Improving Generalist Teacher Education in the Arts

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Abstract: Australian pre-service music training of generalist teachers is conceptualised as being inadequate. For the past 30 years, numerous studies have reported problems in three main areas of generalist teacher Arts education; lack of time given to arts teacher education; lack of confidence of pre-service teachers engaging with the Arts; and the influence of past experience on pre-service teacher engagement with Arts education. Few studies have examined the actual curriculum and pedagogy taught within Arts teacher education. The content taught within Arts subjects is important for future teacher engagement with the Arts. This study hopes to fill this void by investigating content taught in generalist teacher Arts training at tertiary institutions. It will provide a content analysis of current Arts teacher education programs in Queensland that is available for generalist teachers. This paper will show that greater understanding of the content in Arts teacher education programs will ensure pre-service teachers have access to quality learning experiences. Through quality learning experiences, pre-service teachers can develop a life-long learning approach for music education in the classroom.

Keywords: Arts, Teacher Education, Experience

Introduction

AUSTRALIAN PRE-SERVICE MUSIC training of generalist teachers is conceptualised as being inadequate. For the past 30 years, numerous studies have reported problems in three main areas of generalist teacher Arts education; lack of time given to arts teacher education; lack of confidence of pre-service teachers engaging with the Arts; and the influence of past experience on pre-service teacher engagement with Arts education. Few studies have examined the actual curriculum and pedagogy taught within Arts teacher education. The content taught within Arts subjects is important for future teacher engagement with the Arts

This study hopes to fill this void by investigating arts education content taught in generalist teacher Arts training at tertiary institutions. It will provide a content analysis of current Arts teacher education programs in Queensland that is available for generalist teachers. This paper will show that greater understanding of the content in Arts teacher education programs will assist in the development of more quality assured programs and will ensure that pre-service teachers have access to quality learning experiences that are applicable to their general classroom practice. Through quality learning experiences, pre-service teachers can develop a life-long learning approach for music education in the classroom.

Literature

Within Australia, the arts were first recognised as an important key learning area in the *Hobart Declaration on Schooling* (1989). The *National Goals* statement provided broad

directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing educational outcomes for students. The establishment of a common set of goals for schools for state and territory governments (with their constitutional responsibility for schooling), provided a combined national interest of providing the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians in key subject areas identified (including the arts). For the first time in Australian educational history, the arts appeared as an agreed goal between states and territories. The arts were positioned as a key learning area for all students, a goal in the curriculum for all states and territories.

In 1999, the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (1999) provided an updated version of the *Hobart Declaration on Schooling* (1989). Again, the arts were considered an important part of the curriculum, acknowledged as a key learning area. Students were to attain "high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas and the interrelationships between them" (1999, p. 6). According to the document, arts education in schools was the responsibility of all states and territories as part of the quality of education for all young Australians.

In 2003, the Australia Council for the Arts initiated the *Education and the Arts Strategy 2004-2007* to set out to facilitate collaborations by "bringing together the arts sector, the education sector, government and community to find creative ways to enrich the education of children and young people" (2003, p. 2). The Council's vision was to create an environment where the arts were an integral part of the lifelong learning of every Australian. The strategy consisted of two priorities:

1. To articulate the role of the arts in enabling young people to thrive in a rapidly changing world (2003, p. 7); and
2. To facilitate collaborative effort between the arts and education sectors (2003, p. 8).

In 2005, the education and the arts *Backing our Creativity Symposium* was one example of the strategy. The symposium funded by the Australian Government and convened by the Australia Council for the Arts aimed to examine the critical role of creativity in education and to consider new ways to bridge the gaps between research, policy and practice in education and the arts in Australia.

The expectations towards arts education in the curriculum were again made public by the Australian Ministerial Council on Education Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEEYTA) releasing the *National Education and the Arts Statement* (2005). Building on from the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (1999), this statement was designed to foster a culture of creativity and innovation in Australian schools. It acknowledged that an education rich in the creative arts maximises opportunities for learners to engage with innovative thinkers and learners, emphasizing not only creativity and innovation, but also the values of broad cultural understandings and social harmony that the arts can engender. Three key principles underpinned the statement to drive change by laying a foundation for stronger co-ordination between educational institutions and also to guide arts and education leaders to ensure that the Australian education system helps children and young people to achieve. These were (MCEEYTA, 2005, p. 5):

- All children and young people should have a high quality arts education in every phase of learning;
- Creating partnerships strengthens community identity and local cultures; and
- Connecting schools with the arts and cultural sector enriches learning outcomes.

In particular, it acknowledged that arts experiences enhanced all phases of schooling. All students, irrespective of their location, socio-economic status or ability should have equal opportunities to participate in arts-rich schooling systems (MCEETYA, 2005). School-based arts experiences should be diverse, based on models of effective practice, and embedded from the early years through to graduation in order to unlock the creative potential of young people (MCEETYA, 2005). In order to foster this crucial change in arts education, the statement acknowledges the necessity to foster the skills and knowledge of teachers through pre-service training and professional development.

The updated *Education and the Arts Strategy 2009-2012* was launched in 2008 to build on from the outcomes of the previous strategy. The council was committed to strengthening the place of the creative arts across the school curriculum, and recognised the importance of arts education provisions for all Australian students. The strategy was designed to intersect with the *Cultural Engagement Framework* (2008), which was designed to implement authentic engagement across all arts practices throughout life. The 2009-2012 strategy consisted of four key priorities. These were (2008, p. 1):

1. Strengthen the relationships between state/territory arts and education jurisdictions and the Australia Council.
2. Pursue a position of leadership through influencing the policy directions of key education and the arts organisations.
3. Promote, recognise and publish Australian best-practice examples of education and the arts.
4. Design and develop a research program around education and the arts.

Priorities will be evaluated through measuring the goals, outcomes and outputs it has set for the life of this strategy. The report will be released in 2012.

In 2008, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) was also published, listing a number of disciplines that the Australian national curriculum and individual state curricula should incorporate. The declaration provided an updated declaration (see *Adelaide Declaration*, 1999). In this document, the arts again were considered important for student learning and development, forming part of a “world class curriculum” (2008, p. 12) for students. The curriculum would enable students to:

[u]nderstand [sic] the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life; and open up new ways of thinking. It will also support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline, which provides the foundation for inter-disciplinary approaches to innovation and complex problem-solving.

The language used in the Declaration took into account movements towards a National Curriculum for all of Australia. In 2008, the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)* was launched to develop a national curriculum from kindergarten to Year 12 in specified learning areas. The authority was also responsible for a national assess-

ment program aligned to the national curriculum that measures students' progress. Part of the assessment program also meant reporting on schools and broader national achievement (ACARA, 2009).

The position paper *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (National Curriculum Board, 2009) was released in 2009, explaining the importance of a national curriculum for Australia. The paper argued for a collective approach in "defining what all young Australian should learn and in creating and sustaining a world-class education system" (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 6). The authors of the paper suggested that (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 8):

The curriculum should make clear to teachers what is to be taught, and to students what they should learn and what achievement standards are expected of them. This means that curriculum documents will be explicit about knowledge, understanding and skills, and that they will provide a clear foundation for the development of a teaching program.

From this perspective, all students for the first time in Australian history will be taught the same curriculum. In phase two of the national curriculum roll out, development of the arts curriculum has commenced, alongside the launch of Geography and Language Other Than English (LOTE).

A position paper for the National arts curriculum is currently being drafted by an advisory board of teachers, school leaders, academics, members of professional associations and curriculum experts. It will be released mid 2010, after which development of the arts curriculum will commence. As yet, little is known about the shape and direction of this curriculum document. What has been proposed in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (2009) is that pedagogy for teaching the content curriculum will not be developed. Rather, teachers will have responsibility in constructing and delivering curriculum documents. So "while the national curriculum will make clear to teachers what has to be taught to students what they have to learn and what achievement standards are expected, classroom teachers are the people who will decide how best to organise learning for students" (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 15). For arts education, generalist teachers will be responsible for their own pedagogical approach in achieving the best learning outcomes.

Queensland Context

Within the context of this research in Queensland, the *Arts Essential Learning Statement*, as part of the *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reports (QCAR)* framework (2007) have been defined from years one to nine to provide increased consistency of what is taught across classrooms. Queensland state schools are obliged to follow these state curriculum documents. The framework defines the achievement standards that teachers need to reach for arts education for each year level, especially in the middle years for dance, drama, media, music and visual arts.

Focus of Study

This study will focus on current content in teacher education in Queensland, Australia for arts education. It will not explore specialist teacher training but generalist teacher training.

When teaching a primary school class, generalist teachers are considered to be capable in all key learning areas, including arts education, which is meant to include all five strands of the arts key learning area also. It must therefore be presumed that Knowledge about arts education is taught in teacher education programs to accommodate this policy requirement.

Methodology

The authors of the study conducted a content analysis of university websites in Queensland, Australia. Content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). An adapted version of Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran's (2003, p.171) 15 stages of content analysis (based within the constant comparative method) will be used as a guide to identify key themes and meanings.

Bachelor of Education programs were accessed to explore the amount of arts training future teacher receive. Coding for manifest content (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001) was used, acknowledging what was directly written on websites. From this analysis it was possible to see the amount of arts education in primary teacher education preparation. Findings are presented below.

Findings

Two types of frequency counts were conducted. Firstly, a content analysis was conducted to see if arts teacher education was available in all teacher education training courses. Findings are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Arts Teacher Education Courses in QLD

Degree	Time	Institution	Arts Subjects Covered
Bachelor of Education (Primary)	4 years	University of Queensland	1 introductory Arts course; integrated Arts and technology course
Bachelor of Education (Middle Years of Schooling)	4 years	University of Queensland	1 introductory Arts course; integrated Arts and technology course
Bachelor of Education (Primary)	4 years	Queensland University of Technology	1 course on teaching Dance and Drama, 1 course on teaching Music, Visual Arts and Media
Graduate Diploma (middle years)	1 year	Queensland University of Technology	1 course on integrated Arts and SOSE
Bachelor of Education (Primary)	4 years	University of Southern Queensland	1 course on the Arts Curriculum and Pedagogy

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Graduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching	1 year	University of Southern Queensland	No Arts courses during entire degree
Graduate Diploma in Education (primary)	1 year	University of the Sunshine Coast	No Arts courses during entire degree
Bachelor of Education (Primary)	4 years	University of the Sunshine Coast	1 course on the Arts and HPE
Bachelor of Education (Primary)	4 years	James Cook University	1 course on Arts education for primary school
Bachelor of Education (Middle Years)	4 years	James Cook University	1 course on Arts education for primary school
Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary)	1 year	James Cook University	All key learning areas taught together over two courses
Graduate Diploma in Education (Years 1-9)	1 year	James Cook University	1 course consisting of Arts, Health and Physical Education and Technology
Bachelor of Learning Management (Primary)	4 years	Central Queensland University	1 course on the Arts

Primary pre-service teacher education programs generally contain one or two semesters of arts based curriculum with the five strands being grouped together in a variety of ways and/or with other Key Learning areas. For example, Visual Arts, Media and Music might be integrated, or Dance and Drama. The focus is on theoretical knowledge linked with practical application. In many cases the programs attempt to align with the Queensland Studies Authority's past P-10 The Arts syllabus document and the current Essential Learning policy. There is a particular focus on arts integration and the way the subjects are used within the primary school as a vehicle for other KLA's. For example, the Arts and Science, technology and SOSE run together, or the Arts and Health and Physical Education are combined to have an interdisciplinary and community focus.

In the early childhood area there is a stronger focus on "the arts" as opposed to the disciplines as individual strands. It is curious to note the focus in tertiary institutions on the integrated approach which is in stark contrast to the current policy direction of the QSA which is advocating a much more individual discipline based approach to each of the eight KLA's. This is more so in the upper primary area and this more closely aligns the primary curriculum to the secondary curriculum model, and with the proposed national curriculum.

In some institutions there are music courses for general classroom teachers where the subject material aims to equip the generalist teacher with the musicianship skills to further support and enhance the existing classroom music program that is provided in Queensland

schools by a specialist music teacher. These courses are one semester in length and focus on repertoire for recorder and part songs. They are Kodally based in their methodology.

Some tertiary institutions have completely removed the primary specialist music component from their education courses and for secondary music training a Bachelor of Music degree must precede a teaching qualification. In some cases there is also a heavy focus on music of the popular youth culture and a more “modern” curriculum with a move away from a history and literature focus in the Western Music tradition. To quote one school secretary, “We are a modern place and about that, (the “that” referring to Bach, Beethoven and Mozart) maybe you should try the Conservatorium that sounds more like their thing”. There was a strong assurance that the courses offered met all of the QSA requirements.

In summary, the pre-service teacher education courses in Queensland’s tertiary institutions offer a myriad of courses ranging from specific music performance courses to arts subjects focused on KLA integration and unitised delivery. It appears no institution provides a pre-service teacher training course for the generalist classroom teacher in primary education that would equip these teachers with skills that encompass all of the five strands of the arts to any degree of competency. There is no repertoire that enables entry for general classroom teachers to the Western traditions in the arts in any of the five strands, nor is there a focus on arts from any non- Western traditions.

Conclusion

Beginning teachers enter the generalist classroom with Queensland teacher registration (where they are expected to have an understanding of the arts) and are expected to teach the arts as part of the *Essential Learnings* syllabus (QSA, 2007). Tensions become apparent between what teachers are supposed to do in curriculum and policy documents and what they are actually capable of in the arts from teacher education. Pre-service teachers need time to develop suitable techniques for arts integration during teacher education. A review of the content within generalist teacher education arts courses is needed to ensure that the needs of the future generalist teachers are met. While the Queensland College of Teachers suggests that beginning teachers require an understanding of the arts to receive teacher registration to work in Queensland, it is unclear what level of arts training the Queensland College of Teachers expects of beginning teachers. Further direction is necessary in determining what is suitable arts education content knowledge.

Improving the arts content knowledge of generalist teachers must also come from government direction. Within Queensland, there is a current focus on improving the content knowledge of pre-service teachers in literacy, numeracy and science (See Masters Report, 2009). Content knowledge in these areas will be tested during pre-service teacher education. Improving the quality of arts however is not mentioned. If the Queensland government is committed to providing quality education to all students, it must ensure that beginning teachers have adequate content knowledge in all the key learning areas, including the arts. The Queensland College of Teachers should also ensure that to qualify for teacher registration, generalist teachers require high standards of content knowledge in all areas.

A review of current arts practices in school curricula is recommended to policy makers and the government. While reviews were conducted in 2005 (*National Review of School Music Education*), 2008 (*National Review of Visual Education*), and 2009 (*National Audit of Music Discipline and Music Education Mandatory Content Within Pre-Service Generalist*

Primary Teacher Education Courses: A Report), few changes have been made to teacher education or arts education in schools. The authors of the review need to also investigate current student engagement with each of the arts disciplines and the influence of limited arts learning on the arts sector.

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About the Authors

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The main focus of my work at the University of Queensland has been the professional development of pre-service teachers. My research and teaching interests include teacher education and arts education, with a particular interest in music. I am currently undertaking a PhD study into the development of beginning teacher self-efficacy beliefs in arts and music education.

Rowena Riek

Rowena Riek has worked in arts education as a teacher for over 24 years. During this time, she has been involved in many projects in the performing arts in schools. She is currently undertaking a PhD at Griffith University, Mount Gravatt. Rowena is undertaking a longitudinal study exploring what is valued in education generally, then in the context of the Arts (music, dance, drama, visual arts and media). The research will examine how values are influenced by other over arching policy agendas.