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Promoting socially just and inclusive music teacher education: Exploring perceptions of early-career teachers

Abstract

Teacher education plays a significant role in influencing generations of future teachers. This paper aims to explore the role of pre-service teacher education in promoting socially just and inclusive practices in music education. Six pre-service teachers were interviewed before graduating, and then again six months into their first year of teaching. The interviewees reflected on their understandings of what constitutes being inclusive in the music classroom and how these understandings have been influenced by their perceptions of both university and school experiences. This paper provides insights into the ways that teacher education programs might equip early-career teachers to engage in a variety of teaching practices that are socially just, within the music classroom.

Keywords

inclusion, music education, pre-service education, social justice

Introduction

Australia is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world (Howe, 1999). While Australian students are linguistically and culturally diverse, it is significant that the Australian teaching profession is overwhelmingly Anglo-Australian and of middle-class background with limited cross-cultural interaction (Allard & Santoro, 2006). In this way, Australian teachers are demographically quite similar to teachers in other Western countries (Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries, 2003). That is, while student populations are becoming increasingly diverse, bringing to classrooms

divergent racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic experiences (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Brown, 2004), the pre-service teacher population is becoming more homogeneous, primarily Caucasian and middle-class (Causey, Thomas & Armento, 2000).

In Australia, the students historically "at risk" are those from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB), rural and remote areas, low-socioeconomic status backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, as well as students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Much research, in Australia and elsewhere, has pointed to the failure of such students to achieve in relation to their Anglo, middle-class counterparts (Giroux, 2003; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Teese, Davies, Charlton & Polesel, 1995; Teese & Polesel, 2003). This inequity has largely been attributed to the failure of teachers to respond to the needs of these students in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways. As Allard and Santoro (2004, p. 2) argue, this is "no longer morally or socially acceptable" and it is crucial for teachers to be able to understand and relate to their students, regardless of their own cultural backgrounds. Teachers who know their students are more likely to be able to assist their students to succeed in school (Delpit, 1995), and research in Australia has shown that "apart from family background, it is good teachers who make the greatest difference to student outcomes from schooling" (Hayes, Mills, Christie & Lingard, 2006, p. 1).

Teachers are integral to making a difference in these times of increasing student diversity. Accordingly, we need to find ways in teacher education to improve "the school success of ethnically diverse students through culturally responsive teaching and for preparing teachers ... with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to do this" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Such a focus in teacher education encourages practices that can be defined as "inclusive." In this paper, teachers' understandings of inclusive practice are analysed in relation to three different perspectives on social justice evident in their accounts (Gale & Densmore, 2000). Broadly speaking, however, inclusive practices in the classroom are understood to be those that utilize pedagogies and curricula to equip all students with understandings that can empower them to improve their circumstances (Australian Schools Commission, 1995).

In Australia, teachers who become music specialists in the primary school require a minimum of 4 years university study, with at least 1 year engaged in education-related courses. It is during this period of study that future music teachers undertake

curriculum and pedagogy studies in music, alongside courses in general education (ranging from educational psychology to behaviour management to the sociology of education). Practicum is also a major component of any pre-service program undertaken in Australia. Students in Queensland (where this research took place) also study courses that address issues of diversity in the classroom. This paper aims to explore early-career teachers' perceptions of socially just and inclusive practices in the music classroom, while also providing insight into the ways that teacher education programs might inspire such practices in more effective ways.

Context of the research

This study followed six teachers 6 months after graduation from one of three pre-service education programs in Queensland, Australia. The Queensland College of Teachers specifies the philosophies, goals, structure and content of teacher education programs required in order for graduating teachers to qualify for teacher registration. Consequently, pre-service teacher education programs in Queensland universities share many similarities.

Outline of the study

Six pre-service teachers were interviewed after their final practicum; a few weeks before they finished their final semester of university study. These same six teachers were interviewed 6 months later, and asked to reflect on their responses from the first interview, as well as how their perspectives on being inclusive in the music classroom might have changed as a result of their experiences. Interviewees self-selected into the study as pre-service teachers, after students of that year cohort were asked by their respective lecturers to volunteer their time. None of the researchers had taught any of these students, to prevent any conflict of interest. Four interviewees were females and two were male. In their first semester after graduating, they were engaged in a variety of pursuits, including teaching in both primary and secondary schools as music specialists and general classroom teachers in both metropolitan and rural schools in private and public schooling systems. Some teachers were employed in more than one school, and one person was enrolled in a Masters degree whilst teaching part-time. Another participant was still completing her practicum. Most of the interviewees were engaged in musical pursuits outside the classroom, and their musical preferences

varied from classical to hip-hop and jazz. All interviewees self-identified as Anglo-Australian.

TABLE 1: Descriptive characteristics of interviewees[1]

Pseudonym	**University Attended**	**Sex**	**Age**	**Most recent degree**	**Musical Preferences**	**Description of work experience since finishing university**
Jess	University A	F	23	Bachelor of Education	Modern R & B	Has a contract at a small rural school, as well as teaching at 5 other smaller schools teaching music from Prep to Year 7.
Jo	University A	F	24	Bachelor of Education (Music)	Radio	Has contracts teaching music at two primary schools (moving towards permanency at one). One school has very high percentages of NESB students.
Toni	University B	M	22	Bachelor of Music/ Bachelor of Education	Alternative	Teaching music at a private school in Brisbane. Teaching a variety of grades between year two and year 10.
Charlie	University A	F	23	Bachelor of Education (Music)	Pop Rock	Multiple contracts as both music teacher and generalist teacher.
Max	University B	M	22	Bachelor of Music/ Bachelor	Choral Music	Private piano teaching, conducting a

[1] Please note: some descriptions of interviewees have been fictionalized to protect the identity of those involved.

				of Education		few choirs, and doing a Masters degree.
Sophia	University C	F	23	Graduate Diploma in Education	Soundtracks, folk music	Finishing off university – on final practicum. Teaching piano privately.

In the first round of interviews (just before students graduated), interviewees were asked questions concerning their perceptions of their course generally. Many of the students raised issues around inclusive practice, and this was further explored in the second round of interviews, where teachers were specifically asked the following questions:

- What sort of music/activities do you use to promote social inclusion?
- Has your view of using music for this purpose changed since you left university?
- What practices in teacher education will promote a socially inclusive teaching approach in music education?

Interviews were conducted by telephone and were semi-structured in nature. This relatively informal structure allowed for the thorough exploration of particular issues of relevance to interviewees within the general topic of inclusive practice. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, with the consent of participants. The two researchers read the transcripts independently, and then came together to discuss their interpretations of the data.

Interview data were subjected to content analysis to identify themes, concepts and meaning emerging from participants' discussions in interviews (Burns, 2000). Our intention was to be both deductive *and* inductive (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 1993) in the coding of the data. This enabled us to capitalise on what we already knew from experience as teachers and researchers in the area, but still remain open to the surprises the data contained. Indeed, Grenfell and James (1998) argue that it is impossible to approach the data with an open or blank mind. Our very choice of research topic, research techniques and interview questions are inevitably coloured by our prior understandings. Pseudonyms rather than participants' names are used in the reporting of the data and while the quotations included are representative of major

themes, attempts have been made to indicate alternative perspectives present in the data.

Whilst this study relies exclusively on teachers' perceptions, we do not necessarily see this as a weakness. Exploring teacher perspectives in educational research is useful because teachers can provide "personal practical knowledge ... a particular way of reconstructing the past and intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). Indeed, early-career teachers may not have considered their approach to inclusive practice and its relationship to their pre-service preparation prior to their involvement in interviews (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999). In this way, the investigation had the potential to promote critical reflection, which helps teachers to "modify and enhance their understanding of professional practice" (Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000).

Teachers' understandings of inclusive practice in the music classroom were analysed in relation to distributive, retributive and recognitive perspectives on social justice evident in their accounts (see Gale & Densmore, 2000). In educational contexts, a distributive approach to social justice assumes that all students have the same basic learning needs, and provides justification for a teacher taking steps to compensate students who are disadvantaged through their "lack" of skills or abilities. Giving additional attention to students whose needs are greater is justified by this deficit approach. A retributive approach recognises that individual students deserve and/or are entitled to different opportunities in accordance with their talents. Teachers who assume a retributive stance individualise their classroom practices. Distributive and retributive accounts of social justice tend to be concerned with students' abilities (or lack thereof) and only minimally with social processes and procedures that (re)produce those abilities. Recognitive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000), informed by the work of Young (1990) and Fraser (1995), includes a positive regard for social difference and the centrality of socially democratic processes in working towards its achievement. In brief, self-identity, self-respect, self-development, self-expression and self-determination are key conditions for recognitive justice. These three perspectives inform our analysis of the understandings of socially just and inclusive practices of participating teachers.

Music teachers' views and experiences of inclusive practice in the classroom

The early-career music teachers interviewed had various views on inclusive practice, irrespective of the courses they studied at university. One teacher, for example, described inclusion as involving "a variety of children from different backgrounds and cultures and skills and abilities" (Toni, 2nd interview). Another saw inclusion as "making everybody feel like they're a part of the group or a part of the classroom and achieving something" (Charlie, 2nd interview). A third teacher spoke of an inclusive classroom as one where everyone is:

> *participating in the learning process … no one is being shut out, no one is being … put on the side. So everyone has a fair and equal opportunity to participate and you have to engage them in that … So everyone's included in that learning.* (Sophia, 2nd interview)

Whilst some described inclusive practice predominantly as catering for multiple abilities in the classroom, others took a broader perspective, and incorporated understandings of cultural and social difference. Each of these perspectives is explored in turn.

Describing inclusive practices: A narrow focus

Inclusive practice, conceptualised by most interviewees, as including or involving all students, was mostly described in the context of the music classroom as relating to the nature of music education. "Whenever any other teacher is outside my classroom or any other music classroom … they are always shocked in a positive way to see how involved every single student is in what is happening in the music class" (Toni, 2nd interview).

It was most notable that *all* interviewees independently referred to the need to cater for the variety of musical abilities that students brought to their classrooms. As one teacher commented, "Because of the situation I'm in … and the school I'm at, [when I think of inclusive practice] I just tend to think of the different ability levels" (Jess, 2nd interview). The emphasis placed on this aspect of inclusion perhaps reflects the inherent discrepancies between the "haves" and the "have nots" (Ballantyne, 2001) in music education, where the prevalence of private tuition has a large impact on the variety of musical abilities in any one classroom.

> *[Being inclusive is] being fair to all kids, trying to cater for their different abilities … and just appreciate what they can contribute to the class.* (Jess, 2nd interview)
>
> *… music involves so many different mixed abilities in the classroom … and you have to somehow include everyone … So there are some students who can do things that other students can't … A student that's grade six piano is certainly not going to use the same piano piece as someone who's never played piano. So, I would give a harder piece to that [more able] person to challenge them, and an easier piece to the person who doesn't have that ability.* (Sophia, 2nd interview)

Jess, Charlie and Sophia all gave examples of inclusive practice that they had employed in performance lessons, during which they made sure that each child in the class was participating in the music-making, regardless of their level of skill:

> *I wrote an arrangement for Oh When the Saints, but for all different instruments, and so some of the instrument parts are quite simple, like … the triangle and the bass drum … whereas some of the other instruments are a little bit harder.* (Sophia, 2nd interview)
>
> *They don't all have to be on the one sort of instrument. It can be a more simplified instrument for some of the lower ability kids so they can still be involved and take part … [For example] you get the upper level kids to play a melody, you can get the lower level kids just to play the bass part, just to keep the beat, and it keeps them involved and they feel like they're accomplishing something as well.* (Jess, 2nd interview)
>
> *It could be you're looking at percussion instruments … and there might be some students who aren't that fantastic at using the percussion, but they can use another instrument and still feel just as important, just as included, as the people who are playing the xylophones.* (Charlie, 2nd interview)

This is arguably a permutation of a retributive view of social justice. Here, after classifying students' musical abilities, teachers adjust their use of repertoire in order to cater for the varying talents and skills of the students in their classroom. This suggests a belief that students deserve (and require) different tasks in order to be appropriately engaged.

Other descriptions of inclusive practice mentioned by interviewees encompassed catering for different learning styles, learning difficulties and learning disabilities. Whilst acknowledging different learning styles could be understood as a retributive approach, the way that these teachers articulate understandings of catering for students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities is perhaps more distributive in nature. This may be due to the praxis shock that teachers commonly experience (Ballantyne, 2007a; Mark, 1998; Stokking, Leenders, De Jong & Van Tartwijk, 2003) in their first few years in the classroom. Socialisation experiences in these years can result in teachers focussing on survival rather than on learning how to teach more effectively (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998), and the school environment becomes very important in determining their practice (Lampert & Ball, 1999; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000; Su, 1992). This is demonstrated clearly in the following statement by Jess, where she describes her experiences with children with special needs as being unexpectedly difficult:

> *[At] the [school] where I'm based … there's so many special needs kids … which I found really difficult at first ... I know I'm not great at including them all the time because you just forget about them because they're just quiet and they sit there and they do whatever you tell them to ... When I was a prac student watching [I thought] "That's easy enough" until you [are] actually put in the [position] where you have to deal with it every week, it's a bit more difficult.* (Jess, 2nd interview)

In an attempt to be inclusive in the music classroom, some teachers acknowledged their willingness to change their teaching style depending on the students they are teaching:

> *… one of my schools I've had to majorly change the way I teach because there's a lot of kids that are ESL and a lot of kids with behaviour problems … And I'm doing stuff that I've never done before … just to suit those kids … The ESL kids … probably can't understand half of the things that I'm saying so … [I use] written cards, or workbooks and stuff they can see, rather than just me telling them, to make it easier for them to understand it.* (Jo, 2nd interview)

Such discourses can hint at deficit constructions of students from non-mainstream cultures. Whilst these may be evident in the thinking of teachers, they suggest the need for the taken-for-granted beliefs that teachers hold about themselves and

"others" to be questioned, particularly as many of these teachers are located in dominant cultures and may view students who are different from themselves as problems to be managed (Allard & Santoro, 2006).

These retributive and distributive understandings of social justice[i] could be seen as narrow conceptualisations of what constitutes inclusive practice. Early-career music teachers appear to conceive of what it means to be inclusive somewhat narrowly. This was evidenced through recognition of the need to cater for mixed abilities, learning styles and learning difficulties and disabilities in compensatory and/or individualistic ways by supplying them with learning experiences that meet their (dominantly determined) needs. Such deficit approaches to inclusivity limit students' power to participate in decision-making processes and have the potential to alienate and re-emphasise existing inequalities in their classrooms. In the next section, we explore inclusive practices that could be characterised as broader in their approach and more closely aligned to a recognitive view of social justice.

Describing inclusive practices: A broader approach

Broader understandings of inclusive practice were also evident in the discourses of the teachers interviewed. Several teachers explicitly acknowledged the importance of catering for cultural and ethnic diversity in the classroom:

> *I've always tried to make myself conscious to be aware of other ethnicities … I'm from a white middle-class Anglo Saxon background but [I try] to be aware of other people's identities … and other people's backgrounds and certainly to include that in my classroom, not for inclusion sake but as a worthwhile component of [the] curriculum that I'm teaching.* (Toni, 1st interview)
>
> *I think you always need to be aware of the different groups who are in the class … You have to be aware of what repertoire you choose and that you're not offending anyone by choosing a particular repertoire and things. But you can also use people in your classroom to an advantage of seeing if they can source music from their own background that they would like to share with the class and you can use that as an educational tool.* (Max, 2nd interview)
>
> *Everyone has a different background; [there are] different races, different cultures, different genders [in the classroom] … So that's … one of the*

> *reasons why I like to focus on different musical styles and cultures … You might do hip-hop for some of the students who are into that, and then you might do African music, maybe, just so that the students who … have different backgrounds can feel that we embrace different backgrounds and different cultures.* (Sophia, 2nd interview)

While such comments can contribute to the "othering" of students who are different from themselves, there are also very real concerns expressed by teachers who believe it is important to foster self-respect in students. Such acknowledgement of the equal moral worth of students from different social groups through their self-identification is a key condition for recognitive justice.

Theoretically, decisions about curricula in the music classroom also provide opportunities for teachers to be inclusive, but some teachers struggle with how to enact this in their practice. One teacher in this study saw it as important to take responsibility for making the decisions about the styles of music that are appropriate for their students. In referring to his program with grade 10 children (15 years old), he felt that the prevalence of rock music, music technology and an emphasis on listening activities in the middle school (with children aged 11-14), hindered his ability to develop a singing-based program. He viewed a vocally-based program as preferable to a guitar or technology based program (despite acknowledging the usefulness of this approach), and struggled with incorporating more contemporary styles of music into his curriculum.

> *If someone can find me a piece of appropriate pop music that would be great and by appropriate I mean vocal range, I mean with rhythms and I mean with melody. That would be great but I'm yet to find one … But as far as … singing and pulling musical concepts and elements from the repertoire it is very hard to do that with contemporary music in my opinion … in the past … [I have looked at] rock and popular and contemporary music to then compare and contrast that to music of others' cultures. There is a lot of what the kids think is quite groovy … Some of the Japanese electronic music that kids have brought in is just phenomenal and then [we] discuss the advances in music technology and the production of sound and sound sources and modifications and all those sorts of things.* (Toni, 2nd interview)

Similarly, another teacher articulated the importance of connecting work in the classroom to students' interests:

> *… some kids hate music so you've got to try and mould it into a way that would be fun for them … With the grade sevens … on one of my practicums, I did a unit on expression and dynamic[s] … all the technical elements … But I knew that with this grade … they wouldn't be able to focus too well, so I changed it and did a unit on pop and rock music, but they were still learning about those elements, just through popular music. So there was something there for them to be interested in … We listened to [Australian bands] John Butler Trio and Jet … a lot of [these bands] still use a lot of classical instruments, and still have those elements that we're looking for, but [this repertoire is] stuff they can relate to. So I don't just put on some Bach and they go "What's this?", and [let them] turn off … It was pretty successful, because … as soon as they heard it they were like "Oh cool" and then at least I had their attention … for them to analyse what instruments they were hearing, or pick out different things from the music … They had to write their own song, just a couple of verses and a chorus, in groups. And then they could [bring] their instruments if they learned any instruments, or just use class instruments to sing and perform their song. So they were kind of thinking they were one of these pop or rock groups. It was pretty fun.* (Jo, 2nd interview)

This is a good example of the way that schools, instead of being sites of "disjunction and dislocation" (Comber & Hill, 2000, p. 88), can relate curricula to students' worlds, and in doing so, make the classroom more inclusive. By ensuring that there are transparent links between the classroom and the world beyond, teachers can encourage and assist students to draw on their cultural experiences in order to succeed academically (Gale & Densmore, 2000). In re-evaluating their school curricula, these teachers are able to acknowledge and respond to the needs and interests of the communities they serve (Mills, 2007). This also demonstrates a further condition of recognitive justice by fostering students' opportunities for self-determination. They are participating in making decisions that directly affect them and what they learn. Such participation enables students to go beyond engaging in tasks determined by others, such as teachers.

Views on inclusive practice in teacher education

The teachers interviewed were asked about how teacher education could assist them to incorporate inclusive practices in their classroom. Clearly their understandings of inclusion (as discussed in previous sections) coloured their responses in this section. As found in other studies exploring early-career music teachers' perceptions of their pre-service courses (see, for example, Roulston, Legette & Womack, 2005), opinions regarding the effectiveness of various courses can be divided, and not all students are necessarily positive.

> *We did about four different courses that were labelled regarding diversity etc, none of them were particularly helpful, to be honest … it wasn't particularly relevant … When you've got your mind made up about who you are and who you want to be [a music teacher] … listening to information that doesn't relate to that can be difficult at times.* (Toni, 1st interview)

At the same time however, some teachers felt that these courses (as they had been experienced) were highly relevant:

> *Probably my favourite [subject] was … all about catering for students with diverse abilities and looking at kids that had visual impairments and hearing impairments and that sort of thing, and I found that really, really fascinating … [However] we didn't really look at it in [terms of] music and that probably would have been good.* (Charlie, 1st interview)
>
> *One subject we did was "supportive classroom environments," which was really good. It looked at inclusion … how to be equitable to different kids, how to involve them all … So that was quite helpful for me.* (Jess, 2nd interview)

Evident in their responses was a tendency to think about their preparation in terms of the music classroom.

> *The inclusion part [of our course] was more a subject that we did as our general classroom component … With the music component … what we talked about with inclusion was … using repertoire with recorder that everyone can at least achieve, so no-one's left out … Like … not singing things that are too unachievable for the kids, that sort of thing.* (Jo, 2nd interview)

In reflecting on their teacher education, it seems that interviewees position general education courses against music education, perhaps only seeing relevance in courses that specifically deal with "how to teach music." Most interviewees who were negative about their experiences indicated that they couldn't see the relevance of general courses dealing with inclusive practice, as they were not presented in the context of the music classroom. This is consistent with findings from other research (Roulston et al., 2005), which indicates that early-career teachers have varying views of their preparation, but tend to value courses that are hands-on and practical. In other studies, secondary music teachers were found to mostly value pedagogical content knowledge and skills in teacher education, and called for the need to integrate and contextualise teacher education (Ballantyne, 2006, 2007b). It seems that, in order for pre-service and in-service music teachers to see the relevance of courses on inclusion, these courses need to explicitly refer to music. It is almost as though music teachers view their teacher education courses through music-coloured lenses. This "colouring" of their views on course usefulness is something that needs to be addressed, in order for these courses to have an impact on future teaching practice.

Such a view of teacher education courses is clearly seen, for example, when, in the first interview, Max expressed the perception that general diversity courses "talked about diversity, but not actually the practical strategies" (Max, 1st interview). Six months after graduating he said:

> *I think more practical solutions need to be done … I think that uni should play a much more important role as far as involving pre-service teachers in giving them practical steps as opposed to just talking about things all the time.* (Max, 2nd interview)

Max's comments on these general courses are contrasted with his comments on the way music curriculum courses dealt with diversity and his experiences on practicum (in the music classroom). These were both viewed as valuable, and, consequently, had an impact on his practice:

> *I think uni … did have an influence on me as far as teaching me … of the "music for all" philosophy … I came out of a program of a private school [where in] grade 10 the people in your music class are all kids who have been doing music for 10 years and learning piano and … have got parents who can afford to do those sorts of things. I suppose uni made me reflect on my own upbringing … Also doing my practicum in a state school I saw*

> *a program there, a fantastic classroom music program, where you had lots of different kids who didn't have the same opportunities as me but achieving a really good result and a genuine love for music and that was purely thanks to the classroom music teacher who was at the school there.* (Max, 2nd interview)

What is interesting here is Max's recognition that privileged class status contributes to academic success. Research tells us that for many other teachers, their view from the centre of the hegemonic culture often leaves them "unable to see how those outside the dominant discourses may be marginalized through curricula, pedagogies and assessment practices that do not take into account different kinds of knowledge, or different approaches to learning or different values and beliefs" (Allard & Santoro, 2006, p. 117). It appears that pre-service teacher education (when presented in the context of the music classroom) may have helped Max to challenge deficit thinking and "naïve egalitarianism" which can cause teachers to "deny the privileges they may enjoy because of their skin colour and social class" (Causey et al., 2000, p. 34).

As students may take as few as two subjects in music curriculum, it is unfortunate that these courses are seen by early-career teachers as the location for all knowledge and skills acquisition. Indeed, it is not possible for such courses to provide all that is desired by early-career music teachers. The view that university courses should provide "practical strategies" for inclusion, specifically within the music classroom, does not acknowledge that there are no universal strategies for teaching children who are from culturally different backgrounds from their teachers or from the majority (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 494). However, we know that discussion of theory divorced from practical examples is also less than ideal in pre-service teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Max, after commenting on the lack of "practical" strategies to deal with diversity, also felt that the message of catering for diversity may have gone "too far:"

> *… as far as the diversity courses at uni … there were some good things … [but] generally I think they just go a bit too far … You've got to be so precious about different cultures … I think it's important that we don't swing the pendulum too far and be really wary about what we're teaching because of the different races in our classes and the different backgrounds … I think you've got to be aware of them, you've got to be flexible to a degree, but not to the point where you're affecting the rest of the*

> *classroom … I think the whole diversity thing can easily be blown out of proportion because I think at the end of the day as teachers we've got a job to teach the students and for the kids to learn and, as music teachers, to foster a love of music.* (Max, 2nd interview)

Indeed, one difficulty for teacher educators working in this area is the temptation for pre-service teachers to try to get on with the business of teaching music "practically" in preference to a deep engagement with issues of difference. Certainly, the notion that if a course does not relate specifically to the music classroom, it is irrelevant, seems to blinker students to the possibilities of such courses to their future practice. In this way, teachers arguably can end up "homogenising or silencing critical factors that can matter" (Allard & Santoro, 2004, p. 6). Alternatively, teacher education programs that engender dispositions that are more closely aligned with a recognitive view of social justice will address these issues and hopefully encourage teachers who "explore and reconsider their own assumptions, understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own, and construct pedagogy that takes these into account in locally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 495). This arguably will only be successful, however, if pre-service teachers believe in the value of such study.

Conclusion

We believe that the field of teacher education generally, and music teacher education specifically, needs to move beyond a fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity. While the typical response of teacher education programs to the growing diversity among students has been to haphazardly add courses – sometimes making them optional rather than compulsory – this approach to curriculum reform does not go far enough. Core courses need to embrace diversity in an authentic way, so that students can clearly see the value of such an approach, within the context of the courses they view as most relevant – in the case of music teachers, courses that allow them to consider teaching music.

Discourses of empowerment, diversity and equity have increasingly been included in teacher education courses in Australia. However, unless such commitments are actualised in the curricula and practices of teacher educators and their students, few gains will be made in terms of equity (Gore, 2001). Indeed, while teachers may be

strong in their discipline areas, Sogunro (2001) argues that some lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to successfully teach diverse student populations. Despite the best intentions of many of these highly committed music teachers, who genuinely seek to improve the academic and social outcomes for their students, some appear to have narrow understandings of what constitutes inclusive practice in this early stage of their career. If we are to take seriously the challenges of socially just and inclusive practice in music education, teacher education needs to find ways to encourage dispositions towards diversity in all pre-service teachers that are more closely aligned with a recognitive view of social justice.

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[i] Definitions of distributive, retributive and recognitive justice used in this study are provided at the end of the methodology section.