

## **Music Council of Australia Annual Assembly 2011 Briefing Paper**

### **PREPARING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM IN MUSIC**

Richard Letts

*This is an attempt to lay out a framework for the development of policy positions and advocacy strategies.*

#### **1. Provision of curricular materials to enable the curriculum to be taught.**

- While musically skilled teachers can be given the freedom to invent materials, it is a fantasy that unskilled teachers are capable of this and so sequenced materials, perhaps offering options that will suit teachers of varying informal backgrounds, should be available.
- Since there will now be a national market for such materials, it may be financially viable for commercial publishers to offer packages.
- The requirements of the basic curriculum must be met but also the 'extended' curriculum. It is unclear to me whether ACARA will provide an extended curriculum.
- MCA can assist in provision of materials via [musiceducation.edu.au](http://musiceducation.edu.au)

#### **2. The present situation with teacher provision**

- The wealthy independent schools have good, sometime superb, music programs
- I have no assessment of programs in Catholic schools but suspect that they are at about the level of government school programs.
- In state schools, at secondary level, all systems use music specialist teachers although not all secondary schools have them and by report there are shortages of qualified teachers to fill vacant positions.
- At primary level, music specialists are used in Qld and Tas, each generally serving more than one school; the classroom teacher is not required to be present during these music classes. (This is in part a budgetary issues.) In the other states, music teaching is the responsibility of the primary generalist classroom teachers. Since (see below) these teachers are mostly not trained sufficiently to deliver a music curriculum, a large percentage of schools, especially primary schools, have no music program. An MCA survey some years ago estimated that 77% of all government schools do not offer a sequential, developmental, continuous music curriculum as recommended by the National Review of School Music Education.
- A recent MCA study showed that on average, the amount of mandatory music instruction delivered to future primary school classroom teachers in the course of a four year undergraduate preservice degree program is 17 hours (out of a total of about 1250 contact hours), with a range of 0 to 54 hours. With this amount of training, it is implicit that they are expected to be able to deliver a music curriculum over years K to 6 or 7. For instance, in NSW, it is 'mandatory' that they do so.
- State Education Departments do not make it a condition of accreditation and employment that applicant teachers demonstrate the ability to deliver the music curriculum. Generally, as I understand it, they accept that if the applicant has the requisite university qualification, they have that ability. The universities are not meeting their responsibilities.

- MCA has another study: the musical training for preschool teachers and carers as part of their undergraduate degrees. The time devoted to music is similar to that for primary school teachers but the qualifications are even more random since, for instance, there is no agreed curriculum. Preschool is not included in the responsibility of the National Curriculum process.
- A major issue in the deliver of the National Curriculum is its competent delivery, and that has implications for teacher recruitment and training and indeed the possible models under which this might happen.

### **3. Primary school classroom teachers competent to teach five art forms?**

- Ministers of Education committed themselves, in the Melbourne Declaration, to education in the visual and performing arts. This has been translated in the charge to the National Curriculum for the construction of curricula in five art forms: dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts. In the design of the National Curriculum, all receive equal treatment. It is proposed that all five will be taught in every school.
- The practicalities have not been addressed. Implementation is not ACARA's responsibility. It does want to design deliverable curricula. But deliverable by whom? It has a dilemma: credible arts curricula could not be delivered by the present primary school teaching force. Does it write non-credible curricula or upgrade the teaching force? Obviously, it would want to produce good curricula and its consultation process applies great pressure for it to do so.
- The cheapest strategy to deliver the music curriculum would be to continue to make it the responsibility of the primary classroom teachers but to train them adequately to do the job, as used to happen a century ago. The extra cost comes during the training period but there is no extra delivery cost. If the class teacher is musically skilled, they can use music to assist in the teaching of other subjects. There are advantages. However, those arguments have been used in the past and the evidence-based outcome is that most primary schools do not teach music or teach it badly.
- Note also that a solution based on delivery by classroom generalists not only has to upgrade preservice training, but will need to provide a similar amount of inservice training to the existing teachers.
- But here is the biggest obstacle to that strategy. If the arts curriculum is to be delivered by primary classroom generalists, they will have to be competent to teach all five art forms. I do not believe that I could be trained to a level of competence in five art forms. Even despite many years as an interested and relatively educated consumer of all five. Could you?
- The teacher training institutions would have to increase their investment, not only by multiplying the time commitment to the arts they do teach by say 700% but also adding arts subjects they do not now offer.
- We have to come to grips with this before seeing a succession of failed experiments that discourage governments from offering the arts curricula.

#### ***Possible solutions to the competence of the teaching force:***

#### **4. Preschool**

- Preschool music is delivered by the preschool teacher. There is no cost of delivery if the teacher is trained.

- There is no clear requirement for adequate training nor does accreditation and employment depend on a demonstration of competency in music and music pedagogy for preschoolers.
- There effort therefore should go into ensuring adequate training and accreditation requirements. There is a Productivity Commission inquiry at the moment to which this case will be made.
- It would be conceivable that preschool music is taught by music specialists and that would have its merits.

#### **5. Use specialist music teachers to teach music at all levels including primary school**

- Concerning primary schools, this is financially feasible because it is the system in two states. It was the system in Queensland long before it became wealthy and Tasmania is still poor.
- It is the solution that seems generally preferred among knowledgeable teachers
- Specialist teachers' time would be divided among sufficient schools to give a full work load
- So that classroom teachers can give some follow-through from the specialist classes and also integrate music into the teaching of non-music subjects where useful, they should still receive preservice music training and they should work in class with the specialist teachers
- Specialist teachers can also offer school ensembles, perhaps out of class hours. If they do so, they should be reimbursed.
- This is a solution that would be implemented over the time it takes to train new teachers. Note that training time is needed also if the system continues to use classroom generalists.
- People would have to be recruited to these specialist positions. Apparently there are problems in finding people to fill even existing secondary school positions.
- In order to do so, consideration can be given to terms of employment that, for instance, encourage practising artists to take positions – e.g. terms that allow them to continue to practice their art, a benefit for all concerned. Others?
- There might be consideration also of administrative structures that are seen as attractive – e.g. the UK Music Service provides music teachers to schools and could build programs that give a sense of collegiality and innovation that a lot of music teachers feel are lacking in schools.

#### **6. Totally change the primary school system so that teachers specialise in one of a number of groups of subjects, as happens in Hong Kong.**

- The obstacle to this solution is that the entire primary school system would have to be re-cast. However, Hong Kong has managed it.
- Other subject areas complain that primary generalist teachers do not have necessary competencies – even mathematics competencies, even though maths is one of the two high priority subject areas. Primary school teachers are expected to be Renaissance men and women, expert to a reasonable level in English, maths, a number of sciences, history, geography, languages, physical education and soon, five art forms. How can we expect that?

- However, a solution in which teachers specialise in a number of subjects would improve subject competency and retain some sense of pastoral care – indeed, possibly enhance it, because children would not be subject to the predilections of only one teacher.

## **7. Train primary school generalists to competently deliver the music, and arts, curricula**

- The economy model so far as the states are concerned – minimal extra costs for delivery of the curriculum and the preservice training is someone else’s problem.
- However, the states have to fund inservice professional development. They probably will be doing this for all subjects, but with the academic subjects the training is in the new curriculum, not in basic skills. See next section.
- To return to the problem of all primary teachers learning 5 arts subjects:
  - I conjecture that it is not practicable
  - We do not want universities to be tempted to think that they can continue to offer the blancmange ‘creative arts’ subject, in which all art forms are combined
  - Perhaps teachers can specialise in two, or three at most, art forms, with a brief orientation to the others
  - Perhaps training institutions could do the same, if they are offering small programs, but that is a suggestion only
- In the schools, the different art forms can be taught by quasi-specialists, classroom teachers with particular specialties exchanging positions with other classroom teachers. If all teachers have at least one arts specialty, for instance the music teacher can visit the dance teacher’s class while the dance teacher visits the music teacher’s class. Every teacher is away from their class for four or five periods a week. That seems reasonable.
- Regional consultants should be employed for each arts subject, to back up the classroom teachers. They also could be given the responsibility for organising the inservice training.

## **8. Professional development**

- Most generalist teachers will not have received adequate preservice training in arts subjects. Therefore to deliver the National Curriculum, they will require post-service training.
- This must be mandatory and a requirement for continuing accreditation and employment, therefore it must be paid for by the state. It could be paid for by the Commonwealth and perhaps that is something the states could argue.
- MCA has organised delivery of PD via video-conferencing. With the advent of the NBN, this probably offers economies and also can deliver PD to regional and remote areas.
- Indeed, parts of the curriculum can be delivered online, which slightly relieves the pressure on under-trained generalists.
- It would be helpful to check what each state is doing to prepare for delivery of Tier 1 subjects. For instance, in SA clusters of schools share maths development and training.

- There are generalist teachers who have some musical background, but who are not skilled in musical pedagogy. Training and/or supporting these people could provide a workforce that we won't get in sufficient numbers from the tertiary sector in the time.

***Other issues:***

**9. Curricular innovation**

- The National Curriculum will be written in terms that offer latitude in how it is delivered. It will look to achieving outcomes for each one or two year period but the methods by which the outcomes are produced will be decided by teachers, schools or school systems.
- There are various innovatory programs being tested in Australia: the UK's Musical Futures, and whole-of-class instrumental learning; web-based programs as invented by e.g. Steven Dillon (QUT), el sistema, with a pilot project about to open near Altona, Vic.
- How can we encourage more innovation?

**10. Instrumental instruction**

- WA and SA offer instrumental instruction in programs using peripatetic teachers. In WA, parents pay a subsidised lesson fee and there is an instrument-hire scheme.
- At this time, it is not clear whether the National Curriculum will require instrumental instruction.
- The pilot whole-of-class instrumental instruction program in SA offers instruction by a specialist, assisted by the classroom teacher, to all fifth class students in the participating schools. By report, the program is very successful, with progress comparable to that of students receiving small-group instruction and high interest in progressing to a second year (and possible later years). Obviously, its success has economic consequences if instruction is to be offered to large numbers in succeeding years.
- Musical Futures also involves instrument learning, albeit self-directed. El sistema teaches large numbers of young students several times a week, although not, in the Victorian pilot, under school auspices.

**11. Regional conservatoria / community or municipal music schools**

- Ubiquitous in Europe.
- Provide instrumental and other instruction outside of school hours.
- In some countries they are only for the highly talented (school-aged, I think). In others, e.g. Sweden, they are open to all interested persons.
- All are highly subsidised, offering either free instruction or very cheap instruction
- They serve only a percentage of the population. For instance, from recollection, the Swedish system serves 14% of the population (though that would be a much higher percentage of the school-aged population). That is the highest percentage. In some cases, there are waiting lists, so these schools do not offer services to all but presumably, they serve most of the people who are interested enough to seek the instruction.

- I think this means that in most European countries, school music is classroom music, though e.g. in Finland, some schools also offer instrumental instruction etc. The municipal music schools do not replace school music, they supplement it.
- I suspect that in terms of service provided, they are an economical solution. They also can be the base for highly trained musicians who are not necessarily interested in working in schools, nor qualified for it.
- In Australia, 'municipal' music schools have a systematic place only in NSW. There are 17 'regional conservatoria' in regional centres – none in Sydney except possibly Penrith (not sure whether that is counted among them). They get about \$300,000 subsidy each from the State, and often their facilities are provided by the local council or the State. The subsidy suffices to pay for admin and backs up some teacher salaries; generally, they have to attract faculty members from the cities so ways have to be found to ensure their income. Their presence therefore enables a professional music cohort to build in the regions, with positive effects on local cultural life. They offer concerts, ensembles and so on, can provide a venue for touring artists, support faculty ensembles. They send regional students occasionally to undertake tertiary music study – almost unknown before they existed.
- However, the subsidy does not suffice to lower student fees. Market rates are charged. Therefore they serve only the more affluent. This is a failing that could be solved by the State.
- They need also to be available in the cities, especially the outer suburbs.
- In remote areas where the population is not large enough to sustain a music school, locally based private teachers could provide services and there could also be online interactive instruction.

## **12. Costs**

- I suggest that we should present some alternate scenarios
- It could be expected that we will be asked to give costs (or will be found wanting if we do not).
- Costs would be assigned to those who would pay. Since the National Curriculum is the Commonwealth's idea, and since it is easier to deal with one government than 8 governments or 24 systems, we could assign costs to the Commonwealth except where clearly inappropriate.
- I would think we need to find an expert person to estimate these costs. Can we find money to pay them?

## **13. Strategies for advocacy and implementation**

- I suggest that the alternatives be presented in a number of scenarios
- Each scenario needs to identify the appropriate targets for advocacy.
- We need to develop a schedule that takes into account real-world factors like deadlines for advocacy to change budgets or curricula.