

“We don’t sound as good without you”: Teachers’ Understandings of the Benefits of

Music Education for Wellbeing

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Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the School to restrict access for a period of time.

Signature

Kristina Phillipson

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Abstract

In response to the increasing standardisation of school curricula and subsequent perceived marginalisation of arts education, there has recently been extensive research into the academic, social and emotional benefits of music education in schools. There have, however, been few studies investigating teachers' perspectives on these potential benefits. Further, although middle childhood is a key developmental period, there have been few studies on the benefits of music education in the primary school years specifically. Research into music education is typically correlational and often of poor design and transferability. As such, the present study approached music education qualitatively and aimed to explore teachers' understandings about whether music education influences students' wellbeing. Further, it aimed to explore the barriers and facilitators to music education in schools. Eight participants were interviewed, including three general classroom teachers and five specialist music teachers. Analysis of the data resulted in the identification of five themes: 'music education has many benefits for primary school children's wellbeing,' 'music is more than just music,' 'music education in primary school isn't valued,' 'there are numerous practical barriers to delivering music education' and 'champions of music facilitate music education.' The results found that teachers see the benefits of music education in a framework that mirrors frameworks of wellbeing in the literature more broadly: they see it as providing balance, and as realising potential, helping students to cope with stress and to be productive. Findings indicate that music education has extensive, holistic benefits for primary students' social and emotional wellbeing.

“We Don’t Sound as Good Without You”: Teachers’ Understandings of the

Benefits of Music Education for Wellbeing

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Education policy and practice have gone through significant changes in the last twenty years, shifting from a focus on vocational preparation and academic ability (Robinson, 2015), to a broader social focus, including responsibility for students’ wellbeing (Chapman et al., 2018) and a need to educate the ‘whole child’ (Garcia & Weiss, 2016). While standardisation and high stakes testing, such as the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Australia, are still common practice in schools in many countries, education curricula have increasingly also included wellbeing education, and an increased emphasis on students’ social and emotional capabilities. Relatedly, recognition that the arts have many psychosocial benefits for students has seen a policy push for more inclusion of the arts in schools, and of music in particular (Croom, 2015). Generally, however, this inclusion in policy has not resulted in an increase in the delivery of arts or music education in schools in reality. Moreover, research into the benefits of arts education broadly – and music education specifically - has been characterised by inconsistent methods and inconclusive results (Crooke & McFerran, 2016), frequently showing correlation between music and a range of academic, social and wellbeing benefits for students, but rarely showing causation (Foster & Jenkins, 2017). This is due in part to the subjective nature of music and the many confounds present, such as parental support and socio-economic status (Foster & Jenkins, 2017; Garcia & Weiss, 2016). Moreover, meta-analyses of music education research show substantial limitations in that research, including a failure to generalise findings between studies, and

small sample sizes (Foster & Jenkins, 2017; Huat See & Kokotsaki, 2015; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lincrin, 2013).

Despite some methodological issues, however, studies into the benefits of music education typically outline outcomes for children including increased cognitive, academic and psychosocial benefits including greater attention regulation, emotion regulation, prosocial skills, social competence, self-esteem, intrinsic desire to learn and engagement, and improved self-directed learning (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing, 2017; Costa-Giomi, 2004; Crooke & McFerran, 2015; Fiske, 1999; Foster & Jenkins, 2017; Hallam, 2010; Lee, Krause, & Davidson, 2017; Rickard et al., 2012). In recent decades, the growing international discourse concerning the benefits of music education in schools (both primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary), has crystallised into three distinct areas: extrinsic benefits relating to academic and cognitive outcomes, extrinsic benefits relating to social and emotional wellbeing, and intrinsic benefits of the enjoyment of music and aesthetics (Crooke, 2016). This study focused on extrinsic benefits of music education relating to social and emotional wellbeing, and on intrinsic benefits of music education, as these areas represent a particularly under-researched area in the literature to date. In addition, this project included a rarely-heard voice in this rapidly-changing environment - that of those who actually have to put policy into practice - teachers.

Specifically, this research aimed to explore teachers' understandings about how music education can influence students' wellbeing. Further, it aimed to explore the barriers and facilitators to music education in schools from the perspective of teachers.

1.2 A Note on Terminology: Wellbeing and Music Education

Wellbeing is a broad concept with many definitions in the academic and applied literature (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). Wellbeing has been variously portrayed as a balance between psychological, social and physical resources and challenges (Dodge et

al., 2012), as an engine driven by inputs, processes and outcomes (Jayawickreme, Forgeard, & Seligman, 2012), or as a process of accrual (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2015). Child wellbeing research often takes into account Bronfenbrenner's systems theory (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012), or the interdependencies of different aspects of children's lives, including home and school, as they develop (Fernandes, Mendes, & Teixeira, 2012), in recognition that wellbeing is context-dependent. This study will use as a theoretical framework the World Health Organization's definition of wellbeing as: "a state in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community" (World Health Organisation, 2014). Specifically, the focus will be on social and emotional wellbeing (SEW) as representing social, emotional and psychological functioning (Crooke & McFerran, 2016), while also taking into account the context-specific nature of SEW through consideration of school, home and community engagement (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012).

'Music education' within primary schools can cover a broad range of activities including band or orchestra practice, classroom instrumental lessons, group singing, listening to a performance or recording, or having an individual instrumental lessons. For this study music education was defined as any formal lesson involving musical concepts, including listening to music or playing an instrument. Activities not included in this definition of music education are the use of music as background to other activities, music activities undertaken during uninstructed free time, or the attendance of performances where there is no discussion of what was heard or learnt. In other words, for the purpose of this study, 'music education' means the conscious attendance to music and a formal effort on the teacher's part to guide learning about what was heard, played or written (Dinham, 2013).

1.3 Background Literature

1.3.1 Benefits of Arts Education in General.

Arts education, as with music education, has been characterised as having both extrinsic and intrinsic benefits. With regard to the value of intrinsic benefits, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) states that arts education is a universal human right (UNESCO, 2006), and the OECD's position is that the arts are "central to human civilization" (Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lincrin, 2013, p. 27). Intrinsic benefits include a tolerance for ambiguity and ability to think metaphorically (Ewing, 2010). It has been suggested that it is in the nuance of the arts that many of these benefits reside for students within schools. For example, as McDonald et al. (2017) indicated, there is a transformational quality of experimentation and working in the liminal space, which the arts are ideally suited to providing. Liminality, or a state of "betweenness" (McDonald et al. 2017, p. 102), arises in arts education from the tension between competence and experience, and can produce a creative edge between honoring the prescribed way to do something (paint, play) and the artist's own interpretation or method. Further, liminality in this context also refers to an in-between state of attention and abstracted absorption similar to that described as 'flow,' discussed below. This capacity of the arts to create liminality, researchers have suggested, is one of the primary ways that the arts influence the wellbeing of students. Further, the arts allow students to explore incompleteness, percolation and experimentation, and encourage resistance to being either right or wrong, as they offer opportunities for interpretation and contribution as much as for correctness. This leads to an argument that the arts are beneficial in and of themselves; that "the value of the arts for human experience is a sufficient reason to justify its presence in school curricula" (Winner et al., 2013, p. 249).

There is also an extensive body of literature regarding the extrinsic benefits to students of studying the arts in school, including socio-emotional benefits such as social connection (Fiske, 1999), self-esteem (Zarobe & Bungay, 2017), sense of achievement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), social engagement (Grossman & Sonn, 2010), improved mental health (Ennis & Tonkin, 2018), increased ability to critique ideas and situations and problem solving (Chapman, 2015), and teaching useful habits of mind such as observing, envisioning, innovating and reflecting (Winner & Hetland, 2008). In sum, the arts have been described as a means to “place the everyday in parenthesis and to ward off chaos without denying it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 36). Increasingly, the benefits of arts education are also framed in terms of preparing students for the ‘knowledge economy’ or teaching them ‘21st century skills’ such as creativity, adaptive expertise and innovation (McDonald, Aprill, Mills, et al., 2017; Winner et al., 2013).

1.3.2 Benefits of Music Education in Primary School.

A review of international studies into the benefits of arts education between 1995 and 2015 found that of 199 studies that met inclusion criteria, 70 investigated music education and of those, 30 were about primary school music education and 20 found a positive impact in various areas for students, including for self-esteem (Costa-Giomi, 2004), speech segmentation abilities (Francois, Chobert, Besson, & Schon, 2013), reading and pitch discrimination (Moreno et al., 2009), intelligence (Nering, 2002) and IQ (Schellenberg, 2004). Ten studies found no impact or mixed impact, and all of these studies were investigating the effect of music education on academic/cognitive measures such as mathematics ability, memory and reading ability. The studies finding no impact were found by Huat See and Kokotsaki (2015) to have small samples, to be only post-test design, and to have high attrition and high variation in effect size, amongst other shortcomings. Of the 20

that found a positive impact, only five were above ‘weak’ quality as rated by the review, being either ‘moderate’ or ‘medium weak’ (Huat See & Kokotsaki, 2015).

As evidenced in these and other, non-experimental, studies, the benefits to social and emotional wellbeing (SEW) of music education are similar to the benefits provided by other arts disciplines, but some factors about the nature of music make it unique. In particular, music is non-verbal and involves a particular modulation of attention and perception (Croom, 2015), which research has suggested helps to foster social bonding (Aultman, 2011). This benefit has been particularly found in recent research into social programs such as *El Sistema* in Venezuela, which offers instrumental tuition to children from lower socio-economic areas who may not otherwise have access to it, with the aim of creating increased social cohesion (Majno, Mariani, & Maria, 2012). Further, making music is recognized as one of the primary ways to experience transcendence (Wills, 2011) and flow, defined by Csikszentmihalyi as “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 36). Flow has been strongly correlated with SEW in both adults (Chirico, Serino, Cipresso, Gaggioli, & Riva, 2015) and children (Custodero, 2002).

As noted above, this study will focus on music education in primary school. Changes in social and emotional functioning occur rapidly during this period of development (typically ages five to 12 or 13), and many studies indicate that both the arts in general and music specifically have an influence on the development and SEW of primary school aged children. Positive connections between individuals and their environments have been found to be increased by music education, and to contribute to positive social and emotional developmental outcomes (Martin et al., 2013), including developmental indicators such as attachment, relatedness and goal attainment (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Finally, primary education is a time when a relationship with learning begins, and exposure to music education at this age can lead to engagement with music for life, which is associated with long-term overall

SEW (Foster & Jenkins, 2017). Despite this, the majority of the research on the benefits of music education to date has focused on gains in academic performance, with less attention being paid to the impact of music education on SEW (Rickard et al., 2012). This is partly due to the subjective nature of SEW, which makes measuring benefits in this area challenging.

1.3.3 Benefits of Music Education: Teachers' Perspectives.

There has been no known previous research focusing on teachers' perspectives of the benefits of music education for primary school students' overall wellbeing, nor SEW specifically. In research investigating teachers' perspectives on the challenges of delivering primary school arts education more broadly, Alter et al. (2009) highlighted ways teachers thought that arts education provided benefits for learning and development, such as development of foundational social and fine motor skills and enrichment of learning across the curriculum. An extensive Australian Government report into the state of music education also touched on teachers' perceptions of the benefits, which included learning ability, coordination, aural skills, self-discipline, behaviour patterns and self-image, and was seen to help to develop language, comprehension and thought processes (Pascoe et al., 2005).

1.4 Barriers and Facilitators: Teachers' Perspectives on Music Education

In addition to a lack of research on teachers' perspectives of the benefits of music education for SEW, there has also been little previous research into teachers' perspectives concerning the barriers and facilitators to delivering music education in primary school. Much of the existing research in this area considers preservice teachers' self-efficacy for teaching music, and some investigates preservice teachers' broader perspectives about music teaching, and principals' perspectives (Collins, 2016; Crooke & McFerran, 2015; De Vries, 2013; De Vries, 2017; Garvis, 2013; Garvis, Twigg, & Pendergast, 2011; Hennessy, 2000; Russell-Bowie, 2009). The small amount of studies investigating in-service teachers'

experience of barriers and facilitators noted barriers including lack of confidence, motivation and knowledge to deliver the curriculum successfully and inability to understand the curriculum, the ‘crowded curriculum’, inadequate teacher training, lack of available time to teach music, inadequate resources, and lack of professional development opportunities (Alter, Hays, & O’Hara, 2009; Collins, 2016; De Vries, 2011; De Vries, 2015; Garvis & Pendergast, 2012; Power & Klopper, 2011; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). A further barrier was the isolation which music teachers experience - as a specialist, you are rarely a member of a teaching team and lack the support of other like-minded teachers (Sindberg & Lipscomb, 2005).

Facilitators have been less frequently mentioned in previous research but include supportive leadership, and opportunities for in-service professional development (De Vries, 2015).

1.5 Context for Current Study

The current situation within education systems in Australia is such that while policy literature suggests music education enhances SEW (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011), research evidence supporting this link is considered both scarce and inconsistent (Crooke & McFerran, 2014), as highlighted throughout this chapter. What research there is, however, suggests that music education provides academic benefits and, to a lesser known extent, benefits to SEW also. Despite this, and despite the fact that 85% of Australians “agree that the arts make for a rich and meaningful life,” (Chapman, Wright, & Pascoe, 2018, p. 21) only 23% of government schools provide opportunities for meaningful musical participation, as compared to 88% in the private sector. In fact, an Australian government report into music education (Pascoe et al., 2005) found that Australian students could complete 13 years of education without participating in any form of music education. The reasons for this are many but include some that mirror research into teachers’

perspectives as discussed previously, that is: inadequate teacher education (Collins, 2016; S. Garvis & Riek, 2010; Power & Klopper, 2011), the crowded nature of the Australian Curriculum (Alter et al., 2009; Chapman et al., 2018; Power & Klopper, 2011), lack of space (Crooke & McFerran, 2015), the dominance in culture of written modes of expression (Alter et al., 2009), fear of the classroom being disruptive or too noisy (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008), and a perception that you need to be a specialist to teach music (De Vries, 2015; Power & Klopper, 2011). Another reason for the lack of delivery of music education despite recognition of its benefits could be the continued prevalence of research into discrete benefits of music, and the paucity of research taking a holistic view, looking into what it is about music that makes it valuable for students at a broader wellbeing level. Finally there is the barrier of federal and state funding, which is often tied to performance on data-driven measures such as National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests (Gonski et al., 2011), or initiatives relating to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) such as STEM Works (South Australia Department for Education, 2018). A recent review of funding (Gonski et al., 2018) indicates that in future, funding will be tied to measurements of individual students' progress, a difficult concept to measure in the arts, and a further illustration of the difficulty schools face in allocating time and resources to arts education.

1.6 Aims and Research Question

Few studies into music education have taken the perspective of teachers, or outlined their experiences of delivering music education, particularly in the primary school context. Moreover, much of the previous research has considered discrete benefits – often to academic outcomes – rather than holistic benefits associated with SEW. This research therefore took a qualitative approach in order to provide an opportunity to provide evidence concerning a more holistic view of music education. More specifically, this research aimed to explore

teachers' understandings about whether music education influences primary students' SEW.

Further, it aimed to explore the barriers and facilitators to music education in primary schools from teachers' perspectives in relation to including music within curriculum in schools.

Specific research questions were: 1) what are teachers' understandings of the benefits (if any) of music education to students' SEW, and 2) what do they experience as barriers and facilitators to delivering music education?

Chapter 2: Method

2.1 Participants

Participants in the study were both generalist ($N = 3$) and music ($N = 5$) teachers who had primary school teaching experience in the past 12 months, specifically of students in years two (when meaningful music education begins in primary school) to seven (the last year of primary school in South Australia). A total of eight participants were interviewed, three female and five male, with ages ranging from 28 to 63 years ($M = 43.63$, $SD = 11.02$). Two participants taught in the private system and six in the public/government system. Seven teachers were from South Australia and one from New South Wales (see Table 1 for details).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age	Type of teacher	Years teaching	System	Range of years taught
█	F	37	specialist	11	private	R*-12
█	F	58	generalist	32	public	R-2
█	F	63	specialist	38	public	R-7
█	M	37	specialist	5	public	R-7
█	M	47	generalist	22	public	R-6
█	M	42	specialist	15	private	R-12
█	M	28	specialist	2	public	R-7
█	M	37	generalist	13	public	R-7

*R refers to reception which is the first year of primary school in South Australia

2.2 Procedure

The study was approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee (H-2018-024). Participants were a convenience sample recruited through posts on the Facebook pages of Music Teachers of South Australia, the Association of Music Teachers of South Australia, Primary Teachers of South Australia, Australian Primary Teachers and the Australian Society of Music Education. A passive snowball sampling method of recruitment was also used, in which participants who had already been interviewed invited friends and colleagues to also participate.

Researcher (KP) interviewed the participants. The first interview was considered a pilot interview but as no changes were made to questions and as the participant met the inclusion criteria, the data from this participant was included in the study. All participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (See Appendix A). Seven

interviews were conducted over the phone and one in person. Interview times ranged from 30:53 minutes to 60:52 minutes ($M= 44:54$). The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of nine questions about teachers' general experiences teaching music, based on the literature outlined in the previous chapter. Specifically, interviews explored the mechanics of teaching, teacher training, professional development, teachers' conceptions of wellbeing and how/whether music education influences wellbeing. Teachers were asked about 'wellbeing' broadly, as opposed to 'social and emotional wellbeing,' in order gain an understanding of their conception of wellbeing in their own words, and the extent to which they felt that music education impacted upon the social and emotional aspects of wellbeing as compared to academic aspects. Interviews were flexible and allowed time for participants to dwell and expand on any areas of particular interest (see Appendix B for full interview schedule).

An audit trail was kept during the interview process, and after each interview the researcher made notes and reflections about the data, which was used to inform subsequent interviews. Data saturation, a point at which no new themes were seen, was reached after the eighth interview (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). In relation to reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2006), it is acknowledged that the interviewer had an active role in the interviews, not only by her participation in them but by the fact that the interviewer is herself a musician, a fact which was known by many of the participants. This may have meant that participants opened up more about their thoughts about music education, feeling that they had a sympathetic ear, or that there was some assumed knowledge and understanding. It is possible that participants talked more positively about music education than they may have otherwise due to the fact that they knew the researcher was a musician, or conversely that the researchers' status as a musician impacted upon her analysis and final thematic structure.

2.3 Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed and then codes, or aspects of the data that relate to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006), were identified from the transcriptions. Inductive thematic analysis (TA) was used to analyse the transcripts. TA is a flexible approach that allows the researcher to identify codes in the data, and to group these through shared meaning into themes. A seven-step process was used in analysis, as described by Braun & Clarke (2006): 1) Transcription by hand by the interviewer, 2) reading and familiarisation with the transcripts, 3) coding: complete, across the entire dataset, 4) searching for themes, 5) reviewing themes (performed by both researchers, who discussed and agreed upon the themes) 6) naming themes and subthemes and 7) writing/final analysis. Two groups were interviewed (general classroom teachers and specialist music teachers) with the intention of triangulating their responses, however initial coding indicated that themes were the same across both groups, and subsequently all participants were treated as one group.

A realist framework was used for the analysis of the data, meaning that the experiences and reality of the participants were reported directly.

Chapter 3: Results

Themes

Analysis of the data resulted in the identification of five themes, which were divided into two sections, mirroring the research aims of: 1) investigating teachers' understandings of music education and its impact upon social and emotional wellbeing, and 2) teachers' understandings of barriers and facilitators to music education. Themes identified under the first section were 'music education has many benefits for primary school children's wellbeing,' and 'music is more than just music.' Themes identified under the second section were 'music education in primary school isn't valued,' 'there are numerous practical barriers to delivering music education,' and 'champions of music facilitate music education.' These themes will be discussed in detail below.

3.1 Themes Relating to Teachers' Understandings of Music Education and Wellbeing

Two themes were identified relating to the first aim of investigating teachers' understandings of music education and its impact upon social and emotional wellbeing. These were 'music education has many benefits for primary school children's wellbeing,' and 'music is more than just music.'

3.1.1 Music Education has Many Benefits for Primary School Children's

Wellbeing.

In the interviews, participants were asked for their definition of wellbeing, and the variety of the responses reflected the multifaceted nature of wellbeing. Participants defined wellbeing in terms of having a balance between "highs and lows" (██████ general classroom teacher) or between being able to take risks and be positive, and having "a bit of stress and anxiety in your life" (██████ music teacher). In developing their definitions, participants noted that the concept of balance includes not always being happy, and involves management and awareness. ██████ for instance, stated that,

(You have) to know when the joy is there and to appreciate that but also you've got to know that it's not always going to be like that. But you have to know how to manage that. And get out of it. (██████ general classroom teacher, lines 1012-1013)

Other factors in participants' responses regarding wellbeing were resilience and ability to adapt (██████ general classroom teacher), and social skills, and persistence, including knowing "what to do when things go wrong" (██████ music teacher). Perspectives on wellbeing varied from a focus on individual aspects of students, as noted above, to a more institutional focus, in which wellbeing was "a focus on the student rather than the curriculum" (██████ music teacher).

In contrast to positive approaches, one participant used a deficit model, indicating that to him, wellbeing is "flourishing in the absence of abuse" (██████ general classroom teacher). ██████ went on to build a hierarchical picture of wellbeing, referring to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954) and stating that in the absence of abuse, and if your basic needs are met,

If you're not concentrating on that top end of that pyramid and trying to chase your next...chip, then, if you're in a position to try and fulfil that whole pyramid, then I think you have wellbeing.' (██████ general classroom teacher, lines 255-257)

Many participants indicated that they had not considered wellbeing in connection with music education before.

In terms of participants' perspectives of music education and its potential wellbeing benefits, while interview questions only mentioned the term 'wellbeing' broadly, responses generally oriented to the benefits of music education in terms of SEW specifically (although broader benefits to school were also outlined). More specifically, discussion of the benefits of music education centred around three main areas: 'social benefits of music education',

‘psychological benefits of music education’ and ‘benefits for learning and the school experience.’

3.1.1.1 Social Benefits of Music Education.

In relation to the benefits of music education on wellbeing, many participants highlighted the benefits to social dimensions specifically. For example, [REDACTED] highlighted the fact that music education provides an opportunity for students to experience an environment where:

...we're not all the same and everyone has got something to offer... and that's where the music is good ... you don't have to be the best recorder player but we don't sound quite as good without you. ([REDACTED] general classroom teacher, lines 1000-1003)

[REDACTED] outlined the ways in which preparing performances meant that students had to work together as a team:

I love the experience that kids get when they're working with each other and their connections they make and the communications they have and the negotiations they have. ([REDACTED] music teacher, lines 717-719)

Aspects of belonging and identity are part of the impact of music education on social aspects of wellbeing, as it provides an avenue for self-expression, or for having a different persona within a group than you might be in your regular class or elsewhere. Daniel mentioned this in relation to boys and how they might feel about singing, and social expectations on them:

It almost works well because it's not a formal lesson, it's just a thing and you just do it, it becomes really, really normal. And, like I have shown them videos of ... the Fijian national rugby league team singing at the World Cup last year, you know, I'm saying, just because you're a tough boy doesn't mean you can't sing, I said look at these tough boys sing. ([REDACTED] general classroom teacher, lines 61-65)

3.1.1.2 Psychological Benefits of Music Education.

Participants also frequently alluded to the psychological aspects of wellbeing as influenced by music education. These psychological aspects can be divided into three distinct areas: positive psychological aspects, growth mindset and the fact that experiencing challenges and overcoming them leads to positive wellbeing outcomes, and each of these facets are explored below in turn.

In relation to positive psychological aspects of wellbeing and music education, many participants referred to the capacity for music to ‘turn on a light’ for some students. Gloria described introducing recorder to a split Reception (first year of primary school)/Year One class for the first time:

Straight away there was a shift in the classroom... straight away we had joy, cos they all wanted to play, and... that feeling of accomplishment because they improved...you wouldn't believe how positive the whole experience is. ([REDACTED] general classroom teacher, lines 56-57, 76-77, 91)

Teachers frequently described how they tried to make music lessons fun for students, so they would associate music class with positive emotions. [REDACTED] stated that this positive association with music would in itself contribute to wellbeing:

Doing music with kids engages them. It gets them active, it gets them listening, it gets them focused in ways that they can't do anywhere else. And if you can do it in a way where they enjoy it and they look forward to coming to class then they have a positive association with music. And that's going to create a healthy wellbeing in them.

([REDACTED] music teacher, lines 217-220)

This was portrayed as in contrast to more traditional methods of teaching music, which were perhaps experienced by teachers themselves in their youth, as outlined by [REDACTED]

I guess also you know the number of times I hear people say oh I used to do piano, but I gave up music cos my teacher was too strict, so much academic heading for the exams like what's the point of this stuff, it's not actually fun it's a chore, that makes me cringe when I hear that sort of stuff cos you know, the amount of joy I get from music, I want to be able to show you that. (██████ general classroom teacher, lines 207-211)

Participants often mentioned the way in which music helps students to focus, and to be in the moment. James stated that this is an aspect of music, which he saw as unique: it only exists while it is being made. This causes the player to be focused in the moment. As ██████ noted:

The main thing for me ... that they get out of it, that they can't get anywhere else, is the ability to analyse something that they are doing objectively and subjectively at the same time... so it's unique because it's art that only exists while it's being made so that, yeah, it's just a very unique thing and they do get similar things out of the other arts, but I think they get it the most out of music. (██████ music teacher, lines 29-31)

Another psychological benefit was portrayed in terms the way music education could help in overcoming nervousness and anxiety, both in performance situations and in general:

When we go on to the festival theatre stage and we meet (the students) ... I had two last years that came up, they were holding on to mum and dad, got rid of mum and dad, and at the end when they came out they absolutely bounced across to them because they...they'd done it. And they knew that that was big. (██████ general classroom teacher, line 1541)

Music education was also seen by participants as an ideal environment for students to experience directly the benefits of a growth mindset, associated with positive psychology, or as ██████ put it: “the power of ‘yet’ as in ‘I can’t do it...yet.’” Music education was seen as

particularly important in relation to growth mindset because participants noted that it is ideally an environment in which it is permissible to make mistakes:

Really I think music is to be enjoyed. And I work really hard trying to create positive environments, positive language... if they are struggling with a task or a concept I use a lot of growth mindset sort of words, OK so we haven't got it 'yet'... you know, we're training our brain to listen to particular things and we don't always get it straight away and it's OK to make mistakes...so it's sort of like, OK well I got it wrong...but it's only because I, you know, I'm still learning. And it's not a failure. (■■■■ music teacher, lines 257-260)

Finally, participants mentioned that built into music education are progressive challenges, leading to a tangible sense of accomplishment, which in turn leads to increased confidence and associated wellbeing.

3.1.1.3 Benefits for Learning and the School Experience.

Participants also noted that music education was beneficial for learning and school experiences more broadly. In particular, participants often noted that music education was a different mode of learning, and that the learning came almost unconsciously while having fun, or as ■■■■ described it, it was like “sneaking the vegetables in with the spaghetti” (■■■■ general classroom teacher). Having fun was seen as a way to let go of burdens and thereby find a way to cope with mental health challenges students might be experiencing at school:

Yeah even with that though I mean, kids who are struggling with anxiety and depression and um...you know especially like kids with at home issues which is becoming more and more prevalent... Um, music can be one of those things where they can just let themselves go a little bit and they don't have to think so hard about everything and they can just be in the moment. They're having fun, they're enjoying themselves, it might be

the only bit of enjoyment they have all day... not that they're not having fun in the classroom but you know there's tasks to be done and we're just you know, we're making some sounds we're enjoying what we do, we're exploring, we're hands on, it's not always a think hard task. And sometimes that's something that kids who are having troubles um in any sort of way can just sort of let it all go for a little while ...and just not feel burdened by big issues. (██████ music teacher, lines 499-511)

Participants also alluded to the fact that music education can be a place for students who feel like they don't fit anywhere else to belong:

It's that community feel, you know, these kids come in and they're not all music kids, they're, you know some of the boys are there avoiding dance, some of the girls are there cos their friends are there, some of them are there because they just don't belong anywhere else, some of them are the little quirky sidekicks that you get, sort of wandering around the yard with you talking about something, I don't know unicorns and whatever they might be into that week, and there's all these little people that may not fit anywhere else and this is a really good place for them to fit. (██████ music teacher, lines 619 - 625)

For some students, music is uniquely able to set off a spark that “gives them a sense of purpose” (██████ general classroom teacher).

Participants frequently mentioned that music is another language, and that this made it a good subject for students who struggled with other aspects of their education, for example students with dyslexia or those for whom behavior at school may be a challenge.

Indeed, several participants outlined how music can help with classroom and behavior management, describing how it could change the mood of a room and make students calmer.

If I think in terms of you know just simple classroom management like I said with those songs that we sing, I think that's a wellbeing aspect because it just allows

them to just settle down and if they don't want to sing they don't have to sing, they can just breathe. (██████ general classroom teacher, lines 269-272)

Several participants alluded to their preference for play-based learning and inquiry-based learning, and saw music as an ideal platform for this. As they pointed out, “we play music and we play with toys, we don't work music.” (██████ music teacher)

Finally, participants pointed out that, being unique, music provided a choice, or an option for learning, so that students with different abilities and interests and different rates and modes of learning could be included and catered for, resulting in increased motivation to learn.

3.1.2 Music is More than Just Music

In the second theme, participants consistently described ways in which music education was about more than just making sounds and learning to play: subthemes in this area included ‘music education helps change perspectives,’ ‘music changes your brain,’ and ‘the benefits of music education extend beyond school.’

3.1.2.1 Music Education Helps Change Perspectives.

Participants felt that music offered a different way to understand the world and a different way to communicate. ████████ suggested that music can be “embedded in your structures,” and ████████ found that the different perspective music provides can enhance learning in other areas:

Whether it's in other classroom settings, in other subjects...because of the pathways they've made in their brains in the music class they might take a different approach or have a different way of understanding something that gets taught in a different class. It might just enhance their understanding of something else they learn in a different classroom. (██████ music teacher, lines 36-40)

Several participants also highlighted the fact that sometimes music provides an outlet for students to *be seen by* their teachers, peers and family in a different light – for example, as successful or creative, or as having an ability that would otherwise go unnoticed. As ██████ stated, it makes music a “good place for acceptance.” She went on to say that other staff members often comment to her that it is “so nice for me to watch my kids working with you because some of these children you just, you never see them do that or anything like that” (██████ music teacher).

██████ thought that music performances provided an opportunity for parents to see their children in a different way:

I've seen (parents) at school when we play and, you know, you can just see the parents they're just ... looking at their child (mimes focusing intensely with eyes) ...and the kids are just.... they're just exploding with happiness when they're doing it. You can just see it. It's just ridiculous. (██████ music teacher, lines 1042-1049)

3.1.2.2 Music Changes Your Brain.

Many participants commented that music education has the ability to literally change students' brains and positively impact their cognitive development. ██████ referred to the fact that many academic professionals had access to music education as children, suggesting that this supports research showing that music facilitates brain connections and “how the creativity and the creative side can help build pathways for academic success” (██████ music teacher). ██████ referred to how music education influences

...the actual neuroscience level of increasing the flow of information in the brain and sort of increasing how quickly that happens and how easy things are to be recalled and therefore actually increasing students' abilities and scores in non-music related curriculum areas. (██████ general classroom teacher, lines 121-123)

■■■■ also mentioned pathways in the brain, stating that: “Learning music just connects pathways in the brain, in kids’ brains that nothing else can” (■■■■ music teacher).

Participants also pointed out that there is something inherently pleasurable about music, and several suggested that this is because playing or hearing music causes chemical reactions such as the release of endorphins. As ■■■■ said, “It’s something that you want to just keep doing it and keep doing it,” and ■■■■ elaborated further:

I think there’s um, there’s chemical reactions that relate to music, ...I know there is, I know my choir comes in after recess, I’ve got these 52 rabbly grade 6s and 7s who come in and they, we do our warmups and we start focusing and they’re, they’re in their space and they’re you know, some of the kids who come in and something’s happened, somebody hates somebody this week, hormones are raging somewhereand by the time you’re out the door the endorphins are flowing, everybody is happy um they’re enjoying their life, cos that’s the best kind of example of how wellbeing ... choir is really good for that kind of thing. (■■■■ music teacher, lines 612-626)

3.1.2.3 The Benefits of Music Education Extend Beyond School.

A common idea identified among participants was that the benefits of music education extend beyond the classroom, such that the benefits of music education don't only relate to music education but also other areas of life beyond school. ■■■■ felt that:

It’s wonderful to learn about the art form and it’s wonderful to learn the musical language and it’s wonderful to listen to music and play music, but the benefits of music for kids is far beyond just the music classroom. And kids who are engaged in music class...the skills they learn in those experiences transfer to everything else in life.

(■■■■ music teacher, lines 32-36)

█████ suggested that music can give a student's life a sort of organisation or focus which can continue long after they have left school. For example, in describing talking to a student in Year 11 who began studying music in Year 5, she noted:

.... he's in Year 11 now with this positive focus and...he still plays the clarinet...and he's in concert band and he's done this and he does that, I just feel like his whole life has... it's almost as if his life has been straightened up or organised around...not around his music but by his music. (█████ music teacher, lines 290-305)

Related to the psychological wellbeing benefits of accomplishment experiences outlined in the previous section, participants also mentioned accomplishment in terms of its effect on students' broader learning, suggesting that learning to practice and approach problems differently when learning music would help students in other subjects. Relatedly, many participants referenced the fact that music is often marginalised in favour of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), and that in fact, it should be the other way round: learning music would enhance students' performance in these areas. █████ put it this way:

Nothing enhances creative thinking more than the arts. So the fact that you know, we believe the jobs of the future will be in STEM ...well yeah they will be. But you've still got to be creative in STEM and nothing will get you more creative than the arts. I just think we've got it a bit backwards... I think if we focused more on music then our literacy and numeracy will improve and be more creative. (█████ music teacher, lines 145-149)

3.2 Themes Relating to Teachers' Understandings of Barriers and Facilitators to Delivering Music Education

There were three themes identified in relation to the second aim of understanding barriers and facilitators to delivering music education, namely: 'music education in primary

school isn't valued,' 'there are numerous practical barriers to delivering music education,' and 'champions of music facilitate music education.'

3.2.1 Music Education in Primary School Isn't Valued

Participants frequently stated that, despite being mandated by the National Curriculum, music education isn't always delivered in schools, or if it is, it may not be of a sufficient quality to be beneficial for students' wellbeing. The main reasons participants gave for this is that pre-service teacher training is inadequate, that schools have to choose what subjects they will focus on, and that the curriculum is crowded and difficult to implement. Finally, teachers talked about the fact that music tends not to be valued in schools and in the broader culture, which leads to it being marginalised in schools.

In particular, participants stated that often teachers valued music but didn't have time to teach it, so they relied on a specialist teacher or on hired performers, and if these options were unavailable then children would simply not receive music education (or arts education more broadly). However, even when there is funding for music education at a school, it isn't always supported by administration:

I think leadership's vision here tends to be science English maths, science English maths, science English maths and anything else well, we'll throw money at you but we're not really going to support you too much. (██████ music teacher, 109-111)

Another common issue highlighted amongst participants was that the Australian Curriculum was crowded, and difficult to implement. This issue was particularly mentioned by music teachers, who felt that music missed out to other subjects. Teachers spoke about how it was difficult to do any arts teaching of value or significant learning or benefit in the time available. ██████ summed this up:

But in terms of what's in place in my school, I think it's ...it feels shoved to the side. It's a box they have to tick. And I'm not convinced that...I don't know whether it's my school's approach to the national curriculum in general and how it's affecting all schools but it feels like there are so many subjects now that kids have to experience that kids don't necessarily get as much of a taste of things as they need to. (██████ music teacher, lines 243-247)

It was commonly stated by participants that STEM subjects were more valued both at school and in society than music. For example, ██████ (music teacher) noted, “when was the last time you saw a banner across a high school saying, you know, new performing arts centre?” ██████ summed up participants' views that music and the arts more broadly weren't valued, despite providing context and meaning for everything else:

There's no focus on the arts..., everything is going to the technical side of things. You know it's not that those things aren't needed but you know to me it's lacking context. Cos that's to me what the arts generally in society is for, it's to provide context. I mean it's all great to have all these engineers who are able to build all these amazing things but you know, what's the point? Like, why do we need to build these things to make our society great if we don't have a great society – and that's what the arts are for. (██████ music teacher, lines 283-289)

Interestingly it was music teachers more than generalist teachers who referred to the ‘crowded curriculum’; general classroom teachers argued that music could be fitted in to the teaching day if there was a commitment to do so. However, in contrast to this, and as noted above, music teachers felt squeezed out of the curriculum by the perceived demands of other subjects.

3.2.2 There are Numerous Practical Barriers to Delivering Music Education

In addition to the issue of music education not being valued within the education system, participants also identified a range of practical barriers to delivering music education. In particular, this was related, by specialist music teachers in particular, to space issues within schools and time constraints. In relation to space issues, participants discussed having to teach in unsuitable spaces – such as having to teach in the staffroom (██████ music teacher), or a rectangle of floor space in the multi-purpose hall which was also the out of school hours care room (██████ music teacher). In addition, participants discussed time constraints; ██████ (music teacher) spoke of being “spread too thin,” and ██████ (music teacher) described how, despite there being a plan for him and another teacher to deliver four of the five arts subjects to every student over two years:

For what, you know, whatever has happened with our school population just means that it isn't possible to timetable all of those classes within our timetable. And we're also really really low on space so we just don't have the rooms to be able to physically do that either. So I don't know how the deputy has come across that these students get their lesson with (me) and these students don't but that's the way it's happened. So for a couple of years there it worked and then we've had a change of leadership, we've had a student population explode, and it hasn't happened. (██████ music teacher, lines 74-78)

These practical barriers likely also interact with the issue of the value placed on music education, as discussed in the previous theme.

3.2.3 Champions of Music Facilitate Music Education

Finally, participants consistently stated that the work they do wouldn't be possible without the help of passionate supporters of music education, whether in leadership or from other staff or the parent community. For example, ██████ felt fortunate to be teaching at a

school where music education was supported by leadership, in contrast to his previous schools where it wasn't supported:

...I feel quite lucky that I'm in a position where from the top down there's very much an understanding from leadership, throughout the staff and the general wider parent community etc. that music is a very much on the same level actually is it important as literacy and numeracy to the point where a previous principle said to me I'm not fussed that kids come out of a maths lesson for a music lesson cos they're just as beneficial. (██████ general classroom teacher, lines 135-138)

██████ echoed this, stating that for him the biggest facilitator was “if I have an ally at the school,” helping him to retrieve students from classes and get them to music lessons on time.

██████ indicated that the support of parents was crucial for a successful music education program:

Um so I'd say you have to have supportive leadership so if that's not supportive then it makes it tough, you have to have a community that will pull together and do it, parents have to be behind you. (██████ music teacher, lines 385-387)

Participants felt that while there was often support in the parent community and occasionally from leadership at the site, what was most needed was support from ‘higher up,’ from education leaders and politicians:

I guess for me it'd be really nice to have someone at a very high, either departmental or even you know, political level who's really passionate about delivering music education. (██████ music teacher, lines 446-447)

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

The aims of this study were to gain teachers' perspectives on the benefits of music education for primary students' wellbeing, as well as developing an understanding of the barriers and facilitators to delivering music education from the point of view of teachers. Thematic analysis of the data resulted in the identification of five major themes: 'music education has many benefits for primary school children's wellbeing,' 'music is more than just music,' 'music education in primary school isn't valued,' 'there are numerous practical barriers to delivering music education,' and 'champions of music facilitate music education.' Consistent with previous, largely quantitative, research, which has shown positive benefits of music education, the results of this study indicate that teachers identify a range of benefits of music education – including to social and emotional wellbeing.

In particular, in relation to the first aim of investigating teachers' understandings of music education and social and emotional wellbeing, the results of this study indicate that, despite the fact that teachers generally had not consciously considered wellbeing in connection with music education before, their conception of wellbeing shaped their views on how music education benefited children – and vice versa. Despite being asked about wellbeing broadly, they oriented their discussion to social and emotional wellbeing, but also talked about other aspects of wellbeing including physical and cognitive/academic aspects. Teachers perceived wellbeing as balance, which informed their views on music education's role in school. They saw music education as providing both a balance between highs and lows of mood, and as a balance to other, more academic areas of school. This study used the World Health Organisation's definition of SEW as a theoretical framework, which highlights achieving potential, coping with stresses and contributing to community (World Health Organisation, 2014), and many participants saw wellbeing and music education in a similar

framework. In particular, the idea of realising your own potential (Ewing, 2010) was prominent amongst participants; they frequently suggested that for some students, music is an avenue to that self-realisation. Teachers also believe that music is an ideal place for students to directly experience ‘growth mindset’ (Government of South Australia Department for Education and Child Development, 2018), and resilience.

Reflecting previous research into the social and emotional benefits of music education, the benefits teachers described fell into areas of extrinsic and intrinsic benefits. Extrinsic social and emotional benefits described by teachers included increased confidence (Hallam, 2010; Vaughn, Harris, & Caldwell, 2011; Zarobe & Bungay, 2017), increased self-esteem (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Rickard et al., 2012) and increased persistence (Caldwell & Vaughn, 2012; Waller, 2011). In addition, and more predominantly, teachers outlined more holistic, intrinsic benefits of music education, such as enjoyment, a place to belong, and growth mindset. This is consistent with research which indicates that arts education (Chappell & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013; Nilson, Fetherston, & McMurray, 2013) and more specifically music education (Crooke, 2016; Pascoe et al., 2005) while having discrete, measurable benefits, also have more holistic, integrated benefits for students.

As noted in the introduction, this study focused on music education in the primary years because this is a period of development during which changes in social and emotional functioning occur rapidly. Teachers did not talk about the benefits of music education specifically in terms of development, however they did note that one benefit was that music education can change children’s brains in positive ways, increasing synaptic connections and plasticity, reflecting the research of Anita Collins (2016) whose research on the impact of music education on brain development has been delivered as a TED talk and widely viewed. (Collins, 2012; Collins, 2014)

In relation to the second aim of investigating barriers and facilitators to music education from teachers' perspectives, results indicated that teachers believe that music education is frequently not valued in primary schools, reflecting the findings of many reviews and much research into music education in primary schools both in Australia and internationally (e.g., Pascoe et al., 2005), and indicating that, despite being mandated, music education is not guaranteed to be delivered in schools, and is very unlikely to occur in the absence of a music specialist (P. A. De Vries, 2017; Pascoe et al., 2005). Relatedly, advocates for music education frequently call for more funding for music education (Burns, 2014), however funding was infrequently mentioned by participants as a barrier to music education. Barriers outlined by teachers, reflecting previous research, were lack of space in the school (Chapman, Wright, & Pascoe, 2018), lack of time to teach all students (Collins, 2016), and a lack of understanding of how music education works and of the benefits it provides over and above learning to play an instrument. This last point is consistent with the view of John O'Toole, a lead writer for the Arts in the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011), who in his introduction to Ewing's (2010) report on the Arts and Australian Education, described "the ambivalent and often muddled perceptions and understandings about the Arts and young people that are alive and well in schools and their curricula" (Ewing, 2010, p. iv).

Embedded throughout the results of this study are some perspectives on music education which have not been previously widely considered. Firstly, while music has been described in previous research as being "at the heart of what it means to be human," (McDonald, Aprill, & Mills, 2017, p. 102) and as an important source of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), it is rare to hear music described in terms of self-actualisation, or 'whole person' benefits. This conception of music as having such benefits mirrors recent theoretical descriptions of wellbeing as being comprised of both Hedonic and Eudaimonic

dimensions – in other words wellbeing as being both happiness in the absence of pain, and as a pursuit of self-realisation (McDonald, Aprill, & Mills, 2017). Consistent with the findings of McDonald et al. (2017), this research shows that music provides an avenue through which to pursue self-realisation for students, and thus is an avenue for the Eudaimonic dimension of wellbeing. Outlining the similarities between the habits of mind formed in music practice and those in visual art practice, Michelle Waller (2011) described how such habits of mind could contribute to lifelong learning and the realization of potential. Self-actualisation is more frequently described in arts education research such as this (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing, 2017; Zarobe & Bungay, 2017), and rarely in relation to music education specifically.

Secondly, much research has tended to separate the practicalities of music from the experience of learning it, investigating very specific areas of music education with very specific outcomes, and few studies have examined the actual nature of music education – that is, what makes it unique, and what makes it well-placed to serve students' social and emotional wellbeing. This research indicates, in contrast to much previous research (e.g. Costa-Giomi, 2004), that it may not necessarily be the learning of notes and technique which lead to the benefits of music education, but the experience of learning music and the physical act of playing it. Teachers indicated that they believe music is unique in this. Reflecting these beliefs in the uniqueness of music education, the Australian Government's extensive review into school music stated that "Music education uniquely contributes to the emotional [and] social [...] growth of all students" (Pascoe et al., 2005, p. v).

Thirdly, the results indicate that what is important about music education may be its very presence in a school. In the same way that sport is commonly present in a school and provides benefits for all students (Bailey, 2006), so music in a school can be a place where some students can shine – and can find the spark that they may have for the rest of their lives

(Foster & Jenkins, 2017). Music's presence is also important because it adds to the diversity of the school climate, and an engaging school climate is an indicator for student development and wellbeing (Moore, Lippman, & Ryberg, 2015). Child development is influenced by school, home and community engagement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and as mentioned above, while not specifically discussing music education in terms of development, participants indicated that they believed music education helped to integrate all of these areas.

Policy documents such as the South Australian Education Department's *Wellbeing and Learning for Life* (Government of South Australia Department for Education and Child Development, 2018) outline the importance of wellbeing concepts, but make no mention of the arts, nor of arts education. Similarly, much research into the benefits of music education does not frame those benefits in terms of the overall, holistic social and emotional wellbeing of children. This research indicates that teachers see links between music and social and emotional wellbeing, and the 'whole person' nature of both; links which are being missed in much current research and policy.

4.2 Strengths

Despite extensive experience in the delivery of music education and the day-to-day observation of its benefits for students, teachers' perspectives have rarely been heard in research about music education. This research provides an opportunity to provide evidence concerning teachers' views and to benefit from their experience in relation to music education.

As noted in the introduction, previous experimental research into the benefits of music education has been assessed as being of poor quality with inconsistent design and methods, and of being largely correlational rather than causal. Through its qualitative and open structured nature, this study provided richness of detail concerning what actually happens in music education, and a holistic perspective of what music education

looks like at school and how it integrates into and impacts upon students' lives. Existing research, in a search for causality, has tended to isolate various aspects of students' wellbeing or other outcomes for measurement, whereas this study provided instead a description of the interconnectedness of benefits, and found that the benefits of music education are across academic, social and emotional areas in various contexts including school and home. Ultimately, this study found, these benefits cannot be isolated and, in order to understand them, should be viewed as a system, or as a whole.

In addition, previous research has rarely discussed what music education is actually like, or the precise mechanisms through which music education may have benefits for wellbeing or other outcomes for students, focusing instead on results such as measurement of emotional wellbeing or attachment to school *after* exposure to music education. This study investigated the practicalities of music education (e.g., that it should be fun and engaging), and provided a richer description of what barriers there are to delivering it, beyond lack of funding where much previous literature has focused (Spohn, 2008).

4.3 Limitations and future research

This study only included three generalist teachers and, as it is generalists who most have to deal with the complexities of curriculum and scheduling, it would have been beneficial to have had more generalist participants. The specific experiences and understandings of generalist teachers in relation to music education and its benefits is thus an area which future research could specifically explore. In addition, the majority of participants were from one Australian state, and it would have been beneficial to hear from more participants in other states, in order to investigate whether different education policies have an effect on the delivery of music education and the experience of any benefits.

Despite previous research finding that parental support and socio-economic status have an effect on whether benefits of music education are experienced by children (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Pascoe et al., 2005), these influences were outside the scope of this research – although participants did identify the important role that parents can play as advocates for music education within a school. Because socio-economic status and parental involvement represent different dimensions seen in ecological theories, future research could investigate Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological developmental framework of development as a more holistic framework through which to explore the benefits of music education and the role that different systems play in promoting those benefits.

Participants referred to the fact that music exists in the moment, and that it is both objective and subjective at the same time. This has similarities to the practice of mindfulness (Zoogman, Goldberg, Hoyt, & Miller, 2015), and future research could investigate ways in which music education could be used as a mindfulness practice for students.

Participants in this study discussed music as offering unique benefits to wellbeing, and particularly to SEW, however it is possible that other arts teachers see similar uniqueness in their disciplines. As such, it may have been beneficial to hear from other arts teachers to gain an understanding of the differences and similarities between music and other arts education. Previous research indicates that there is something unique about music education (Custodero, 2002, Hallam 2010), and the participants in this study also believed this, but there has been relatively little research into arts education in other disciplines, nor comparative research between the arts. Indeed, more research in general is needed into what it is that makes music unique. Many art forms, such as dance and drama, exist 'in the moment' and have their own language; music is not unique in this. Further research is also needed into how the arts can work together to benefit students, and how to capitalise on the qualities that make them different from other school subjects.

A further limitation of this study was that it did not compare public and private school systems, due to insufficient sample size for such a comparison. Given differences in funding structures in particular, future research could investigate any differences in the delivery of music education in public versus private schools, and any differences in teachers' perceptions about benefits from within these two systems.

As noted previously, teachers discussed a range of benefits of music education, which they only briefly related to child development, for instance in relation to brain development. Further research is needed into ways that music may be important developmentally, for example by contributing to the diversity of students' learning environment.

4.4 Implications

The findings of this study present several implications for education, and for the intersection of education - especially music education - and psychology. In particular, while music education is usually viewed by education policy makers and researchers through the prism of its extrinsic and intrinsic benefits, this study identified a broader benefit of music - the diversity it brings to the school environment - and the wellbeing benefits which may flow from that diversity. The results imply that student wellbeing may be looked at as flowing from the wellbeing of the school and the climate that is created by diversity of choice and experience.

A further implication of this study is that for provision of quality music education and the SEW benefits flowing from it to occur, teacher training needs to be improved to enable teachers to have greater self-efficacy and confidence in music teaching. As such, targeted training or professional development opportunities for general classroom teachers in particular may assist in the delivery of music education in school and lead to overall benefits for students as noted in this study.

Previous literature has argued that the arts and music education have overarching intrinsic benefits that give meaning to life, or are about “what makes us human” (Jindal-Snape et al., 2018; Winner et al., 2013, p. 262). This was also seen in the results of this study, illustrated by one participant when he stated that the arts “provide the point” for life. (James, music teacher). Not only does music education provide intrinsic benefits, but it also provides its benefits partly by simply being present in the school and thereby enriching it, becoming part of the fabric of students’ lives. Music education provides holistic benefits which cannot be separated from the environment in which they occur, nor from each other. Thus it is unsurprising that many previous studies have found inconclusive results when attempting to measure discrete benefits of music education; this study indicates that attempts to isolate and measure the benefits of music education miss the complete picture of music education; a too-close view may cause the observer not to see the whole picture.

4.5 Conclusion

This is the first qualitative study to investigate teachers’ understandings of the benefits of music education to primary school students’ social and emotional wellbeing. A key outcome of the study was the fact that teachers identified a strong connection between music and wellbeing – and the social and emotional aspects of wellbeing in particular - suggesting that when students study music they are getting ‘more than just music.’ The results of this study indicate that while teachers believe music education provides benefits to indicators such as school engagement, confidence and resilience, their conception of the benefits extends to a more holistic view of music education as a place where social, emotional and physical benefits are all combined together and woven into school life, and into students’ future lives. They also have an awareness of the increasing prevalence of anxiety and mental health issues for students. As McDonald et al. (2017, p.99) have noted, music education has the ability to address social and emotional issues and can provide a place

for students to “feel together and think for themselves, instead of thinking together and feeling alone.” This study found that music education also provides broader, more holistic, ‘whole child’ benefits. In particular, music education enriches school life, provides a chance for students to reach their full potential, and, as Gloria (music teacher) noted, it shows children that “...we’re not all the same and everyone has got something to offer... you don’t have to be the best ... but we don’t sound quite as good without you.”

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: *What do teachers perceive are the benefits of learning music for middle-upper primary students, and what are the barriers to delivering it?*

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: [REDACTED]

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Clemence Due

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Kristina Phillipson

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Honours in Psychology

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

This research project is about teachers' understandings of the psychological benefits to students of learning music, and teachers' experiences in delivering music education.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Kristina Phillipson. This research will form the basis for the degree of Honours in Psychology at the University of Adelaide under the supervision of Dr Clemence Due.

Why am I being invited to participate?

This project will explore the perceptions of generalist teachers and specialist music teachers about the psychological benefits to middle/upper primary students of learning music, and the barriers and/or facilitators teachers face in delivering music education.

Generalist teachers must:

- Have taught in a classroom at year 3-7 level for at least one year at a government school

Music teachers must:

- Have taught specialist music (either instrumental or classroom or both) at year 3-7 level for at least one year at a government school

What am I being invited to do?

If you wish to participate you will be interviewed about your perceptions of the benefits of music education and your experiences in delivering it. The interview will take place at a

location convenient you, e.g. at a public place selected by you. Interviews may also take place over the phone or via Skype if preferred. Interviews will be recorded for anonymous transcription.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?

Each interview will be approximately 60 minutes.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

There are no risks associated with participating in this project.

What are the potential benefits of the research project?

This research may help inform educators and policy makers about real world experiences of delivering music education and real world perceptions of the psychological benefits of music education. In giving teachers' perspectives it may provide information about any disconnects between theory, policy and practice, and will potentially provide suggestions for improvements in delivering music education and/or in curriculum design.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time until the start of data analysis.

What will happen to my information?

Your name and any identifying information including location of your work will remain confidential and will not appear in any subsequent publications or reports that arise from the data. Confidential interview transcriptions will be made from the audio recordings, and only the named investigators above will have access to the interview transcripts for the purpose of analysis.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you would like to participate in this research, please contact Dr. Due or Kristina Phillipson. They will be able to provide you with further information about the study, and you will be able to organise a time to meet for an interview.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

████████████████████

████████████████████

████████

██

██

████████████████████

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number ██████████). This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. If you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant, please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on:

Phone: +61 8 8313 6028

Email: hrec@adelaide.edu.au

Post: Level 4, Rundle Mall Plaza, 50 Rundle Mall, ADELAIDE SA 5000

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

Please contact Ms Phillipson (details above). You will receive a consent form and be able to arrange a time for an interview.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Kristina Phillipson and Dr Clemence Due

CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	<u><i>Generalist and Music Teachers' Understandings and Experiences of Music Education in Primary School</i></u>
Ethics Approval Number:	

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, and the potential risks and burdens fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have about the project and my participation. My consent is given freely.
3. Although I understand the purpose of the research project, it has also been explained that my involvement may not be of any benefit to me.
4. I agree to participate in the activities outlined in the participant information sheet.
5. I agree to be:
 - Audio recorded
6. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
7. I have been informed that the information gained in the project may be published in a thesis and/or journal article.
8. I have been informed that in the published materials I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.
9. I agree to my information being shared on an online digital repository including the audio recording made of the interview and the transcript of that recording.
 - Yes No
10. My information will only be used for the purpose of this research project and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except where disclosure is required by law.
11. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher/Witness to complete: [This can be removed for electronically returned consent forms.]

I have described the nature of the research to _____
 (print name of participant)

and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview questions: Generalist Teachers

1. Can you tell me a bit about your general experiences teaching music or incorporating it into your classroom?
2. Other than learning how to play an instrument or sing, what do you think are the benefits to children of learning music at school?
3. How is music taught in your school?
 - a. If music is not taught, why not?
 - b. Is there a music specialist or is music taught in the classroom?
 - i. IF IN CLASSROOM: how do you find teaching music?
 - c. What are the barriers to teaching music in the school day?
 - d. What are the facilitators to teaching music in the school day?
4. If you could have an ideal syllabus where you could teach anything you wanted to in the time available, and you wanted to maximize students' wellbeing, what would that look like? What would you do the same/differently to what you do now?
5. Do you think your teacher training prepared you for teaching the whole curriculum? What would you change about your training?
6. What would you say is the status of music at your school? And at schools in general in Australia?
7. How would you define wellbeing?
8. Do you think music influences students' wellbeing?
 - a. If yes, what is it about music that influences their wellbeing and how?
 - b. Does participating in music make a difference or is listening to music enough to experience the influence?
9. Any demographic questions not yet answered: age; gender; years of experience as teacher; type of schools; personal and professional experience teaching/learning music

Interview questions: Music teachers

1. Can you tell me a bit about your general experiences teaching music in schools? E.g. how long have you been teaching and what do you teach?
2. Other than learning how to play an instrument or sing, what do you think are the benefits to children of learning music at school?
3. How is music taught in your school/s?

- a. Do students come out of class to go to their music lessons?
 - b. Do you teach music to classes/groups?
 - c. Do you have adequate space/facilities to teach music?
 - d. What are the barriers to teaching music in the school day?
 - e. What are the facilitators to teaching music in the school day?
4. If there could be an ideal syllabus where classroom teachers could teach anything they wanted to in the time available, and they wanted to maximize students' wellbeing, and for example could collaborate with you in teaching music, what would that look like? What would be different from or the same as what happens now?
 5. Do you think your teacher training prepared you for teaching music in schools? What would you change about your training?
 6. What would you say is the status of music at your school/s? And at schools in general in Australia?
 7. How would you define wellbeing?
 8. Do you think music influences students' wellbeing?
 - a. If yes, what is it about music that influences their wellbeing and how?
 - b. Does participating in music make a difference, or is listening to music enough to experience the influence?
 9. Any demographic questions not yet answered: age; gender; years of experience as teacher; type of schools; personal and professional experience teaching/learning music.