

Dear Margaret,

Thank you for your comments. I found them very helpful.

I have attended to all the changes recommended by you, as indicated below.

Would you

1. re-format the foot notes to end notes throughout? ✓ I used 1,2,3 etc. Is that okay?
2. address those editorial issues raised ✓
3. either remove references in listing that are not in text or provide reference where appropriate ✓ Removed
4. provide a brief autobiographical statement as indicated. ✓

Best wishes,

Julie

Reconceptualising preservice teacher education courses for music teachers: The importance of pedagogical content knowledge and skills and professional knowledge and skills

This paper explores the perceptions of early-career music teachers regarding the effectiveness of their preservice preparation. Findings suggest that early-career music teachers' perceptions of effective preparation contrast with their experiences in preservice education, and that their perceptions of a practical course are not reflected in the design of courses in Queensland. Whilst early-career teachers recommend a course that focuses on pedagogical content knowledge and skills and professional knowledge and skills, many courses focus predominantly on general education knowledge and skills and music knowledge and skills. Analysis of interviews suggests that a course that integrates these traditionally separate areas of preservice education, as well as contextualising learning in terms of the realistic roles of music teachers, may prepare preservice teachers more effectively for their future roles.

Introduction

The quality of teaching occurring in schools can be directly attributed to the preservice teacher preparation that teachers receive (Carter, Carre, & Bennett, 1993; Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Temmerman, 1997). When they reach their first schools, teachers are typically confronted with a reality that differs from their expectations of teaching following their preservice preparation, which causes many to re-evaluate their preconceived notions about teaching (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). The discrepancies between teachers' expectations of school life and the realities of teaching often contribute to what is known as *praxisschock* (Mark, 1998) also referred to as praxis shock (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) or practice shock (Stokking, Leenders, De Jong, & Van Tartwijk, 2003). In addition, there is a high incidence of 'burnout' among music teachers in Australia and Queensland in particular (Kelly, 1999; Leong, 1996), which has been associated with music teachers leaving the profession early. It has been argued that attrition of music teachers can be addressed during preservice teacher education (Hancock, 2003; Stokking, Leenders, De Jong, & Van Tartwijk, 2003), and arguably in order to do this, it is first necessary to explore the effectiveness of existing preservice courses.¹

A search of the literature reveals that research in music education has been conducted in many areas relating to teacher education, including how preservice music teachers learn to be teachers (Yourn, 2000), perceived problems of beginning music teachers (DeLorenzo, 1992; Krueger, 2000; Richards & Killen, 1993), teachers' perceptions of their induction experiences (DeLorenzo, 1992; Conway 2002), the effectiveness of preservice courses in preparing primary and instrumental teachers to teach music (Conway, 2002; Temmerman, 1997), and the competencies required by beginning music teachers (Leong, 1996). In a recent Australian review of school music education, the improvement of music teacher education was argued to be essential in order to improve music education in schools (Pascoe *et al.*, 2005). However, despite the argument that music teachers are the key stakeholders in music education (Pascoe *et al.*, 2005), and that the needs of early-career music teachers should be considered when reconceptualising teacher education courses (Yourn, 2000), no research so far has specifically explored early-career classroom music teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their course in light of their preservice teacher education.²

In a bid to address this gap in the literature, an earlier study by Ballantyne and Packer (2004) reported that early-career music teachers in Queensland feel that their preparation left considerable room for improvement. Ballantyne and Packer's (2004) research quantitatively explored the effectiveness of four aspects of preservice courses –*pedagogical content knowledge and skills* (knowledge and skills pertaining specifically to the teaching of music in the classroom), *non-pedagogical professional knowledge and skills* (non-pedagogical or musical knowledge and skills required of music teachers), *music knowledge and skills*, and *general pedagogical knowledge and skills* (non-discipline specific pedagogical knowledge and skills).³ The perceived effectiveness of the four areas varied. In terms of improving teacher education courses, it was recommended that teacher education courses place greater emphasis on developing *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* and *professional knowledge and skills* required for teaching secondary classroom music and dealing with the practical aspects of running a music program. It was noted that less attention is needed in the area of *general pedagogical knowledge and skills*, as this area was already adequately covered (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004).

This paper further explores the issue of early-career music teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of their preservice preparation and how best they might be prepared for teaching classroom music.

Context for the research

This study was undertaken in Queensland, Australia, with early-career music teachers who had graduated from one of three preservice education programs (at the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University).⁴ Teacher education courses in Queensland are similar across universities because they all have to comply with the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration's (1999) guidelines which specify course requirements in terms of philosophies, goals, structure and content of programs, the teaching and learning approaches of the program and assessment of student work. At the time of the study, all teachers were required to attend university in a full-time capacity for at least four years which usually comprised two years of content studies and two years of general education studies.

This study focuses on the experiences of secondary classroom music teachers. In Australia (Queensland), their role is separate from that of instrumental teachers, although a third of

classroom teachers are also involved in teaching within the instrumental program (Ballantyne, 2005). Secondary classroom music teachers in Queensland, at the time of this study, taught music to students from Year 8 (age 12/13) to Year 12 (age 17/18). During the period when this study was being conducted, teachers of Senior Music (Years 11 and 12) were required to use the Queensland Senior Music Syllabus to inform their teaching, in order for students to graduate with an Overall Position (OP) in the State. In Years 8 to 10, some schools required the use of *The Arts 1-10 Syllabus* (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001), and others did not. Music as a subject tends to be taught in most Year 8 classrooms, and as an elective in Years 9 to 12.⁵

Method

This paper reports on the findings of part of a larger study that explored the effectiveness of music teacher education programs in Queensland, Australia. Results from the first stage of the study (a questionnaire administered to 136 early-career music teachers) provided detail on early-career music teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of teacher education programs in Queensland. The second stage of the study (reported here) involved interviews with fifteen early-career music teachers who had responded to the questionnaire seven months earlier. Participants represented varied teaching experiences and perceptions on the effectiveness of the course. Briefly, the interviewees comprised 11 females and 4 males, the majority of whom were either somewhat satisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with their preservice course and three who were very satisfied with their preservice course. They came from a variety of schools including both metropolitan and rural schools in State, Catholic, and non-Catholic Christian schools.

Interviews took place at the convenience of participants, across a wide variety of sites – most commonly at the school of the teacher (if in Metropolitan Brisbane), or by telephone interview (if interviewee lived outside Metropolitan Brisbane). All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed with participants' consent. Pseudonyms were used in the reporting of data.

The interview questions were developed following the analysis of the questionnaire data, and were utilised in a semi-structured manner, combining Patton's (2002) *interview guide approach*, and *standardized open-ended interview*. In practice, this meant that all interviewees were asked identical questions, but additional questions were also used to elaborate, probe and expand on particular topics where necessary. This flexibility ensured that important and salient topics were

not excluded from the interview, and also provided enough structure to ensure comparability of responses. The interview questions relevant to this paper were:

1. *What impact has your university course had on your experiences in your first few years at school?*
2. *What experiences have you had that have built on the knowledge and skills that you gained from your university course?*
3. *What experiences have you had that you were not well prepared for?*
Probe: How could your preservice help with that?
4. *Could you please describe your ideal teacher education preparation?*
5. *What recommendations do you have to improve the preservice courses?*

These questions were designed to encourage interviewees to reflect on their perceptions of the effectiveness of their preservice course experience. Interviews were analysed for themes across the research questions and trends identified in the analysis of the questionnaire data. The data were subjected to content analysis (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001) to identify themes, concepts and meaning (Burns, 2000). This is a summary of the steps taken in analysis:

1. The transcripts were read, and as themes emerged, they were noted and coded. Themes were continually compared with one another to ensure *internal homogeneity* and *external heterogeneity* (themes held together meaningfully, and differences between the themes were clear) (Cavana et al., 2001, p. 173). Adjustments were made as necessary. Some text was allocated to more than one category at this stage.
2. As the transcripts were re-read, “causes and consequences, conditions and interactions, strategies and processes” (Cavana et al., 2001, p. 174) were examined in order to see how categories interrelated and clustered together. Sub themes and new themes emerged at this stage.
3. Categories were re-read to ensure that each category included similar content, as well as excluded content that was not relevant (again checking for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity). Category names were adjusted to ensure that they clearly described the category.
4. Relationships across categories were examined and mapped in order to create a greater understanding of the research area.
5. As the report was written, themes and raw data were frequently revisited to check, question or support various arguments in the report.

It should be noted that the content analysis used in this study used coding for manifest content (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). Manifest content is that which is directly said in the interviews, whereas latent content is that which is implied. The quotes presented in this paper are representative of the majority of interviewees' responses, unless otherwise stated. Where generalisations are made, they only extend to the participants in this study.⁶

Results and discussion

When asked to comment on the impact of their preservice programs, most early-career music teachers indicated that they felt ill-prepared for the realities of teaching, reporting that "I just learnt on the job" (Claire), "I was not well prepared" (Susan, Joy, Grant, Carolyn, Jessica, Roy, Fiona, Claire) and "I honestly had no idea what's going on" (Lotte). Participants used these phrases, together with more direct statements such as "it was a shock" (Roy, Jessica), to refer to their feelings towards their early experiences as music teachers. It is interesting to note that these teachers tended to link the 'shock' that they experienced to the specific nature of *music teaching*.

Roy *Well because we weren't prepared for any of that at university, it was a shock when I got out, and I was working much harder than I thought that I would have to. And in my first couple of weeks as a teacher I went up to the principal and I said: "this is ridiculous! I'm doing as many classes as everybody else, and I'm taking the choir and the band and all of that, and I'm a first year teacher, and it is just ridiculous," because it was such a shock to me that all of this stuff fell to you, and it didn't fall to anyone else.*

When commenting on their preparation, teachers frequently hinted at the relationship between the 'shock' felt and the effectiveness of their preservice courses. In particular, the early-career music teachers interviewed had strong ideas about the effectiveness of the four areas of their courses (which reflected the course structure at all universities – incorporating music studies, music curriculum studies, general education studies and practicum). As a result, comments were grouped into the categories of *pedagogical content knowledge and skills*, *professional knowledge and skills*, *general pedagogical content knowledge and skills* and *music knowledge and skills*. Therefore, early-career music teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the course in these four categories were explored in order to illuminate areas where preservice courses may need to be reconceptualised.

Pedagogical content knowledge and skills

Pedagogical content knowledge and skills are that knowledge and those skills that apply specifically to teaching music within the secondary classroom. In this study, *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* includes such aspects within the classroom as knowledge of music teaching techniques, engaging students with music in a meaningful way, implementing the music curriculum effectively, assessing students' abilities in the various aspects of music, and explaining and demonstrating musical concepts.

The compartmentalisation or separation of the education and music subjects in the preservice degree was particularly commented on by the teachers. Their expressed need for the 'application' or 'contextualisation' of the education subjects to the music subjects and vice versa was noticeable. An example of this is provided in Roy's justification for feeling 'jaded' with his teacher education course:

Roy *I did think that so little of what they had taught me over those four years applied to what I was doing ... None of it was made music-specific, and I think when you're in the music classroom, there's a whole range of things that you need to consider ... If we were taught at university the things that we were taught, but they were put in a music context ... then that would solve a lot of those problems.*

The expressed disillusionment with the separation of these areas within preservice courses highlights the need for *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* and is consistent with previous research indicating that teachers have an affinity with their discipline area and find it almost impossible to separate content and pedagogy (Ramsey, 2000; Shulman & Sparks, 1992).

The separation of general education and music education subjects in teacher education courses caused difficulties for interviewees in relating their content studies (in music) directly back to what they had to teach in classrooms. This is seen in Joy's comments about what content she chooses to teach:

Joy *Just the content of what they gave us at uni. I can't... at this school anyway where I am now, I cannot use it. It is too hard to use.*

Joy reported being unable to teach the content that she found difficult at university, and couldn't see how to use it in the classroom. This is consistent with other studies where teachers of

geography were also found to manipulate the curriculum to marginalise those areas in which they were least confident (Rynne & Lambert, 1997). Arguably, if preservice courses commonly separate subject matter and pedagogy, then early-career music teachers may find it difficult to reconnect these two areas once teaching.

Interviewees had many suggestions as to how they believe subject matter and pedagogy should be linked. In her early-years of teaching, Claire admitted that she found herself ‘copying’ the teaching she had experienced as a student. She felt that if subject matter and pedagogy were linked more explicitly in her preservice course, she may have been able to develop her own teaching style:

Claire *I wish they'd ... just taken us and gone: "ok this is how you teach major scales" ... I guess in the education department we got taught vaguely how to teach stuff and in music department they taught us music skills but no one married the two ... and said: "This is how you can make it real for kids".*

Music curriculum subjects (of which there were two out of a total of 16 subjects in the preservice course) were frequently mentioned as those most likely to be able to provide the desired increase in *pedagogical content knowledge and skills*. Chen (1996) also found that classroom music education units and teaching practice were highly valued by music teachers. Rory spoke at length about a positive experience that he had in his music curriculum subject. It should be noted that the unit he is talking about continued for only one month, and he (as did others) felt that this sort of music education instruction should continue throughout the whole course:

Rory *There was a section of the course, which was specifically to do with music teaching rather than general subjects ... and we spent ... about a month or so, actually looking at this one particular way of approaching the teaching of music ... and did all the activities and so in a sequential way so we could see what the thinking was behind this ... And so ... when I then came here I knew okay, that's one solid way I could go about doing things. And I knew what the thinking was behind it and I'd had all the activities and so on that we'd done and we could jump in and straightaway do it ... That was a really solid blend of theory and practice and materials to use to start off with.*

In describing their ideal teacher education courses, early-career music teachers spoke about the specific areas of *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* that they would most like addressed. These included:

- increased exposure to resources for the music classroom;
- coursework that is consistent with the likely context of their first years of teaching;

- the development of a variety of pedagogical options for the classroom;
- the development of macro and micro planning specifically for the music classroom; and
- increased preparation for senior moderation and extension music.

These areas were of particular concern because they were seen to be integral to being an effective music teacher, and the early-career music teachers interviewed felt ill-prepared in these areas following their preservice course. On the whole, the early-career music teachers in this study perceived *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* to be the area of most concern in the preservice course. The importance of this aspect of teacher education preparation was consistent with the findings from the questionnaire analysis.

Interview participants spoke about the need for the integration of both music and education subjects by suggesting that they felt unable to make links from the general music subjects and the general education subjects back to the music classroom. One way that this fragmentation of university subjects could be addressed is by encouraging a pedagogical and discipline-specific application of concepts in all subjects throughout the course (not only in the music curriculum subjects). In addition, resourcing, planning, syllabus familiarity and pedagogical skill development were particularly important for interviewees in their early years of teaching, and if these were addressed more effectively, the teachers interviewed in this study felt they might be better enabled to cope with the challenges of teaching music.

Professional knowledge and skills

Analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that early-career music teachers felt that *professional knowledge and skills* were covered least effectively in the preservice course. This category from the questionnaire included such aspects as organisation of extra-curricular music activities, legal issues, managing the music budget, coordination of staff, communication with the community, communication with colleagues, and communication with students and parents. *Professional knowledge and skills* were discussed extensively in the interviews, with many participants providing anecdotes revealing their unpreparedness for this aspect of their job. Janis describes her initial shock at the *professional knowledge and skills* expectations of a classroom music teacher at her first school:

Janis I guess [I went in] a bit naively and expect[ed] that all you got to do is classroom music, then you get to the other side when you get all the instrumental stuff, especially in the small schools. Running ensembles for the instrumental side of things, and organising newsletters or letters home to parents about the music ... I guess I just didn't expect [that there would be]... so much of it to do ...

Another example of the *professional knowledge and skills* required by a secondary classroom music teacher in the first few weeks of school is described by Rory:

Rory Within the first two weeks of the employment ... [I was] given the time of one and a half weeks to prepare three music camps of 170+ students with room allocations, organise ... the actual accommodation packages, money in, letters out. And exactly how do you structure a letter to what the school deems is necessary, and what do you need to include in these letters? ... At the same time, [I had] to take induction numbers and interview over 600 students for auditions for ensembles that need[ed] to be placed before camps went. Having ... no teacher-aide assistance, I [had] to organise and re-write work programs that needed to be out, and [was] told that they needed to be delivered to students by that next week as well. So structured overviews for a semester for grades 7 – 11 need[ed] to be in the hands of students within the 2nd week. So that seemed to be quite a task at that time to take on board while still getting used to the school.

This type of experience appears to be quite common in the early years of classroom music teachers, and reflects a philosophy that early-career teachers should be 'thrown in the deep end', to 'sink or swim', which is a common experience for teachers of all disciplines (McCormack & Thomas, 2003). These sorts of experiences seem to draw early-career teachers' attention to shortcomings in their preservice courses, particularly in the area of *professional knowledge and skills*.

Fiona Nowhere [in the preservice course] did they cover how to do a budget, how to write tests, how to mark, how to assess in a useful way, how to deal with colleagues ... It would have been more useful for us to learn [the] skills ... to deal with heavy workloads, how to deal with report writing, because that is often a heavy workload time ...

Early-career music teachers' abilities to deal with the expectations placed on them depend on both their preservice preparation and the effectiveness of their mentoring and induction experiences. However, it seems that none of the participants in the interviews felt well prepared for the high expectations associated with the *professional knowledge and skills* workload, and this needs attention in preservice courses.

Most comments in the category of *professional knowledge and skills* centred on classroom music teachers' involvement in the instrumental program and in particular, the need for skills relating to (a) budgeting and resourcing the instrumental program; (b) communicating with staff members and parents; and (c) organising and running concerts.

Early-career teachers' descriptions of their unpreparedness in dealing with the professional demands of teaching music suggest a relationship between professional knowledge and skills and early-career teachers' experiences of praxis shock. This is consistent with Kelly's (1999) study on 'burnout' in secondary school classroom music teachers in Queensland where it was argued that the extra-curricular program is one of the greatest stressors on music teachers in Queensland. In addition, Scheib (2003) argues that role conflict (evident in this case where classroom teachers are expected to excel both in the classroom and as instrumental teachers/coordinators) can create job dissatisfaction and occupational stress.

General pedagogical content knowledge and skills

General pedagogical content knowledge and skills refers to the part of the course that deals with the generic knowledge and skills to teach (regardless of discipline specialisation). Areas within this category include the knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of education purposes and values, ability to cater for student needs, ability to plan for effective learning, ability to organise the learning environment and the ability to utilise various instructional strategies. Analysis of the questionnaire data showed that *general pedagogical content knowledge and skills* were perceived to be both important and adequately addressed in the preservice courses.

It seems that when the future teachers' context is addressed explicitly, teachers find it easier to engage with the theory in a meaningful way. For instance, when teachers are able to distinguish how and where they can use (or adapt) general pedagogical knowledge to their context, they are more likely to find it useful. Roy reported frustration at the general education subjects, because he felt the content and skills covered were not applicable to the specific context of music education.

Roy

I know certainly in the final year of education when we had lectures and tutorials for general education courses, everyone in the general tutorial classes of about twenty hated the music people, because the musicians in the tutorials for any education subject, were always the ones that put up their hand and say: "well what about this?" Because it was never an issue for anyone else in the

room ... So I think that just shows me that what we are doing is completely different to what a lot of other education students are doing.

The opinion that music education students require training that is ‘completely different’ is likely to be related to the notion that music education is unique. The opinion that preservice music teachers may feel alienated in the general education subjects is also expressed by Susan:

Susan A lot of those subjects do seem to be focussed on your general classroom, or your primary classroom in particular, and I think that alienates a lot of people who are doing secondary subjects or specialist subjects. Perhaps it does need to be brought back to their context, whether that is in the psych classes or in their particular pedagogy classes ... Because if they were young and inexperienced like me, they can't see the links quite so easily. They need to see those links in the context of their particular subject.

Both Roy and Susan seem to have felt excluded in their preservice course due to their inability to apply the knowledge and skills from the general education subjects to the context of the music classroom. In addition the two areas of the preservice preparation that attracted a lot of comment (and which are part of the category of *general pedagogical content knowledge and skills*) were those that dealt with behaviour management, and those that dealt with educational psychology. These were generally seen to be important if they related explicitly to the music classroom. It seems that explicit linkage between *general pedagogical content knowledge and skills* and the music classroom context is necessary for early-career music teachers.

In summary, *general pedagogical content knowledge and skills* was perceived to be an area that varied in its value to early-career music teachers. Perhaps if general education subjects were approached in a way that allowed for the development of *pedagogical content knowledge and skills*, they would increase in their perceived importance and effectiveness. In particular, the contextualisation of the general education subjects was an issue that clearly emerged as requiring attention in the preservice courses.

Music knowledge and skills

Music knowledge and skills refer to the areas of the preservice course commonly covered in either a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Music Degree, prior to studies in education. This category includes such areas as performance skills, conducting skills, aural perception skills, composition skills and music history knowledge. The results of the questionnaire, in particular the Importance-Performance Analysis, revealed that all aspects of *music knowledge and skills* were not viewed as

equally important, nor were they covered equally well. In general, interviewees felt that a certain level of content knowledge was needed in order to be a successful music teacher.

Joy *There is a lot of preparation involved. You have to have a vast knowledge base over all styles of music. Anything to do with composition and layout and absolutely any facet of music from styles, composition, which piece to pick for a student. It is quite exhaustive, because they will come up with any question to ask you and you feel unprepared if you don't know the answers to that. So you do have to have a very wide knowledge base.*

The knowledge and skills required in the more advanced subjects, particularly the senior classroom music units seemed to cause the most concern for early-career music teachers.

Jessica *I never got to do the [subject - 'A history of Twentieth Century music'], whereas that's the one that's in the Senior Syllabus and is more important, so I sort of had an issue with that ... [It can] be a bit nerve wracking going into a school and not really knowing yourself what you're teaching ... I can see that knowing what you need to know is obviously going to help and kids can see through it, and if you're not confident about what you're teaching, they're going to just walk all over you.*

Antoinette *The content addressed in the music side of things has been very useful and still continues to be so ... knowing your music composers, knowing your periods, knowing your instrumentation, knowing how to compose a certain style. That is the important stuff, that's the core stuff that we have to impart on students.*

Those areas of the music course that went beyond what early-career music teachers would require in the classroom, or which early-career music teachers found difficult linking with their classroom practice were sometimes viewed as 'useless' and 'not practical'.

Colleen *I remember taking writing technique courses, and musicianship, and those sorts of things ... I hated those courses, because I knew that that wasn't the stuff I needed to be learning to be a classroom music teacher. And it still bugs me now that I wasted that time at uni, when I could have been doing other stuff.*

It seems that teachers' perceptions regarding the 'effectiveness' of *music knowledge and skills* is strongly related to the perceived usefulness of these knowledge and skills in the classroom. It is therefore unsurprising that some areas are viewed as 'ineffective', as the *music knowledge and skills* subjects studied were not designed specifically for music teachers - they are generalist in nature.

Claire *When we did music history subjects, or music writing technique subjects, all the education students were in with all the other music students, so the focus was not teaching us so that we could teach someone else, it was to teach us to improve our knowledge, our skills, that sort of thing.*

It nevertheless remains that the teachers interviewed wanted revision-style classes in their preservice courses, covering the basics of music to be used later on in their own classrooms. In particular, aural perception skills emerged as an area of most importance to early-career music teachers who responded to the questionnaires. This area was also perceived to be well addressed in the courses.

Claire *Definitely aural skills, number one, without a doubt. [At] the uni [I attended] that was a really big thing and I am very, very grateful that they did provide us with such intensive aural training and in fact if I could have done more, I think I would have, because it was just such an important thing, and it meant that when I was teaching the kids, I not only had improved those skills myself but I actually got taught how to teach aural in a meaningful way.*

When mentioning aural skills, many teachers referred to specific methods of teaching. This is interesting, in that the interviewees were once again linking their pedagogical practice to music content and skills.

Probably the most notable finding from the interviews regarding early-career music teachers' views on *music knowledge and skills* was that early-career music teachers seemed to mostly value the *music knowledge and skills* that they would be using for teaching. Early-career music teachers appear to view *music knowledge and skills* as necessary in order to be able to teach music. They felt that they should have more musical knowledge and skills than their students, but also required revision lessons on the topics that their students would be studying. It needs to be noted that it is impossible for any teacher education course to cover content that is applicable to every given context. Perhaps it is more important that teachers are given the skills to source appropriate content for their context.

Implications for teacher education

The first few years of teaching can be challenging for early-career teachers, and this can be addressed during preservice teacher education (Hancock, 2003; Stokking, Leenders, De Jong, & Van Tartwijk, 2003). By exploring early-career music teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their preservice courses, it has been possible to gain a greater understanding of the areas of importance to them, and those areas that are in need of improvement.

The early-career teachers in this study spoke of four areas relating to the structure of their course. This 'fragmented' view of teacher education seems to reflect existing teacher education programs (Ferry et al., 2004) which present both music and education theory in isolation from the context of *music teaching*. Despite the reality of fragmentation, the overwhelming finding from this study was that *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* and *professional knowledge and skills* are seen as very important to early-career music teachers, predominantly because these are the areas that are seen to be directly contextualised to their experiences as music teachers. A course that takes into account the needs of its stakeholders should therefore present pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills within the context of music education. This would enable early-career teachers to develop the ability to apply knowledge and skills learnt in all subjects to their future context as early-career secondary music teachers.

Another way to address the segmentation of the preservice course, and to enable preservice teachers to use *music knowledge and skills* and *general pedagogical content knowledge and skills*, is to ensure that preservice teacher education is integrated. An integrated course is one that helps students make links between theory and practice, between general education and music education as well as relating the knowledge presented in all their music discipline and education units to their future professional practice.

Integration and contextualisation can only occur when the structural design of the preservice course is reconceptualised, particularly in terms of the practicum and the sequence of preparation. It is suggested that practicum needs to be located throughout the course, coupled with reflective-style discussions that explicitly link current educational theory with the context into which music teachers will be operating in their early years (the music classroom). In practice, the areas of *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* and *professional knowledge and skills* could be used to bridge *music knowledge and skills* and *general education pedagogical knowledge and skills*. This should in turn highlight for future teachers the links existing between education and music, university and schools.

This study is limited in that it only considers the needs and perceptions of the early-career music teachers. Although they are arguably the major stakeholders in the preservice program, these teachers' opinions should be considered alongside other stakeholders such as university lecturers, and experienced teachers. Future studies should consider:

- How best ‘contextualisation’ and ‘integration’ should be addressed;
- Other stakeholders’ perceptions of the effectiveness of teacher education courses and ways to improve these; and
- How early-career teachers from other discipline specialisations perceive the effectiveness of their teacher preparation.

Despite its limitations, this study has implications for the reconceptualisation of teacher education courses beyond the original context of the study. Previous studies indicated the importance of *pedagogical knowledge and skills* and *professional knowledge and skills* in an effective teacher education course. This study has shown that when discussing their teacher education, music teachers see contextualisation and integration of these areas throughout the course as a way to improve the preservice courses. The findings provide an empirical basis for the planning and development of preservice music teacher education programs based on the needs and experiences of new graduates. Teacher education programs that address these needs will likely have a greater potential to prevent ‘burnout’ among early-career music teachers.

NOTE

This paper is based on the findings of a PhD study entitled the “Effectiveness of preservice music teacher education programs: Perceptions of early-career music teachers”.

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Julie Ballantyne is a lecturer in music and arts education at the University of Southern Queensland. She has taught classroom music to students at both Primary and Secondary school levels. Julie completed her PhD in music teacher education in 2005 and has published in the areas of early-career music teacher identities, praxis shock, early-career and pre-service music teachers' perceptions of course effectiveness, trends in teacher education, philosophical allegiances of early-career music teachers and subject choice of secondary school students.

¹ 'Preservice course' may also be referred to as a 'program'.

² For the purpose of this study, early-career teachers are those teachers in their first four years teaching in the classroom, following graduation from university.

³ The method employed was a questionnaire survey, where participants' ratings of importance and performance in relation to 24 items of music teacher knowledge and skills were analysed. The 24 items fell into four categories, which reflect the general design of preservice programs in Queensland *viz.*, incorporating music studies, music curriculum studies, general education studies and practicum. The categories were confirmed through the use of a principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation. For further details on this study, refer to Ballantyne and Packer (2004).

⁴ In the analysis of the questionnaire data, no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers from public, independent, Catholic and non-Catholic Christian schools were found. In addition, no statistically significant perceptions based on the university attended were found.

⁵ Information on the current curriculum requirements of music teachers can be found on the Queensland Studies Authority Website (www.qsa.qld.edu.au), however it should be noted that the senior syllabus referred to by participants in this study has been replaced in 2006.

⁶ Full copies of transcripts are available on request.