

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

Objectives

The focus of the project was identified by the Research Committee of the Music Council of Australia as being to provide factual information about designated trends in the provision of school music education in Australia, with possible use of this information in a national campaign in support of music education in Australian schools by the Music Council of Australia. A series of eleven research questions was developed by the Research Committee.

Research Questions

The following research questions were identified by the Research Committee of the Music Council of Australia as being relevant to the aim and objectives of the project:

- 1 What are the numbers of primary and secondary schools in each of the three systems (Public [i.e. Government], Independent, Catholic)?
- 2 In each of these categories and at each of these levels, what are the total numbers of students?
- 3 In each of the categories, what are the numbers of specialist music teachers?
- 4 In each of the categories (public [i.e. government], independent, Catholic) and at each level (primary and secondary), what are the numbers of students receiving music instruction?
- 5 If possible, what is the breakdown of the number of music students by grade (year) level?
- 6 What is the number of students sitting for examinations or undertaking other forms of assessment in music subjects at the end of their secondary education or at an equivalent level of Vocational Education and Training?
- 7 In each system, what is the number of hours of music instruction offered in each year level?
- 8 Of those hours, how many are devoted to core (mandatory, where it exists) curriculum and how many to music electives?
- 9 In each system, how many hours of instruction/participation are devoted to extra-curricular music activities?
- 10 Compared to the previous period (i.e. a decade ago or a previous government or administration), are school music programs constrained or supported by: a) availability of trained music teachers, and b) adequacy of music facilities, equipment, teaching materials?
- 11 At tertiary level in each state, how many hours of instruction are provided in music/music pedagogy to students of primary school teaching?

Research Procedure

The project was scoped by Principal Investigator. State Investigators were appointed with reference to ASME State Chapter Councils. Guidelines were developed by Principal Investigator for State Investigators—including additional information on research questions and possible sources of data.

State reports were reviewed by ASME State Chapter Councils and submitted to Principal Investigator and, after review, any additional data required was identified.

When the final versions of the State Reports were received, the Principal Investigator undertook editing, formatting and compilation of the state data into chapters that addressed each of the eleven questions into a National Report. The National Report was then circulated for review to State Investigators, ASME State Chapter Councils and Project Reference Group for comment.

Findings and Key Issues

Number of Specialist Music Teachers in Schools

The data available in relation to the number of specialist teachers was unfortunately quite incomplete with the result that longitudinal data was available for only three states (Queensland, South Australia and Victoria). The situation regarding classroom music in the two states for which data was provided is slightly ambiguous. In Queensland, there has been a significant improvement in the teacher:student ratio in government schools—in 1980 the ratio was one teacher for every 2005 students whereas in 2002, the situation had improved significantly to one teacher for every 670 students. The findings in South Australia on the other hand show a slight deterioration in the teacher:student ratio in government schools from one teacher for every 249 students in 1992 to one teacher for every 327 students in 2002. However given, at worst, a teacher:student ratio of 1:327 in South Australia the situation is comparatively better in South Australia than it is in Queensland.

In relation to instrumental music teachers, data from each of the three states—Queensland, South Australia and Victoria—suggest an overall improvement in two states, Queensland (where there has been an improvement in the teacher:student ratio from 1:3179 in 1980 to 1:1343 in 2002) and Victoria (where there has also been an improvement from 1:1971 in 1995/95 to 1:1687 in 2002) and a slight deterioration in South Australia (from 1:1732 in 1989 to 1:1953 in 2002).

Number of Students taught Music in Schools

Although there is still insufficient data to identify any national trends, it is possible to summarise the situation in the states and territories as follows.

- In the Australian Capital Territory, classroom music is a compulsory subject in Year 7 in most government high schools and it has therefore been assumed that 100% of students in that year receive classroom music instruction.

- In New South Wales, it is mandated that all students attending primary schools should receive classroom music instruction and that, in addition, all students during the course of their Lower Secondary School years (most usually in years 7 to 8) should receive 100 indicative hours of music instruction in order to qualify for the NSW Board of Studies School Certificate by the end of their Year 10.
- In the Northern Territory, the available data suggest that approximately 25% of all students across all years (primary through to the end of secondary) received music instruction during 2002. The overall percentage of students receiving music instruction in those schools designated as primary schools is 53.66%, with the breakdown into categories being 30.02% of primary students in government schools, 49.55% in Catholic schools and 81.41 in Independent schools.
- In Queensland, the assumption is that all primary school students from P to Year 7 in government schools receive music instruction. The situation in Catholic and Independent schools is unclear because no statistical information was available.
- In South Australia, the percentage of students in government schools (accounting for both primary and secondary school enrolments) receiving music instruction during 1995 was 23.97 and during 1996 was 23.25. In government secondary schools in 1995, 19.88% of students were receiving music instruction whereas in 1998, the percentage had fallen to 17.27. These figures represent a slight decline in the percentage of students in South Australian government schools receiving music instruction.
- There was no statistics available for Tasmania although official sources estimate that all students in primary schools should be receiving musical instruction.
- In Victoria, the only available statistics are from the 1988 Ray Review and a 1995 survey undertaken by Lierse (1999b) that estimated that approximately 25% of all post-primary school students were receiving music instruction at that time. The situation remained virtually the same over the period 1988 to 1995.
- In Western Australia, there were no statistics available on which to form a view on the numbers of students receiving music instruction.

Although the evidence is purely anecdotal, the situation in Victoria with the introduction of the two versions of the Victorian *Curriculum and Standards Framework—The Arts* in 1995 and 2002 respectively, is that a somewhat more relaxed approach is taken in the CSF and in its interpretation particularly in primary schools. Students are either receiving regular instruction in the form of a systematic and sequential music curriculum from their generalist classroom teachers or an on-staff music specialist teacher, or alternatively if music is being taught at all, it is used as a form of pedagogy for teaching the current extra-musical classroom topic or theme rather than being directed to the teaching of the elements of music *per se*. It is also a fairly common practice for music classes to be taken by volunteer parents with some musical knowledge and skills, or by a local musician or outside music teacher during perhaps a regular fortnightly ‘withdrawal’ time when the classroom teacher is given time for preparation, marking or other non-classroom duties. The fact that only two strands, Visual Arts and ‘Performing Arts’—the latter of which may consist of one or more of the three performing arts (music, dance and/or drama)—are required

under the *Curriculum and Standards Framework II—The Arts* for Levels 1 to 3 (Prep to Year 4) means that music is no longer even nominally required to be taught in Victorian government primary schools. Although Music is then included in its own right as one of six arts strands for years 5 to 12, effectively the *CSF II* represents a significant loss of ground for Music at the lower and middle primary school levels in Victoria.

Given that there are currently trials being undertaken of other curriculum models—for example the Queensland *New Basics—Curriculum Organisers* (Education Queensland 2000), the integrity of music as a discrete curriculum area may well be under threat. The Queensland Curriculum Basics for instance has, as its principal objective, ‘managing the enormous increase in information resulting from globalisation and the rapid rate of change in the economic, social and cultural dimensions of our existence’. This curriculum is being trialled in thirty-eight schools for a four-year period from 2000 and has four areas of development, which are based on four key questions:

1. Life pathways and social futures
Who am I and where am I going?
2. Multiliteracies and communications media
How do I make sense of and communicate with the world?
3. Active citizenship
What are my rights and responsibilities in communities, cultures and economies?
4. Environments and technologies
How do I describe, analyse and shape the world around me?
(Education Queensland 2000)

Although there is presumably the possibility of including some music within this context, its traditional role as a discrete area of the curriculum appears to have been entirely lost. Such a radical approach to curriculum design and development could be the direction to be taken nationally in the future and may well mean that the number of students receiving formal music instruction could decrease markedly under any new curriculum regime.

Number of Students enrolling for Music Subject at Year 12 Level

The number of students undertaking Music subjects at Year 12 level may be viewed as one of the key indicators of the extent of music teaching in Australian secondary schools. Despite some gaps in the statistical data and some anomalies (such as in Queensland in 1995 and the large percentage in Tasmania in 1998), the following table indicates either a fairly consistent or a slight increase in the percentage of the Year 12 student population who undertake music subjects.

Table Number of students studying Music subjects at Year 12 in Australian States and Territories, 1988-2001

Year:	1988	1991	1992	1995	1998	2000	2001
ACT		6.89%					6.89%
NSW	6.40%	5.40%	5.50%	5.30%	5.90%	6.60%	7.10%
NT				3.38%	2.87%	5.56%	8.84%
QLD			5.66%	0.23%	5.84%	6.41%	6.38%
SA			3.56%				5.91%
TAS					12.58%	8.56%	9.43%
VIC			2.86%	3.48%	3.89%	4.50%	4.20%
WA			2.48%	2.65%	3.08%	3.27%	3.69%
Av. %		4.49					6.55

The situation in the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland has remained fairly constant over the past decade or so. Other states/territories, most notably the New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia have seen modest increases over the decade. The situation in Tasmania has fluctuated over the past five years but overall appears to have the largest proportion of student population undertaking music studies at its end-of-secondary-education examinations followed closely by New South Wales. It is significant that the number of end-of-secondary-education candidates in music subjects has, despite one or two exceptions, increased annually so that by 2001, the national average number of students taking music at year 12 was 6.55% compared with the comparable percentage from 1991/92 of 4.49.

Curriculum Status, Hours of Instruction and Type of Music Teaching in Schools

The situation varies considerably between states and territories. In some states/territories—the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, there is no weekly period of time prescribed or mandated for class/core music instruction at the primary level in government schools. In other states and territories, there are either recommended or prescribed minima or average of hours to be allocated for music instruction at primary level—in Northern Territory, it is assumed that music will be taught for an average of 1.25 per week, in Queensland for 1.5 hours per week and in Tasmania for between 30 and 60 minutes per week. In South Australia, while it is assumed that primary school students will receive at least one music lesson per week, this is not mandated and indeed some school principals are satisfied to consider choir time as representing classroom music instruction.

At secondary level, the only state to have mandated music studies is New South Wales where students must undertake a music subject with a minimum of 100 indicative hours in year 7, 8, 9 or 10 as part of the requirements for the New South Wales School Certificate. Other states assume that Music will be available as an elective from Years 7 and 8 through to Years 11 and/or 12 when Music may be taken as part of the end-of-secondary-education examinations. A notable feature of the music studies at the secondary level in Australia is the lack of uniformity in the expectations of education authorities regarding core music studies at secondary level

where subject specialist (rather than generalist) teachers are by far the norm.

The situation in Independent and Catholic schools is impossible to ascertain due to lack of data. However, in the situation at Years 11 and 12 where music subjects may be taken for end-of-secondary-education qualification, the same time allocations apply to students across all systems.

Hours available for Extra-Curricular Music Activities

Overall there was little statistical data and certainly no uniform data about the number of hours devoted to extra-curricular music activities in schools. The best that could be done by most State Investigators was to report on the range of school music extra-curricular activities and where possible to give an estimate of the number of hours. Depending on the type of school—primary or secondary—and the category of school—government, Independent or Catholic school—the range of activities and the time allocated to extra-curricula music activities varies widely. Where a structured extra-curricular primary school band program is in place—as in Tasmania—there are additional ensemble rehearsal requirements of between 60 and 90 minutes per week to the small group instrumental music lesson of between 30 and 60 minutes per week. Otherwise, extra-curricular music activities vary so much that it is impossible to make any reliable estimate of the number of hours allocated to such activities.

Availability of Trained Music Teachers and Adequacy of Music Education Facilities

The answers to question on these issues highlighted several important problem areas, not only in relation to issues of the supply of specialist music teachers and the adequacy of music facilities, and equipment, but also in relation to broader policy issues.

One of these issues is a long-standing one—namely the unrealistic expectation, particularly of government primary schools, that classroom music will be taught by generalist primary school teachers. In reality this does not occur as it should in several states—in New South Wales, to some extent at least in the Northern Territory and South Australia, and in Victoria. The chief problems associated with this issue are:

- There is a mismatch between the extent—in terms of time allocation and therefore of curriculum content—of music curriculum studies undertaken by prospective teachers in their pre-service teacher education courses and the expectations of education authorities and/or the school in relation to classroom music teaching;
- There is also a lack of teacher professional development opportunities particularly for primary school music teachers with many states adopting the policy of leaving the provision of in-service education to teacher professional associations;
- Related in part at least to the lack of teacher professional development is a decline in the availability of curriculum support staff; evidence was presented that Music Branch or similar curriculum support had been dispensed with and, although there have been some appointments of Arts Curriculum Officers

(such as in Western Australia), these appointments are often non-music specific;

- While there is a policy in place that classroom music teaching at the primary level should be undertaken by generalist teachers, the argument for the provision of musically-qualified teachers to ensure that music teaching takes place loses creditability;
- The frequently referred to ‘over-crowded curriculum’ at the primary school level which has seen the introduction of new curriculum areas such as mandatory LOTE or Information Technology has resulted in less time being available for class music teaching; in addition, the inclusion of five art forms (or strands) instead of the traditional two (Music and Visual Art) has resulted not only in a further decline in the available time for teaching music but has had repercussions for teacher education where many institutions have felt compelled to broaden the range of arts areas to their arts curriculum studies.

At the secondary level, schools—both non-government and government—appear to have higher staffing levels and better infrastructure in terms of teaching space and equipment as well as being better funded overall than the primary school sector. With one or two exceptions, the availability of qualified secondary music specialists does not appear to be a significant issue.

In some states, the funding of instrumental teaching still appears to be a problem, particularly at the primary school level.

Adequacy of Pre-Service Teacher Education in Music

Despite the limited data available, statistics from the ACT and New South Wales indicate a significant decline in the amount of music curriculum studies in the course of generalist primary teacher education. There is also evidence of a significant decline in South Australia as well. Reasons for this decline have already been outlined—an increasingly crowded primary school curriculum and the expansion of The Arts from Music and Visual Arts to five arts areas with a consequent decrease in time allocation for music curriculum studies. This situation is likely to be fairly uniform across all primary teacher education courses in Australia. The result is that generalist primary teaching graduates, unless they have undertaken elective music and/or music education units within their courses, are unlikely to be sufficiently competent or confident to teach music effectively to their classes.

The situation regarding the preparation of specialist secondary music teachers is somewhat more optimistic. There is evidence from Queensland and Victoria that there has been an overall increase—presumably meeting the demand for secondary specialist music teachers—in the number of secondary music education graduates. The implication here is that, despite the rhetoric included in primary curriculum framework documents in some states that music is an integral part of primary arts education, if music is not being effectively taught at the primary level because of a lack of skills and knowledge among generalist primary teachers and there is not adequate provision for music specialists in primary schools, there may be a shift towards music being taught solely at the secondary school level and becoming merely an extra-curricular offering in primary schools.

From a cognitive-developmental perspective, there is considerable evidence to suggest that music learning should take place from the Early Childhood Education levels if children are to receive an effective education in music. The current situation in Australia from the perspective of generalist primary teacher preparation is that, with such limited time allocations for music curriculum studies being presumably uniform across all Australian primary teacher education courses, there is little chance that primary teachers will be capable of implementing music curriculum in their classrooms.

Recommendations

One of the most important findings to emerge from the research is the fact that there is the lack of uniform policies and practices in relation to the collection of statistical data about music education at the state and territory level. Indeed, aside from statistics collected end-of-secondary-education assessment authorities (which have a statutory obligation to do so), for whatever reason, state and territory education departments either do not collect, or (as has been evident on some occasions) are unwilling to release, statistical state on music education. This has made the identification of trends at both state/territory and national levels almost impossible in most instances.

During the mid 1960s, Graham Bartle, then Senior Lecturer in School Music at the University of Melbourne, was commissioned by the Australian Council for Educational Research (with funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation) to undertake a nation-wide survey of music education that involved approximately 150 schools. The report of this research was subsequently published as *Music in Australian Schools* (ACER, 1968). Bartle's findings at that time were that music in primary schools at the time was patchy, depending on whether the class teacher had any interest or expertise in music, and that even though secondary school music was more accepted it was rarely offered beyond the year 8 level. Major recommendations included details for employing itinerant instrumental teachers in government schools who could help lay the foundation for further development of the subject in secondary schools by beginning instrumental training at the primary school level.

Despite some shortcomings in the present research study, it has nevertheless set a useful benchmark in relation to several aspects of music education policy and practice and with a more detailed examination of some of these issues, a replication study could prove most useful as a means of identifying trends in the overall pattern of development in music education in Australian schools.

The key recommendation from the current research is the need for a comprehensive national survey of school music education in Australia. The present research has been undertaken on a very limited budget and the scope of its research questions has necessarily been limited by the available funding. Having identified some of the current issues in music education and also the lack of available data—particularly longitudinal data—from government education authorities as well as the almost total lack of information from the Independent and Catholic school systems, a large-scale and adequately funded research project needs to be undertaken.

Accordingly, there is a need for the Music Council of Australia together with professional associations such as the Australian Society for Music Education and/or the Australian Association for Research in Music Education and with music industry groups such as the Australian Music Association, to form a strategic alliance with one or more university partners to prepare an application for an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant. The application should be for sufficient funding to allow for a comprehensive survey of a representative sample of Australian schools of all types—primary, secondary, senior secondary and other ‘mixed-age’ (such as there are in Northern Territory)—and in all categories—government, Independent and Catholic schools. Ideally, the study should also draw on statistics that may also be available from state/territory education departments that may not have been available for the present study. To this end, representation should also be made to national and/or peak bodies such as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, the Australian College of Educators, National Council of Independent Schools, the National Council of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, and the Australia Council to enlist their cooperation in locating data.