

The perilous path from proposal to practice: A qualitative program evaluation of a regional music program

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Abstract

The current paper retrospectively evaluates the efficacy of implementing a large-scale music education program into a regional cluster of Victorian primary schools. The program's primary aim was to increase access and quality of music education for students in these rural schools. The methods utilized to evaluate the program and the discrepancies between intended and implemented program are first described. Thematic analyses from qualitative data from principals, music teachers, parents and students are then reported, revealing that while increased access to music education was indeed achieved, the quality of the program and its impact in schools was not as high as intended. An impact evaluation of the program revealed that the recipient needs and resources were not sufficiently incorporated into the program's goals, and as a result, the program design may not have been the best fit for this community. A set of recommendations for implementing future music education programs is provided, with an emphasis on optimizing sustainability in regional areas.

Key words: music education, program evaluation, qualitative research, string teaching.

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An evaluation of a particular project has its greatest implications for projects that will be put in place in the future. (Cronbach and Associates 1983, p. 409)

Introduction

In 2004, a committee of educators from a regional secondary school in Victoria, Australia, successfully applied for a government grant to implement a large-scale music education initiative. The funded project, referred to in this paper as 'MP', ambitiously aimed to improve provision of music education within all of the

state government funded schools in their area. In addition to building a new community music centre at the secondary school and expanding the existing secondary school music program (for students aged 12-18 years), the MP proposal also included strategies to provide high-quality classroom and instrumental music programs to the primary school students (aged 5-12 years) in its cluster of 'feeder schools', at no cost to the families involved. The aim of the first three-year phase of the program (2005-2007) was to introduce the full program described in this paper into five of the ten primary schools in the

cluster, with the remaining five schools to receive benefits from additional community music initiatives.

The MP committee established a partnership with Monash University to develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation of whether implementation of an intensive music education program for school children with varied psychosocial and academic needs yielded significant benefits on a range of student potentials. The effects of the primary level music program on music-related outcomes, measures of academic and cognitive ability and psychosocial well-being were measured and analysed throughout the three-year program using quantitative research methods. Positive effects of the program on immediate recall of verbal information and self-esteem were observed, and the detail of these quantitative findings are to be reported elsewhere (Rickard, N., Appelman, P., James, R., Murphy, F., Gill, A. & Bambrick, C. 2010).

This article will report on a qualitative program evaluation, performed by a research team consisting of academics from three university disciplines (Psychology, Music and Education), which describes how this ambitious music program was implemented into the five primary schools over the three-year period and the lessons that can be learned from this initiative. As the opening quotation implies, the purpose of this evaluation is to provide educational administrators and music educators with a detailed account of the successes and pitfalls of this particular program in order that they can make informed decisions about implementing similar programs in the future. This article will be presented in four sections. First, the music program originally proposed and the program actually implemented will be outlined. Second, the methodology utilised for the evaluation process will be described. Third, an impact evaluation of the program will address whether program objectives and recipient needs were met, why changes occurred to the

proposed program as it was implemented, and what unintended outcomes occurred. Finally, the implications of these findings with particular respect to issues of sustainability and transportability will be discussed and guidelines for future program proposals and implementation suggested.

Description of the proposed and implemented music program

The objectives of the program, and how these were implemented (planned vs actual) are outlined in Tables 1 and 2. As part of the evaluation process, it is important to recognise the discrepancies between the original proposal and the program that was actually implemented. The reasons for these discrepancies will be discussed in the impact evaluation.

Participants

The first year of Victorian government primary schools is referred to as Preparatory (Prep) and students entering Prep class are typically 5 years of age. Students continue through years 1-6 in following years, before moving to a secondary school for years 7-12 (age 12-18 years). Secondary

Table 1: Objectives and Outline of Intended Program

1	To ensure all students, regardless of socio-economic status, have access to high-quality classroom and instrumental music programs.
2	To improve academic, musical, cognitive and psychosocial student outcomes through such participation in a high-quality music program.
3	A high-quality music program was defined as having three interconnected aspects: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least three sessions of classroom music per week 2. Weekly instruction on at least one musical instrument. 3. Participation in at least one high-quality ensemble, involving weekly rehearsals and regular public performances.

Table 2: Summary of Intended and Actual Program

Proposed strategies for treatment schools	Program actually implemented in treatment schools
<p>Kodály classroom program</p> <p>Years Prep-2</p> <p>Three 30min sessions per week</p> <p>Sequential and developmental Kodály program to teach music literacy skills. Based on Queensland music curriculum.</p> <p>Qualified Kodály teacher to develop program materials to be used in cluster beyond funded program and provide Professional Development for music specialists and generalist teachers.</p>	<p>Kodály/Orff classroom program</p> <p>Years Prep-2</p> <p>Two 40min sessions per week (due to staffing availability and timetabling issues)</p> <p>Combined Kodály/Orff program</p> <p>Kodály principles used to teach music literacy where relevant to students and existing school program. Less emphasis on music literacy in some schools where students were not as receptive or Kodály program was inconsistent with existing music program.</p> <p>Employment of qualified Kodály teacher difficult in rural area. Music teacher employed undertook Kodály training, but did not feel qualified to claim 'expert' status to train other teachers.</p>
<p>Instrumental program</p> <p>Year 3 string program with cohort continuing in following years.</p> <p>Small group lessons with qualified string teachers</p> <p>Weekly one hour session to be supported by at-home practice</p> <p>Program to include best-practice pedagogy and repertoire based on programs by Paul Rolland, Sheila Nelson and Mary Cohen.</p> <p>Program to utilise innovative technology including interactive DVD-ROMs (Murphy 2008)</p> <p>School to purchase instruments and program would provide staff.</p>	<p>Instrumental program</p> <p>Year 3 string program with cohorts continuing in following years.</p> <p>Whole class group lesson taught in string ensemble setting</p> <p>Staffing was problematic with a large number of teachers of varying quality employed through duration of program.</p> <p>Typically almost half of session time was taken up with tuning instruments.</p> <p>Initially most students were not allowed to take instruments home to practise.</p> <p>Each teacher utilised own program, without consideration of what other teachers had taught previously, and with little reference to intended best-practice materials.</p> <p>DVD-ROMs were never purchased as schools did not have facilities to use them.</p> <p>One school also purchased brass/woodwind instruments for Year 5 & 6 students who were taught in a weekly whole class ensemble setting.</p>
<p>Ensemble program</p> <p>All students were to have access to at least one instrumental and/or choral ensemble, which rehearsed weekly and gave regular public performances.</p>	<p>Ensemble program</p> <p>Middle Years choir established in first year of program but struggled to gain and maintain sufficient numbers.</p> <p>In subsequent years, choral directors travelled to each school in the cluster every 2-3 weeks to rehearse songs for regular cluster concerts.</p> <p>Instrumental programs were taught in ensemble settings and gave some informal performances to peers and parents.</p>

schools are generally centrally located and have larger student numbers, drawing their population from many 'feeder' primary schools in the wider area. Two of the five primary schools in this study are located in the same regional town as the secondary school which applied for the government grant. The other three schools lie within a 20 km radius of the town. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 census data, the town has a population of approximately 7000 and sits in the lowest decile on the Postal Area Index of Economic Resources within the state of Victoria. The wider area covered by this project has a population of approximately 17,000 and sits in the second lowest decile on the Local Government Index of Economic Resources within the state of Victoria. Despite these levels of disadvantage, the grant proposal noted that the area has a thriving arts community of local artists, musicians and instrument makers.

Student involvement in the program at each school ranged from 36 to 89 students, varying with the size of the school. These five schools volunteered to participate in the program and demonstrated their commitment to the project by providing sufficient funding to purchase class sets of instruments. Before the implementation of the MP program each school generally provided one specialist music lesson per week for each class and a small number of children participated in user-pays instrumental lessons provided by visiting teachers.

The MP coordinator in charge of implementing the entire program was also the secondary school music teacher. The MP program employed a Kodály teacher, instrumental teachers and vocal ensemble teachers to provide additional music education to the primary schools throughout the three year program. These teachers were officially based at the secondary school, but travelled between each of the primary schools to deliver the program.

Methodology

The methodology utilised in this evaluation was informed by Stufflebeam's (1983, 2007) "CIPP" (Context, Input, Process, and Product) model of program evaluation and Owen's (2006) description of retrospective impact evaluation. This qualitative approach to impact evaluation seeks not only to measure *what* was achieved in relation to intended objectives, but also to gain a rich understanding of *how* and *why* these achievements occurred. In addition, this approach can also discover unintended outcomes and assess the validity of intended outcomes for the recipients and stakeholders.

Data collection and analysis

Observation visits were made to each of the schools on at least four occasions. Music lessons conducted by MP staff were observed and short conversational interviews with students, principals and teachers were conducted on each of these visits. Researchers recorded summaries and impressions in written notes. Seven longer, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 classroom teachers and five MP teaching staff at the end of the first year of the program. A principal, the MP Kodály teacher and the MP coordinator were also interviewed extensively during preparation of this report at the conclusion of the program. These semi-structured interviews were taped and transcribed in summary form, with representational quotes transcribed in full. Interview questions focussed on the participants' expectations and experiences of the program, difficulties encountered, positive and unintended outcomes and future recommendations.

Informal group discussions were also conducted during the final round of testing with string classes at three schools discussing what the students liked and disliked about the program. In addition open-ended feedback questionnaires

were sent to all parents, principals and teachers of the participating schools, and all MP teaching staff. One school also designed and administered their own questionnaire to the participating string students. Participants were asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the program and make recommendations for future programs. Thirty seven responses were received, representing parents, principals, classroom teachers, MP teaching staff and students, and therefore provided a diversity of quite detailed additional feedback from stakeholders in the program.

Thematic analysis was used to code and organise the interview and questionnaire data into themes relating to access and equity, program content, program organisation, student skills and attitudes, quality of teachers, and wider benefits to the community. Repeated readings of this coded analysis provided broad level analysis and general findings about the program, while closer analysis of individual interview transcripts and survey forms provided specific examples to illustrate these broad findings. Planning documents and correspondence were also collected and analysed to provide an understanding of the program organisation and context.

Impact evaluation of the MP program

Were the objectives of the program achieved?

On a purely objectives-based assessment of this music program, it is possible to conclude that for the cohorts of students involved in the treatment interventions, the program did meet most of the intended objectives. Students in the 2005 cohort of Years Prep-3 at the five treatment schools received free access to an expanded music program for three years, and did demonstrate some measurable improvements in verbal

memory (Rickard, Vasquez et al., 2010) and self-esteem (Rickard, Appelman et al., 2010). While some of these benefits were not observed in control schools who did not receive the program, it is difficult to determine from the quantitative data what components of the program were responsible for these effects. The qualitative data presented in this report suggest, however, that benefits are unlikely to have been caused directly by the intended improvements in music education provision as it is doubtful that the actual program received by the students met the MP proposal's definition of a high-quality music program.

Were the needs of the recipients met?

Perhaps more importantly, however, is that the desired outcomes of the program appear to have varied significantly across different stakeholders. For instance, even if the intended goals of a high-quality music program had been achieved, it is unclear whether this form of music program was regarded by all stakeholders as appropriate for the needs of the particular community. The proposed program was based on the MP coordinator's previous experience as a music teacher in non-government private schools in much larger regional towns and her desire to have students from the local feeder schools arrive at secondary school with consistent levels of music experience and skills to participate in the secondary music program.

This is probably being a bit pie in the sky, but I couldn't see why the state schools couldn't do the same. If you had the same resources and teachers it should be the same (as in private schools). (MP coordinator)

A comprehensive audit of the existing assets, resources or limitations associated with the primary school music programs was not performed before the original proposal was developed, nor was input from the primary school principals, staff or students regarding their own opinions of their needs effectively

sought. Assessment of the particular budget constraints, staffing formula or curriculum approaches of government primary schools, and how these differ from the secondary schools or non-government private schools with which the leaders of the submission were familiar, may also have been insufficient for successful adoption of the program. It appears that while the primary school principals were keen to participate in the program and boost the degree of attention given to music within their schools, they deferred to the professional experience of the MP coordinator with regard to the form of program that should be implemented. For instance, one principal stated that:

Even though I thought a different instrument might be easier... it was certainly too good of an opportunity and I was prepared to defer to the coordinator's better judgement. I think that's all you can do if you're looking at someone who can accumulate quality resources and quality tutors.'

Common complaints from students involved in the string program were that they found the lessons boring and the repertoire uninteresting. These observations were also reported by parents and generalist teachers. One parent commented, 'She was never challenged with the music work they did and lost a lot of interest', while a classroom teacher wrote, 'No effort was made to consider student needs/wants. They need to engage the students. The talented students were bored and the struggling ones left behind!' It is difficult to ascertain from the collected data whether these comments refer to problems with the teaching materials or the manner in which teachers implemented them.

Some adults questioned whether compulsory learning of a string instrument was culturally valid in a community where few families could afford to purchase their own instrument and continue tuition at the cessation of the program and few opportunities existed for hearing or joining with other string performers in the community outside of school. Some suggested that percussion, guitar or ukulele might have been options

that were more affordable and appealing for students in this particular community. Although the original funding submission makes mention of the fact that this regional area has a vibrant arts community, the proposed program did not capitalize on this local expertise or encourage students to develop skills consistent with participation in existing local activities.

Although the majority of teachers and principals interviewed were positive about the Kodály program and impressed with the students' improvements in musical literacy, staff at two of the schools were concerned about the highly structured nature of the program and whether this was appropriate for young children. One generalist classroom teacher commented, 'Kids at that age they want to sing and they want to get into things and they really have short concentration spans. And when you're sitting on the floor and doing that sort of thing all the time [they get a bit restless]...I know that the basics of the singing and things like that are really important but you would also like to factor in the fun aspect of music. Because I think that's really important. I mean correct singing is very nice and it's lovely but I think it also needs to be fun.'

This comment highlights a possible discrepancy between music educators and generalist school staff and parents regarding the value and role of music education. The MP program was introduced into participating schools with limited explanation of the reasons for why the particular aspects of the program had been chosen or the outcomes that could be expected. The literature suggests that it is not uncommon for schools and students to value music primarily as an opportunity for entertainment and a break from 'real work' (Forari, 2007, p. 142; Tacka & Houlahan, 1995, p. 9). In reflecting on the program, the MP coordinator also recognised the need for schools with poorly informed expectations to be educated about the benefits of music learning if they are to value and support the efforts of such a comprehensive intervention program:

There's also the notion of entertainment versus education. Some schools were happy if the kids came out of lessons happy and they'd had a fun day. But to have it connecting and building all the way through (in a sequenced program) from Prep-12 was the aim and it was happening. Principals began to see that music education is much more involved than they thought – it's not just a little add-on.

In another example of highly variable feedback about a specific issue, a comment repeated by parents, students and teachers was that the compulsory nature of the string program had negative impacts on the learning of the students who were enthusiastic because of the need to cater for students who were disinterested and poorly engaged. Yet, other respondents felt that compulsion to participate had been positive because it exposed many children, whom teachers and parents felt may never have self-volunteered, to the experience of playing a string instrument.

You don't realise the musical talents some children have until they are given an instrument ...This program has probably tripled or quadrupled the amount of kids that have an interest in music. (Primary school principal)

In summary, it is therefore difficult to conclude whether the needs of the recipients of the program were met, as these needs were not clarified at the beginning of the program. Different needs and expectations of participants will inevitably lead to different perceptions of the same issues, making it difficult to use qualitative data to assess the overall value of the program. While the quantitative data collected do indicate that many of the objectives were met and several measurable positive outcomes were achieved, the qualitative data questions whether the outcomes achieved were consistent with the expectations and values of the program's stakeholders.

Why was the program not implemented as planned?

The major changes to implementation of the program were due directly to staffing issues. From

the very outset, it was extremely difficult for the MP coordinator to obtain appropriately qualified and experienced staff to implement the proposed program. This was partly due to the very small numbers of qualified music teachers living in this relatively small regional area available for employment, but also because some of those who may have been available expressed concern about the difficulties involved in taking up such a highly demanding itinerant position (personal correspondence to MP coordinator, March 2005).

Eventually, almost two terms after funding was allocated, a teacher returning from family leave agreed to take up the Kodály position on a part-time basis, rather than the full-time position proposed. Difficulties in attracting and retaining appropriately qualified string teachers led to a high turnover of teachers in the string program, with each teacher possessing variable skills, background and experience. Staff availability and timetabling issues within the schools thus led to a reduction in the number of Kodály lessons each class received per week, and the adoption of whole-class lessons instead of small group sessions in the string program.

Changes to the implemented program also inevitably occurred due to the individual music teachers' own expertise and interests and adaption to the particular context and needs of the individual schools and students. Forari (2007) argues that the ideologies of policy are frequently either ignored or transformed by teachers to fit with their own agendas and values. Such actions may be a result of the manner in which teachers make sense of the new policy they are meant to implement. Individuals make different interpretations of the same policy message dependent on their previous knowledge, experience, values and attitudes. For example, some teachers may focus on surface aspects of the new policy that are familiar to them and fail to recognise the deeper differences that require change, while emotional self-preservation can also prevent complete adoption of policy change.

These inevitable implementation difficulties which occur in all new programs were further compounded in this program by insufficient communication, induction and training at the beginning of each MP teacher's employment. Due to the MP coordinator's own teaching duties at the secondary school there may not have been sufficient time to provide adequate direction and supervision of MP staff. Although the Kodály teacher undertook substantial training in the Kodály method, the instrumental teachers established their own program and repertoire with little reference to the proposed program and materials, and frequently without reference to what had already been taught to the students by previous teachers. Feedback from students, parents and teachers showed considerable frustration with the fact that each teacher seemed to start again from the very beginning and often repeated the same repertoire.

What were the unintended outcomes?

Thematic analysis of feedback and interview responses indicated several unintended outcomes occurred as a result of the implementation of the music program. Unanticipated positive outcomes mentioned by respondents (in addition to the intended outcomes of increased access to music education and development of musical and personal skills described earlier) included expansion of performance opportunities (which were felt to have increased student self-confidence); the building of the new music centre at the secondary school which had provided a significant community resource; and expectations about music learning had been raised within the community, particularly in regard to young children's ability to acquire music literacy skills and learn to play an instrument. As one music specialist said, 'I would never have assumed that Preps were capable of such things!' There was some limited adoption of the Kodály principles by at least three of the music and generalist

teachers who observed the program and valued its contribution to music literacy and singing technique. The program provoked a new understanding within the community of what is possible if adequate funding and staffing is available for music education.

Some schools also reported unintended outcomes that had detrimental effects on their existing music programs. In some schools, existing music teachers felt that their own programs were undermined and devalued by the arrival of 'experts' who did things differently. In at least two cases, the MP program replaced elements of the existing classroom music time allocation rather than supplementing the standard music curriculum already being provided by school staff. One school previously had a long established choir of 60 plus members, established primarily through the music teacher's effective rapport with students and dynamic personality and teaching style. When the program established the travelling choral experts, time allocation for the existing choir was cut. Within weeks of beginning the new choral sessions with visiting teachers, the numbers of participants dropped to approximately 12-15 members. The momentum of the original choir was lost and the teacher subsequently found it difficult to rebuild.

There were also significant costs to the schools to participate fully in the program. Some principals and staff reported dissatisfaction that significant funds had been committed on the basis of the proposed program, yet a substantially reduced program was ultimately delivered. String instruments are relatively expensive and, as only one of the schools was able to self-fund employment of staff to continue the string program beyond the funded project, most of these instruments ended up in storage, unused in the schools. Anecdotal reports suggest that because the schools invested heavily in music over the period of this program, administrators have felt under pressure from staff and parents to subsequently direct available funds and

attention to other subject areas instead of trying to maintain the music program. Despite this attitude, one enterprising school music teacher has actually traded in several violins to purchase a class set of ukuleles and has successfully developed a class music instrumental program with a local musician.

Implications and guidelines for future programs

The problematic implementation of this program highlights the many difficulties that can be encountered between planning a proposal and successfully putting it into practice. From a retrospective impact evaluation of this program, the following guidelines for other groups interested in establishing similar music programs are proposed.

Establish and carry out effective proactive evaluation procedures prior to proposal development

A proactive evaluation must first consider the needs and context of the particular community to determine what sort of proposal is suitable and viable. The context evaluation component (to assess needs, assets, and problems within a defined environment) and the input evaluation component (to assess competing strategies and the work plans and budgets of the selected approach) of Stufflebeam's (2007) CIPP evaluation model checklist provide a structured approach for ensuring that program proposals are well considered, appropriate and viable for the particular community. These assessments must question both philosophical and practical issues. For example: Is the proposed curriculum relevant and engaging for these students? Is it based on current best-practice research? Can sufficient staff and funding be obtained to implement this program? In this case, such an evaluation could have alerted the MP committee to many of the organisational difficulties the program would

face and the need to either redesign the intended proposal or put in place further support measures to ensure the program's acceptance and viability.

Empower stakeholders to develop ownership of the program and work towards institutionalising the new program

Ideally, the community must have some input and sense of ownership of the program if they are to commit to its implementation. However, Fullan (2007) does suggest, that provided the initiative is in fact a good idea, this sense of ownership can grow over time provided participants are empowered to make choices and provide input as the program develops. This program was proposed with the best of intentions but insufficient process may have been initiated to encourage participants to develop their own sense of ownership of the program. To encourage empowerment, a clarificative evaluation must take place in the early stages of program implementation to ensure that the needs identified in the proactive evaluation have been fully ascertained (Owen, 2006). Often participants can only fully understand and make informed judgements about their needs once they actually become involved in a new initiative and can reflect on their practice (Fullan, 2007). A formal process for acknowledging participants' experiences and responding to their suggestions allows participants to develop their own meaning for the initiative and greatly improves the likelihood that the program will be implemented and sustained.

Long-term sustainability of such a program requires institutionalisation of infrastructural changes to the schools' values, policies, and capacities of staff. Fullan (2007) suggests that while significant change can be achieved within 2 to 3 years by implementing a specific program, institutional reform can take 5 to 10 years. It is extremely difficult for programs to build up sufficient momentum within three years to self-

fund their continuance. Proactive steps must be taken from the outset of the program to gradually change the values and music education policy of each school. In order to be able to continue the program beyond the initial funding, there must be a commitment from schools to either seek to employ appropriately qualified staff or to provide adequate professional development for existing staff. Even if schools are willing to make such commitments (as at least one of the schools in this program was), the funding realities of government primary school budgets and the lack of availability of appropriate professional development or qualified staff in regional areas can make this objective unrealistic without alternative funding sources.

Establish effective management and organisational structures for:

a) monitoring and long-term development of the program

b) day-to-day implementation and communication amongst stakeholders

As part of the original submission for this particular program, a proposed management structure was developed consisting of a steering committee and sub-committees for building, evaluation, sustainability, parent support, and program development. However, the crucial evaluation, sustainability and program development sub-committees were never formed, leaving the bulk of the responsibility for managing the program to the MP coordinator.

Continuous interactive and monitoring evaluative processes require the regular attention of a dedicated group, representative of the various participants, to both identify and take action on issues as they arise. In such a large-scale initiative, it is vital that effective communication processes are developed to keep the many participants informed of what is happening and what is expected of them. Collaborative decision-making processes and delegation of tasks are

essential to both manage the day-to-day issues of staffing and implementing the various aspects of the program and to provide long-term guidance for development of the curricular program.

Choose curricula content and pedagogical practices appropriate for the needs of students and the community

A major consideration for any program proposal regards selection of the particular curriculum content and pedagogical practices. According to sociocultural theorists, students learn through participation in the valued and meaningful practices of their community, gradually gaining competence and building identity with the support of more knowledgeable peers and adults (see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998). By this definition of learning, students must be motivated to actively participate (engage) in meaningful practices that they regard as relevant to either present or perceived future needs (Cambourne, 1988).

The highly traditional approaches to music education chosen for this program (Kodály-based classroom program and instrumental string program) may have unintentionally alienated some students and generalist teachers from engaging with the chosen curricular content and practices. The National Review of School Music Education (DEST, 2005) recognised that the concept of quality music education can be viewed from various perspectives which need not be mutually exclusive. The authors describe how these perspectives can form a continuum from a pedagogy for participation (valuing enjoyment, inclusion and participation) through to a pedagogy for expertise (valuing acquisition of skills and excellence in performance). Although an aim of this music program was to provide access to music education to all students, it also aimed to do this through provision of curriculum strategies focused on a pedagogy for expertise.

While lofty goals are admirable, they can miss their mark if a sufficient base of participation and enjoyment has not been well established first. The chosen curriculum of any proposed program must take into account the varying levels of commitment of the participants and provide curricular activities that are relevant to their needs. Parents and teachers particularly questioned the relevance of compulsory learning of a string instrument when it is so far removed from the types of music to which most students listen and engage in outside of school. Several respondents suggested that the string program may have been better received if all children were given an opportunity to trial the program (perhaps for one term or semester) and were then allowed to choose whether or not they would continue.

The intrinsic educational value of these particular curriculum choices is beyond the scope of this paper; rather, the issue is raised to highlight the importance of selecting an approach which is appropriate for the context. Interestingly, several researchers commenting on the implementation of the Kodály-based music curriculum in Queensland have also reported that some teachers feel this approach is not suitable for all educational contexts (Southcott & Hartwig, 2005; Barton & Hartwig, 2004; deVries, 2001). Whilst deVries strongly supports the philosophical beliefs of Zoltán Kodály, he argues that the way his philosophy is frequently interpreted and implemented (focusing on acquisition of discrete musical skills) is faulty and neglects the cultural pluralism of the twenty-first century.

Recruit and retain quality teachers and provide appropriate professional development and resources to ensure teachers can deliver the proposed curricula

The qualitative data collected in this study clearly showed the importance of recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. Student

enjoyment and progress appeared to be associated with the MP teachers who were able to build a good rapport with the students, differentiate learning activities for students of different abilities and establish an enjoyable, yet challenging learning environment. Provision of acceptable working conditions and appropriate remuneration are crucial factors in establishing a stable teaching team. Inevitably, the short-term contracts, poor pay rates, excessive travel and teacher isolation often inherent in the role of itinerant instrumental teachers make this stability very difficult to achieve.

Given the high turnover of program staff, it has been difficult to ascertain which, indeed if any, string teachers utilised the proposed curricular and pedagogical strategies. Any successes or failures of the program are therefore not necessarily attributable to the particular strategies proposed, but rather to the general increase in the amount of music exposure and involvement provided by participation in the program. Stringer and Owen (1986), summarising the work of Fullan and Pomfret (1977) and Fullan (1982), suggest that successful implementation of a particular curricular innovation relies on 'teacher knowledge of the curriculum to be implemented, positive attitudes towards the intentions of the curriculum, and an ability to undertake the teaching roles implied in the curriculum.' As the MP Kodály teacher indicated:

It became very clearly apparent when I did the Kodály training how much I didn't know, what I didn't know. People say that if you're doing a few hand signs and taas and titis then you're teaching Kodály. People just don't get it. If you're going to deliver a Kodály program then you need to have the commitment of the schools to a sequential developmental program and you need to have the staff trained.'

A key recommendation for any group aiming to establish an innovative curriculum program is to ensure that teaching staff are well informed about the particular pedagogy required and how it differs from their previous teaching practice.

This understanding must be not only at the surface level of content and materials, but also at the deeper philosophical levels of pedagogical practice and beliefs. They must also be provided with appropriate resources and training to provide any special materials and skills necessary for carrying out this new pedagogy.

Establish a collaborative professional learning community that builds teacher capacity through the recognition and development of individuals' strengths and interests

A successful program must not only inspire a shared vision of the program intentions through adequate professional development but also acknowledge the unique strengths and interests that individual teachers bring to the practice of teaching. Eisner (1983) describes teaching as a unique form of 'artistry' that cannot be completely prescribed or controlled by hierarchical forces. This is particularly so in music education where teachers bring vastly different skills and experience according to the instruments they play and their levels of training. The unique skills of many of the pre-existing music teachers in the cluster were perceived to be overlooked or devalued by the introduction of this program rather than being built upon and enhanced. Neither were the skills of existing musicians in the community capitalized upon, which may have enhanced sustainability of enhanced music education beyond the three year funded period. The development of a professional learning community allows teachers to work collaboratively to build their capacities with a focus on improving student learning rather than on simply implementing a prescribed program (Fullan, 2007). Extending this community beyond the school also shapes the program as a culturally relevant and valued practice with which all stakeholders can identify, and which embeds the student's development within a sustainable future in that community.

Actively plan for student engagement by listening to and valuing students' opinions

In recent decades, research into student participation in educational change has argued for the necessity of listening to students' views about what they are taught and how they best learn, although some argue, little has changed in practice (Fullan, 2007). If students are expected to engage in musical learning, it makes sense to allow students to share their opinions about the types of music and activities they enjoy and find meaningful. The musical and technological environment contemporary students grow up in is significantly different from that of their teachers' generation, radically altering children's musical and learning preferences (Grimmett, 2008). Through exposure to interactive technology, contemporary students understand how it feels to be fully engaged in an activity and demand similar levels of engagement in their school activities (Prensky, 2001, 2005). Fullan (2007) argues that such engagement will only occur through two changes:

- a change in classroom pedagogies that actively seek to understand students' needs and engage them in relevant and meaningful learning experiences, and
- a change in school culture that recognises and values the opinions that students have about factors that affect their learning and takes action on these.

In terms of music education, it may therefore be necessary to constantly update curricula to recognise, include and value the forms of music making and listening that students find meaningful in their own lives. A central tenet of Kodály's philosophy is to use the musical mother tongue of students as a starting point for music education so that ultimately they will have the musical knowledge to understand the masterworks of musical literature (Choksy, 2003). The typical musical mother tongue of contemporary students extends beyond nursery rhymes and folk songs and includes the rich array of culturally diverse musical styles and forms

available in most homes through electronic media. Music educators may therefore be more likely to engage students if they build upon, rather than ignore, this eclectic musical heritage (deVries, 2004).

In closing, it is interesting to note the recent reflections of Dr Deanna Hoermann who introduced the Kodály concept into Australia through the establishment of the Developmental Music Program (1970–1985) in western Sydney:

Music is a pathway to richer opportunities in every students' [sic] educational journey, but setting new directions in music education is a complex learning and unlearning process for all concerned. Above all we cannot afford to underestimate the individual and organisational capabilities required to manage the change process in music education and succeed. Had I the knowledge about change management that I have today I feel sure that the program could have succeeded in continuing and expanding. (Hoermann 2005, p. 7)

While it is difficult enough to manage change within one institution, to manage significant change across a cluster of schools with many competing agendas, values, priorities and personalities is an enormous task. Any such proposal must be realistic about what can reasonably be achieved with the time and resources available. Funding should be aligned with the need to develop appropriate criteria that reward well-planned and manageable proposals that are firmly embedded in the reality of their community context. Reasonable timelines must be allowed for both planning the proposal and preparing to implement the program if educators are to succeed in successfully implementing innovative proposals. Ultimately, proposals based on lofty ambitions and good intentions can only successfully navigate the path into practice if they are matched with a thorough understanding and commitment to contemporary evaluation, change management, organisational and teaching/learning practices.

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