

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

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<http://www.ijea.org/>

ISSN: 1529-8094

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Volume 18 Number 4

January 29, 2017

## Self-Efficacy and Music Teaching: Five Narratives

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Citation: de Vries, P. (2017). Self-efficacy and music teaching: Five narratives. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 18(4). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v18n4/>.

### Abstract

This article examines generalist primary (elementary) school teachers' self-efficacy in teaching music. Five teachers, each with five years teaching experience, were interviewed for the study. Using this interview data narratives were constructed for each of the five teachers. These narratives focused on what factors contributed to the level of self-efficacy each teacher experienced in teaching music. The five narratives are presented, structured using the five elements of narrative - character, setting, a problem (or problems) faced, actions taken to address the problem/s, and resolution – outlined by Ollerenshaw & Creswell (2002). Each narrative is followed by a brief discussion of the impact of the four key aspects that contribute to self-efficacy – mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal.

## **Introduction**

The study reported in this article contributes to an emerging body of literature focusing on generalist primary (elementary) school teachers' self-efficacy in teaching music (see Battersby & Cave, 2014; Author, 2013; Garvis, 2013; Garvis & Pendergast, 2012, 2010). Self-efficacy beliefs "determine the level to which the teacher will teach in the classroom" (Garvis, 2013, p. 86). That is, self-efficacy beliefs affect how a teacher perceives their ability to achieve teaching outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Music education literature has highlighted problems with pre-service and graduate primary school teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching music (Alter et al., 2009; Author, 2011; Garvis, 2013; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010; Hallam et al., 2009; Hennessy, 2000; Holden & Button, 2006; Pascoe et al., 2005; Power & Klopper, 2011; Propst, 2003; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Russell-Bowie, 2002; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). Therefore focusing on self-efficacy in teaching music has the potential to further understanding about the factors that impact generalist teachers' music teaching practices in primary schools.

This study is part of an ongoing longitudinal study focused on generalist primary school music teaching in Australia. The study began when a group of 112 primary school teachers were surveyed at the end of the first year of teaching about their beliefs and practices in teaching music. These 112 primary school teachers were attending a professional development day for beginning teachers. The survey results provided a grim picture – just 37% taught music regularly. At the end of the survey respondents were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed to discuss the results of the survey. 24 of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to do this. These teachers were interviewed, revealing reasons for not regularly teaching music included time constraints (i.e., a crowded curriculum), and lack of skills, resources, and professional development opportunities. These 24 teachers were contacted towards the end of their third year teaching for follow-up interviews. Only five of the teachers agreed to be interviewed. All five were eager to talk in detail about their experiences around teaching music. These five teachers revealed a wide range of music teaching practices, which in turn mirrored the range of practices identified by the 24 interviewees in their first year teaching. These practices included teaching a weekly music lesson to all classes in a school, conducting choirs, attempting to sing with the aid of a CD, using technology to facilitate music composition, integrating music with other arts into an assembly performance, and facilitating and participating in a school-based rock band. While background experiences in music and music education (i.e., learning a musical instrument, taking music as a subject at high school, quality and amount of time devoted to music education in pre-service teacher training) impacted on self-efficacy beliefs in teaching music, high self-efficacy in teaching music was achieved through mastery teaching experiences (music teaching accomplishments) and verbal persuasion (positive feedback) from parents, teachers and school principals. The current study revisits these five participants, this time at

the end of their fifth year teaching, to determine how their self-efficacy in teaching music is progressing, and what factors are impacting on this self-efficacy.

### **Literature Review**

Within the Australian context music teaching in primary schools is predominantly the responsibility of generalist classroom teachers (Letts, 2007), although specialist music teachers are employed in some primary schools to teach music. The Australian curriculum, in outlining the learning area of the Arts from Foundation level to Year 10, does not specify who is responsible for teaching music (ACARA, 2015). With the generalist primary school teacher largely being responsible for teaching music in Australian primary schools the decline in time devoted to music education in pre-service generalist primary teacher education courses in Australia is problematic in that graduates are not likely to have the necessary skills and dispositions to teach music (Barton, Baguley, & MacDonald, 2013; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010, 2012; Hocking, 2009). This is not unique to the Australian context. Welch & Henley (2014) point to a similar situation in England, where hours allocated to music in teacher education courses suffer compared to so-called core subjects such as English, science and mathematics. This sidelining of music (and the arts) in favour of these core academic subjects is also reflected in education policy (Ewing, 2010). This can result in music curriculum being “unchallenging, demotivating and sometimes dreary” (Ofsted, 2013, p. 12). Therefore it is not surprising that generalist primary school teachers may not feel confident or inclined to teach music.

However, the problem is more complex than reduced hours devoted to music education in pre-service teaching courses and devaluing of music in education policy and curriculum. For example, a generalist teacher may not teach music in the primary school because of the presence of a music specialist in the school (Author, 2011; Berke & Colwell, 2004; Hash, 2009; Saunders & Baker, 1991). If this is the case then the generalist teacher may view music teaching solely to be the responsibility of the specialist teacher. If a school administrator decides to employ a music specialist teacher this may be a sign that music is valued within the school. School administrators (i.e., school principals) are pivotal in determining how valued music is in a school, as they have discretion in allocating resources to teaching music (i.e., time allocations for music, physical resources) and promoting music within the school (Author, 2015; Garvis & Pendergast, 2012; West, 2012). Teachers may also have low general confidence about teaching music (Author, 2011; Garvis & Pendergast, 2012; Hennessy, 2000; Holden & Button, 2006; Ruddock & Leong, 2005; Stunell, 2010), and self identify as being “unmusical”, which is often attributed to lack of quality musical experiences in childhood (Garvis & Pendergast, 2012; Hallam et al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006; Propst, 2003; Ruddock & Leong, 2005; Russell-Bowie 2002; Stunell, 2010; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008; Wilson et al., 2008). Finally, lack of resources within the school may impede the ability

or inclination to teach music, whether that be lack of time to teach music (Author, 2011; Pascoe et al., 2005; Russell-Bowie, 2002), lack of physical resources such as musical instruments or music teaching space, or lack of access to relevant professional development in music (Author, 2011; Garvis & Pendergast, 2012, 2010; Holden & Button, 2006; Power & Klopper, 2011).

With these issues impacting on the confidence or inclination of generalist primary school teachers to teach music it is unsurprising that when music is taught by generalist primary schools teachers the quality of this music teaching has been questioned, with music being taught sporadically, and being treated as an “add on” to other curricular activities, often with a focus on preparation for items for school assemblies and concerts (Author, 2013; Bresler, 1993; Giles & Frego, 2004; LaJevic, 2013; Pascoe et al., 2005; Saunders & Baker, 1991; Stake, Bresler & Mabry, 1991; Wiggins & Wiggins 2008).

### **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is the “perceived operative capability” (Bandura, 1977, p. 646) whereby an individual reaches a level of success that is desired. Self-efficacy focuses on what an individual believes they can achieve in relation to a particular task, resulting in these beliefs determining the kinds of thinking and actions an individual may take to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997). For teaching this means that “self-efficacy is developed through the interaction between an individual’s judgement of their teaching ability to perform a task and their perception of the actions required to perform that task successfully” (Garvis, 2013, p. 86). If a teacher feels confident in performing a task they are likely to participate in that task, but if they lack confidence they are likely to avoid the task or put less effort into that task (Bandura, 1997). High self-efficacy is realised through commitment, determination, enthusiasm, and in the case of teaching the ability to change existing teaching behaviours to achieve desired outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Bandura (1997) identifies four key influences on self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. Bandura (1997) identifies mastery experiences as being the most powerful on teacher self-efficacy. These are experiences that teachers have when they see that their teaching results in student outcomes being achieved, or even improved upon. This in turn leads to optimism about future teaching tasks of a similar nature, resulting in increased motivation to continue teaching at this level. Once at this point teachers are more likely to persist with teaching tasks that may initially be challenging. However, if a teacher attempts a mastery experience but fails, this will weaken a teacher’s self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences involve teachers observing others successfully teach a lesson or specific task. The lesson must be one that the observer can directly relate to so that

following observation they feel comfortable trialing a similar type of lesson. The focus is on observing to build confidence to attempt a particular task. Verbal persuasion refers to feedback or comments a teacher receives about their teaching from a source that the teacher views as being credible. Physiological arousal is the response (or responses) a teacher has to a given teaching situation. This may be a physical or emotional response, for example feeling anxiety, dread, joy or excitement. If a teacher feels joy in response to a teaching task they are more likely to attempt the task or a similar task in the future than if they experienced dread when attempting the teaching task.

Teacher self-efficacy is still forming in the early years of a teacher's career (Bandura, 1997). However, once self-efficacy beliefs have been formed they are difficult to change. The exception is when a teacher receives a shock of some kind (Bandura, 1997); in the case of music teaching self-efficacy this could be "a curriculum and date, a greater understanding of the importance of music or sustained professional development" (Garvis, 2013, p. 92).

### **Research Design**

A narrative methodology is used in this study. Narrative foregrounds the use of storying as a way of constructing meaning (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p. 7), acknowledging that people live storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) whereby they understand and make sense of a life through "the imposition of story structures" on what may sometimes appear to be random experiences (Sinclair Bell, 2002, p. 207). Narrative inquiry is retrospective meaning making focusing on the "biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (Chase, 2005, p. 651). The five teachers that were interviewed for this study were asked to relate their biographies as teachers, specifically focusing on music teaching, to me as the researcher.

As a narrative researcher I was aware that in interviewing the participants and co-constructing the stories they told me I was a character in these narratives. My own story as a primary school teacher with a particular interest in teaching music intersected and overlapped with the stories told to me as the researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). In acknowledging this position I have endeavoured to "reflect upon [my] inquiry dispositions and the set of values and beliefs that are brought to the inquiry process" (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p. 10) and make these explicit to the reader. Therefore I state up front that I am a lecturer in primary pre-service teacher education programs. I have a background as a primary school generalist teacher and a primary school music specialist. I believe that music education should be taught to all children in primary school and I believe that ideally all teachers should be able to teach music to children. I recognise, however, that this ideal cannot be met due to a range of factors that I have experienced as a teacher in schools, at university, and through my reading of research literature in the field of music education. In keeping with the acknowledgement of my prior experience and being co-creator of the stories I have elicited from the

participants I also use the narrative strategy of “the researcher’s interactive voice” (Chase, 2005, p. 666) whereby I present myself as a character in the narratives responding to the stories being told to me by the participants.

As a researcher I found that I had built up rapport over time with the five participants. I had interviewed each of them in their first year of teaching, and then again in their third year of teaching. At that time I signaled that I might contact them again in their fifth year of teaching. All five indicated at that time that they would be willing to do this. As a result when all five participants were contacted they readily agreed to be interviewed. At the conclusion of the interviews at the end of the third year of teaching I indicated that the five teachers could contact me if they wanted any support in their own music teaching. Tanya (as will be outlined later in the article) was the only teacher to take up this offer.

The data set for this study consisted of interviews with the five participants. There were two interviews per participant: an initial telephone interview of 20-30 minutes, followed up by a more in depth face-to-face interview lasting 35-65 minutes. Both interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Each participant read the initial transcription of the telephone interview to ensure accuracy and identify issues raised that they would like to elaborate on or discuss in the following face-to-face interview. The initial telephone interview asked the participants to talk about their current music teaching practices and how these practices differed to their music teaching the last time they were interviewed (two years prior). They were invited to talk about a range of issues, including their confidence in teaching music, the impact of prior music education experiences on them (i.e., at school, at university), the types of music activities they taught, any interaction they might have with a specialist music teacher in the school, access to and use of music education resources, and whether they had accessed any professional development focusing on music. The subsequent face-to-face interviews were open-ended, where the telephone interview transcript was used as a starting point to discuss each participant’s beliefs, values and practices in teaching music, specifically focusing on each teacher’s self-efficacy in teaching music.

Interview transcripts (telephone and face-to-face) were analysed, beginning with multiple readings of the transcripts. As was the case with the interview transcripts from the end of the participants’ third year of teaching it was apparent that in each of the participant’s stories there were the elements of character, setting, a problem (or problems) faced, actions taken to address the problem/s, and resolution. Ollerenshaw & Creswell (2002) identify these elements as being the five elements of plot structure that can be analysed and then organised by the researcher into a sequence of events that are subsequently restored by the researcher (p. 333). Following Ollerenshaw & Creswell in analysing the data using this “problem-solution approach” (p. 333), interview transcripts for each participant were colour coded for these

elements of plot structure. Once organized in this way five stories (one for each participant) were written that began with the problem faced and concluded with resolution to that problem. Each story included details about characters, the setting of the story, and the actions undertaken by each participant to address the identified problem that was faced. To ensure that I was being faithful to the stories told to me, the emerging and then completed stories were shown to the participants for feedback. Pseudonyms were used for all people mentioned in each of the five narratives, and the name and location of schools where teachers worked were not identified to ensure anonymity.

### **Five Narratives**

#### ***Melinda***

Melinda has taught in the same primary school since she graduated from university with a teaching degree. She was initially employed as a generalist primary school teacher. In her second year teaching at the school her passion for music education resulted in her starting a school choir. The school had no specialist music teacher and no extracurricular music activities. Student demand for choir participation resulted in Melinda starting a second choir. As a result of this the school principal offered Melinda the opportunity to be a part-time music specialist as part of her teaching duties in her third year teaching at the school. Although she taught her regular class until lunch time, after lunch each day she taught music to other classes in the school. While she did this other teachers would teach her regular class. When I interviewed Melinda at the end of this third year of teaching she was excited and very happy to be teaching music to the school and leading the school choirs. She spoke of utilizing her experience and passion for singing in a community choir and her background in music at high school. She spoke of participation in her community choir giving her the confidence to start a choir at school. She learnt about the role of the choral conductor through observation of the community choir conductor, including pedagogical techniques used, repertoire selection, and “people management.”

Melinda and I sit in her office, a small but light-filled area that is part of the music building. This building consists of an open teaching space, Melinda’s office, two music practice rooms, and a storage room for musical instruments. Melinda tells me she has been teaching music in this space for six months: “When Don [the school principal] asked me to increase my music teaching [in the school] he said I’d get this part of the new multipurpose [building].” The school population has increased in the past two years, meaning that if Melinda was to teach all classes music she would need more time to do this. As a result she has been music specialist for half of her teaching week and spent the other half as a generalist teacher teaching a year 4 class. She job shares teaching the year 4 class with another teacher.

“It’s hard work,” she tells me, “more than when I was just teaching music after lunch. Now I’m half music, half [general] classroom. And being given this new space [she indicates the music teaching space with a wave of her hands] kind of means that I really am a music teacher now, not just ... I don’t know ... the semi-music teacher I used to be.” Melinda tells me that along with her increased duties teaching classroom music she has also increased extracurricular music duties: “Don didn’t say I had to, but I did think that if I am going to be the music teacher I needed to do more with my choirs.” This meant continuing with her two established choirs and starting what she describes as her “show choir”, a group of nine students who “are the best singers.” The show choir perform more technically challenging music than the other choirs and their performances consist of “some choreographed moves, which you can’t do [successfully] with a choir of thirty or forty [students].”

When I last spoke to Melinda at the end of her third year teaching she was learning the craft of choral conducting, relying on her own experiences in a community choir and some a professional development day she had attended which focused on choral conducting and repertoire selection. This day long workshop was primarily designed for school music teachers. Melinda mentioned that the workshop was transformative in making her realize that up until that point she had not been teaching her children to sing “properly.” At the time Melinda was happy to have her choirs singing in the school and “occasionally singing in the local area” (i.e., at a retirement village). She tells me that she has now progressed with her choirs to “competitions where we come up against other choirs.” She tells me that she now feels confident to enter her choirs in these competitions, but at first she felt “scared, I thought ‘what if I fail and we do really badly?’” It was these thoughts that saw Melinda seeking help in the form of online forums (such as Facebook) with other music educators to seek advice about preparing for and competing in choral competitions. “Without [them] I [would have been] clueless, I mean I had no idea about choosing the right repertoire and about stage presence and about what judges look for.” In her first competition the school senior choir were not placed, but “he [the adjudicator] gave us a highly commended which was so great, I mean that was the first time we’d entered and we got that!” She talks of having a “buzz” when the adjudicator announced this and subsequently when choir members, their parents and the school principal congratulated her. “I was on a high for days,” she says, smiling at the thought.

Melinda says this gave her the confidence to enter further competitions and “really push myself and the kids [in the choirs] to do better and better.” To achieve this goal she sought out a professional development day with a leading choral educator. “The day was amazing, I learnt so much, and not just about conducting, but about singing, about my own singing, not just how to help my kids sing better.” She also asked the school principal for some “in school time” for extra rehearsals leading up to competitions (choir rehearsals tended to occur during

school lunch hours and before school). “Don [the school principal] was really supportive and organized this.” Melinda comments, “And it all paid off ... in one competition my show choir placed second, then three months later in another [competition] they came first. That was an amazing moment, I felt ... fantastic!” When I ask Melinda if this moment had changed the way she saw herself as a music educator she said, “Absolutely. It was like I’d made it, I was the real thing, not just the fill-in music teacher because nobody else was doing it.” She indicates there were other flow on effects from this experience, namely in her classroom music teaching where she now sought to expand the musical experiences she planned for her classes. “Up until then it was really just singing and music games. But this year I’ve started to focus also on playing [musical] instruments, on having older kids composing. And they love it. I’ve had 12- and 13-year-olds tell me they like my classes, and that’s not something teenagers will come up and tell you usually.”

Considering these mastery experiences and the positive way Melinda describes them I am surprised towards the end of our interview when our conversation takes an unexpected turn. Melinda says, in a lower voice, moving in closer to me, that “I just don’t know if I can continue like this though.” She is referring to balancing her dual roles as music teacher and generalist teacher with her year 4 class. “The music [role] now feels like it’s much more than it used to be, it’s like more than a part-time job and I want it to be, because it’s what I really love ... but I’ve got all these responsibilities with my regular [year 4] class and I’m feeling I’m not giving them everything I should. Gina [the teacher she job shares with] has had a go at me about forgetting things and basically not pulling my weight ... which I know is true and I feel really bad about it.” As Melinda says this I can see that she is anxious, clearly stressed about her position. I suggest that seeing she has a good relationship with her school principal that she should talk to him about this. “I did,” she says. “He gets it and said he’d like to make me [a] full-time music [teacher] but the [school] budget won’t allow it.” I ask Melinda how else she can address the problem she is facing. She replies: “I’m doing that now, I’m applying for full-time music [teacher] positions in other schools ... I think I’ve got a real chance, the experience [for such a role]. I think I’m ready for that.”

As a music teacher Melinda is highly self-efficacious. Her story demonstrates how all four aspects of self-efficacy are in play, which ensures that Melinda continues to grow and face new challenges and achieve new goals as a music educator (primarily in her choral teaching). She achieved mastery experiences in the choral competitions she entered, which was the impetus to broaden her classroom music teaching where she achieved further mastery experiences. She had vicarious experiences in the form of the professional development she attended and with her interactions with other music educators in online forums. Verbal persuasion was present from the choral competition adjudicator, school principal, parents and the children she taught. She also referred to physiological arousal when initially being

commended and subsequently placing in choral competitions. However, despite being highly self-efficacious in her music teaching, Melinda is currently facing the challenge of balancing her music teaching with her general classroom teaching. She clearly prefers and feels confident enough to take on a full-time music teaching position, but at present does not have such a job. If she remains in her current teaching job she faces possible erosion of her self-efficacy in teaching music because of the school's emphasis on the "core curriculum, the literacy and numeracy which Don told me [when speaking to him about possibly being the school's full-time music teacher] has to be my priority with my [regular] class." She said that if she focused more on this "then I can't see I can continue the way I am with my music [teaching]. That will suffer, I'm sure of it."

### ***Tanya***

Tanya's experience with music and music teaching is in stark contrast to Melinda's experience. When interviewed in her third year of teaching she described herself as being "totally unmusical." Apart from mandatory classroom music classes in her own schooling she has not been involved in music making. She spoke in detail about her negative experiences with music education at school and in particular her pre-service teacher education training. In the latter she spoke of feeling embarrassed when called upon to sing alone in a music education tutorial and was subsequently graded on the quality of her singing. Despite this she described a situation where she endeavoured to teach her year one class songs with an accompanying CD. She wanted to do this because she believed that music plays an important part of young children's lives, "particularly emotionally." However, the teacher she shared a classroom with was negative about her attempts, which resulted in Tanya no longer teaching music to her class.

Tanya is now teaching year 3 at a different school. The school is new and she has a permanent teaching position, "which is such a relief." Previously Tanya had been on twelve month teaching contracts which she says "makes you feel like you're not really part of the school, [that] you'll probably be gone soon so you never totally commit [to the school]." The stability of obtaining a permanent teaching position has resulted in Tanya "giving everything" to her teaching. This includes a renewed focus on the place of music in her teaching. She says that "my eyes were opened to how music can really help children." She cites two examples of the impact of music on children in her class, the first being one child's improved behavior in class since commencing piano lessons (out of school), the second being a group of four girls who had joined the school choir who "always come back from choir [rehearsal] so happy and just ... up."

Tanya decided that she wanted to try incorporating music in her teaching six months ago. However, she did not know where to start, indicating that the performing arts specialist in her

school was only at the school one day a week and was “never around” to talk about this. Tanya indicates she remembered little about teaching music from her pre-service teacher training. “So I started surfing the [inter]net for ideas.” A lot of what she found was “just too hard to get my head around.” Tanya then contacted me, asking if I could suggest any websites or people she might contact for help. I thought that Melinda would be a good person to make contact with, so I asked Melinda if she would be willing to talk to Tanya. She was, and invited Tanya to join a Facebook page where relatively new teachers discussed music teaching. “I remember my first post ... It was ‘Please help me teach music, I want to but know nothing and am totally unmusical.’ I got so many helpful ideas and links to websites and YouTube.” Tanya shows me some of the websites and YouTube clips she used as a result of these suggestions. “You can’t believe how helpful this was. And my kids absolutely loved what we were doing, all the singing games ... they’re always asking to sing and play the latest song I’ve found.” Tanya says she tends to “start the day with a song or two” which she describes as a good way of “settling” the class and putting the children in “a good mood for learning.” She brings YouTube clips up on her classroom whiteboard for the children to see. “I need this,” she says, “to sing along with and see the actions.” I ask if she ever sings unaccompanied with the children. “Never,” she replies. “I can’t do that ... even you saying that makes me get butterflies [in the stomach] ... I guess I just had too many bad experiences singing all alone, at school and at uni[versity].” Tanya does indicate that she always joins in with the singing games with her class: “I figure I have to model for them, even if there are others [children, teachers] singing and playing on the [YouTube] clips ... and it’s fun. I like it, I feel like we are all enjoying it.”

I ask Tanya how she goes about planning and selecting musical experiences for her class. “It’s not really planned,” she says. “I take suggestions from Facebook and try them. If they work we continue with them, if they don’t or the children just don’t like the song then I’ll try something else.” I ask if she has any long term planning strategy for music with her class. She replies, “Not really, [I] just [want the children] to have fun and to sing. I know from what the children say that they do some of the more serious music [activities] with Mrs Harris [the performing arts teacher], like learning to read music and do rhythms.”

Considering that there is a performing arts teacher in Tanya’s school it would be easy for her not to focus on teaching music as the performing arts teacher is responsible for music education in the school. However, the two instances she cited of seeing music having a positive impact on children in her class were the impetus for her incorporating music experiences in her classroom. These powerful observations countered previous negative aspects in her self-efficacy to teach music, namely an absence of positive vicarious experiences (i.e., observing others successfully teach music to children), lack of verbal persuasion (i.e., negative comments from a teacher about her previous attempt to teach music

in her third year teaching), and negative physiological responses to teaching music (i.e., in response to school and university music education experiences). In making the decision to teach music to her class Tanya's self-efficacy developed primarily through a range of vicarious experiences, including conversations and suggestions from other more experienced teachers through Facebook, and her watching YouTube clips of children and teachers singing and performing actions to songs. In using these clips with her class and joining in with the singing Tanya had mastery experiences, supported further by verbal persuasion from the children in her class (i.e., their positive responses to the singing activities). Despite these positive aspects of self-efficacy it was clear that Tanya had no intention of developing music education experiences further with her class. The reason for this is the presence of a performing arts teacher to teach the more complex aspects of music which Tanya has little experience and confidence in.

### ***Jane***

Jane and I meet in the late afternoon in a pub that Jane says she frequents with other teachers every Friday afternoon to "de-stress." She feels comfortable in this setting and says she is happy to be talking to me. Jane enjoys listening to music and singing to herself (i.e., singing in the car when alone). She does not play a musical instrument and does not see herself as being "particularly musical." Like Tanya, her only experiences with music making came in the form of mandatory classroom music lessons in her schooling. She does not identify as being musical or as a musician. However, she acknowledges that music should be part of the primary school curriculum. When I ask why she believes this she says, "You told us, remember?" I taught Jane in a music education subject that she undertook in her teacher training course at university. She goes on to say that she has witnessed how important music can be in the lives of children and the fact that it is mandated as a subject to be taught in the Australian Curriculum. When we last spoke two years ago she told me about an integrated arts activity that she had taught the children in her class that was based on ideas from a textbook I used in the music education subject I taught. This was the first mastery experience she had when teaching music.

Jane has been teaching in the same school for the last five years. She is on a 12 month teaching contract. "The school keeps stringing me along, the admin[instration] tell me how I'm such a valuable teacher but they still haven't offered a full-time position [to me]." She likes the school culture, even though this year she has been given a year 6 class for the first time: "It's been hard, I've only ever taught the younger years before." Jane says that she has been struggling with some of the content she has to teach at year 6 level, particularly in mathematics, which she acknowledges "is not one of my strengths." She works closely with an experienced leading teacher in the school who specialises in mathematics.

When I ask Jane about the role of music in her teaching she tells me that she has continued with “integrated arts”, with an hour scheduled each week for “arts and humanities.” She plans these activities with the two other year 6 teachers. “We try to link these activities with whatever theme we’re doing in class. Like this term it’s [the theme] global change so we’ve been doing a lot of role play with this and script writing with the kids.” Jane explains that one of the other year 6 teachers has a drama background so they tend to do a lot of drama activities. When asked about how music fits into the arts and humanities hour Jane is vague: “I do what I can, what I can find.” I ask her to be more specific. She smiles and says, “Well there really hasn’t been much music. The drama kind of takes over. I did find a song though that fits the theme, John Legend’s ‘If you’re out there.’ He’s popular with a lot of the kids and they enjoyed singing the song.” I ask how she taught the song; Jane says, “Well I just played it and put the lyrics up and we just sang it over and over ... a lot of them [the children] already knew the song, so they kind of taught themselves.” Apart from this example, Jane says she also plays background music when the class is doing “quiet work.” She says she compiles playlists of different types of music. “I’ll sometimes tell the class the name of a song and the artists if it’s not something they know ... so I am trying to expose them to different music.”

Jane says that “ideally I want to do more music ... I know it’s important.” However, Jane identifies a range of factors that she believes are stopping her from teaching more music to her class. She cites the absence of a specialist arts teacher in the school: “If there was a music or arts teacher I’d be able to talk to them about teaching music to my class, but there isn’t, and there’s no one [in the school] who has much of a music background ... so there’s nobody to get help from.” The focus of the school’s professional development program is also a factor: “There’s nothing about music, it’s all literacy this year and a bit about health and social media. So how can I learn anything about teaching music?” Finally, Jane highlights the pressures of “just getting all the basics done.” The “basics” she refers to are literacy and numeracy, and the school’s focus on science and technology. “We’re lucky to even have an hour each week for arts and humanities. I know that some other year levels don’t, and it’s because there’s just no time.”

I ask Jane where she sees her future in teaching music. “I’ll just do what I can I guess, which isn’t a lot. I really do want to do more, but with everything going on here [at the school] I can’t see it [happening] ... But I can still sneak in a bit here and there, you know like the music playing in the background and unconsciously getting children listening to different styles [of music]. And singing, it’s just about finding songs that upper primary [children] will like. So I can do more of this, but I really need to focus on the maths side of things which is really a priority ... and then the literacy and science.”

Jane has low self-efficacy in teaching music. While she acknowledged the importance of

music education she believes that she does not have the ability or opportunity to teach music, as articulated in the reasons she gave for not teaching more music than she currently does. The factors that can impact on positive self-efficacy are largely absent: Jane has not experienced any meaningful mastery experiences in teaching music, there have been no opportunities for vicarious experiences (she mentions not having the opportunity to talk to other teachers or a music specialist about what she might do in teaching music), there was no mention of physiological arousal, and the only verbal persuasion she experienced were some comments from children in her class about enjoying singing the John Legend song she selected.

### ***Ebony***

I sit down to talk with Ebony late on a Friday afternoon. She looks tired, so I ask if she wants to reschedule our interview. She says no, now is fine: "I'd be just as rundown if we did this pretty much any other afternoon." We sit down and Ebony tells me that she did not expect to feel this tired since deciding to go part-time as a teacher. She shares a year 4 class with another teacher who is also part-time. Ebony teaches the class three days one week and two days every second week. She decided to go part-time after the birth of her first child. She has been teaching part-time since the beginning of the year.

Ebony chose music as a subject in high school which she took as an elective up until year 10. It was at this time that she started taking clarinet lessons and playing in the school concert band. She still occasionally plays the clarinet. When I interviewed Ebony at the end of her third year teaching she talked positively about how she had learnt to use the Garageband app and then taught her class how to use it. They went on to compose music using this app for a multimedia project. She was very pleased with the results, as was the school principal. Ebony now tells me that she refined the project with a new class the following year, allowing children to spend more time composing music for the project that focused on promoting the school for prospective new students and their parents. "They were also sampling and using other music they found [on the Internet] ... we also found a new app which let them remix this music. The results were so good that my boss [the school principal] organized to have the videos on a loop in the school front office. They played for nearly a year, people loved them."

When interviewed at the end of her third year teaching Ebony spoke of her passion for using technology in her teaching and how it had allowed her children to be "musically creative." Ebony valued music as part of the curriculum, partly because she had learnt the clarinet and still played it. However, as the school had a performing arts teacher she was told by her mentor teacher that music was something she did not have to teach. As a result she had not planned to teach music. Rather, when she discovered the Garageband app she realized that this could be used as part of the larger multimedia project being done in class. She described it as "a natural fit" for the project.

I ask Ebony if she has continued using technology to allow children to compose music. She says, “No, not this year. I leave all music to the P.A. [performing arts] teacher. There just hasn’t been the time ... Being part-time [as a teacher] is hard, you don’t have the kind of freedom to plan and teach like you do when [you are] full-time with your class.” She goes on to explain that she has to plan everything with the teacher she shares her class with: “You have to, so you know everything that needs to be covered is done and to make sure you don’t repeat what she’s already done [with the class].” Ebony also explains that she did suggest to this teacher earlier in the year that they do some music with technology “but she wasn’t into this, [she] said we wouldn’t have time ... she’s really focused on maths and English, making sure we do all that and do it well. That’s really the priority, and I’ve learnt lots from her in teaching this, that’s been good.” As a result Ebony did not pursue her idea, even though she would still like to: “I really do [want to], but there just isn’t the time, there really isn’t.” She goes on to explain that “I’d be happy to teach [my class] music myself, but I can’t see that happening.” Her class, like all classes in the school, have a 45 minute lesson each week with the performing arts teacher. At the end of her third year teaching Ebony told me that she had clashed with this teacher when she decided to use Garageband with her class. She now tells me, “It got worse [between us] the next year when Rob [the school principal] showcased the multimedia projects [from her class] in the school office ... Margaret [the performing arts teacher] had a go at me about that, saying she should have been doing that ... [she] said she was the ‘expert’.” As Ebony says this she is clearly becoming agitated. She goes on to say: “I mean my kids hate going to her class ... they always come back saying it [the performing arts class] was boring ... all they do is music theory worksheets and sing kids’ songs that they [the class] really hate ... and it’s such a shame, because music can be so much fun, so good for children.” She tells me she is sure that she could plan a music program for her class that is “fun, creative, and where they’ll learn about music.” I ask if this would be more than using technology for composition. She replies, “Of course ... I get that the theory has to be taught, but I know all that from [learning] clarinet and doing music in high school. And I’ve still got notes from university about teaching music. So yes, I could do that ... but I can’t because of everything that’s happening now [at school].”

Ebony has high self-efficacy regarding her potential to teach music. This is due to mastery experiences in the past (her third and fourth year teaching), along with verbal persuasion from the school principal. However, Ebony feels she is unable to teach music for a range of reasons including time factors (time needed to plan her teaching with the teacher she shares a class with; time devoted to literacy and numeracy teaching) and the presence of a performing arts teacher in the school who is responsible for the school’s music education program. The negative verbal exchanges she had with the performing arts teacher about her teaching music in her classroom in the past, alongside negative feedback from students in her class about the

performing arts lessons they are currently attending, have contributed to Ebony wanting to teach her children music. However, she seems resigned to not doing this due to the constraints mentioned.

### ***Simon***

When I meet Simon in his classroom after school I see his guitar, out of its case, beside his desk. “Still playing then?” I say. He replies, “All the time.” Four years ago Simon started teaching himself to play the guitar, learning through a series of YouTube clips. He started bringing his guitar to school in his third year of teaching, and soon he was inviting children (upper primary) to join him in what he described as “loose jam sessions.” This included children playing guitar, bass guitar, keyboard and drums. These sessions resulted in a group of the young musicians performing as a group.

Simon has an ongoing position in an independent private school. He has been employed there for four years and teaches year 6. The children in his class attend a range of specialist lessons with specialist teachers, including a weekly music lesson (Simon is not expected to teach any music to his class). Simon did not study music in high school and had “very little” music in his pre-service teacher training. When asked to elaborate on the latter two years ago he said, “We had like maybe four hours on teaching music in the [entire] course ... for someone like me with no music that just had no impact, no impact on me at all.” Despite this, Simon said, “But I always was interested in the guitar, so I went for it ... Now I can’t see myself without it. I play it every day ... alone, in the band I’m in, with the kids [at school].”

The jam sessions at school that Simon started in his third year of teaching continue. “We get together two lunch times a week, sometimes more if we have a gig coming up.” The gigs he refers to include performances at the school assembly and at school dances. Simon says that the jam sessions have now evolved to a point where he plays a lesser role than he did two years ago. “Back then I was playing with them all the time, I was part of the whole gigging thing, playing guitar with the band that came together.” He says that nine months ago he began to feel that he wasn’t needed as much in this role: “There’s these two guys, Mitch and Steve [year six children], they’ve kind of taken over from me, they’re leading the whole thing ... So I’m pretty much there to supervise and basically just being a kind of resource guy ... I’ll find chord charts for songs they’re interested in [trying] on the Net, find clips of songs showing arrangements, tune instruments, that kind of thing.”

I mention that at the end of the third year teaching he said that he felt he could take the experiences he had with the jam sessions and teach music. I ask if he still feels this way. “Yes, definitely ... I can read music now, my singing’s much better than it was, I’m much better on guitar, so yes, I think I could. And I’ve started writing my own songs too, which has been

fantastic. And the kids in the band have started with this too. So it's not just covers [cover versions of existing popular songs], but a couple of originals too, even one of mine [original song]." Simon says that he began writing his own material as a result of feeling "like I wasn't needed as much with the jamming and rehearsals [at school] ... I wanted to do more." He was not sure what this would be until the music specialist at the school told him of an artist-in-residence program she had organized for the school. A local musician was going to be taking residence at the school for a term. He was mainly going to work with high school students on the school campus, focusing on music composition. "But Lynn [the music specialist] was great, she asked me if I'd like to work with Tim [artist-in-residence] and have him work with the kids in the band." Lynn explained that they could focus on songwriting, as this was something the children and Simon had not been involved in. "I liked the idea straight away. I've come up with a few riffs and a couple of chords that I really liked, but had no idea how you go from that to writing a song. So I was looking forward to it, and thought the kids would really get into it too."

Over a period of a term Tim the artist-in-residence worked with Simon and the children, attending the jam sessions one lunch time each week, and a half day on Saturday towards the end of term. "That Saturday was really great, it gave us time to develop all the ideas we'd had and do more writing with each other ... I took riffs, some chords and started writing lyrics, and then Tim helped me out with coming up with a tune to sing over it. He was really great, so much knowledge, and so supportive." Simon also talks of helping the other children with their compositions: "[I would help with] simple stuff, like if chords were too simple, I'd suggest an extra chord or a different sequence of chords ... and Tim was showing me chord stuff which I was showing them [the children] ... 7th and 9th chords, things like that." Simon speaks of receiving ongoing feedback about his songwriting from Tim. "He also showed us his YouTube channel where he posts lots of lessons about writing songs ... I used those a lot at home." He tells me that Tim is going to post a performance of the school band performing a song written by Simon, Mitch and Steve (the two year 6 children leading the jam sessions at school). Simon picks up his guitar and starts playing this original composition. He sings the first verse and chorus, then looks at me and smiles. "I love that bit, that end of the chorus, it gets me every time, that final chord." He thumps his chest, stressing how affected he is by this. "I'm so proud of that, and the boys are too ... they're now talking about wanting to be songwriters, I mean seriously they are talking like this could be something they do after primary [school], even high school."

While Simon has not been engaged in formal music teaching he has been responsible for starting, overseeing and maintaining an informal music learning environment for a group of children who learn existing popular songs and have started to write their own songs. Simon demonstrates high self-efficacy in this informal teaching role and has expressed confidence

that he could teach music in a more formal capacity. In terms of self-efficacy, Simon has experienced mastery experiences over a number of years, beginning with the initial jam sessions and culminating in a series of performances. This year he experienced a new form of mastery experience in successfully engaging in songwriting and helping children with their songwriting. Vicarious experiences contributed to these mastery experiences, namely observing and working with Tim, the artist-in-residence, and accessing his YouTube channel to learn more about songwriting. Simon experienced verbal persuasion from his students, in particular the two boys he wrote a song with. Lynn, the music teacher at the school, also provided verbal persuasion in encouraging Simon to take part in the artist-in-residence experience. Finally, Simon demonstrated physical arousal when performing the song he co-wrote with two of his students.

### **Reflections**

The five teachers provide contrasting pictures of self-efficacy in music teaching. The four key influences on self-efficacy as outlined by Bandura (1997) – mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal – were clear indicators as to whether these teachers demonstrated high or low self-efficacy in music teaching. As previous literature has demonstrated, mastery experiences – in particular ongoing mastery experiences – were most important in framing high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The two teachers who were highly self-efficacious in their music teaching, Melinda and Simon, exhibited all four key influences on self-efficacy. In contrast, the teacher with lowest self-efficacy, Jane, had not experienced any meaningful mastery experiences, vicarious or verbal experiences, or physiological arousal. Both Melinda and Simon also demonstrated the cyclical nature of high music teaching self-efficacy (Lummis & Morris, 2015) in that they continually built on their existing skills and knowledge to achieve mastery of a task (choral conducting for Melinda, songwriting for Simon). This relates to the importance of perseverance as being a product of a higher sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). That is, both Simon and Melinda persevered with some complex teaching and learning tasks that took them beyond their previous mastery experiences.

It should be noted however, that Simon's self-efficacy was specifically in relation to the informal music learning that he led/taught, as opposed to the more formal music teaching that Melinda was engaged in. Despite being highly self-efficacious, Melinda's story demonstrates tensions arising between being highly self-efficacious in music teaching and the reality of teaching in schools today. That is, being a part-time music specialist and part-time generalist teacher Melinda anticipates having to move her focus and efforts from music teaching to her generalist teaching, in particular the teaching of more privileged subjects such as literacy and numeracy. Despite all the support she has received for teaching music from her school principal, these "core" areas of the curriculum are seen as being of greater importance than

music, hence Melinda's belief that her self-efficacy in music teaching could become compromised. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy in Australian schools and schools in other countries such as the USA is driven by the standardised testing that occurs in these areas of the curriculum (Gerrity, 2009; Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013). Preparation for this testing often takes away from class time in other curriculum areas (Comber, 2012) such as music. This suggests that the lower status of music in primary schools can impact on self-efficacy in music teaching, as revealed by Garvis & Pendergast (2010). This was also seen in Ebony's story where she spoke of having to focus more on literacy and numeracy to the detriment of teaching music.

The identification of informal experiences in music teaching and learning as impacting (or potentially impacting) on high music teaching self-efficacy was also revealed, specifically in having the opportunity to talk to people within the school with some expertise about teaching music (Tanya, Jane) and using the Internet for communicating with others about music teaching or simply sourcing music teaching ideas and resources (Melinda, Tanya, Simon). These informal opportunities become increasingly important when research has clearly shown that preservice teacher education programs do not have the capacity to provide generalist graduates with the necessary skills and dispositions to teach music as graduates (Barton, Baguley, & MacDonald, 2013; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010, 2012; Hocking, 2009; Welch & Henley, 2014).

The presence of a music (or performing arts) specialist teacher in a school had varying impact on music teaching self-efficacy. Jane lamented the absence of such a specialist teacher, believing contact with such a teacher would increase her music teaching self-efficacy. For Tanya, the presence of a performing arts teacher in the school meant that she was prepared to try teaching music she felt comfortable with, but realised the specialist was there to do the music teaching she was not confident doing. Conflict between Ebony and the school's performing arts teacher was a factor in her wanting to teach music to her class (although she did not due to other factors), whereas the music specialist in Simon's school provided the opportunity for Simon to work with the visiting artist-in-residence and focus on songwriting with the children in the band he oversaw. These varied experiences with music and/or performing arts specialist teachers demonstrate that having a specialist music/performing arts teacher does not necessarily mean the generalist teacher will not engage with music teaching, as seen in previous research (Author, 2011; Berke & Colwell, 2004; Hash, 2009; Saunders & Baker, 1991). Although not teaching (formal) music education, both Ebony and Simon expressed the belief that they could potentially teach music to their respective classes if needed or if afforded the opportunity. This was largely due to prior mastery experiences in music teaching.

### In Conclusion

I came away from the interviews with these five teachers and the writing of their narratives with a sense of sadness for four of the five participants. With the exception of Simon, these teachers that I had known since the end of their first year teaching expressed varying degrees of frustration in what had begun as their positive attempts to teach music. As a result their self-efficacy, to varying degrees, was challenged. Generalist primary school teachers need support in teaching music. These five case studies have revealed that many factors can detract from their ability to successfully teach music. Teachers need the support of school administrators to teach music, have adequate resources to teach music, and have the time to teach music. The cases illustrate the importance of teachers having the opportunity to achieve mastery experiences in teaching music. Therefore teachers need the opportunity to observe successful music teaching, talk about music teaching with expert teachers, and access relevant professional development. Informal networks such as facebook groups have the potential of allowing novice teachers of music to interact and support each other and draw on the expertise of more experienced teachers of music. This is an area for future research, as is exploring how generalist teachers can work with music specialists to further their self-efficacy in music teaching. Ultimately their stories illustrate just how complex being a generalist primary school teacher is, with music teaching being just one (sometimes small) part of their teaching lives.

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| Patricia S. Campbell  | University of Washington, USA                        | Joe Norris               | Brock University, Canada                               |
| Katie Carlisle        | Georgia State University, USA                        | Peter O'Connor           | University of Auckland, New Zealand                    |
| Juan Carlos Castro    | Concordia University, Canada                         | Eva Osterlind            | Stockholm University, Sweden                           |
| Sheelagh Chadwick     | Brandon University, Canada                           | David Pariser            | Concordia University, USA                              |
| Sharon Chappell       | Arizona State University, USA                        | Michael Parsons          | Ohio State University, USA                             |
| Smaragda Chrysostomou | University of Athens, Greece                         | Robin Pascoe             | Murdoch University, Australia                          |
| Cala Coats            | Stephen F. Austin State University, USA              | Kimberly Powell          | Pennsylvania State University, USA                     |
| Veronika Cohen        | Jerusalem Academy, Israel                            | Monica Prendergast       | University of Victoria, Canada                         |
| Tracie Costantino     | University of Georgia, USA                           | Clint Randles            | University of South Florida, USA                       |
| Teresa Cotner         | California State University-Chico, USA               | Bjorn Rasmussen          | Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway |
| Melissa Crum          | Independent Scholar                                  | Mindi Rhoades            | The Ohio State University, U.S.A.                      |
| Victoria Daiello      | University of Cincinnati, USA                        | Martina Riedler          | University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, USA           |
| David Darts           | New York University, USA                             | Doug Risner              | Wayne State University, USA                            |
| John Derby            | University of Kansas, USA                            | Mitchell Robinson        | Michigan State University, USA                         |
| Ann Dils              | University of North Carolina-Greensboro, USA         | Joan Russell             | McGill University, Canada                              |
| Kate Donelan          | University of Melbourne, Australia                   | Johnny Saldaña           | Arizona State University, USA                          |
| Paul Duncum           | University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, USA         | Jonathan Savage          | Manchester Metropolitan University, UK                 |
| Laura Evans           | University of North Texas, U.S.A.                    | Ross Schlemmer           | Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.            |
| Lynn Fels             | Simon Fraser University, Canada                      | Shifra Schonmann         | University of Haifa, Israel                            |
| Susan Finley          | Washington State University, USA                     | Ryan Shin                | University of Arizona, USA                             |
| Jill Green            | University of North Carolina-Greensboro, USA         | Richard Siegesmund       | University of Georgia, USA                             |
| Eve Harwood           | University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, USA         | Tawnya Smith             | Boston University, USA                                 |
| Luara Hetrick         | University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA      | Robert Stake             | University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA        |
| Rita Irwin            | University of British Columbia, Canada               | Susan Stinson            | University of North Carolina-Greensboro, USA           |
| Tony Jackson          | University of Manchester, UK                         | Mary Stokrocki           | Arizona State University, USA                          |
| Neryl Jeanneret       | University of Melbourne, Australia                   | Candace Stout            | Ohio State University, USA                             |
| Koon-Hwee Kan         | Kent State University, USA                           | Matthew Thibeault        | University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, USA           |
| Andy Kempe            | University of Reading, UK                            | Rena Uptis               | Queen's University, Canada                             |
| Jeanne Klein          | University of Kansas, USA                            | Raphael Vella            | University of Malta, Malta                             |
| Aaron Knochel         | Penn State University, USA                           | Boyd White               | McGill University, Canada                              |
| Carl Leggo            | University of British Columbia, Canada               | Jackie Wiggins           | Oakland University, USA                                |
| Lillian Lewis         | Youngstown State University                          |                          |                                                        |