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The First Year of Teaching in Primary School: Where is the Place of Music?

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Abstract

The aim of the research reported in this article was to determine what music first year generalist primary teachers were teaching. In particular, the study sought to determine the impact of music education coursework undertaken in teacher training on these teachers' practice as beginning teachers. The self-reported data was generated through a written survey undertaken by 112 first year generalist teachers in their first year teaching, with 24 of these teachers agreeing to be interviewed after the survey was completed. Results revealed that only 37% of these beginning teachers are teaching music on a regular basis. Reasons impacting on their decision to teach (or not teach) music include the presence of a music specialist in the school, their current or recent learning of a musical instrument, amount of time dedicated to music education in their teacher training courses, lack of confidence about teaching music, availability of time to teach music when other curricular areas dominate, and access to resources, teaching spaces, and relevant professional development. Implications for teacher educators teaching music education for preservice generalist primary teachers are outlined.

Introduction

The teaching of music in Australian primary schools has been a contentious issue for a long time now, whether it be who should be teaching music (a specialist music teacher or generalist classroom teacher), the nature of the music curriculum (in particular the way music curriculum differs from state to state), the amount of time devoted to music education in the primary school, or the quality of the music teaching. There is little research about the actual teaching of music in Australian primary schools, particularly when the responsibility for teaching music lies with the generalist classroom teacher. We know, however, that the teaching of music in Australian primary schools is invariably falling to the generalist classroom teacher, except in the state of Queensland where there are specialist music teachers (Letts, 2007). The focus of this paper is the teaching of music by first year generalist primary school teachers in Melbourne, Victoria, a state where it is up to individual schools if they will employ a music specialist or not. As Letts (2007) reports, due to this decentralization, the Department of Education (now the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) in Victoria are unable to provide information about how many primary schools do in fact employ specialist music teachers.

The focus on first year generalist primary school teachers was taken because there is a significant body of research, from Australia and abroad, that focuses on preservice generalist primary teachers and teaching music (see Berke & Colwell, 2004; Gifford, 1993; Hallam et al., 2009; Hash, 2009; Hennessy, 2000; Holden & Button, 2006; Jeanneret, 1997; Mills, 1989; Russell-Bowie, 2009), but there is minimal research focusing on these teachers once they graduate and begin teaching. It was anticipated that teachers in their first year teaching would still have clear memories of their preservice teacher training, and in particular the music component of this training, so would be able to comment on the impact of this training on their practice teaching music as beginning teachers.

There has been much focus on the confidence levels of preservice generalist classroom teachers to teach music, which is generally low (Hallam et al., 2009; Hash, 2009; Hennessy, 2000; Holden & Button, 2006; Jeanneret, 1997; Mills, 1989; Russell-Bowie, 2009), although it is higher for students with prior musical experience (Jeanneret, 1997), such as playing a musical instrument (Hallam et al., 2009). Research does indicate that preservice teachers believe there should be more time devoted to music in their teacher education courses (Hallam et al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006; Russell-Bowie, 2009). Certainly the lack of time devoted to music education in preservice teacher education courses does not help in building confidence to teach music. Another of the key issues that has emerged in research about preservice primary school teachers' attitudes to teaching music focuses on the role of integrating music into other curricular areas. Berke & Colwell (2004) found that students had

a positive change in relation to their music ability, music knowledge, music objectives and confidence to teach music when music was integrated into the elementary curriculum. However, integrating music into other curricular areas can be detrimental, resulting in a greater valuing of non-musical outcomes by preservice teachers (Hash, 2009). In a study of almost 1000 preservice primary school teachers in Australia, Namibia, South Africa, the USA and Ireland, Russell-Bowie (2009) alarmingly found that the Australian students gave significantly lower responses than students in the other countries to music being a high priority in schools. The Australian students also had the lowest confidence levels for teaching music. Other challenges revealed in the study include the lack of resources and time to teach music, subject knowledge, and adequate preparation time in university teacher education courses.

Research focusing on practising primary school teachers teaching music reveals a variety of data. Colwell (2008) found that these teachers (alongside secondary school teachers) had increased confidence in teaching music when integrating music with core academic objectives. Saunders & Baker (1991) found that generalist teachers were more likely to teach music in the lower primary school and still viewed the teaching of music as something that music specialists should be responsible for. The latter was also a finding in Hash's (2009) survey of preservice elementary classroom teachers' attitudes towards music.

The quality of music teaching in elementary schools in the USA was an issue addressed by Bresler (1993) nearly two decades ago. She was scathing about the teaching she witnessed, seeing music being used as background to other activities in the classroom and serving other curricular areas. The latter was also self-reported by generalist elementary school teachers in a study conducted by Saunders & Baker (1991). Bresler found that there was very little music instruction occurring, with minimal focus on music's intrinsic aesthetic and cognitive value. Nearly two decades later Wiggins & Wiggins (2008) revealed similar findings, with "misguided visions" of many of the teachers who were the focus of their research about "what it is to be a musician, to teach music, and to learn music" (p. 14). Just as Stake, Bresler and Mabry (1991) found, Wiggins & Wiggins also revealed that for many teachers, music education was primarily about preparing for performance at school assemblies and concerts.

Holden & Button (2006) examined the teaching of music by generalist classroom teachers in the United Kingdom, revealing a lack of music skills and confidence to teach music. The teachers identified a need for ongoing professional development to teach music effectively, particularly in class support. Hallam et al. (2009) also identified this as a possible way to further effective teaching of music by generalist classroom teachers, specifically through collaborative work with music specialists.

The literature on preservice and in service generalist primary school teachers suggests there are a myriad of problems and issues in the provision of quality music education in the primary school when delivered by non specialists. The aim of the current study was to find out what beginning generalist primary school teachers were doing (or not doing) when it comes to teaching music in schools in Melbourne, the capital city of Victoria, and what factors impacted on their current practice. In particular, the study sought to determine the impact of music education courses in their recently completed teacher education training.

Research Design

There were two stages to the research design: 1) the administering of a survey to 112 teachers in their first year of teaching when attending a professional development day, and 2) follow up interviews with teachers who indicated on the survey they were prepared to be interviewed (n=24). The professional development day was not focused on music or music education. Rather, the day focused on the first year of teaching in primary (elementary) school, examining the challenges that graduate teachers face.

The survey asked respondents:

- for background information (what primary level they are teaching in, their previous and current musical experiences in relation to playing musical instruments and singing),
- whether they believed prior musical experiences have impacted on their ability to teach music,
- about their confidence in teaching music,
- whether they view themselves as being musical,
- about music in their teacher education courses (what music content was covered in their course, how many subjects included music education, how many hours throughout the course was devoted to music education, whether they felt there was enough time devoted to music, what else they would have liked to have addressed in music in their education course, and the most useful aspects of the music education content in their course),
- whether they teach music to their class on a regular basis,
- about the kinds of music activities they teach,
- whether they integrate music into other curriculum areas,
- if there is a specialist music teacher in their school and if there is, how this impacts on whether they do or do not teach music,
- about the music education resources they use,
- what circumstances would allow them to teach more music to their class, and

- whether they have accessed any professional development focusing on music since they began teaching.

The survey was administered to the teachers at the end of a professional development day at which the researcher was also presenting. Only first year generalist primary school teachers were asked to respond to the survey. The survey was administered to these teachers at the beginning of term 4 (October). Follow up interviews occurred over the following month. These interviews were semi-structured, asking respondents to comment or clarify findings drawn from the survey. This research design, beginning with a survey, then using interviews to further explore trends and themes that emerged in the survey, is an example of a sequential research design. One of the key advantages of such a design is that the survey provides some core data, but the interviews “provide information on emergent and unexpected themes” (Driscoll et al., 2007, p. 24). A phenomenological approach was taken in the analysis of interview data. This data was broken down into core themes, a theme being defined as “a statement of meaning that (1) runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or (2) one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual input” (Ely et al., 1991, p. 150). Van Manen (1990, p. 87) describes a theme as the form of capturing the phenomenon that one is trying to understand; a theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience.

Findings and Discussion

Who is Teaching Music?

Of the 112 first year generalist teachers, 42 (37%) taught in the lower primary school, 51 (46%) in middle primary, and 19 (17%) in upper primary. Of the 112 teachers, only 41 (37%) indicated they taught music to their class on a regular basis, 19 (17%) sometimes taught music to their class, and 62 (54%) indicated they did not teach music to their class. When these statistics are broken down according to what part of the primary school teachers teach in, it is apparent that there is a much higher proportion of lower primary school teachers teaching music on a regular basis than middle and upper primary school teachers. That is, 29 of the 42 (69%) lower primary teachers indicated they taught music to their class, but only 10 of the 51 (20%) middle primary teachers and just 2 of the 19 (11%) upper primary teachers taught music to their class. Saunders & Baker (1991) found a similar trend with 159 surveyed elementary school classroom teachers. However, the authors were unable to explain why this might be the case.

Of the 24 interviewees in the current study, 11 taught in the lower primary school. 9 of the 11 indicated they regularly taught music. When asked why they believed lower primary teachers were more likely to teach music than middle or upper primary, responses focused on the music content (“songs for lower primary are easier to sing, they’re much shorter and easy to remember”; “using instruments with young children is much more basic than it would be with

older kids”), self consciousness and singing (“I’m fine singing to little kids, but I don’t think I’d feel comfortable enough to sing with older children”) and music being a natural part of the lower primary curriculum (“I did some EC [early childhood] units where play is really important and of course young children incorporate musical play in their day-to-day play so it’s only natural that I build on this and regularly include music in my classroom”), and student interest in music (“The little ones are more into school music than older children, so I build on this and will often do the songs and the singing games that the children do with the music teacher [music specialist in the school]”). Therefore teaching music in the lower primary school is perceived as being more natural and easier than teaching music in the middle and upper primary school. These perceived beliefs can be explicitly addressed in teacher education courses so that preservice teachers do not exit their teacher training with such perceptions about teaching music.

Presence of a Specialist Music Teacher

The presence of a specialist music teacher in a school impacts on whether generalist teachers teach music in their classroom on a regular basis. 19 (17%) generalist teachers indicated there is a music specialist in their school, but only two of these teachers indicated they also taught music to their class on a regular basis. Both teachers were lower primary school teachers, and both agreed to be interviewed. Both self identified themselves as being musical, with extensive musical backgrounds. One said, “I guess that because I’ve experienced music all my life and know how powerful it is, I want to use it in my classroom. What the music teacher does with my class is great, but I build on that, I incorporate music into my day-to-day teaching.” Interestingly, both interviewees indicated that if they did not have a musical background they would not be teaching music. Therefore generalist teachers with musical backgrounds may be more likely to teach music, even when a music specialist is present in the school. Both teachers integrated music into other curricular areas as well as leading music only lessons, although they both agreed the latter was difficult to do:

It’s a time thing, with so many things to teach I often won’t have the time to teach a music lesson by itself ... knowing the children get their half hour music lesson with the music teacher means I don’t panic if I can’t fit in a music lesson, because they’ll have their music. But I still incorporate music in my teaching.

Because these two teachers see the value in teaching music to their children, they are prepared to do this any way that they can, including through integration of music with other curricular areas.

Previous research has revealed that generalist teachers believe, for the most part, that music should be taught by a music specialist in the primary school (Berke & Colwell, 2004; Hash, 2009; Saunders & Baker, 1991). This perception primarily focuses on the specific musical skills that these specialists have. Five interviewees in the current study indicated they had a specialist music teacher in their school and therefore did not teach music on a regular basis, citing this as a reason for not teaching music. However, four of the five indicated they had been directed by the school principal or more senior teachers not to teach music as music was taught by the music specialist: “It was never an option for me, I was told I was lucky to be teaching in a school with so many specialists - music, art, LOTE [Language other than English], P.E. [physical education], so I could concentrate on teaching other stuff.” If this kind of message is being sent to beginning teachers, it is not surprising that they are not teaching any music in their classroom.

Current Musical Engagement

Hallam et al. (2009) found that preservice teachers currently learning a musical instrument in a one year primary teacher training program were the most confident students in the cohort when it came to teaching music. These findings are mirrored with those surveyed in the current study. That is, current musical engagement impacts on whether generalist primary school teachers teach music. Only seven of the survey respondents indicated they were currently learning a musical instrument or singing in a choir. However, all seven indicated they taught music to their class and were confident in teaching music, with two of the seven working in a school where there was a specialist music teacher. Four of these seven teachers agreed to be interviewed. Two currently play guitar, one the piano, and one the clarinet. All indicated they had played their instrument to their class during the year. The two guitarists indicated they have their acoustic guitars at school and regularly bring the instrument out to accompany singing: “I’m always getting requests to play, it adds something to the atmosphere of the class, the children are just so wanting to sing with the guitar, their faces light up when they see it come out.” The clarinet player used her instrument as the springboard for exploring instrument families with her class:

My kids are in grade 5 and had virtually no idea about orchestral instruments so I brought in my clarinet, played it, pulled it apart, they were so interested in how it worked that we ended up looking at the different instrument families. This even brought in a bit of science, you know, about how sound is created and how sound travels.

Interestingly, one of the guitarists spoke of being a musician when playing her guitar in class:

When I play [guitar] with my class I'm being a role model, I think I show the children that as an adult you can be a musician and really enjoy playing and also be something else, in my case a teacher. That's a positive message to send to children I think.

Therefore these instrumentalists modelled their music making to their class, acknowledging that in doing this they were being musical role models and highlighting that in playing their instruments, positive music making opportunities occurred in their classes. Such stories could serve as an impetus for others to learn a musical instrument and bring this into classroom music making. This could be addressed, for example, by incorporating learning guitar in preservice teacher education courses.

Prior Musical Engagement

87 of the respondents (78%) indicated they had learnt the recorder at school, with 79 indicating they ceased playing when they entered high school. 39 respondents (35%) had also learnt another musical instrument, but only seven were currently learning a musical instrument. Of the 23 respondents who were still playing a musical instrument in high school but who were no longer playing a musical instrument presently, 22 currently teach music to their class. 13 of the interviewees were in this category. When asked how the experience of learning a musical instrument in high school had impacted on their ability and willingness to teach music, interviewees identified confidence to play music, knowing how to read music, and realising how learning music can be transformative. On the latter, one interviewee stated,

Learning the cello was amazing for me, I loved playing it at the time ... I made so many friends being part of the school orchestra and got to play music I'd never heard before which has stayed with me for life. And then there's just something about *playing*, something that takes you to another place, to experience something that is special, really special, and I want the children I teach to experience music like I experienced it. Obviously I'm not going to teach them an orchestral instrument, but singing and dancing and doing body percussion, I think this can take children to that place.

When asked if they believed prior musical experience impacted on their ability to teach music, 110 of the 112 surveyed respondents indicated yes. Reasons given for this included having learnt a musical instrument (21 responses), currently learning a musical instrument (5 responses), being able to read music (8 responses), an ability to sing, either from formal

singing lessons (2 responses), singing in a choir (10 responses), singing in music class (1 response), and singing in a school musical (3 responses).

7 of the interviewees were not currently learning a musical instrument or had not learnt a musical instrument in high school. All 7 indicated prior musical experience impacted on their ability to teach music. One of these interviewees had, however, been active in school musicals:

I'm not a trained singer, but singing in musicals gives you confidence to sing and it's made me confident enough to sing with my class, so when it comes to music it's mainly singing and choreographing songs. I don't do music theory though, I can barely read music. We did a bit of that at uni[versity], but none of it stuck.

Of the other 6 interviewees in this category, 4 indicated they had not taught music to their class in their first year of teaching, and 2 sporadically did. All six indicated a lack of confidence and skills to teach music, with five of these people indicating that they believed if they had learnt a musical instrument in the past they would feel more confident to teach music now. Therefore engagement in music making in a sustained way in high school, even if no longer engaged in music making in this way may impact on whether generalist primary school teachers decide to teach music.

Perceptions of Musicality

Survey respondents were also asked to define what "being musical" means to them. Similar responses to the previous question about prior musical experience were given, these being the ability to play a music instrument (73 responses), being able to sing (33 responses), and having the ability to read music (31 responses). The only other response given was the ability to compose/create music (3 responses). The emphasis on equating playing a musical instrument with being musical was interesting, with one of the interviewees saying, "I can sing but I'm not what you'd call musical, I can't play an instrument." This attitude was also foregrounded by two of the interviewees currently learning a musical instrument, with one commenting, "I don't think anyone can be just musical, you have to work at it, you have to be learning an instrument." This perception about what it means to be musical needs to be addressed if non-instrumentalists are to teach music in the primary school.

24 of the survey respondents (21%) indicated that they thought of themselves as being musical, whereas 88 indicated they did not (79%). 29 respondents indicated they felt confident about teaching music in their classroom (26%), 79 did not (71%) and 4 were unsure (3%). It is therefore unsurprising that only 41 (37%) of the 112 teachers teach music on a regular basis when so many don't see themselves as being musical or feel confident to teach music. The

issue of confidence cannot be underestimated, and has been shown to be a significant factor in previous research about whether preservice teachers intend to teach music or inservice teachers teach music (Holden & Button, 2006; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). Despite the lack of confidence revealed in the current study, two of the interviewees who identified themselves as not being musical still taught music to their class, with one saying:

I wish I could hold a tune [when singing], but I can't. I learnt how to read music at uni[versity] but had to work really hard to get that skill, which I think is a useful skill. I can't play an instrument either, but you can get around that, I've focused a lot on music where I don't sing or play, but get the kids to do this. I plan the experience and often let some of the musical kids in my class take the lead.

This interviewee had frequently planned music composition experiences with his class: "I had this lecturer at uni[versity] who had us composing and it was really good fun ... and my kids enjoy this too, I'm amazed by what they come up with." The other interviewee who also self identified as not being musical focused on a different aspect of teaching music: "Of course I'd like to be musical and have musical skills, but I don't. I know how important music is to young children in particular so I've been using the textbook which also has a CD with it that we had at university. It's good, gives me plenty of ideas for music lessons." These two interviewees demonstrate that lack of confidence to teach music and beliefs about not being musical do not necessarily mean that a teacher cannot teach music. The use of prepackaged resources such as CDs and textbooks, utilising the talents of musical children in class and making teachers aware that music activities can be facilitated even without the teacher having to sing or play a musical instrument are ways that teachers can at least begin to have music in their classrooms.

Preservice Music Education

All respondents indicated they undertook music education as part of their preservice teacher education courses at university, whether that was as part of a four year undergraduate degree (83 respondents, 74%) or a graduate course (29 respondents, 26%). The respondents identified three general areas that addressed music in their courses: music fundamentals (48 respondents, 43%), learning how to teach music (110 respondents, 98%), and specifically how to integrate music across the curriculum (25 respondents, 22%). When asked how many subjects in their courses included music education, 73 indicated just one subject (65%), 37 identified two subjects (33%), and 2 students identified three subjects (2%). When asked to estimate the total number of hours in their course devoted to music, the majority estimated between 10-19 hours (see table 1).

Table 1.

Hours devoted to music education	Number of respondents
2-4	3
5-9	28
10-19	52
20-30	27
31-40	2

Interestingly, of the 29 respondents indicating they received 20-30 or 31-40 hours of music education, 28 indicated they taught music to their class on a regular basis and 24 indicated they felt confident about teaching music. All of the interviewees in these two categories indicated that the amount of time devoted to music education in their teacher training courses impacted on their decision to teach music:

We got more time on music and art than drama or dance. I'm not all that experienced in any of the arts, so I needed that time for music and art, which I now teach because of the practical hands-on activities we did at uni[versity], which I now do with my class. But I've hardly done any drama or dance because I wouldn't know where to start – that just wasn't done at uni[versity].

A more experienced musician commented that

having a fair bit of time" for music in her course resulted in being involved in a number of practical music activities: "Because I've got a musical background I got to work with peers who didn't have my experience, so I was the more capable peer. This got me thinking how I can use children in my class with musical backgrounds to scaffold children who don't have those experiences, which I've done. Those children with the experience in music like being mini teachers!

Therefore the amount of time devoted to music education is a strong indicator as to whether beginning teachers teach music.

Of those 3 respondents receiving just 2-4 hours of music education in their courses, none indicated they were confident about teaching music and none of the three indicated they currently taught music to their class. None of these three agreed to be interviewed. The results for those receiving just 5-9 hours of music education were a little better, with only 2 of the 28 respondents indicating they felt confident teaching music and just 3 indicating they did teach music to their class. One of the interviewees indicated that she estimated the time spent on music education was 6 hours in her graduate course:

You can't be expected to teach music if you don't have a musical background and you only have 6 hours of music ed[ucation] in your course. All we did was sing a few songs, shake some shakers and design some music listening activities. Sure we had readings, but I needed more of the hands on experiences to build my confidence and skills.

The interview data from the current study specifically points to students wanting more “hands on” musical experiences in their teacher training, because “if you haven't done it yourself, how can you possibly teach it?”

Previous research has revealed that preservice teachers believe not enough time is devoted to music education in teacher training (Hallam et al., 2009; Russell-Bowie, 2009). In the current study, when asked if they believed the amount of time devoted to music education was sufficient in their course, only 9 indicated yes. Not unsurprisingly, these three respondents received either 31-40 hours of music education or 20-30 hours. 103 of the 112 (92%) respondents felt that the amount of time devoted to music education in their teacher education courses was insufficient. This included 21 of the 26 respondents who received 20-30 hours of music education in their course. 5 of those 21 were interviewees, which included two people with minimal music experience and one person with a music performance degree. The latter provided an interesting perspective on this issue:

Obviously I came to music ed[ucation] with a music skill set, so singing and playing instruments was not something I had to learn. But many of the people in class did, and I saw how difficult it was for the lecturer, spending so much time getting the class as a whole to just open their mouths and sing. I felt like I was wasting my time sitting through that, because so much time was spent just learning music from scratch. And I know I was not the only one who felt like this, there were others who felt it was wasting their time because they had musical backgrounds. I seriously wanted to get into the how and what you teach in music, which we got to, but later on. I really think that music ed[ucation] needs to be streamed at university.

This perspective highlights a significant issue for teacher educators in music education courses. That is, with such limited time in music education, how is this time best spent to accommodate students with wide ranging musical backgrounds? Clearly for some students basic music making is the starting point, but for people like the quoted interviewee, this is clearly not the most useful way for her to be learning about music education. As she suggests, “streaming” classes according to musical backgrounds is a possible solution to this issue.

When asked what aspects of music or music education that were not sufficiently addressed or not addressed at all in their teacher education courses, a number of areas were identified (see table 2):

Table 2.

Aspects of music education not sufficiently addressed	Number of respondents
Developing resources	61
Integrating music	48
Music therapy	19
Putting on a school performance	15
Learning to play a musical instrument	4
Learning to read music	2

The development of resources included comments centred around sourcing and learning how to use books, kits, CDs, and developing lesson plans that could be used when teaching. For example,

With such limited time spent on music in my course I think there needs to be a bigger focus on this, giving us the resources, knowing how to use them, so when we get out there we've got something with us that's practical and useful, not just another academic reading that we used in an essay.

This perspective is certainly understandable, and is something that teacher educators might consider including in music education courses. Previous research has pointed to generalist teachers utilising such resources in their teaching. For example, Wiggins & Wiggins (2008) found that only 17 out of 300 generalist teachers did not use one of five popular music teaching kits available to them. Holden & Button (2006) found that 56% of non-specialist teachers relied on a “scheme or text” to teach music. The authors revealed that these resources were “quite prescriptive” and not properly interpreted by the teachers (p. 34). The latter could possibly be addressed if these resources are used as part of teacher education coursework in music.

The strong showing of integrating music was elaborated on by some respondents, who identified the need to integrate music because this was a strong focus of current curriculum (the Victorian Essential Learning Standards) and because of lack of time to “just teach a music lesson.” This emphasis on integration was also reflected in the number of teachers who were choosing to integrate music in their teaching, rather than teaching standalone music lessons. That is, of the 41 teachers who indicated they taught music to their class on a regular

basis, 29 integrated music (71%), 7 only taught standalone music lessons (17%), and 5 did both (12%). One interviewee reflected the views of most interviewees with the following comments:

We're taught from first year [of our university course] that learning for children has to be related to real life contexts if we want to engage children. So it makes sense to integrate music, because kids do that every day, the way they listen to music, the way they play music ... having children sitting down and singing in solfa just doesn't make any sense to me, so I'm sure it wouldn't to children either. It's just not relevant.

It is not surprising that integrating music is occurring when this is emphasized in curriculum documents and teachers simply do not have the time to teach "stand alone" music lessons. However, the way in which music is integrated in the classroom is a complex one, with previous research suggesting this is usually done in a cursory way, with music taking a subservient role to other curricular areas, frequently being used as entertainment (Bresler, 1993).

The focus on wanting to address music therapy was unexpected. However, a number of interviewees were passionate about this:

At university we read and read and read about the benefits of music for children – both academically but more important socially and emotionally. But we just didn't get into that at all, not on a practical level. But this year I've found that music is incredibly therapeutic for two boys in my class who have some challenging behavioural issues. I just find that when they go off I can use music to bring them down. Just letting them sit back and listen to music to calm down has been incredibly useful.

Another interviewee had observed another teacher in her school introduce a drumming circle as a Friday afternoon activity for a group of children with special needs: "These are children who all the teachers know, the ones always getting into trouble, but to see them in a circle, drumming together, all smiling, really getting into it ... that blew me away. I wanted to know how to do that."

6 of the interviewees indicated that they would have liked to have learnt about selecting material for and then rehearsing for a school performance that featured music.

It's an expectation that you do this, and I was surprised at how the parents really

judge you on this one performance. Fortunately, I had some very talented girls in my class who are into dancing and they basically did the choreography. But I wish I had those skills ... as this is something we all have to do, I think it should be covered at uni[versity].”

Another interviewee said,

The most stressful thing this year was having the class perform on school assembly. This is a *really* big thing in my school and I know some teachers spend a whole term preparing. I got through it, just, but the hardest thing was engaging the audience. That was something I wish we’d looked at [at university].

The stressful nature of having to stage a performance featuring music was touched on by all six interviewees. This is a problematic issue. If this is addressed in teacher education preparation as the interviewees wanted, the very real risk is that this kind of performance becomes the only music making that occurs in schools. This view of music education by generalist teachers has been clearly revealed in previous research (Bresler, 1993; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). However, preparing for and putting on a performance has the potential to open up further music making and music teaching opportunities for generalist teachers if such performance move beyond the singing of songs, often singing along with a CD, that Wiggins & Wiggins frequently observed.

When asked to identify the most useful aspects of the music education course content in their teacher education courses, the development of a resource folder or learning about and using specific music education resources dominated (see table 3). One respondent said,

We did our arts subject in second year [of a four year course], and there’s no opportunity on placement [teaching practicum] to teach music, so three years later I find I’ve got to teach music, and thankfully I dug out my resource folder and it was great, it brought back things we’d done in second year and I’ve used it a lot.

A number of interviewees commented that the format of the resource folder was important, in that it was not relevant to just have a reference to a song or music activity, but to have that song or music activity actually in the folder, “ready to use.” Other comments focusing on the usefulness of the resource folder indicated that a mix of resources and music teaching ideas from in class at university alongside independently sourced items was important because it drew on the “expertise of lecturers but also made us take the time to find and evaluate music resources.” Drawing on resources that had been used in class as part of teacher training again points to the value that these generalist teachers place on “hands on” music making experiences in their teacher training. However, also having them source their own resources

empowered these future teachers to seek out their own music education resources for their future music teaching.

Table 3.

Most useful aspects focusing on music to be drawn from teacher education	Number of respondents
Using and developing resources/resource folder	43
Learning how to teach music	18
Listening activities for children	12
How to teach music composition	4

The interviewees who indicated that learning about music listening activities in their course was useful tended to be teachers who were not regularly teaching music. They categorized their music teaching as being sporadic, with most of these lessons consisting of music listening activities. These interviewees also identified themselves as lacking confidence to teach music and having minimal music backgrounds. As one such interviewee said,

There was no way I was going to sing or teach singing because that makes me feel really uncomfortable, and I don't think I have the confidence to teach composition or play instruments, so really the only option left was listening and responding to music, to music I found out about at uni[versity].

Listening and responding to music activities therefore were viewed as activities acceptable for those who have minimal musical backgrounds. There is the potential, however, for these activities to be used as a springboard for other music activities that incorporate singing, playing instrument, and composing music.

Two interviewees indicated that learning how to teach composition was particularly useful to them. One was an experienced musician who was confident in teaching singing, playing instruments and facilitating listening and responding to music activities. However, this person had not even considered teaching composition to primary school aged children, "because I always thought this was something you only did at high school. So for me this was the most valuable part of my music course, I learnt lots of things about age appropriate composition tasks." Interestingly, the other interviewee who found this useful had no musical experience and indicated that prior to addressing music composition in her music education course had very low confidence about teaching music: "But when you see that when it comes to composition you can have children creating music in groups it doesn't matter if as the teacher

you don't have great musical skills, it's more about creating a space where children can *be* creative."

Teaching Music in the First Year of Teaching

When asked to identify the music activities that they have taught in their first year of teaching, singing dominated, with all 41 respondents who indicated they taught music providing singing activities (see table 4).

Table 4.

Music activities taught in first year of teaching	Number of responses
Singing	52 (87%)
Listening to music	28 (47%)
Responding to music through movement/dance	15 (25%)
Playing musical instruments	12 (20%)
Composing music	5 (8%)

Interviewees indicated that singing was privileged in their music education courses, with their music education lecturers justifying this by indicating that every child has a voice, and "you don't need a music room or other musical instruments to make music when you can sing." Not all interviewees agreed that singing should be the dominant music activity, because

not all kids like to sing. To force that on an entire class is wrong, so I haven't had all my kids singing this year. Some enjoy it, and I've let them go off and learn songs and then perform them, but for others, they don't want it.

This interviewee indicated that the only whole class music activities he taught were music listening activities. When asked about the relative low number of people incorporating musical instrument activities in their music teaching, the overwhelming response was lack of access to musical instruments. One interviewee said, "I wanted to do some percussion activities with my class but when I asked the music teacher if could borrow some from her room, she said no, she used them all the time. So that was that." Therefore factors beyond the control of the teacher impact on the choice of music activities conducted in the classroom.

The 41 teachers who indicated they taught music to their class on a regular basis and the 19 who sometimes teach music to their class identified the use of the following resources in their first year of teaching (see table 5):

Table 5.

Music resources used	Number of respondents
CDs (or other sound recordings)	55 (92%)
University materials/notes	21 (35%)
Musical instruments	14 (23%)
Books	14 (23%)
Music kits	12 (20%)

A number of reasons were given for using CDs (or other sound recordings), including availability (purchasing in store or online; downloading music from the internet), providing a model for student singing so that “I don’t have to sing the song alone to teach it”, and multiple uses of a CD: “you use it for singing, but also listening like identifying the musical elements like the different instruments, and you can have it on so that children can move to the music as well.” The university notes and materials that interviewees found most useful were those “practical teaching ideas”, or as one person put it, “the activities we’d done in class and experienced we had notes about so they were used to refresh my memory this year.” Of the musical instruments used, these were the guitar and keyboard for those who could play themselves, and for the other respondents, classroom percussion instruments. One interviewee had bought her own classroom percussion set and indicated that had made a “big difference in the amount of music I do with my preps, they love getting the instruments out.” All of the books and music kits used by the interviewees were items they had used during their music education course at university. Therefore music education courses in teacher training can play a significant role not only in exposing preservice teachers to quality music education resources but modelling how these resources can be used for authentic classroom music making experiences.

Access to resources to teach music was also identified as one of the circumstances that respondents indicated would facilitate the teaching of music in their classrooms (see table 6):

Table 6.

Circumstances that would facilitate teaching of music	Number of respondents
More time	85
Expertise/training	76
Access to resources	15
Space	11

The dominance of having more time to teach music refers to the crowded curriculum identified by many respondents, with 7 of the 85 indicating that literacy and numeracy

dominated their teaching, resulting in music rarely being taught or not being taught at all. Interviewees further reinforced this viewpoint:

About three quarters of the teaching I've done this year has been either literacy or numeracy blocks. That leaves hardly any time left for everything else that the VELS [The Victorian Essential Learning Standards] says we've got to teach. Music is just one part of the arts, too, so I've tried to give my children arts experiences this year, but because there's just not enough time, this has only happened every now and then.

These first year teachers clearly want more expertise in teaching music so that they can teach, but even if they do develop this expertise, finding the time to teach music, having access to appropriate resources, and finding the physical space to teach music are all further hurdles to teaching music:

We needed more time at uni[versity] on music, but you could say the same about other areas too like the rest of the arts and science and history too. I'd like to get some PD [professional development] in music, but realistically, that's not a priority in my school. It's all about literacy, numeracy, classroom management issues. And even if I did have those skills, when am I going to have the time to teach music regularly? I've got a really small classroom and I can just imagine what other teachers would say if we started making noise! I'd love to have my own space and instruments to do more music, but I really can't see that happening.

The reference to professional development is interesting. None of the 112 respondents had accessed any professional development focusing on music in their first year of teaching. Interviewees reinforced the perception that music is not a high school priority when it comes to professional development. However, two interviewees had sought out professional development in music, but found "it was for music teachers. I wanted something for me, a beginning teacher with not a lot of music experience. I couldn't find anything like that." Teacher educators in teacher training courses could help in highlighting where professional development in music education occur so that beginning teachers can access such professional development. In discussing the issue of inadequate time for music education in teacher training, Hallam et al. (2009) suggest that more professional development opportunities in music education be made available to beginning teachers. They also suggest that beginning teachers work with specialist music teachers to further their skills and abilities to teach music. Wiggins & Wiggins (2008) revealed that 61% of teachers in their study had access to a regional music advisor to assist in the planning and delivery of music education. Unfortunately, no such advisors exist in Melbourne, Victoria to support beginning teachers.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the current study, which will be discussed with reference to Australian and international literature focusing on music education and the generalist primary school teacher. It must be noted that the sample of survey respondents and interviewees are not necessarily representative of the entire population of first year generalist primary school teachers in Melbourne, Victoria. Rather, this was an example of convenience sampling, with those surveyed and interviewed being drawn from a group attending a professional development day at which the researcher was present. It should also be stressed that the results are self-reported by the respondents. Therefore it is very difficult to draw any conclusions about the actual quality of the music teaching that teachers reported. However, the results of this study clearly demonstrate that the teaching of music is not occurring in every primary classroom taught by first year teachers in this study. It could be argued that this is not necessarily an issue for concern if a school has a specialist music teacher who provides ongoing regular music education for all children in the school. However, this is clearly not the case in this study, with just 17% of the teachers indicating there is a specialist music teacher in their school. Despite this, only 37% of teachers teach music on a regular basis. This statistic, when placed alongside the interview data, points to beginning teachers' low confidence levels about teaching music resulting in these teachers choosing not to teach music on a regular basis. This is not surprising, considering the wide body of literature pointing to similar issues in confidence in preservice teacher training (see Gifford, 1993; Hallem et al., 2009, Hash, 2009; Jeanneret, 1997, Mills, 1989; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Stunell, 2010). As Stunell (2010) writes, "at least a minimal level of positive musical self-efficacy may be required before teachers can be expected to attempt teaching music" (p. 101). The issue of musical self-efficacy must be addressed in preservice teacher training.

Also of concern is the direction coming from school principals that if there is a music specialist in a school, the generalist classroom teacher should not be teaching any music. Such a directive surely ensures that children will not have the opportunity to "appreciate music as part of the whole curriculum" (Mills, 1989, p. 126), with a specialist music teacher teaching music as a separate subject in a separate room.

The teachers in this study clearly believed that prior musical experience impacted on their ability to teach music (110 of the 112 surveyed indicated this). The study confirmed previous international research that current musical engagement, particularly playing a musical instrument, impacts on the decision to teach music (Hallem et al., 2009; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). Hallam et al. found an explicit connection between preservice primary school teachers who play a musical instrument and confidence to teach music. That is, those preservice teachers with the highest levels of confidence in teaching music played one or more musical

instruments. In the current study, those interviewed who played a musical instrument not only expressed confidence in teaching music, but also demonstrated that they used their musical instrument in their music teaching, providing (self-reported) rich musical experiences for their children. Interestingly, the study also revealed that those teachers no longer playing an instrument, but who had learnt a musical instrument in high school, were also likely to be teaching music on a regular basis. Therefore sustained musical engagement, albeit in the past, can also impact on the decision to teach music.

The study has many implications concerning music education in teacher training courses at the university level. The study clearly demonstrated the amount of time devoted to music education in teacher training courses impacts on whether a teacher decides to teach music on a regular basis. That is, the more hours devoted to music education, the greater the likelihood that a teacher will teach music. The need for more time devoted to music education in teacher training courses has been highlighted previously in the Australian context (Hocking, 2009; Australian Government, 2005), the English context (Hallam et al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006), and internationally across Australia, Namibia, South Africa, and the USA (Russell-Bowie, 2009).

In Australia the National Review of School Music Education (2005) highlighted a trend towards merging music education into more generic arts education subjects, thus reducing the amount of time devoted to music education. This has been confirmed by Hocking (2009), who surveyed the music content in preservice primary education courses in Australia. What the interviews in the current study clearly demonstrated was that teachers want more time devoted to “hands on” music activities in their teacher education courses. The results of the study demonstrate that music teacher educators need to address misconceptions about music and music education that the respondents articulated, such as teaching music to lower primary school children being easier than teaching middle or upper primary music and that being able to play a musical instrument constitutes “being musical.” Such misconceptions point to some of the fundamental issues that music teacher educators face today. As Wiggins & Wiggins (2008) write, with insufficient contact time in preservice music teaching courses, these educators “must decide whether to spend their limited time developing the musical skills and understandings of their students ... or teaching them how to teach music” (pp. 11-12). The issues that interview respondents articulated in the current study regarding teaching lower primary music being “easier” than teaching upper primary and being able to play a musical instrument constituting being “musical” are issues that clearly fall into the former category articulated by Wiggins & Wiggins, that is developing preservice teachers’ understandings of their students in relation to music. However, if addressing such issues become the music teacher educator’s primary focus - to the detriment of developing musical skills and focusing on teaching how to teach music – preservice generalist teachers are likely to emerge from their teacher education courses unprepared to teach music.

There are a number of other issues that music teacher educators might address based on the results of this study. These include finding the best way to conduct music education classes with a broad range of musical abilities and experiences that students bring to class (i.e., possibly streaming classes into music ability/experience groups), focusing more on music composition, using listening and responding to music activities for those preservice teachers with minimal music backgrounds as a springboard for other music activities incorporating singing, playing instruments, and composing music, learning how to effectively use commercially available resources such as CDs, kits and text books to teach music, addressing music therapy as part of course content, having preservice teachers develop music education resource folders which can be used once they begin teaching, and exploring how to integrate music authentically across the curriculum. The latter is a key issue for generalist primary teachers, who view music as being something that they want to use to at least supplement other curricular areas (Saunders & Baker, 1991). The need to explicitly address how music can be integrated in an authentic way, where musical knowledges and music teaching are also taught, was highlighted in a study by Berke & Colwell (2004) that focused on preservice elementary teachers participating in a music course that addressed integrating music with reading and social studies. Based on the findings of his own study examining preservice teachers' attitudes toward music in the elementary classroom and examination of similar research studies, Hash (2009) suggests that preservice music courses for generalist teachers may be more effective if they focus on "integration rather than teaching music as a discipline" (p. 11). The rationale for such an approach is that the students in Hash's study – and in the other studies cited above – point to a valuing of integrating music prior to attending music education courses and after participating in such courses.

Some of the findings from the study are likely to be controversial for music teacher educators. For example, teachers indicated they wanted more time in their teacher education course devoted to preparing for school performances such as assembly and concert items. It could be argued that in doing this, teachers will then engage their students in music through preparation for such performances, but there is also the real danger that such preparation and performance becomes the sole music education that children will encounter with a teacher, with music being relegated to little more than entertainment (Bresler, 1993). Ultimately tertiary music education for preservice generalist teachers is problematic, as seen with the sheer number of factors articulated by first year generalist teachers in the current study. In having first year generalist teachers talk about their preservice music experiences and their current practice as teachers, this study begins to address the preservice teacher dilemma that Thompson (2009) articulates: "How do we balance meeting preservice teachers' current needs versus future needs?" (p. 2). That is, preservice teachers clearly have a diverse range of needs when it comes to music and music education which need to be addressed in the preservice context if these people are to teach music when they enter schools. However, focusing on the *future*

needs of these teachers is equally important. This was particularly clear in the current study when teachers spoke about the barriers they faced when it came to teaching music in schools as first year teachers. The preservice music education experience should address these issues and explore ways that such barriers might be addressed. These barriers included the lack of time that generalist primary school teachers face to actually teach music in their classrooms. With 85 of the 112 respondents indicating this is an issue, the study revealed that it is not just music education courses as part of teacher training and prior musical experiences that impact on a teacher's decision to teach music. Rather, as was the case with those teachers who were instructed not to teach music by their school principal because there was a music specialist in the school, there are other factors at play, such as curricular imperatives that foreground the teaching of numeracy and literacy to the detriment of other curricular areas such as music, access to resources, physical space to teach music, and accessing relevant professional development in music education.

The teaching of music by generalist primary school teachers is clearly very challenging with a wide variety of factors that impact on the decision to teach music. The current study has uncovered these factors, which need to be addressed if the long-term inadequate state of music education in many Australian schools is to improve.

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