

Filling the Gaps: What Research is Needed to Assist with Music Education Advocacy in Australia¹

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Introduction

Postgraduate research studies (theses, research paper reports, etc.) represent the major source of research findings in music education in Australia when compared with other forms of research (such as ARC-funded research). Both the quality and quantum of postgraduate research clearly demonstrate that music education as an academic discipline has come of age. Indeed, it has reached a level of maturity that was unimagined fifty years ago. A database of postgraduate research studies in music education undertaken for academic awards at Australian universities and by Australians at overseas universities — the *Bibliography of Australian Music Education Research (BAMER)* — was established in 1989 and, since that time, has sought to maintain a publicly-accessible database that it is hoped will benefit postgraduate research students, research supervisors, professional researchers and the music education profession as a whole. Although there are now many databases such as *Trove* and the Musicological Society of Australia's *Thesis Register*, the BAMER database is the most comprehensive in that it not only includes bachelor honours, masters and doctoral level theses and dissertations held in university libraries, but also includes smaller research studies, such as research papers and other research reports undertaken in partial fulfilment of MEd, MMusEd, MMusSt and other degrees that are generally held only in departmental libraries or by the individual researchers concerned. The main source of data for BAMER is in the form of submissions from individual researchers of both completed and in-progress research studies, supplemented by data from other sources such as university library catalogues.

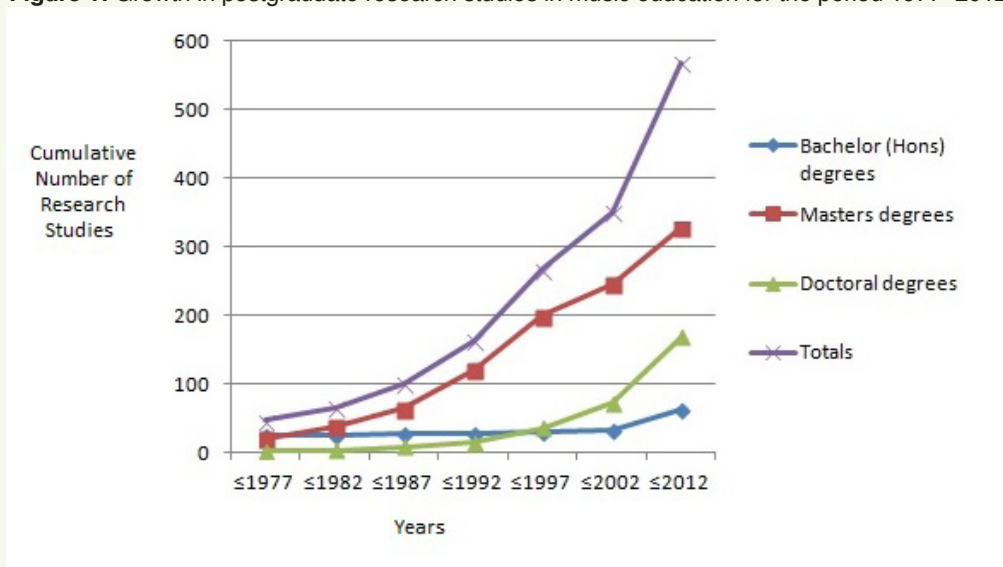
What was effectively a meta-analysis of music education research undertaken for academic awards at Australian universities and by Australians at overseas universities during the period 1936–1997 was first reported by Stevens (1999). In an extrapolation based on the projected successful completion of what were then in-progress theses for the following five years (1998–2002), Stevens identified a projected exponential growth in postgraduate student research studies over the twenty-five year period from 1977–2002 (Stevens 1999, 2000, Stevens and McPherson 2004). This applied particularly to doctoral research. A recent updating of the BAMER database from the earlier version (ending with 1997 data) to the current version (ending with 2012 data) demonstrates that this growth has continued in an upward projection as indicated in [Table 1](#) and [Figure 1](#).



Table 1: Growth in postgraduate research studies in music education for the period 1977–2012.

<i>Degree</i>	<i>≤1977</i>	<i>≤1982</i>	<i>≤1987</i>	<i>≤1992</i>	<i>≤1997</i>	<i>≤2002</i>	<i>≤2012</i>
Bachelor (Hons) degrees	25	25	27	28	31	33	62
Masters degrees	21	38	65	121	200	246	328
Doctoral degrees	2	3	9	15	36	72	168
<i>Totals</i>	47	66	101	164	267	351	558

Figure 1: Growth in postgraduate research studies in music education for the period 1977–2012.



The Continuing Need for Music Education Advocacy

Several developments during the first decade or so of the present century — the 2002–2003 Music Council of Australia investigation into trends in the provision of school music ([Stevens 2003](#)), the 2003–2005 National Review of School Music Education (NRSME), the substantial, evidence-based report from the NRSME investigative team ([Pascoe et al. 2005](#)), the subsequent establishment of a Federal Government Music Education Advisory Group (2006–2009), the 2006 National Music Workshop ([Harvey 2006](#)), the national music education advocacy initiative through the *Music: Play for Life* program, the ongoing endeavours of such organisations as the Music Council of Australia and the inclusion of music as a subject within *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts* — have offered the hope of meaningful reforms in music education in schools. However, the reality is that music continues to be in a highly vulnerable position in many schools. Even if all of the recommendations from the recent *Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools* being undertaken by the Victorian Parliamentary Education and Training Committee ([Parliament of Victoria 2013a](#)) are fully implemented in that state, there will still be a shortfall in the optimal provision necessary to ensure that all students in Victorian government schools receive a quality music education during their primary and early secondary school years and opportunities to specialise in music through to year 12. The situation as it currently exists in Victoria — as in other state and territory government school systems — presents a major challenge for the future.



Not only is provision a key issue, particularly at the primary school level, — that is, what means of teaching music, generalist or specialist teachers, is to be employed — but also the quality of the music curriculum — that is, what the nature and quality of the music curriculum to be implemented are. Although learning outcomes for music are clearly set out in the draft of *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts* and the need for students to receive a sequential, developmental and continuous music education is articulated, one of the key omissions is any indication of the amount of time per week to be allocated to music. Moreover, it appears that what arts subjects are offered will be determined by state and territory school authorities or by individual schools rather than being nationally mandated.

However, the requirement of a sequential and continuous music program is inextricably linked to provision. If students do not have the opportunity for a sequential and continuous music education in line with the music outcomes at each of the educational levels, then the proper implementation of the music as a school subject becomes doubtful. This is not necessarily to cast doubt on the quality of the music program but rather to question the logistics of providing teachers trained in both music content and music pedagogy.

A review of the over 240 written submissions to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry ([Parliament of Victoria 2012](#)) reveals the strength of conviction among music educators, music education professional bodies, schools and other educational institutions, parents and the general public about the benefits and value of music in school education. However, many of the submissions relied on the statement of personal beliefs or of overseas research findings to justify the inclusion of music in school education. Comparatively few Australian research studies were cited to support the value of music education. This suggests either that Australian music education research has not addressed this aspect and/or that the dissemination of research findings has been less than effective in terms of informing both the music education profession itself and the public at large. Many submissions, however, drew on the corpus of international research which is not without gaps in the research that particularly supports music education advocacy.

International Research that Supports Music Education Advocacy²

Before looking more closely at the Australian situation, it is first necessary to consider the current state of music education research in the international arena and how this relates to the Australian context. There is a plethora of international research that supports the value of music in education with much of it coming from countries attempting to increase the status and prevalence of music in their education systems. Ironically, it often comes from government agencies in these countries: the United Kingdom and the United States (see [Henley 2011](#), [President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities 2011](#)) are examples. On the other hand, there are some jurisdictions that, by and large, have no need to advocate for music education. These countries, including some of the top scoring PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) achievers such as Hong Kong, have strong music programs and traditions in their schools and an infrastructure that is supportive of music education at all levels ([Letts 2012a](#)). In common with Australia, Hong Kong offers a curriculum that is increasingly aimed at meeting the global contemporary needs of students, rather than integral music skills. For example, the aims of music education in Hong Kong are stated as:

- Developing creativity and imagination
- Developing music skills and processes
- Cultivating critical responses in music
- Understanding music in context ([The Curriculum Development Council Committee on Arts Education 2003](#)).

The emphasis in their rationale statement is creativity-centred: that is, developing creative thinking skills which can be applied globally.

These aims are not new to the Australian audience, but the priorities perhaps are. In commenting on the situation in Finland, Alexis Kallio ([2009: 79](#)) states that 'In contrast to academic and scientific subjects, rather than achieve particular performance or academic goals, the focus is on the overall response to the subject matter' or what students holistically derive from a music education. In *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts*, the first of four aims is developing 'the confidence to be creative, innovative, thoughtful, skilful and informed musicians' ([ACARA 2013: 91](#)), rather than 'developing creativity and imagination' as stated in Hong Kong curriculum. So the desired aim here is both global and music specific.



Kallio asserts that new territory is being traversed when the focus of a music curriculum document is on extra-musical values, which she believes is the case with the Finnish music curriculum where life-enhancement appears to be a major objective. She maintains that

‘Whether seen as intrinsically valuable, or a means to cognitive, social or physiological ends, the value of music education can be viewed from a number of perspectives. However, incorporating extra-musical reasoning in advocating music education raises a number of questions and presents potential problems that are worth consideration and caution’ ([Kallio 2009: 82](#)).

The life-enhancement properties of music are well recognised for those who *choose* to engage with them, because these are the very reasons they do so. However, these objectives cannot simply transfer as a given in a music education context. A major issue in using extrinsic music factors to justify music education would appear to be that we often use research conducted in one context and apply it to another. How can life-enhancement be measured? The fact is that, although PISA scores are high in both Hong Kong and Finland, the method of delivering music education, indeed the whole philosophical basis for its delivery, differs. Given the differing methods of delivery and their underlying philosophies, is it reasonable to draw conclusions about these countries’ academic outcomes based on their provision of music education? Can these or any other countries claim that music education contributes to a student’s general creative capacity? The research into the impact of music education on creative potential is still in its infancy. How, in any kind of rigorous way, does one go about researching the increased creative ability derived from engagement in music education?

In a different form, this is also an issue in Australia where music education varies enormously in context, in rationale and in implementation between different states and territories, and between different schools within states. We can draw on a range of literature to assert that students will achieve particular musical and extra-musical outcomes if they are musically educated. However, this may amount to what could be thought of as false advertising. Music education philosopher Wayne Bowman is also cautious about music education advocacy, maintaining that

‘Where musical instruction and curricula are poor fits to the aims of general education and the institutional practices devoted to their pursuit, advocacy efforts will not improve our lot. We need to work to make instructional practices in music more congruent with truly educational aims’ ([Bowman 2012: 35](#)).

This perspective may well help us to focus in on the gaps in music education research.

The issue for music education research is not always the calibre of the research but, as suggested, its broad and sometimes inappropriate application. So what could be considered useful and rigorous, and what needs further or redirected research at the international level?

Brain Research

The most rigorous research internationally has been in the area of the neurological sciences where our insight into the brain and its engagement in a host of activities can be mapped. From this research we know which areas of the brain are engaged in any kind of musical activity, from listening to a tone or series of tones (which may or may not be considered as music), to performing on a variety of instruments, or to composing. This research also reveals the extent to which such a broad range of areas in the brain, from sensory-motor areas to the newer pre-frontal cortex, to the very ancient brain stem are engaged in various musical activities. The problem is when we take all that research and condense it to apply to all music education and make claims of increased brain function. For example, there is obviously greater brain engagement in some musical tasks than others, there is greater brain plasticity with some activities than others, and there are changes in brain plasticity over time due to ageing ([Levitin 2012](#), [Damasio 2012](#), [Hyde et al. 2009](#), [Hodges 1996](#), [Hodges and Gruhn 2012](#), [Juslin and Sloboda 2001](#), [Merrett and Wilson 2012](#), [Peretz and Zatorre 2003](#)).

Studies into the Individual, Social, Cultural and Extra-musical Benefits of Music Education

Despite the plethora of studies in the areas of social engagement and cognitive development through music education, there are still quite mixed and conflicting outcomes identified in the research literature. Burnaford et al. ([2007](#)) conducted a literature review of evidence for



the impact of music and the arts on other areas of the curriculum. What this reveals is that there is a strong causal relationship between listening to music and spatial-temporal reasoning and also performing music and spatial-temporal reasoning. A number of studies show a relationship between enhanced mathematical skills and playing a musical instrument, but, however, the cause is not understood. Some studies show a link between reading ability and music performance. A number of studies show increased academic ability when engaged in arts education, not always specifically music education. However, the research that is missing here is

- finding the cause of the improvement in other academic areas, and
- specifying the type of musical engagement which results in these outcomes.

A great deal of the research into social engagement has been undertaken across the arts, rather than being music specific. Of note here is *Champions of Change* (1999) that includes an extensive review of the literature. For example, Catterall's work, reviewed in Fiske (1999), shows a direct link between high engagement in the arts (particularly instrumental music and theatre arts), school retention rates, and academic achievement. Indeed research tends to show a correlation between school engagement, motivation and increased academic achievement, all of which is hardly surprising.

These meta studies are, in themselves, representative of both large- and smaller-scale research in that we are being presented with a distillation of research findings. The problem then is that we do not have a clear insight into the conditions of the studies from which the findings are extracted and the applicability of the findings to the range of music education environments in which Australian students find themselves. But we do not know whether or not we would actually choose to define these as quality music education experiences.

Quality Music Education

Seidel and colleagues (2009) from Harvard's *Project Zero* have attempted to outline the specifications for quality arts education. If research defining the value of music education is to be taken seriously, then the quality of that education would seem to be a hugely important factor as Bowman has highlighted. It could be suggested that *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts* provides a model of what can be described as a quality music education framework. Of note too is McPherson and Welch's (2012) tome, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education*, which comprehensively addresses every facet of music education from the philosophical to the practical. The asset represented by all of these documents is the focus on a student-centred learning approach, the need to engage students on a long-term basis, and to meet student needs. There would appear to be a clear need for research defining what a quality music education is and how it might come together with that describing the benefits of music education. Despite the breadth and depth of research both in Australia and internationally, we still find ourselves in a position where the status of music education is continuing to be undermined so that music education in schools, as previously stated, remains in a vulnerable position.

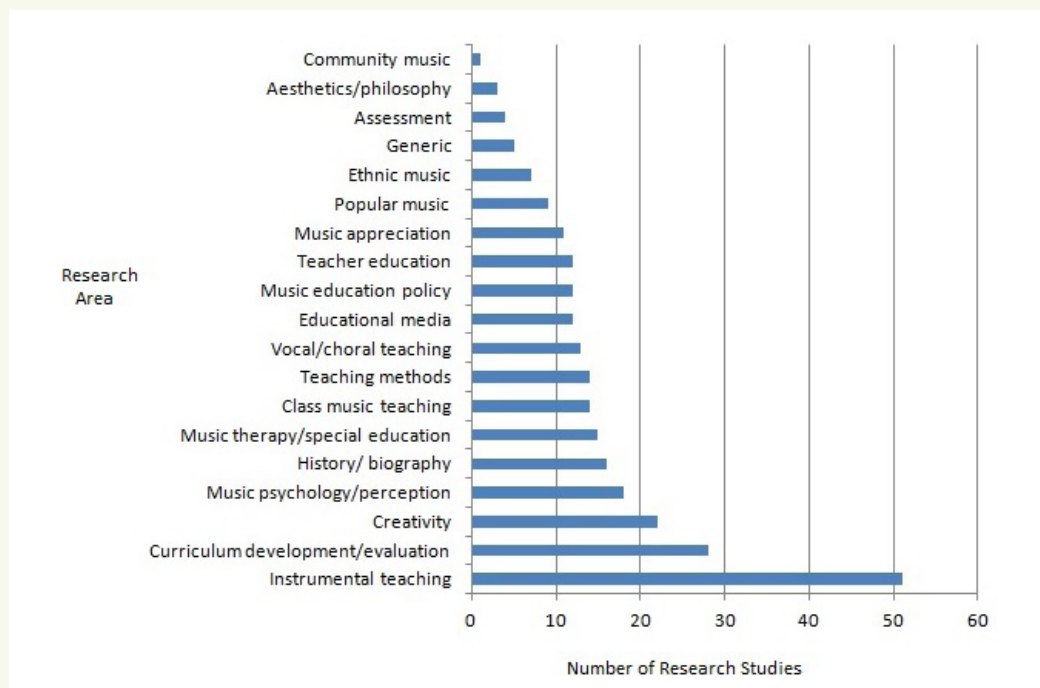
Australian Research that Supports Music Education Advocacy

Turning back to the Australian situation, the current analysis (2013) of completed research studies in the BAMER database for the period from 1936 through to 2012 has attempted to identify the research focus areas represented in the now 558 research study entries. The original analysis (1999) of research focus or music education content areas for entries in the BAMER database for the period 1937–1997 (then numbering 267 completed research studies) was undertaken through entry data supplied by individual researchers or, in the absence of this, a process that involved the compiler or editor of BAMER reviewing the title and abstract of each research study and nominating the major area of research focus or music education content.³ The distribution across these areas is represented as percentages in the bar graph of [Figure 2](#).

As will be seen, the most researched area up to and including 1997 was instrumental music teaching, which represented 19.1% of the cumulative total of 267 completed research studies at that time. Then, in descending order, the most researched areas were curriculum development and evaluation (10.5%), creativity (8.2%), music psychology/perception (6.8%), music education history/biography (6.0%), music therapy/special needs education (5.6%), teaching methods (5.3%) and class music teaching (5.2%), with areas such as vocal/choral teaching, teacher education, music appreciation, music education policy and educational media less well represented ([Stevens 2000: 68](#)).



Figure 2: Bar graph showing the number of entries in the BAMER database, 1936–1997 (n=267), each with a focus on one main research area.



For analysis reported here (2013), the means employed to identify the major focus of the respective research studies was to review both the title and the abstract (where available) and, through these two data fields, to identify the major focus of each research study. Many entries were identified as having multiple foci but several had only one main focus. The process of quantifying the areas of focus was for each of the research study entries to be incorporated into a new or existing grouping of research studies identified as having the same research focus. The ability to group database entries in this way is one of the features of the bibliographic software program, *EndNote X5* (2011) that facilitated this analysis (see [Figure 3](#)).

Although a direct comparison with the previous analysis (1999) is not possible (this analysis identified a single research focus area whereas the 2013 analysis included multiple research foci) the results of the latter analysis, represented in [Figure 3](#), nevertheless indicate that instrumental music teaching is still by far the most researched area in music education. This is followed by curriculum development and implementation, and then by research studies that relate specifically to primary and secondary education. In general terms, the current situation differs little from that in 1997. However, of particular interest in terms of later discussion are those focus areas where comparatively less research has been undertaken. Some of these which loom large as important in the wider Australian school music context include the effect of music engagement on identity formation (both personal and musical), policy in music education, quality in music education, motivation, indigenous education, assessment and examinations, values/benefits/attitudes, gender, and the influence of music on learning in other curriculum areas.

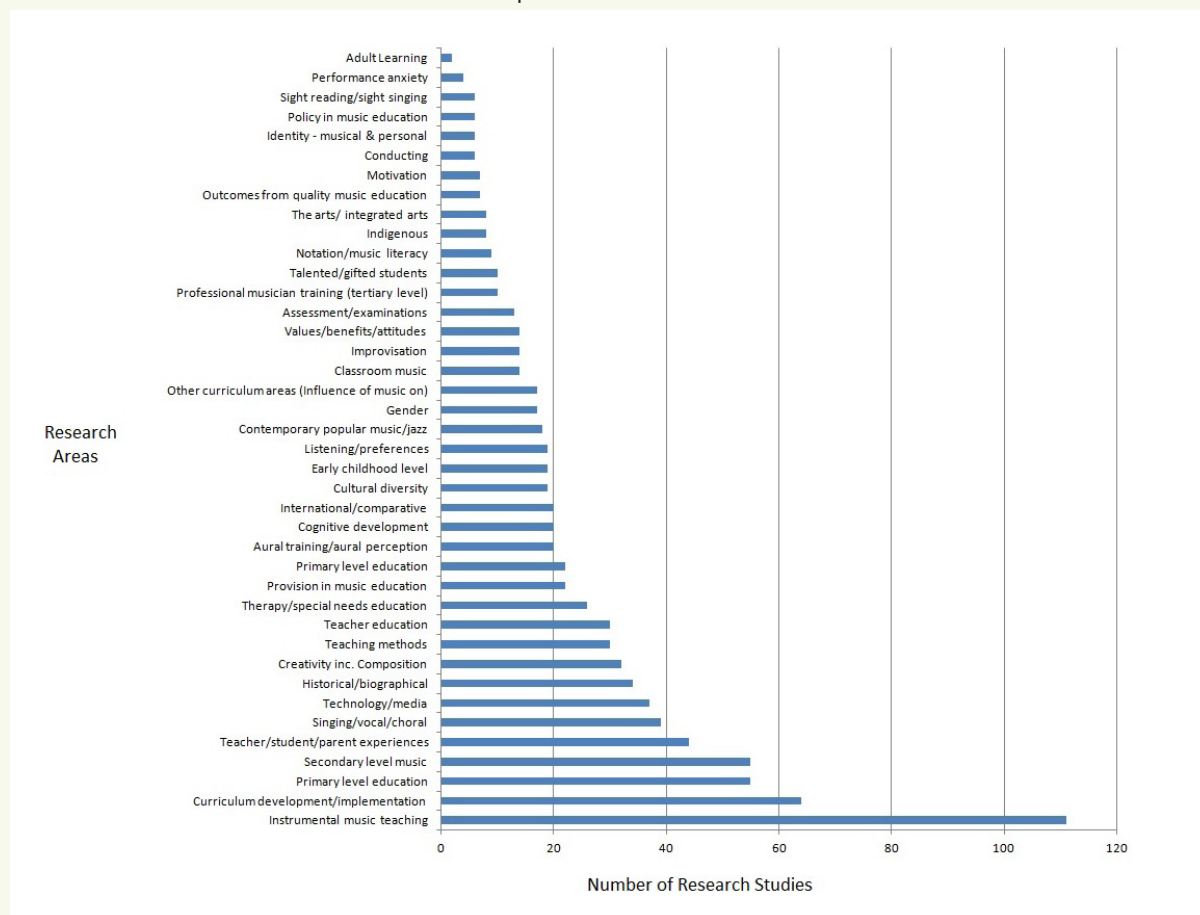
What are the Research Areas in Music Education where Findings are Needed to Support Music Advocacy in Australia?

Based on the review of the international situation and the immediately preceding analysis of the current areas of focus in Australian music education research, there are two main areas that may be identified where in-depth, rigorous research is required.

The first, already alluded to, relates to the outcomes, both intrinsic (musical) and extrinsic (extra-musical), of specific programs, particularly those which may be described as quality music education programs. These need to be more fully investigated. The analysis of 558 entries in the BAMER database identified only eight that explicitly focused on the outcomes from quality school music programs.



Figure 3: Bar graph of the number of instances identified in entries in the BAMER database, 1936–2012, with a focus on applicable multiple research areas.



Recent research for The Song Room ([Vaughan et al. 2011](#)) parallels many North American studies into the benefits of arts education. Outcomes from the implementation of The Song Room program allow generalisations to be drawn about the benefits of arts education to all students participating in this particular program. However, it is small but highly focused music programs, such as the *Pizzicato* (string teaching and complementary classroom music) program that has been introduced at Meadows Primary School in Melbourne’s western suburbs, where research will perhaps provide the most valuable data on the benefits of music education to a more narrowly defined student group.

A second research area that may be singled out focuses on three interrelated aspects: the extent of and provision for music in schools, the training of teachers to implement school music programs, and the benefits or value of music in general education. Again, some of these research focus areas may be identified as having received less attention by music education researchers than they might. The analysis of BAMER entries reveals that, aside from historical studies, there were only 22 from 556 research studies that addressed the extent of and provision for music in schools. Again, excluding historical studies, aspects of teacher education in music was better represented with 30 research studies. However, there were fewer than might have been anticipated (only 14) that considered the benefits, value and attitudes of school communities in relation to music education.

A quick perusal of the evidence presented at hearings of the Victorian Parliamentary *Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools* ([Parliament of Victoria 2013b](#)) is revealing on a number of fronts that are not confined to the government school sector. In Victoria (and this is not the case in all states), the following issues emerged as significant aspects that the Education and Training Committee of the Parliament of Victoria should address.



1. There is no central record keeping and therefore no available data in any school sector (government, Catholic or independent) about:
 - 1.1. the extent of music education programs in schools;
 - 1.2. the way that funding is allocated to schools by regions or systems;
 - 1.3. the impact of decision-making by principals and school councils regarding the availability or provision of music education in schools;
 - 1.4. the way music is taught, monitored and assessed in individual schools;
 - 1.5. the pathways of students from schools to adulthood and the value of music in their lives as they travel this pathway; and
 - 1.6. parental and community input into music education.
2. There is only limited knowledge about the pathways of students engaged in primary music programs in schools who choose to study music for the end-of-year-12 Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and where this ultimately leads them. There is no data that compares these students with those who studied VCE music but did not have access to music education at primary school or even, perhaps, in their junior secondary years.
3. There is little or no data about what we might describe as a quality music education as not all schools that have access to music education:
 - 3.1. use a student-centred approach to teaching and learning;
 - 3.2. have an understanding of the latest thinking about music education;
 - 3.3. have access to and utilise findings from current research in music education; or
 - 3.4. have access to and utilise sufficient teacher professional development in music education.
4. The lack of an effective solution to the long-standing problem of providing musical training for primary educators for roles as either classroom teachers of music or as specialist primary music teachers.
5. People in positions of authority, from federal and state governments, to regional directors, to principals in schools, seem to have little knowledge of, or access to, research about the benefits of music education, or they choose to turn a blind eye to it.
6. Although there is now some research being undertaken into lighthouse music programs such as the *Pizzicato* program, there is a lack of extensive research that embraces differing implementations of music programs across the state. There may be research into particular aspects of music education: the prevalence and quality of music education in primary schools in country Victoria ([Heinrich 2012](#)) or a single case study of highly successful music program in a government primary school ([Cosaitis 2012](#)), for example, but these are comparatively isolated instances of such research.
7. The problem of what may be identified as very tenuous links between:
 - 7.1. university music faculties;
 - 7.2. university education faculties;
 - 7.3. centralised governments (federal and state);
 - 7.4. curriculum developers;
 - 7.5. providers of teacher professional development;
 - 7.6. teacher registration authorities (e.g. the Victorian Institute of Teaching and the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership);
 - 7.7. school regions (including the Catholic Education Office);
 - 7.8. schools; and
 - 7.9. external arts providers.

Specifically in relation to the latter aspect, there would seem to be a need for research to be undertaken into how it might be possible to connect these disparate institutions in order to provide more sequential and therefore more comprehensive educational experiences for young people. Even the fact that educators working in schools and in government departments have only limited access to current music education research does not help in forging these links.

Some organisations, such as the Music Council of Australia (MCA) and more recently The Music Trust,⁴ are working to build bridges between all of these stakeholders. There is a growing understanding and acknowledgement that only by having all those involved in



music education working towards the same goals, assisting each other to fill the gaps in research, and providing a cohesive, common and strong voice for music education, will the situation change. Research findings are needed to guide decisions about aligning the intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes with the kind of music education in which students are actually engaged. Knowledge of how music education impacts on, particularly, social and cultural outcomes for students is also needed. An increased research focus into what is missing in the implementation of music education (i.e. what needs to be fixed and how) and the optimal means of achieving the desired high quality music teaching and meaningful music learning in schools (i.e. examples of exemplary practice) will provide models for future action. Research findings will provide much needed ammunition in the ongoing battle for improvements in music education. Music education advocacy that is not sufficiently well supported will simply fall short of achieving this aim.

Recent Research Strategy Initiatives

Together with a number of other music education advocacy working groups established under the auspices of the Music Council of Australia through the indefatigable leadership of Richard Letts, a Research Strategy Working Group⁵ was set up in December 2012 to ‘encourage research that would provide support to advocacy for the provision of universal opportunity for Australian children to receive a quality music education in schools throughout the school years’. Initiatives proposed for the Working Group included:

- defining the areas of research most likely to support music education advocacy;
- undertaking a literature review to identify the strongest research projects that support music education advocacy;
- inducing, recruiting and otherwise activating research that supports music education advocacy;
- encouraging the participation of researchers in the strategy by facilitating appropriate forms of inducement; and
- disseminating and utilising the outcomes from relevant research that supports music education advocacy. ([Letts 2012b](#))

Action included, firstly, the continuing development of a narrative that drew on the findings from both Australian and international research which supports music education advocacy. An important part of this exercise was the compiling of an annotated bibliography of representative research studies, the findings of which, informed the various aspects of the narrative. This involved the updating and analysis of BAMER database entries to identify Australian research that was likely to be able to contribute to the narrative.⁶

Secondly, the presentation of position papers at professional conferences and the publication of articles in scholarly journals aimed at encouraging the Australian music education research community to undertake studies that would result in findings which support advocacy (see below).

Thirdly, the Working Group investigated the possibility of involving expert and high profile researchers from other discipline areas to work with music education researchers on projects that targeted such issues as the extra-musical benefits of school music. Topics discussed by the group included the transferability of music education to other curriculum areas and the development of students as individuals through music education. It is envisaged that The Music Trust’s Advisory Committee will re-envisage aspects of the work of the MCA’s Advocacy Group, as Richard Letts’ passion for music education advocacy continues to foster new directions for action and research. For example, the following aspects may feature as possible areas of focus for research into extra-musical benefits: rational thinking skills (reasoning, critical thinking, logistical thinking and interpretive skills), creativity skills, cognitive development (abstract thinking, aural and spatial awareness, verbal understanding, etc), social skills (communication with others, social confidence, team cooperation, leadership potential, etc) and personal development (concentration, memory, time management, self-image, self-confidence, self-esteem, etc). It is pleasing to note that there was recognition of many of these benefits of music in education included in the report of the Victorian Parliamentary *Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools* ([Parliament of Victoria 2013a](#)).



Conclusions: Proposals to Encourage Research that Supports Music Education Advocacy

Without doubt, all research findings undertaken in the field of music education contribute to a better understanding of the *what, when, how* and *why* of music in education in its broadest sense. However, if music education advocacy is to have a positive impact on governments, educational authorities and school communities to improve 'the provision of universal opportunity for Australian children to receive a quality music education ... throughout the school years', research findings have a key role in supporting the rationale for music in schools.

One of the key agencies in this endeavour is the music education research community itself. In particular, supervisors of postgraduate research studies are in a position, when advising students who are uncertain about their future research direction, to promote investigations that, as outlined previously, consider not only the *what* and the *why* associated with contemporary music education policy and practice but also the *how*. In other words, music advocacy needs research that has immediate and practical application to, and influence on, music education: that is, what the situation is and how it might be improved.

Another of the Working Group's proposals to promote research generally was for the establishment of a national register of music education research supervisors. Such a register would enable prospective postgraduate student researchers to better locate potential supervisors, as well as associate (and possibly adjunct) supervisors, whose expertise is better able to match students' interests in particular topics. Given the possibilities for online supervision of postgraduate student research (email communication and online document transfer as well as Skype and other online conferencing possibilities) more use should be made of adjunct supervisor appointments to ensure that postgraduate students are working with supervisors and co-supervisors with specific expertise in the topics that they wish to investigate.

Finally, both music education researchers and the wider music education profession are likely to benefit from a knowledge of what postgraduate research studies have been undertaken by researchers at Australian universities but also by Australians who have undertaken their research at overseas universities. Not only would this provide knowledge about pre-existing research that will inform the literature reviews undertaken as part of any research project, but also where the research expertise may be found in terms of potential supervision. The BAMER database, although unfortunately and inevitably not a complete listing of all postgraduate research studies, nevertheless represents the most complete listing currently available. Supervisors in particular are encouraged to make their postgraduate research students aware of this as a source of information for their literature reviews and to encourage their students to submit information about in-progress and completed research studies to BAMER.

Only by the music education research community working collaboratively with advocacy organisations such as the MCA and The Music Trust will it be possible to achieve the ultimate aim of providing 'universal opportunity for Australian children to receive a quality music education in schools throughout the school years'.


ENDNOTES

1. This article has been adapted from a position paper presented at the 36th Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Research in Music Education, May 31st to June 1st, 2013 on behalf of the Research Strategy for Music Education Advocacy Working Group, Music Council of Australia.
2. This section of the article is based on papers by Mandy Stefanakis which are available on the *Music in Australia Knowledge Base* at <http://www.musicinaustralia.org.au/index.php?title=Stefanakis,_Mandy>.
3. The task of assigning focus areas to each of the research study entries in the current BAMER database was undertaken by Robin Stevens who has had a long involvement in reporting on and undertaking music education in Australia and who, as best as possible, made informed judgements regarding the topics or focus of the various research studies.

4. A new organisation, The Music Trust <<http://musictrust.com.au>>, was established by Dr Richard Letts in the latter part of 2013 and has taken over some of the music education advocacy work formerly undertaken through the MCA.
5. This Working Group consisted of MCA members Professor Andrew Brown, Dr Richard Letts (chair), Professor Gary McPherson, Ms Mandy Stefanakis and Associate Professor Robin Stevens.
6. The results of this updating of entries in the BAMER database are available in the most recent set of resources (a webpage listing, a downloadable PDF listing and an EndNote Library) at <<http://australian-music-ed.info/BAMER/>>.

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ABSTRACT

Despite advocacy by professional organisations, recommendations from successive government reviews and inclusion of the arts in the new Australian Curriculum, music still remains in a highly vulnerable position within the school curriculum. While there are many voices advocating better provision for and improvements in music curriculum implementation, some arguments rely on subjective opinion and therefore represent unsubstantiated assertion. In order for the benefits of music education to be taken more seriously by governments and education authorities, there is a need for more persuasive arguments that are evidence-based and therefore irrefutable.

While there are numerous international studies that provide evidence-based findings, these are often perceived as lacking cultural relevance or, given differences in education delivery, being less applicable to the Australian context. Findings from local research give both currency and relevance that can be usefully employed in music education advocacy in Australia.

The quantum of research in music education has grown exponentially over the past few decades and much of this research may be used for advocacy. Nevertheless, there are significant gaps in music education research that, if filled, could strengthen not only the rationale for music education, but also provide accurate data on the current provision for, and implementation of, music in schools.

This article discusses the growth and current state of music education research and includes an analysis of postgraduate awards. It also identifies some of the current gaps in the national research profile which, if filled, would significantly assist with music education advocacy. Proposals for filling these gaps and more generally promoting research relevant to music education advocacy are discussed.



Keywords: music instruction, music learning, music teaching, postgraduate theses, research, music education advocacy.

Received by the Editors 22 September 2013; accepted for publication (in revised form) 9 December 2013.

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