Exploring teachers' perspectives on the strengths and challenges of Indonesian gamelan music programs in Australian schools

Julia Pope
Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University and Hills International College, Jimboomba

Abstract

This article explores teachers' experiences of establishing and maintaining Indonesian gamelan music programs in Australian schools focusing on their views of the strengths and challenges of those programs. By analysing these experiences, I argue that we can discover important indicators of the factors which affect the long-term vitality and sustainability of such programs. Knowing and understanding these factors helps teachers and school management who may want to establish or maintain a gamelan program in their school. Gamelan programs in schools are valuable as they can be an important step in developing intercultural understanding in students and promoting cultural diversity in the school curriculum. I start with an overview of cultural diversity in music education and my own connection with the topic. I then discuss the qualitative methods used for my research. I interviewed 23 teachers across 16 Australian schools over a period of 10 months in 2017-2018. This is followed by a discussion of the participating teachers' experiences of teaching gamelan in their schools and what, in their view, are the strengths and challenges of those culturally diverse music programs. I then summarise the findings of my research, offer some possible typical characteristics of a vital and sustainable gamelan program in a school and give suggestions for steps to take to ensure a successful and long-standing program. It is hoped these findings help teachers and school management to both establish, and maintain, effective gamelan programs in their schools.

Key words: Cultural diversity, Indonesian gamelan, Music education

Introduction

Increases in the cultural and ethnic diversity of many societies since the mid-twentieth century, and the reality of the multicultural classrooms within which many school teachers work today, have led many educators to believe there is a need for students, especially in Western countries, to develop greater intercultural understanding (Hayden & Thompson, 1998; Draisey-Collishaw, 2004). Many music education policies and curricula have changed to incorporate a broader view of what types of music should be studied in Western schools (Volk, 2004). This is especially true since the 1960s when many Western countries were influenced by the Tanglewood Declaration, the key outcome of the Tanglewood Symposium, a conference sponsored by the USA-based Music Educators National Conference, which stated, "Music of all periods, styles, forms and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety, including currently popular teenage music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures" (Choate, Fowler, Brown, & Wersen, 1967, p. 2).

One approach to developing more culturally responsive and diverse programs for music learning and teaching in the West has been to introduce into schools a range of musics and ensembles, such as Indonesian Gamelans. Gamelans are traditional instrumental ensembles from Indonesia and Malaysia consisting largely of bronze or iron metallophones,

gongs of various shapes and sizes, and drums. The accessible and tactile nature of gamelan instruments (Sanger & Kippen, 1987; Plantema, in Schippers, 1995) and the immediacy and physicality of the playing experience (Schippers, 2010; Eros, 2008; Mendonca, 2002) make it an effective and attractive medium with which non-Indonesian children can explore music of another culture (Ruffer, 2001; Goldsworthy, 1997). There are many relatively straightforward parts playable by children or beginners (Schippers, 2010), and the instruments are very well suited to being used as a rich sound resource for student composition projects (Lindblom, 2017; Diamond, 2000).

Gamelan can be found in many places outside of southeast Asia. Early uptake of this tradition outside of Indonesia first took place in formal diplomatic and education contexts, including Indonesian Embassies and Consulates, and Universities (Mendonca, 2015; Harnish, 2013). From here, interest in gamelan spread by various means including commercial recordings and expanding ethnomusicology programs (Chacko, 2014). Interest in this music continued to increase worldwide in the later decades of the 20th century and spread to semi-formal and informal community and educational contexts (Mendonca, 2002). Since the 1980s in particular, opportunities for teaching and learning gamelan have increased in many parts of the Western world (Mendonca, 2002).

The first set of gamelan instruments arrived in Australia in 1942. The instruments were brought to Australia by political prisoners evacuated from the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) prison camp at Boven Digul in Western New Guinea when the Japanese invaded the NEI (Kartomi, 2002). These were followed by many other sets in later decades brought by educators, performers, cultural tourists and other individuals. Many of these gamelan found homes in universities, or in Indonesian Embassies and Consulates in Australia. The physical proximity of Australia to Indonesia, the increasing interest in this type of music worldwide (Mendonca, 2002), and its suitability for educational settings, have undoubtedly all contributed to the acquisition of these gamelan.

Sets of gamelan can also be found in schools in Australia, though it is difficult to determine exactly when the first sets were acquired in this context. It may have been in a school in Geelong, Victoria in the early 1970s due to the pioneering work of Bapak Poedijono, a well-known and highly respected musician, puppeteer, composer and dancer and spent decades of his life bringing the culture of Indonesia to Australians. Poedijono was awarded an OAM in 1994 for his services to promoting Indonesia culture in Australia. Some of the schools with gamelan purchased the instruments through government funding such as that associated with the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy which was a feature of Australian school education from 1995-2002 (S. Bradshaw, personal communication, June 25th, 2018; Curriculum Corporation, 2003); others were donated or loaned to the school by a teacher who owned a set of instruments privately, or by members of the wider school community.

Today, school-based gamelan sets exist in a range of contexts. Some form the basis of vibrant and innovative educational programs with a wide-reaching impact, while others, after an initial period of activity, have spent years in school storerooms. The educational programs surrounding the gamelan in schools in Australia have varying degrees of success, measured not only in educational terms but also in terms of their vitality and sustainability. This article aims to generate insights into the factors that affect such vitality of these programs – a topic that has so far received little scholarly attention. The challenges facing gamelan programs in schools in Australia are likely to be indicative of challenges facing culturally diverse music programs more generally, in Western formal and semi-formal music education (as I will argue later). Understanding these challenges could help educators realise the potential of these ensembles.

My own interest in Indonesian gamelan stems from attending a series of workshops learning to

play the instruments in Glasgow, Scotland in 1990 while I was a student at University there. I then took up the Darmasiswa scholarship opportunity, an Indonesian government-funded program with the purpose of promoting and increasing the interest in the language, art and culture of Indonesia among young adults of other countries. I studied in Surakarta (Solo) in Central Java from 1993-1995 and studied *Karawitan* (gamelan music) at the tertiary institution now known as ISI (Institut Seni Indonesia). Since then, I have taught gamelan in schools (both primary and secondary), special needs groups of all ages, tertiary institutions and community groups. As my experience grew, I became interested in exploring gamelan from an academic perspective and am now a researcher in the areas of Indonesian gamelan music and music education. As a music teacher, I teach gamelan both as a regular part of my secondary school's music program, and as an extra-curricular activity in the primary school sector of a Primary to Year 12 International school in Australia.

In this article, I use school-based Indonesian gamelan music programs as a case study to explore the experiences of teachers in the context of teaching culturally diverse music in schools in Australia. By 'school-based music programs' I mean the music teaching and learning that occurs both in classrooms and in extra-curricular music activities in schools. I use the term 'culturally diverse' music to mean music from traditions other than Western Art and Western Popular music, in the sense that these musics or traditions bring diversity to what might be an otherwise culturally monochrome music education. Examples include Australian Aboriginal music, West African Mande music and Brazilian Samba music. I recognise that this label is problematic, in similar ways to the label 'world music' being problematic, a matter explored at length in the media and literature in recent years (Bohlman, 2002; Schippers, 2010; Gillett, 2019): 'culturally diverse' is not the way that exponents of these traditions would conceive of their music, and the label has potential to 'other' these musics in non-productive or even harmful ways. I choose to use the term here for continuity reasons since others use it (Cain, Lindblom, & Walden, 2013; Joseph, 2016), while recognising that no term, perhaps, is perfect.

In the course of several years' research on school-based gamelan in Australia, I encountered a wide range of types of Indonesian gamelan ensembles in the schools I visited. These included Balinese Gong Kebyar, Balinese Beleganjur, Central Javanese – Solo style, Central Javanese – Jogya style, and Sundanese (West Java) Gamelan Degung. These ensembles differed from each other in terms of the type and number of metallophone instruments, the tuning and the style they were decorated in. While Central Javanese – Solo style was the most common type, the considerable range of other types show the diversity of cultures represented under the banner of 'Indonesian Gamelan'. I chose to focus on gamelan as a case study for this research because of the diversity of gamelan ensembles and gamelan programs in Australian schools, and because gamelan is currently one of the most profiled non-Western (culturally diverse) genres of music represented in Australian schools.

Following this introduction, there is an overview of cultural diversity in music education, as a way to understand the context of the research study. I then discuss the qualitative methods used for my research. This is followed by an analysis and discussion of the key strengths and challenges that the teacher-participants in this study experienced when teaching gamelan programs. I then summarise my findings, reflect on the generalisability and limitations of my approach, offer some implications – including possible typical characteristics of a vital and sustainable gamelan program in Australian schools – and give suggestions for steps to take to ensure a successful and long-standing program. It is hoped these findings help teachers and school management in Australia to establish and maintain effective gamelan or other culturally diverse music programs in their schools.

An overview of culturally diverse music education

A convenient starting point for an overview of cultural diversity in music education in modern times is the 1967 Tanglewood Declaration (Volk, 2004; Schippers & Campbell, 2012; Choate et al., 1967). This declaration set the stage for change in the United States and further afield, including countries such as Australia, Canada and the UK, and gave music educators the impetus to realise this new vision of music education. Despite the importance of the Declaration, it took many years before the teaching of culturally diverse music in schools became relatively widespread in many parts of the world, including Africa, Asia and Latin America. Schippers and Campbell (2012) comment that the process of making school music curricula more multicultural was sped up considerably once "government and educational policies started recognising the importance and realities of cultural diversity more widely" (p. 89) from the mid-1970s onwards. There was an inevitable delay (Volk, 2004; Cain, 2011) due to the time needed for the change to filter through from policy to curriculum, then via teacher training to the classroom, and the practicalities involved such as teaching resources, teacher training programs, etc.

In the 1980s, there was significant funding available for educational initiatives in Western countries in particular, and an abundance of resources was created for teachers to use. In contrast, the early 1990s were a period of economic recession in many parts of the Western world, including in the USA, Canada, UK, Finland, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. In the USA at least, this partially curtailed the previously generous funding available for multicultural education. This was not the case in Europe where there had been an explosion of carefully conceived new initiatives and projects since 1990. The conference proceedings from *The Second International Symposium: Teaching Musics of the World* that took place in Basel, Switzerland in October 1993 (Lieth-Philipp & Gutzwiller, 1995) contain many detailed and innovative examples of culturally diverse music teaching practice in Europe (and a few from the USA).

The seminal edited volume *Cultural Diversity in Music Education: Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century* (Campbell et al., 2005) provides a more recent review of innovations and issues in the field. In the introduction, Campbell and Schippers (2005) comment that there is a "receding emphasis on notation and analytical teaching methods in the way material is being presented to learners" (p. v) in some areas. They report on some very successful projects and trends in Europe which are enduring and thriving. They also note that from the late 1990s "Xenophobia has struck in even the most tolerant environments, and the fear-driven desire to return to an idyllicised monocultural past is a force to be reckoned with in maintaining established projects and developing new initiatives" (p. vi). They comment that there is a deeper understanding of the fact that "many types of music transform in new times and places" (p. vi) and so there is correspondingly less angst over the issue of authenticity, often a common stumbling block for teachers. In response to teachers' commonly voiced concerns about issues of tradition and authenticity when teaching world musics, Schippers (2010) advises to "not get stifled by these concepts … read about them, think about them, and boldly present the recontextualised version of the music you have chosen to work with in the classroom" (p. 169).

From this brief overview of culturally diverse music education in schools, it can be seen that though there has been debate and critical thought on this topic for many decades, the field is still evolving. My research project sits within this dynamic area, and through the use of teacher voices, hopes to add more detail and depth to the understanding we have of teachers' lived experiences when trying to establish, maintain and teach these music programs. By doing this I hope to encourage "the essence of boldness" (Cain et al., 2013, p. 86) in music teachers in Australia (and around the world) when they are taking their "first

courageous steps" (p. 86) towards establishing and maintaining a culturally diverse music program in their schools.

Methodology

The research project I report on in this article is part of a wider PhD project on teaching gamelan in schools in Australia and New Zealand. Both projects are informed by critical reflection on my own experiences over 25 years of teaching and learning gamelan in educational contexts. This helped me to make a clear and deep connection between my own lived experiences and those of my interviewees. For this research project, I aimed to explore the experiences of teachers when establishing and maintaining a gamelan program in their schools. I used a subset of the data collection and analysis processes that I utilised for the wider PhD project. I made use of the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews to collect data. Fife (2005) explains that semi-structured interviews, using mostly open-ended questions, "are a chance to develop a conversation along one or more lines without most of the usual 'chatter'" (p. 95) that can distract from the focus of the interview. The interviews aimed to study in some depth the experiences of gamelan teachers in schools in Australia, with an effort to solicit a wide range of views of gamelan programs. I undertook the interviews over a 10-month period in 2017-2018. They were done mostly in person, on site at many of the schools. Some of the interviews were written and one was done over the phone. As well as visiting schools and speaking with teachers with active gamelan programs, I was also keen to visit schools that had gamelan that were underused or not used at all. Interviewing teachers in that situation was invaluable in helping determine the challenges involved in maintaining an active gamelan program.

I used a variety of strategies to determine which schools and individuals to contact about participation in this project. I used my personal and professional networks of gamelan contacts, the online Gamelan Listserv community, and internet searches to find appropriate participants. I focused on finding schools with gamelan and finding the teachers who taught gamelan in those schools. At each interview I employed a snowball sampling technique (Atkinson & Flint, 2004) for further recruitment of participants by asking if the interviewee knew any other schools with gamelan and the relevant teachers.

My research identified 26 schools in Australia with gamelan. I completed interviews at 16 of those schools with a total of 23 teachers and completed 5 other interviews with a total of 8 people giving me insight into the history of gamelan in schools in Australia. In total, I undertook 23 face to face (some with two or more participants) or phone interviews of about one hour each and three written interviews. The general line of questioning included prompts such as: *Why does the school have a gamelan? What does the school want/hope to achieve by teaching gamelan? Why do you teach gamelan? What are the benefits and downsides? If you were giving someone advice on starting up and maintaining a gamelan program, what would you say was important to ensure success? Do you have the physical infrastructure and physical resources you need to run the program? What are the wider school community's attitudes towards the gamelan program? Do they support having a gamelan at the school?* I found that often after a few initial questions, many other questions were answered in the flow of the conversation. The face-to-face interviews were transcribed by an external service and I then analysed the transcriptions and the written interview answers using thematic coding (Fife, 2005). In the remainder of this article, participants are coded as T1-T22, preserving anonymity in line with the ethical clearance protocol for the research.

Findings and discussion

In this section, I present teacher voices about the strengths and the challenges of gamelan programs that they have experienced. By focusing on using teachers' own voices to describe their

lived experiences of establishing and maintaining culturally diverse music programs (in this case, Indonesian gamelan) in schools, I hope to make authentic and meaningful statements about these participants' experiences and perceptions about how to make these programs successful. These insights in turn could help other teachers and schools create and maintain successful programs, thus helping to promote intercultural understanding and culturally diverse teaching and learning in Australian schools. This section is in two parts. The first examines teachers' perspectives on the strengths (or positive aspects) of specific successful gamelan programs; the second examines perspectives on the challenges and limitations of those programs.

Strengths and positives of specific programs

The strengths or positive aspects of successful gamelan programs in schools can demonstrate what is important to cultivate or focus on when establishing and maintaining a culturally diverse music program. One of the most memorable experiences I had in interviews was experiencing the passion, knowledge and commitment of the teacher(s) to their programs. I experienced this through the way they talked about their teaching, the instruments and their classes. This was not the case for all schools, but it was a strong feature of schools with successful gamelan programs.

One teacher described how she feels about being able to teach gamelan in her school:

> *I am extremely fortunate to have had such a wealth of experience in the music and culture and to own a gamelan and feel privileged that I can pass some of my knowledge and experience on to my students. It's* [teaching gamelan] *always positive and one of the highlights of my teaching year.* (T4)

Another teacher described the value of having a knowledgeable gamelan musician available to teach the gamelan:

> Author: *So Ayu being here is quite crucial to the program to really flourish?*
> T11: *Yeah, absolutely. The teachers would find it hard to prepare and spend time. They certainly couldn't compose like Ayu does, the fusion piece that she would work on with the high school students, none of us would have the capacity to do that …. Ayu is essential for the more advanced and the more creative work that the students do with the gamelan.'*

As evidence for the importance of school management support (through generous funding) as well as the benefits of having a knowledgeable gamelan musician as a teacher, one participant (T13) commented that her school used to have a visiting artist come from Ubud, Bali every year. The school paid for him to come and instruct all classes for a single term.

Many teachers mentioned the strength of both school management support and support from the wider school community for their program. The following two quotes are indicative:

> *They* [school management] *were welcoming. When I first got it, it was incredibly – they just thought it was so unique, so I invited a whole load of the administration to come and listen to the result, and they were thrilled ... they were thrilled to the point that there was an art exhibition that's held annually and they asked us to perform at the opening of that… which was really nice.* (T4)

> *Whenever we've put it in front of the wider community, the response is always really positive and they're amazed because it's so unusual. They can see the complexity and they can see the refinement the students have to get to, the level they have to get to.* (T5)

One teacher described what the gamelan represents or symbolises in their school, demonstrating very tangible management support for the program:

> *It promotes that commitment we have to the international dimension of an education, to learning about other countries and cultures.'* [The gamelan is] *'a visible sign that we are committed to capturing children's curiosity about other countries and cultures.* (T10)

Some teachers described their fortunate position in terms of space allocated for the gamelan:

> *In terms of space, we're very fortunate, extremely fortunate that we have enough space and enough store room as well.* (T2)

Teachers at four of the schools stated that they owned the gamelan themselves and a number of other teachers mentioned that their school owned the instruments. This clear ownership position provides some certainty and confidence about being able to access and use the instruments long term in those schools.

To summarise, the most common strengths or positives of the program that the interviewees discussed or demonstrated included: the teacher(s) being passionate, knowledgeable and committed to the program; management support for the program; a dedicated space for the gamelan; the long term availability of the instruments, either due to them being owned by the school (not just loaned) or owned by the gamelan teacher themselves (four of the schools have gamelan that are owned by the gamelan teacher). Further discussion of the importance of these and how to enable them to happen in a school are discussed later this article.

Challenges or limitations of specific programs

The purpose of identifying common challenges or limitations that interviewees faced was to try to pinpoint exactly what challenges are likely to arise when establishing and/or maintaining a culturally diverse music program, such as gamelan, in schools. Once these likely challenges are identified, targeted action can be planned to try and alleviate or avoid such things occurring thus supporting the vitality and sustainability of these programs.

Many teachers interviewed for this research commented on the difficult situation that existed at their schools in terms of the space available (or lack thereof) for the gamelan. Some went further to reflect on the implications that has for the status of the gamelan at their school:

> *We need a space. We need a space. Yeah, because I can teach – anyone can teach a lot of protocol and a lot of respect and cultural background, but if it's – but if there's not a space being held for that gamelan, then it's very hard for them to come into honouring what it is, a privilege it is to learn.* (T9)

> *Space is at a premium here at the moment … That dividing wall there is not soundproof and if you're playing gamelan without a sound proof wall then it's not going to work … That's been a big issue for us.* (T14)

> *Then our class sizes changed and then I came into this room now, which I can't have a gamelan set up in here. There's no room.* (T1)

Many teachers mentioned the lack of time available in the school day, both in terms of the curriculum and extracurricular activities, for gamelan to be taught:

> *Time is a major issue, and priority* [of Indonesian language teaching at the school and by association gamelan] *is a major issue.* (T1)

Teachers mentioned their lack of confidence when teaching the gamelan. This was based on them feeling that they didn't have sufficient expertise and/or training in how to teach gamelan, as the following conversation between two gamelan teachers at a single school demonstrates:

> *T15: I would feel a little bit embarrassed, offering it at a very big event, because it's an experience and it's an exposure, but I'm not sure I'm doing it really – if... T16: We're doing well.*

> *T15: What we do is great for the box it has to tick. Have they – do they have a positive attitude to the gamelan, but if any expert came in they'd probably be able to say, that's not how you do it.*

A teacher who was part of a group of schools that shared a gamelan between them commented that transportation of the instruments was often a problem along with issues of damage incurred when the instruments were at other schools:

> *Getting it* [the gamelan] *from one school to the other was always quite a task and then they end up – each time it would come back … I'd be really disheartened at how damaged things looked.* (T8)

A number of teachers implied or explicitly mentioned a lack of clear school management support for the gamelan program and commented on the difficulties this caused:

> *Due to the nature of the leadership of the school being up in the air, the continuation of the Indonesian Language program in itself is somewhat tenuous as it was the Principal that called for the change. Without the focus of Indonesian being here at school there might not be an uptake of the focus*

to utilise the gamelan without someone who can teach it whether that's from an artist in residence or a schoolteacher. (T9)

A few schools commented on their instruments needing servicing and not having the means to do this. Gamelan instruments commonly need minor repairs and re-tuning every 3-5 years. This is a skilled job and it is difficult to find someone outside of Indonesia that can do this.

Repair is a big issue for the gamelan, as we have neither the skill nor the knowledge on how to do this. (T17)

While the vast majority of schools said their students enjoyed learning gamelan, a small number of schools mentioned that some students are not particularly enthusiastic about playing the gamelan:

Lots of kids here … because they're not playing it properly, complain that it's too noisy … it's just everyone playing at once. (T15)

*Others are a little disrespectful and dismissive and are not open to a new musical experience. The negative attitudes are seen more in Year 9/10 students and less in younger and older classes. (*T3)

To summarise, the challenges or limitations that teachers experienced in establishing or maintaining a gamelan program in their schools included: a lack of dedicated space; noise levels; insufficient time in the timetable and for extracurricular; lack of expertise; difficulties transporting the gamelan; lack of management support; skill and knowledge for repairs, servicing and tuning; lack of student enthusiasm and/or respect for the gamelan.

Characteristics of a vital and sustainable school-based gamelan program

Having briefly presented some experiences of teachers in relation to the strengths and challenges they encounter in teaching gamelan programs in schools, I now draw on those insights to propose steps to take to ensure a successful and long-standing program. Inspired by a critical reflection on these strengths and challenges, and based on the interview data, the following points (in italics) offer one possible set of descriptors of a vital and sustainable gamelan program in a school and I address how each one may be achieved.

Committed, supported, knowledgeable, inspired, creative teachers (more than one) with in-country experience of the music culture in Java or Bali and access to further learning or professional development as needed. The presence of expert teachers at the school is fundamental to the success of a program. These teachers also need to be passionate about the music they are teaching and have a strong belief in the importance of a gamelan program in their school. They also need access to further resources and learning opportunities as needed and wanted. Experts in specific music cultures outside of the country or region that the music is from are rarely abundant. Finding experts who are also qualified teachers makes the search more difficult. Some flexibility and creativity in finding appropriate teachers is therefore needed. Indonesian community leaders can be approached to ascertain if they know of any expert musicians who could teach in the school. The class could then be supervised by a qualified teacher shile being taught by the community-based expert. *Strong and tangible management support* is needed for teachers to be able to travel to Indonesia for further professional development. Ideally, this would be funded by schools themselves or by grants from appropriate authorities. A number of schools I visited had provided funds for their teachers to visit Java or Bali for further lessons on gamelan. Other schools had arranged for *visiting artists, musicians and dancers at the school from time to time* for example Artists in Residence programs, so that expert musicians from Indonesia could spend time at the school teaching the students. Some schools had the same expert Indonesian teacher every year for one term for a number of consecutive years enabling the building of a strong knowledge base amongst teachers and students.

Strong and tangible management support. Many interviewees mentioned that this point is fundamental for the success of a gamelan program. It can be encouraged and nurtured by

prestigious performances from time to time combined with regular performances 2-3 times a year. These performances provide the ideal opportunity for *strong visibility of the program's activities through frequent promotion of them in the appropriate channels* (e.g., assemblies, school newsletter, school facebook page). These performances can be facilitated by *teaching gamelan as part of the curriculum, as well as running extra-curricular gamelan performing group(s).*

Good quality, well-maintained instruments permanently set up in a beautiful, valuable, dedicated space decorated with contextual cultural items – textiles, art items, photos etc. Strong school management support and a clear valuing of the program is needed for this to happen. It requires the availability and prioritising of funding for the instruments in the initial stages, and then for the ongoing maintenance of those instruments. It also concerns the availability and prioritising of space at the school. Teachers also need to have cultural knowledge and cultural contacts in order to obtain appropriate cultural items for display in the area around the instruments. This suggestion helps the instruments to be *seen as an integral part of the school – not something 'other'.* These suggestions, together with *strong and tangible management support*, and *committed, supported, knowledgeable, inspired, creative teachers,* create *long term confidence in the program continuing.* Engendering this confidence is another step towards a vital and sustainable program.

Keen, respectful students. Students will often take their attitude cues from the adults around them. If the teacher and the school clearly value and respect the instruments (shown by how the instruments are housed and treated), and the opportunity to teach and learn them, then most students will be keen and respectful. Issues can arise when students echo xenophobic or racist comments heard in the wider community or within their own families about the culture which the instruments are from, or comments of a more general nature implying that other cultures have less value and complexity than mainstream Australian culture. These comments should be challenged immediately by the teacher if and when they arise. They can be briefly explored or unpacked and more appropriate attitudes can be suggested. Having *sufficient instruments for each child to play (one child per instrument)* also helps with keeping students engaged and keen and encourages a feeling of ownership in the students.

Enjoyable, meaningful lessons that maintain students' interest – fun and creativity combined with depth of understanding and skill building. This requires a creative, skilful and experienced teacher. It is also an ideal topic for professional development sessions within Australia given by other teachers of gamelan. These could develop from a formal network established for teachers of gamelan programs in schools. This leads to another step that can be taken to ensure the vitality and sustainability of the program: *The teachers belong to a supportive professional network consisting of other gamelan teachers in schools/educational institutions.* A number of less experienced or confident teachers mentioned that a professional network for gamelan teachers, including mentoring opportunities, would be very useful for them and would give them more confidence in delivering the program. I hope this will be set up in the near future as one of the outcomes from the larger research project that this article is a part of.

Plenty of time for creativity and composition as well as learning traditional pieces. This is closely related to the point in the previous paragraph. Having sufficient time allocated to the program is a crucial element in its success. Students need enough time to learn the basic playing skills and some traditional or classic pieces, but then also time to experiment with the instruments and to create their own compositions. This creative element in the lessons often leads to a much greater feeling of ownership and engagement with the music enhancing the longevity and perceived value of the program.

No curriculum or policy document type impediment to the program. This depends on the jurisdiction within which a school resides but throughout

my research in Australia I found no example of a curriculum document or policy which discouraged the teaching gamelan music. The extent to which the different states and territories encouraged it varied considerably. Nevertheless, it is vital that there is no official or formal impediment to the teaching and learning of gamelan music within a school in order to be able to sustain an active program.

Conclusion

The characteristics of a vital and sustainable gamelan music program described in this article mirror the requirements of many types of programs that could be set up in schools. Issues such as needing committed, knowledgeable teachers, sufficient time and space, access to quality resources, and strong management support are familiar to anyone working in education. While caution should be exercised in generalising to other kinds of music programs or other geographical contexts, each of which will have unique contexts and influencing factors, I argue that the issues that these gamelan teachers have experienced are likely to have many commonalities with the experiences of teachers of other types of culturally diverse music. For example, the programs all take place in a school context, with likely similar issues of appropriate personnel, resourcing, and school community attitudes. Further research is needed to explore the extent to which these insights are applicable to programs involving culturally diverse music other than gamelan.

In addition to the possible applicability of these findings to other types of culturally diverse music programs, there are a number of gamelan programs in schools in the UK, Canada, New Zealand, the USA and other countries around the world and the insights on the Australian situation presented in this study may have wider applicability to gamelan programs in those other countries. This is another area recommended for future research.

This article has given insights into the factors impacting gamelan programs in Australian schools. Educators must be confident and assured in their demands for such programs to exist and to be appropriately supported. Challenges to these programs should be anticipated and responded to by both teachers and their school management. I hope that the knowledge gained from this article helps educators to overcome challenges to the vitality and sustainability of gamelan programs in their schools and thus help them to either establish, or to continue and develop further their gamelan or other culturally diverse music programs.

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Julia Pope *is a PhD candidate at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. She teaches Javanese Gamelan at the Conservatorium and is Head of Faculty – Arts and Technology at an independent international school near Brisbane. She also holds roles within the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority as part of the quality assurance process for Senior Secondary Music. She holds a Master of Arts, a Master of Education and a first class honours degree in Ethnomusicology. Her areas of interest are Indonesian music, cultural diversity, music education, and ethnomusicology.*