



## **Challenging constraints or constraining challenges: Initial teacher primary music education across the Tasman**

*New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, Volume 14, Issue 1, 50–68, 2017*

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Initial teacher educators seek to manage curriculum coverage within the time constraints of initial teacher education (ITE) courses. As a result, considered choices need to be made regarding content and pedagogical approaches based on what ITE educators deem to be valuable, memorable and transferrable. Using narrative methodology, two tertiary educators across the Tasman (the ocean that separates Australia and New Zealand) share their views about what they prioritise in their music education courses and how these choices are informed. Both authors face similar challenges, and share the view that the teaching of music goes far beyond simply entertainment. They uphold that music education provides a rich context to develop not only knowledge, skills and understandings about music itself, but also to address social, cultural, linguistic, cognitive and affective domains of learning, to name a few. This article looks at some of the ways the authors effectively support ITE students to address the music components of courses. While constraints of time in ITE programmes is not a new phenomenon, the intention of this article is to highlight the benefits of music education, and encourage other educators to critically reflect on choices made in their own teaching contexts under challenging constraints.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Initial teacher education (also known as pre-service education) has a long history in both Australia and New Zealand. Initial teacher education in this article refers to the period when a student acquires their teaching credentials in an education faculty in a University. For much of its history, Australia had a range of very diverse teacher training institutes. Educational changes instigated by Government political reforms in Australia in the late 1980s resulted, however, in a more unified national system of ITE, including the amalgamation of Colleges of Education with Universities (Aspland, 2006). New Zealand followed similar patterns of tertiary education reform. Until the 1990s, New Zealand teachers completed their initial teacher education in one of a small number of

specialist colleges of education. The deregulation of teacher education, the introduction of a competitive market, the changes in funding policies in the 1990s, and the shift to a greater focus on research saw all teachers' colleges eventually amalgamate with universities (Kane, 2005). These reforms in teacher education in both countries which drew neoliberal education and marketisation together with educational reform in the tertiary sector, have had a considerable impact on the context in which university academics and teacher educators work, and on the design of ITE programmes (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Kane, 2005). This included how music and arts education were to be considered, which is the focus of this article, situating itself in the discipline of Music as one of the performing Arts areas within the Bachelor of Education Primary in each of one New Zealand and one Australian university.

While this is only a small study, it can be argued that the status of music education in ITE programmes in both countries is heavily influenced by similar international university and ITE priorities, accreditation agencies and government policies. Second, one of the advantages of drawing on narrative theory is that it gives attention to consideration of dominance and resistance and provides a space for advocates such as the authors of this article. Before considering the subject of this article, it is useful to examine the status of the Arts curriculum for schooling, because one of the key roles of ITE programmes is to prepare teachers to deliver the various school curricula. The effectiveness of this preparation is, however, debatable.

## **THE ARTS CURRICULUM FOR SCHOOLING**

The Arts (Music, Dance, Drama and Visual Arts) in both countries, and Media Arts and Visual Communication Design in Australia, are core learning and teaching areas across both divides of the Tasman. Music is identified as a discrete discipline in both the state mandated national New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2007) and the Victorian Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum [VCAA], 2016). In both countries, the curriculum is the key reference underpinning the development of teaching and learning experiences in the Arts. In Australia, each State and Territory is responsible for its own curriculum, guided by two key documents: the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians (Department of Culture and the Arts, 2017), and the Shape of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2017a). The national curriculum design is led by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and provides a learning framework for Victorian Schools and teacher education programmes.

Both curricula strongly advocate for the inclusion of music education in the wider school curriculum. The unique nature of music is exemplified in statements such as "Music is a fundamental form of expression, both personal and cultural. Value is placed upon the musical heritages of New Zealand's diverse cultures" (MoE, 2007, p. 21). Similarly, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, in its rationale and aims of music in the curriculum, points out that through active music learning students will gain an "understanding of other times, places, cultures and contexts" that combines activities such as performing, composing and listening. These activities, developed sequentially, "enhance students' capacity to perceive and

understand music” as they significantly “impact on the cognitive, affective, motor, social and personal competencies of students” (VCAA, 2017a).

It is argued that music, along with the other arts, plays an essential role in society and in schools (Nunan, 2010). The Arts contribute to the “wider goal of developing creativity in our society and economy” (p. 8), and allow us to make sense of our rich and diverse world. The Arts provide expression to our imagination, they are unique in that they contribute to academic achievement, emotional, social and spiritual development, and may help us to have respect for self and for others (Ewing & Gibson, 2015; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Ware, 2014). The Arts involve the whole community and contribute to “each young person’s ability to perceive, imagine, create, think, feel, symbolise, communicate, understand and become confident and creative individuals” (Perso, Nutton, Fraser, Silburn, & Tait, 2011, p. 2). Without the Arts, we may not as easily be able to learn about various people, places, culture and diversity across time. Arts Education in schools develops students’ ability to reason, think and understand the world and its varied cultures. Arts in the curriculum offers unique and varied opportunities to respond, perform and create (ACARA, 2017b).

As authors, we firmly believe and argue that all children should be given the opportunity to explore, experience and engage in the Arts. The debate is centred around the nature and extent of this engagement. Arts education provides children with the opportunity to express their feelings, ideas, skills and experiences through language and gesture, (drama), movement (dance), sound (music), images (visual art and media). The Arts enable children to express and learn alternative ways of communicating with self and with others. Through Arts engagement, children use their imagination, develop sensitivity, take risks, and celebrate diversity in a positive and holistic environment that values their self-esteem. The Arts have long been associated with improving students’ reading, critical thinking, cognitive ability, verbal and mathematical skills (Hunter, 2005; Piscitelli, Renshaw, Dunn, & Hawke, 2004). Exclusion and/or undervaluing of the Arts in schools limits students’ learning experiences and marginalises opportunities to experience a holistic model of education (Adams, 2011; Caldwell & Vaughan, 2012). This discussion is relevant to ITE programmes and teacher education, to which we now turn.

## **THE ARTS/MUSIC CURRICULUM FOR ITE PROGRAMMES**

While universities in both countries have a degree of autonomy from external control, all ITE programmes are influenced by external accreditation agencies in the form of Teachers’ Councils. It is not clear what the impact of these accreditation agencies has on music education in ITEs, but it is clear these agencies tend to give a greater status to the teaching of mathematics and literacy in comparison to the Arts (Kane, 2005). Across Australia, state and territory accreditation authorities established federally run accreditation (Hocking, 2009). In 2009, the establishment of Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) provided direction for “policies in education” (Hocking, 2009, p. 9). In Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching is responsible for teacher accreditation and accreditation of teacher-training courses (VIT, 2017).

All providers of teacher education programmes in New Zealand must meet specific requirements set out and managed by the Education Council (formerly the Teachers' Council). Kane's (2005) critique of the governorship of the Teacher's Council over a decade ago is still relevant. While said to represent teachers, and funded by teachers' membership fees, currently the Minister of Education appoints all the members of the board, raising questions about precisely who the Council represents. Previous and current Ministers of Education have prioritised mathematics and literacy for schooling. This is reflected in the Council's emphasis on literacy and numeracy in terms of the curriculum areas in its accreditation process, which is understandable given its role as a state agency.

Across our two ITE institutions (one in New Zealand (University A), and one in Australia (University B) music education within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) courses is taught as a component within the Arts. At University A, students attend three to five music sessions totalling between six to ten hours over three years. In the third-year programme, students have the opportunity to select a full course of music education. At University B, students attend three music workshops in their second year, totalling six hours. In their fourth year, students have the option to select music as a focus study (eleven weeks of three hours). In this article, the focus is on the first Arts education module/unit within the degree programmes. Within this short time-frame, it is expected that music modules in both institutions address the teaching and learning of music for ages five to twelve years.

Within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) courses, the time allocated for music is shared with other Arts areas leaving most ITE graduates with rather limited knowledge, skills and understanding to integrate music education in their future classrooms as generalist teachers. What is expected of graduating teachers is "far beyond what we require a specialist arts educator to deliver, and yet it is expected that a generalist...teacher can deliver the entirety of the arts curriculum" (Collins, 2016, p. 2).

The number of hours allocated to Arts education, particularly music education, in both Australia and New Zealand is negligible—only seventeen hours in teacher education courses (Hocking, 2008; Jeanneret & Swainston, 2012). A study by Hocking (2009) pointed out that "New South Wales is the only state to clearly set a minimum requirement for creative arts training: 36 hours for a graduate degree and 72 hours for an undergraduate degree" (p. 4). This is consistent with other international studies which have shown that the Arts are often marginalised in teacher education programmes (Garvis & Pendergast, 2012; Nompula, 2013).

This minimal contact time with ITE students necessitates careful selection of materials and content to encapsulate what the authors consider to be the essentials in music education. As tertiary music educators, we are challenged to make informed choices about how to address the enormity of preparing generalist students to teach music in the primary school, while retaining the integrity of music and its rightful place in the curriculum. Our situation is not novel, and we share our stories with many other music educators facing similar challenges.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this article, we draw on our own stories through personal narratives, which, we believe, is an effective way of reflecting in and on our teaching (Chase, 2007; Sandelowski, 1991; Schön, 1986). Narrative inquiry as a methodology is a way of understanding experience, simply stated, “narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). By employing narrative inquiry methodology as a way to understand our experience, we share our experience as a reflective story and a way of thinking (Bruce, Beuthin, Sheilds, Molzahn & Schick-Makaroff, 2016). According to Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013,) “narrative or story forms of representation are also used as ways of representing results or findings in various qualitative and quantitative methodologies and are increasingly seen as an effective approach to knowledge translation and knowledge mobilization” (p. 575). We find that time constraints challenge us to prioritise pertinent aspects of music education in our teaching. To enable readers to understand the choices we make, we uncover nuances about our experience through our narrative by expressing the inner thinking of our actions in relation to our situated context (Wang & Geale, 2015). We welcome dialogue across the Tasman to ascertain how best we can prepare our students for generalist primary teaching. We articulate teaching and learning concerns that are particular to us as tertiary music educators—advocacy, course content, preparing students to be culturally responsive, pedagogical concerns and students’ levels of confidence and competence.

## **ADVOCACY IN A CROWDED CURRICULUM**

This article alone cannot do justice to the myriad benefits of music education such as building self-esteem, developing cognitive skills, catering for aesthetics, or building social skills. While it goes without saying that the benefits of ‘music for music’s sake’ must also be acknowledged, we also acknowledge the benefits of other learning areas such as reading, writing and numeracy, as these are considered to be “the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life” (ACARA, 2011). While no-one would argue the necessity of learning numeracy and literacy skills in a modern world, the intense focus on these areas can create a narrow view of essential life skills that fails to acknowledge the value of a holistic and balanced education. This is best exemplified in the emphasis on standardised testing associated with achievement in numeracy and literacy in both New Zealand and Australia which, we believe, presents a delimited perspective of the globe and of student individualities. Standardised testing contributes to inequality regarding access to knowledge and evidence of knowledge (Au, 2009). Despite the alleged freedom in delivery offered by the New Zealand Curriculum, options are “curtailed by the assessment industry that seems to operate in a paradigm of easily measurable objectives” (Begg, 2006, p. 1) accentuated by the fact that schools have to report student progress against National Standards to the Ministry of Education. Mandatory reporting of student achievement, whether through national testing (Australian model) or through overall teacher judgements against standards (New Zealand model) encourages and discourages certain behaviours. This includes schools and states prioritising high stakes subjects where they become

more accountable—such as mathematics and literacy. This was exemplified by Eisner (2002):

...the field of education has predicated its practices on a platform of scientifically grounded knowledge...the arts...as sources of improved education practice are considered, at best, a fallback position, a court of last resort, something you retreat to when there is no science to provide guidance. (p. 4.)

In comparison, in both countries where music education is not required to produce overt measurable data for accountability purposes, its alleged value can be doubted or challenged (Regelski, 2005). It is well-recognised, however, that music promotes social, cultural, moral, spiritual and linguistic development and gives students opportunities for individual expression, serving as a “platform for creative thinking and practice” (Grigg, 2014, p. 249). At the international level, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) stated:

We are today clearly and strongly aware of the important influence of the creative spirit in shaping the human personality, bringing out the full potential of children, and adolescents and maintaining their emotional balance [...] music education will provide a comprehensive education and lead to the full development of the individual (2013).

The narrowing curriculum continues to disadvantage students who prefer to communicate in non-verbal ways. If teachers are comfortable with ‘more of the same’ and ‘one-size-fits-all’ in their approach to teaching and learning it would seem this then results in a certain uniformity of curriculum which may be deemed to cater well for national testing and standardisation of learning (Popkewitz & Gustafson, 2002). We consider that a music context provides other ways to enable students to construct and create meaning and to communicate their ideas. ‘Knowledge’ is not exclusive to the fields of numeracy and literacy.

Both authors have found that the defence of music’s rightful place in the curriculum is a constant, but necessary, battle. Within our ITE programmes, we, like other ITE music educators, are competing for time in a ‘crowded curriculum’. This phenomenon is not new. Uptis (2005) rightly pointed out, “it is a perennial and universal lament among artists, artist-teachers, and teachers alike, that there is not enough time to plan arts encounters for students” (p. 6). We also concur with Regelski (2005) who claimed, “the [distancing] of music and music education from life creates a legitimation crisis for music education. Failing to make a noteworthy musical difference for society, a politics of advocacy attempts to justify music education” (p. 1). Naturally, teachers advocate for particular learning areas based on their philosophical beliefs. Both authors consider music to be special, with distinct differences from other subjects, evident in the following narratives relating to the authors’ beliefs about the value of music education.

**Author 1:**

*I try to make a 'musical difference' in the lives of students during their short courses. One of the challenges is the need to be pragmatic about my own personal beliefs and experiences. I have had a privileged musical journey, and made the most of musical opportunities that came my way. I find that students tend to view musical ability as a 'have or have not' phenomenon. I tend to downplay the notion of 'talent' and focus more on 'opportunity and perseverance'. Generalist primary teachers are expected to teach a wide range of subjects, and it is unlikely that they will be experts in all of them. I often use mathematics as a starting point for conversations about how generalist teachers develop strategies for teaching subjects that are not personal strengths. My main goal is to help students find their own starting points. They all connect with music in different ways, and personal interests and preferences can act as a 'springboard' for further teaching and learning opportunities.*

**Author 2:**

*In my role as tertiary music educator, I actively "advocate for viable, sequential, enduring music programmes [courses] for all students" (National Association for Music Education, 2013) across all teacher education courses at my university. I continue to do so in my various roles such as Faculty Board, my music education submission on behalf of my University to the Parliament of Victoria (Parliament of Victoria, 2013) and through professional organisations (for example the Australian Society for Music Education). Though faced with institutional challenges when programmes are accredited, it is apparent that "Universities providing graduate and post-graduate teacher education are not willing to commit the resources to mandatory pre-service music education necessary to enable all (or any of) their graduates to teach the music curriculum" (The Music Trust, 2017). I am mindful when preparing and delivering the music units that all students have varying abilities as non-specialists. Over the years, I have found that students are nervous to sing, and they lack the confidence and competence to teach music. By fostering a safe, participatory communal environment where all students can participate in activities either as a whole class or in small groups enables them to build their confidence. Through playing, singing, moving, listening and creating, students develop knowledge, skills and understandings that they can apply to the primary classroom.*

Both authors are mindful of the range of abilities and levels of confidence our students bring to our courses. Music within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) does not require music auditions. The issue we are dealing with here is that students enter the course with varying abilities, understanding and respect for the subject. In a short space of time, we have to promote the importance of Arts Education (music education) in primary schools and equip students with some discipline and pedagogical knowledge of music teaching and learning to adequately deliver the music curriculum.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

Time constraints and emphasis on theoretical knowledge make selection of course content challenging. This is not due to a shortage of ideas—on the contrary, it is difficult to make ‘best choices’ from a plethora of possibilities. Music education involves a range of learning contexts, each with unique principles and practices – singing, moving, listening, playing, creating, reading and notating. Extrapolating key ideas from these very broad modes of music requires careful deliberation. Consideration needs to be given to the option of ‘depth versus breadth’ (Regelski, 2005)—a choice made by all educators in all learning areas. Both authors share ideas about experiences that they find most valuable, memorable and transferable in their music courses.

### **Author 1:**

*My favourite learning experience is a ‘newspaper rain piece’. Students organise themselves into two groups – one sitting in a circle, the other standing in another circle behind them with a piece of newspaper. Those on the floor close their eyes and listen while those with newspapers follow my lead while I scrunch, shake, crinkle the paper, and together, we create the sound of a rainstorm. The response from the listening group never ceases to fascinate me. When they open their eyes, there is always a reaction of “Wow – that was amazing!” The discussion that follows is always interesting – the rainpiece doesn’t involve steady beat or pitch, two elements of music that are central to most of the music that students listen to. So – is it music? This is a hypothetical question that gets students thinking, and leads us to the New Zealand Curriculum in which ‘Music’ is called ‘Music – Sound Arts’. I receive feedback from students who have tried this activity with children when they are in schools for practicum (placement), and have enjoyed success. I believe that this is attributed to the fact that students do not need to be able to sing in tune, play an instrument, or read music notation in order to facilitate this learning experience.*

### **Author 2:**

*One successful way of teaching and learning the ‘elements of music’ is through a soundscape. Initially, I model ‘how to’ compose a short piece of approximately 1-*



*2 minutes to the whole class using graphic notation. We use conventional classroom instruments and unconventional sounds (for example water in a bottle, hairdryer, car keys, electronic telephone ringtones etc.). Students then work in groups of six to eight to create their own soundscape and graphic score that relates to a 'topic' or 'descriptive piece' (for example Thunderstorm in the outback, The Beach, The playground etc.). This teaching and learning experience forms part of their assessment task as they demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding through performing, composing and listening to each other. This fun activity aligns with the Victorian Music Curriculum as it helps students develop "confidence to be creative, innovative, thoughtful, skillful and informed musicians". Through this group activity they gain "skills to listen, improvise, compose, interpret, perform, and respond with intent and purpose" (VCAA, 2017a).*

Both experiences described in these narratives epitomise the notion of 'experience to concept' where the elements of music are embedded in the activity. The elements of music (beat, rhythm, pitch, tempo, dynamics and tone colour) are central to musical understanding. The challenge is to build a solid foundation of understanding of the music elements in a short space of time. Students find the language technical and do not always have a very rich understanding of musical concepts, and because there is so much to cover in class in a little time, resource material is provided to help students consolidate their learning. It is hoped that they will be able to adapt this in their future classrooms. The music aspect within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) is not linked to a school placement, which makes it difficult for us to see them enact what they do in relation to the curriculum. Rather, we hope they can adopt some of the ideas such as 'newspaper rain piece' or 'soundscape' (described in the narratives above) when they go out to teach.

## **CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS**

The authors' shared belief that culturally diverse music presents students with a rich context for finding out about peoples' lives, language, customs and traditions, is apposite in the culturally diverse countries of New Zealand and Australia, with their minority indigenous populations. It is important, we suggest, that in our lecturing roles we foster diversity through music, which we seek to achieve by teaching in culturally responsive ways. Much literature has been written on teacher education programmes that include "knowledge and skill development on issues of diversity" (Ellerbrock, Cruz, Vásquez, & Howes, 2016, p. 226). In a recent study by Han et al. (2014) the authors identified that "the use of cultural referents in teaching bridges and explains the mainstream culture, while valuing and recognizing students' own cultures" (p. 291). We encourage and support the inclusion of music from migrant or minority groups in our courses, consistent with Robinson (2017), who approved of "music teacher preparation programs...[that]...incorporate more non-European-based music,

multicultural music, and world music ensembles” (p. 14). Our respective music programmes allow students to engage, explore and experience new and different cultures, languages and music as we prepare them for 21<sup>st</sup>-century classrooms. We hope we have developed our own identity and cultural competence in our music teaching, enabling us “to connect with students... [while] valuing and recognizing students’ own cultures” (Han et al., 2014, p. 291). Hence, the intercultural understandings necessary “to be agents of social change in their future classrooms as they prepare to face multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-faith classrooms” (Joseph & Trinick, 2016, p. 202) is described in the following narratives.

**Author 1:**

*Music is a wonderful context for acknowledging and celebrating similarities and differences. The inclusive nature of singing and music-making allows for individual contributions in group settings. I like to use songs in te reo Māori not only to address the University’s requirements to acknowledge the Treaty of Waitangi, but also to celebrate what is unique to New Zealand. Our students experience poi and rākau (sticks), which are used to add sound and movement to music. We also sing songs in other languages including Samoan, Cook Islands Māori and Tongan. Considering the short amount of time available (four to five sessions), I prioritise music that not only reflects diversity, but is also found in resources produced by our Ministry of Education. Through listening, singing, playing and moving, students gain understanding of culture, language and stories through song.*

**Author 2:**

*As a South African, I introduced African music into all my music teaching at Deakin University since 2001. Learning about other peoples and cultures is one of the four aims of the music curriculum in the Victorian Curriculum (see Victorian Curriculum, 2016). Since 2017, the new Victorian Curriculum stresses the need for students to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture (Victorian Curriculum, 2017b). Students found that learning something ‘new and different’ like that of African music places them all on the same level playing field as they gain a better understanding and appreciation of difference (Joseph, 2005; Joseph, 2009; Joseph, 2015). Through the singing of songs (for example work, action, harvest, religious and protest songs) and playing on traditional African instruments (djembe, dun dun, shekere, agogo, claves, marimbas, maracas and caxixi shakers), students build cross-cultural understandings of people, music and culture. They engage in conversations about the role and function of music in different societies and*

*have some understanding of the impact music can have on the lives of children in the classroom.*

As ITE educators in our particular contexts, these narratives describe how we face the challenge of preparing our students for multicultural classrooms. We find that music is an effective vehicle to teach about difference and diversity through songs. Our students will teach children from many different lands in their future classrooms, hence we encourage them to seek information from children, parents and members in the local community about music from a different country. In this way, they may gain an authentic teaching and learning experience and may invite parents to share their music, language and culture with the class, or ask the school to provide funding for artists in schools.

### **THE 'BEST' PEDAGOGY?**

As ITE educators, we are challenged to select best ways to inform our students about the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of teaching music. This is done through the authors' interpretations of 'best practice'. Our intention is to model teaching and learning strategies that demonstrate integrity and authenticity, but also model practices that are 'tangible' and accessible to those with limited music ability and little confidence. This involves experiential learning leading to understanding, offering pedagogical models that have significance for all areas of teaching and learning, one that goes "beyond the context of music education" (Vass & Deszpot, 2016, p. 1).

#### **Author 1:**

*The pedagogical practices that I model during class sessions are a balance of what I personally consider to be the best examples of effective pedagogy and practices that are likely to be emulated by other teachers who may be lacking confidence. For example, when I teach a song, I am more likely to use a recorded version of the song initially, then possibly follow up with a 'live' version involving guitar or ukulele. This is not to say that other accompanying instruments such as piano are not appropriate for singing, but I am mindful of the fact that not many students have had the opportunity to develop piano playing skills. In New Zealand, there is more chance that some teachers may play basic chords on guitar or ukulele. This is not a 'dumbing down' of the teaching of music—it is taking a pragmatic approach to generalist music education.*

#### **Author 2:**

*I always use the three-pronged approach of 'seeing, doing and hearing' as a way to build students' confidence and competence. In the first Primary Arts Education unit, students are introduced to the elements of music through singing, playing on classroom instruments, listening,*

*composing and moving. By modelling 'how to' teach during three music workshops (two hours per week), I offer content and pedagogical knowledge that can be readily adapted and adopted for the classroom. In addition, support material (resources, notes, videos and academic readings) is placed online for students to access. The hands-on practical approach of teaching provides students some understanding of how to include music in their future classrooms as generalist teachers. For example, the soundscape activity helps students gain critical and creative thinking skills, and they learn how to communicate in a group and make decisions. Through composing they learn how to teach the music elements in a fun and creative way thereby also gaining intercultural understandings.*

As mentioned earlier, the Bachelor of Education (Primary) units do not require auditions for entry into the programme, hence, most students do not play an instrument. Voice, then, becomes an easy and accessible instrument for students to use. Many students are, however, not confident to sing in front of a class, and feel they cannot sing in tune or in time. Hence, we encourage group singing to help build students' confidence and model how to use recorded music to teach songs. By also working through our respective curriculum documents, we work through some of the ways we can teach music in class as non-music specialist through singing, composing, listening, moving, and playing on classroom percussion instruments. Students draw on ideas from the in-class activities and resources provided to adopt and adapt for their future classrooms.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

One of the main challenges facing music ITE educators is the fact that many students have varying levels of experience and confidence. While we would like to assume that using voice and body is natural to us as humans, we recognise the lack of confidence and competency our students bring to the music room to be able to teach using voice and body. Literature links levels of confidence with teaching music in primary schools (Russell-Bowie, 2012; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008). Our narratives identify some ways we address these issues, and incorporate learning experiences that embody the music elements to increase students' understanding. On the other hand, we also encounter students who enter our courses with depth of experience, knowledge and qualifications in music. The challenge with these particular students is to find ways to translate their knowledge and skills into effective classroom practice, within the context of school curricula. If we could safely assume that the students entering our courses have sufficient knowledge of music, then effective music education could be delivered, even within limited contact time. In reality, this is not always the case (Collins, 2016).

The Bachelor of Education (primary) programmes across the two universities similarly aim to prepare pre-service teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, understandings and values that will help them contribute to the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, ethical, spiritual and aesthetic

development, and wellbeing of their learners. As future teachers, our students play an important role in building bridges in the class and across the wider community. Music is a viable vehicle to “open doors for pupils to enjoy their local and national heritage”, and, as future teachers, our students will be acting as “cultural gatekeepers” selecting and teaching music that fosters values of a “just and tolerant society” (Grigg, 2014, pp. 12-13). Our narratives described specific ways that we use music to celebrate cultural diversity in our courses.

As ITE music educators, we have to make the best of limited time and resources within the overcrowded curriculum in order to achieve what may be considered an “impossible task” (Collins, 2016, p. 1). This involves ‘bridging the gap’ for those students with little confidence and skills and extending those who are proficient in musical performance but lack pedagogical knowledge. We also need to undertake ongoing professional development to keep abreast of new ways of teaching and learning music to assist us to prepare our students for the 21st century classroom. International research shows that children richly gain socially, linguistically, culturally, and emotionally and more when engaged in music education.

Neoliberal policies in Australia and New Zealand have impacted on the school curriculum and served to focus the attention of principals and school leaders primarily on improving literacy and numeracy achievement, paring away the provision of a rich curriculum for all students, including the Arts. These policies and the crowded curriculum in ITE have resulted in a decline in the status of the Arts, which has been manifested in the reduced time allocated to teach ITE students. Eventually, when students graduate, this has implications for classroom practice. Teacher education provides the professional knowledge base to facilitate the development of an understanding of how students learn, and what and how they need to be taught (Berliner, 2001). There is further evidence that teachers who have a solid foundation both in pedagogy and subject matter are more effective teachers and have a positive influence on their students’ achievement (Rice, 2003).

It is hoped that the small window of opportunity we provide as ITE educators within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) will enable our students to embrace diversity in all its fullness as they explore and experience music teaching and learning in their future classrooms. There is clearly a disconnect between what teachers are expected to do, and ITE provision. We invite international dialogue in regards to how best we can address this imbalance, and effectively prepare our beginner teachers to act as curators in their future classrooms so that children in primary classrooms can creatively construct meaning when engaging in and with the sonic world.

Manuscript Submitted: March 17, 2017

Revised Manuscript Received: June 25, 2017

Revised Manuscript Accepted: August 3, 2017

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