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Developing Preservice Primary Teachers' Confidence and Competence in Arts Education using Principles of Authentic Learning.

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Abstract: Arts education research over the years has highlighted the situation of non-specialist preservice primary arts teachers as having little confidence in their own artistic ability and their ability to teach the arts to children. Added to this, problems such a lack of resources, confidence, priority, time, knowledge and experience appear to inhibit the regular teaching of the arts by generalist classroom teachers while at the same time, face-to-face hours for preservice primary arts education have decreased significantly over the recent years. This paper describes how one subject within a Primary Teacher Education course responded to these challenges. This subject was based on Herrington, Oliver and Reeves' (2003) framework for creating authentic learning environments then triangulates this authentic learning framework with what students wanted to learn in the subject and how they perceived they had developed their confidence and competence in creative arts education

Introduction

There is much research that indicates participation in the arts has been shown to enhance academic achievement, develop children's respect for themselves and others, develop children's life skills for the future as well as allowing them to express themselves in a variety of authentic media (Bamford, 2006; Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999; Fiske, 1999; Russell-Bowie, 2012). Engagement in the arts can also increase the attendance and attitudes to attendance of children at school (Dreezen, Aprial & Deasy, 1999; Uptis & Smithrim, 2003), children's performance in reading, verbal and general literacy skills (Bamford, 2006; Butzlaff, 2001; Hetland & Winner, 2001; Hunter, 2005; Vaughan, Harris & Caldwell, 2011) as well as their mathematical achievement (Bamford, 2006; Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanga, 1999; Hetland & Winner, 2001).

However, the history of the paucity of arts education in both state schools and teacher education institutions in Australia is also well documented as is the lack of confidence and competence of generalist preservice and inservice teachers in relation to arts education (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2008; Department of Education, Science and Technology [DEST]; Duck, 1990). Over the last few years much research has highlighted the situation of non-specialist inservice primary teachers as having little confidence in their own artistic ability in music, dance, drama and visual arts and in their ability to teach arts to children (Ballantyne, 2006; DEEWR, 2008; DEST, 2005; Duck, 1990; Ewing, 2010; Meiners, Schiller & Orchard; 2004; Sanders and Browne, 1998). The Australian Senate Inquiry into Arts Education (Senate Environment, Recreation, Communication and the Arts Reference Committee [SERCARC], 1995) reiterated what past and present reports had found that 'Generalist primary classroom teachers, because of their own poor arts experience at school, and inadequate teacher training, lack confidence to teach the arts. As a result... there is a strong impulse to marginalise the arts in their teaching' (p.49).

Even though research indicates that students enter their initial teacher education course with little or no background in arts education the amount of face-to-face hours has rapidly decreased in primary teacher education courses over the past years (SERCARC, 1995).

Confirming this research, the *Australian National Review of School Music Education* indicated that ‘the level of music education that the majority of students entering pre-service teacher education bring to their studies is demonstrably inadequate’. It also confirmed that ‘teachers emerging from these programs indicate that they lack sufficient knowledge, understanding and skills and accompanying confidence to teach music’ (DEST, 2005, p. 78).

Similarly, the *National Review of Visual Education* (DEEWR, 2008) indicated that minimal visual arts was taught in primary schools and that there were significant problems in relation to the status and practice of visual arts education at teacher education institutions.

So why are the arts being devalued in state schools and why are primary school teachers hesitant about teaching the arts in their classrooms? One reason is that the arts have rarely been seen as an academic subject that can be easily measured and reported on. Rather, the arts have been marginalised and viewed as leisure or ‘soft’ subjects with little connection to the ‘important’ subjects, such as literacy, science and mathematics, which prepare students for the workplace (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). Schools value what is valued by the economic culture of the country. Currently this is based on economic rationalism which values that which can clearly contribute to the nation’s productivity (Houston, 2008). Because of this, when principals are faced with the need to make budget or time cuts the arts are generally the subjects to be downgraded or disappear (Bresler & Thompson, 2002, Holquist, M. 2011; Winner & Hetland, 2000). An example of this attitude to the arts in schools, is that seen in the initial proposal for an Australian national curriculum. In this document the arts were not to be included in the compulsory national curriculum, and were to be taught if, when and how principals thought fit. However after much lobbying by relevant associations, the arts were included in the second phase of the national curriculum (Crabbe, 2007; Muspratt, 2009; Russell-Bowie, 2011).

Partly in response to economic rationalism, there is currently a strong emphasis on teaching Mathematics and English to the detriment of other subjects, including the arts, as schools focus on the ‘high stakes testing’ related to the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Mathematics (NAPLAN) (O’Keefe, 2011). Schools choose to spend much of their time on teaching literacy and mathematics and devalue the arts, giving them a low priority. Principals and teachers generally do not understand how important the arts are in assisting children to achieve academically in school or that engagement in arts programs can make a significant difference in children’s NAPLAN scores (Bamford, 2006; Ewing, 2010; Vaughan, Harris & Caldwell, 2011). Teachers are required to cover a prescribed curriculum that is increasing in its intensity and requirements alongside the pressure to prepare students to undertake these standardised tests (Andrews, 2011; Bresler, 1992; Oreck, 2004).

In general teachers are hindered in teaching the arts by pressures to cover the prescribed curriculum and to prepare students to undertake standardized tests (Bresler, 1992; Oreck, 2004). In relation to individual teachers, at least six key challenges to teaching the arts have been identified by both preservice and inservice teachers. *Lack of personal experiences in the arts* was given as the strongest reason, followed by *lack of priority for the arts* and *not enough time in the school day*. The other three problems, *lack of preparation time*, *lack of adequate resources* and *lack of knowledge of the syllabus*, were ranked closely to these three main problems, (DEEWR, 2008; DEST, 2005; Russell-Bowie, 2004; SERCARC, 1995).

This paper takes up these challenges to teaching the arts by exploring the effectiveness of one preservice teacher education subject to develop confidence and competence in students which may address at least some of the challenges and may increase the likelihood of these future teachers implementing the arts programs in their classrooms.

Context

Teacher educators need to reflect carefully on how they can address these challenges and increase the confidence and competence of their generalist preservice primary teachers through innovative approaches despite the decrease in face-to-face hours. Many universities are unable to address these seemingly insurmountable problems. Green, Chedzoy, Harris, Mitchell, Naughton, Rolfe & Stanton (1998) investigated student perceptions of how university courses have supported their practice in schools, as well as their readiness to train students in teaching art, dance, drama and music. Through qualitative interviewing, it was understood that students are not encountering adequate opportunities to practise arts teaching or model their class teachers, particularly in the subjects of dance and drama. This resulted in a low level of student teacher confidence as well as inadequate subject knowledge in teaching the arts.

Getting pre-service teachers motivated and involved in their learning process is vital to the development of their abilities and confidence. For example, Meiners, Schiller & Orchard (2004) report on a partnership program between an early childhood institute and a performing arts centre. The partnership was intended to support undergraduate students' understanding of the vital nature of arts learning for young children by practising and refining skills within conventional educational settings and through field placement opportunities supervised by professionals in all areas of the arts. What student teachers noted about the experience was that they enjoyed participating actively and physically, rather than just passively observing. This interactive approach to learning was further supported by evaluations of various undergraduate training programs and helped to bring out the creativity of students through 'doing' and making full use of all resources available (Meiners, Schiller & Orchard, 2004).

Competence in a subject area can be a major predictor of confidence and efficacy related to teaching (Bandura, 1982; Ramey-Gassert & Shroyer, 1992). For example, Miraglia (2006) conducted a qualitative study exploring how the histories, perceptions, and attitudes of 18 preservice generalist teachers contribute to their anxiety in making and teaching art. Data were collected through interviews, a background questionnaire, student reflective journals, and a researcher's observation journal. It was revealed that contributing factors to anxiety in art making included: a lack of art knowledge, a fear of making mistakes, and negative responses from peers and/ or former teachers. It follows then that increasing preservice teachers' art knowledge and competence can reduce the fear and anxiety in art making and increase their confidence.

According to Herrington, Oliver & Reeves (2003), in order to learn effectively, and develop their confidence and competence, students also need to have authentic learning experiences. Herrington et al have developed a list of criteria to define authentic learning. Authentic learning experiences should:

- Have real world significance;
- Be ill-defined, requiring students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity;
- Be complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time;
- Provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources;
- Provide the opportunity to collaborate;
- Provide the opportunity to reflect;
- Be integrated and applied across different subjects areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes;
- Be seamlessly integrated with assessment;
- Create polished products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else; and
- Allow competing solutions and diversity of outcomes.

This authentic learning framework was investigated as a possible model on which to base the *Primary Creative Arts* subject. Due to each of the criteria being relevant to at least

one part of the subject, it was selected as a substantial foundation for the subject as it was based on sound pedagogical theories such as situated cognition, anchored instruction, problem-based learning, cognitive flexibility theory and effective web-based learning (Bransford, Sherwood, Hasselbring, Kinzer & Williams, 1990; McLellan 1996; Reeves, Herrington & Oliver, 2002; Savery & Duffy, 1996; Spiro, Vispoel, Scmitz, Samarapungavan & Boeger, 1987).

Overview

Arts educators in teacher education programs need to explore learning frameworks from other disciplines as well as their own in order to produce pedagogically sound subjects and courses. Several learning frameworks were considered in relation to the development of this creative arts subject, and Herrington et al's framework of authentic learning was deemed to suit this subject. This choice was made because of the framework's flexibility and practical nature and its recognition of the need to make the creative arts relevant to the real world as well as providing students the opportunity to collaborate, reflect, use a variety of resources and learning experiences and to integrate their learning. It also espoused similar theories and practices already utilised by the creative arts lecturers.

The authentic learning framework was used to inform and evaluate the preservice arts education subject that aimed to develop the required confidence and competence in preservice primary teachers and address the problems faced by inservice teachers in relation to arts education, using both online and face-to-face teaching.

This paper will firstly describe and examine the implementation of this preservice primary creative arts subject at an Australian university, and demonstrate how it is based on Herrington's authentic learning framework (Herrington et al, 2003). Secondly, the paper will report on students' perceptions of how they developed confidence and competence throughout the subject and then triangulate these perceptions with Herrington et al's authentic learning framework as well as the students' perceived reasons for their increase in confidence and competence in arts education.

Content of Subject

Overview

The subject *Primary Creative Arts* was designed in three stages. At the start of the creative arts subject, the students were asked to complete a brief survey in their first lecture. Questions in the survey asked students to indicate their perceived background, confidence and competence in teaching arts education. They were also asked an open ended question about what they would like to learn in the semester, how they would like to learn it and how they would know they had learned it. The results were analysed so any changes to the subject could be made, based on the students' requests. These were also matched with the subject content to ensure the subject met the students' perceived needs.

The second stage analysed the content of the subject in relation to the Herrington et al's authentic learning framework to ensure the learning experiences were authentic and promoted deeper learning.

At the final lecture of the creative arts subject, students were asked to complete a brief survey asking if they felt more confident and competent in the area of arts education, and if so, how they had achieved this. The results of this survey were analysed thematically and used to evaluate the effectiveness of this subject and to inform staff as they prepared for the next semester of teaching the same subject.

The results of the students' responses to what they would like to learn in the subject were triangulated with challenges to teaching the arts as identified by teachers as well as Herrington et al's criteria for authentic learning, thus seeking to validate the content and processes of the creative arts subject.

Instrument used for first survey

Ninety-five students completed the entry survey. This Creative Arts survey was designed to assess what students think about Creative Arts Education, both in relation to their own personal background, skills, and attitudes to the four subjects areas: Music, Visual Arts, Dance and Drama, and in relation to their perceived ability to teach each of these subjects in the classroom. The scale consists of 23 items altogether. Two items gather age and sex data. There are 20 multiple choice questions: 17 with four sub-questions representing the arts subjects, and three items specifically related to music. The majority of responses were categorized into a 1-5 Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. One question involved a Yes/No response. There were also three open ended questions intended to gather insights into how and what students would like to get out of their course. The open ended responses are categorized and presented. The surveys findings were designed to assist Creative Arts lecturers in structuring and tailoring the course subjects to the needs, abilities, and interests of students.

Instrument used for second exiting survey

Eighty-three percent of students completed the exiting survey in their final lecture. This survey included three open-ended questions covering how confident and competent students felt in relation to arts education and what aspects of the subject assisted them in developing this confidence and competence.

Students

The students involved in the subject were 138 preservice primary teachers who had completed an undergraduate degree, eg. B.Arts, B.Sc, B.Soc.Sci. or B.Psych. and were now enrolled in a Master of Teaching (Primary) degree. The cohort included 123 (89%) female and 11 (8%) male students. In relation to age, 18% of participants were 18-21, 42% of participants were 22-25, 21% of participants were 26-30, 13% of participants were 31-40, and 6% of participants were over 40 years old. One arts education lecturer, the researcher and author, was responsible for coordinating the creative arts subject and teaching the music, dance and integration education tutorials and lectures, while casual staff taught the visual arts and drama components of the subject.

The creative arts subject

The creative arts subject was implemented over six weeks that were spread across a 12 week semester. During the first four weeks, each week focussed on one artform (dance, drama, music and visual arts). The last two weeks aimed at consolidating learning and outcomes in each artform through integrating the arts with literacy and across a theme. In each week, students attended a two hour lecture and a two hour tutorial for each art form. These included content related to the specific art form and modelled how to engage children in the arts, making arts education a positive learning experience, behaviour management in

the arts classroom and activities for different ages of children. The total face-to-face input they received for each art form in the overall subject was this two hours of a practical workshop/tutorial and two hours of an interactive lecture, with the other weeks focussing on authentic integration of the arts across the curriculum.

As well as the face-to-face teaching, students were required to work at blended learning projects. These included:

- Completing an online theory quiz each week, based on the syllabus and readings from the textbook, which developed their basic knowledge and understandings in the different art forms;
- Writing personal reflections about the lectures and tutorials in a weekly online journal, to consolidate their learning;
- Researching the importance of the creative arts, to help them realise the arts should not be left out of their classrooms;
- Developing an integrated arts program which they could use when teaching;
- Using the online teaching and learning resources regularly so they developed a large portfolio of practical hard copy and online classroom resources, lessons and programs; and
- Learning practical arts skills for at least 10 - 20 hours in each art form to develop their personal experience and competence in the arts.

These learning experiences sought to address issues teachers nominated for not teaching the arts, ie. lack of personal experience in the arts, not realising the importance of arts education for children, lack of knowledge of the syllabus, lack of adequate resources, and lack of time to prepare programs and lessons (DEST, 2005; DEEWR, 2008; Russell-Bowie, 2004).

Triangulation of the authentic learning framework with what students wanted to learn and how they developed their confidence and competence in arts education.

From the findings from the data from the first survey, few students indicated that they felt confident or competent in relation to arts education. They suggested a variety of approaches which would help them develop this confidence and these were compared with the planned content of the subject.

The content of the subject was analysed in relation to Herrington et al's (2003) authentic learning framework. Each aspect of the subject was found to be clearly aligned with each of Herrington et al's criteria. This confirmed that the subject was firmly based on the authentic learning framework.

At the end of the semester, most of the students agreed that they had developed confidence and competence in arts education. They listed key aspects of the subject that helped them achieve this confidence and competence and these included the assessment items and the practical tutorials and lectures.

These findings are developed further in the next section of the paper.

1. Entry survey: students' background and confidence, what they wanted to learn in the subject and how they would know they had learned this.

When asked about their *background and confidence in arts education* the results confirmed those in previous studies (Ballantyne, 2006; DEEWR, 2008; DEST, 2005; Duck, 1990; Meiners, Schiller & Orchard; 2004; Russell-Bowie, 2004; Sanders & Browne, 1998 SERCARC, 1995). The sampled preservice teachers were found to possess low background and confidence in and around the arts, particularly in regards to music, dance and drama. In relation to the individual art forms, only 21% felt confident in teaching music lessons, 40% in teaching visual arts lesson, 25% in teaching dance lessons and 26% in teaching drama

lessons. In relation to background in arts education, 14% indicated that they had a good background in music, 46% in visual arts, 17% in dance and 11% in drama.

Furthermore, many students predicted anxiety when having to teach arts lessons, and less than half of participants felt positive about teaching music, dance and drama tutorials. However, the majority of students expressed a sound interest in the arts, particularly visual arts, and believed that primary school children should be exposed to all areas of arts education.

In response to the question about *what they would like to learn this semester*, the open ended responses indicated a general desire from students to be competent and confident in teaching the arts. They would like to be exposed to general ideas for teaching the arts, and, more specifically, lesson plans, teaching methods, resources, and appropriate activities in all arts subjects. Music was found to be the most cited subject area that students wanted to learn. Moreover, students wished to learn how to accommodate creative arts programs to different year groups and children of different developmental stages, how to support children in the classroom by engaging them and creating positive learning experiences, effective techniques to manage the behaviours of children in arts classes, learning to sing, dance, and play an instrument, and, finally, effective ways to link the creative arts to other key learning areas. These items are all included in the NSW Creative Arts Syllabus (NSW Board of Studies, 2006) and the set text (Russell-Bowie, 2009) so would be included in the subject, see Table 1.

When asked *how they would like to learn this*, a significant theme to arise from the responses was an eagerness to learn via an interactive and practical teaching approach, ie, to learn 'by doing'. This approach to preservice learning has been favoured by preservice teachers in the literature in the past (Meiners, Schiller, & Orchard, 2004), and represents an opportunity for students to learn from interaction and make full use of resources available. A 'hands on' approach to learning may be beneficial in reducing boredom in the classroom, and could be used as a means to simulate the dynamic classroom environments to which preservice teachers will eventually be exposed.

Furthermore, Green et al. (1998) note that students are not encountering adequate opportunities to practise arts teaching or model their class teachers. Without sufficient practice or exposure to valuable role models in the arts, students are effectively entering the classroom with limited working knowledge of how arts classes should be taught. Participants in the present study strongly indicated that they would like to learn through example and be given more opportunities to observe and model their tutors. Learning vicariously through observation can be a powerful way to help students develop their competencies. In addition to learning from example, mentoring and discussions with teachers are effective support systems for pre-service teachers (Delorenzo, 1992).

Respondents further indicated that they would like to learn through attendance at university lectures and in-class tutorials. Several participants also mentioned that they would prefer a balance of theory and practical course work, with ready access to lesson plans and online material. Some mentioned they would prefer independent learning.

When asked *how they would know they had learned this*, respondents most frequently indicated that they would have a sense of confidence in and around conducting lessons as the most significant indicator of their learning. The ability to implement knowledge and skills coupled with successful and effective performance in the classroom were the next most significant determinants of one's learning. Students also felt that their learning could be measured by the development of their knowledge and understanding of the concepts, and through self evaluation and reflection on performance.

Based on the literature, the students' lack of confidence and background in arts education was taken into account in the planning of the subject. The content of the subject also covered all aspects of those requested by the students and the assessment items covered the indicators noted by the students that would confirm their learning (see Table 1).

Students' request for content	Subject content
To become confident and competent in teaching the arts	Lectures, tutorials, practice teaching sessions, quizzes, e-journals
Classroom activities in each art form across grades	Lectures and tutorials, creative arts website, textbook
Behaviour management techniques	Lectures and tutorials, textbook
Engaging and positive learning experiences	Lectures and tutorials, textbook
Classroom resources	Creative arts website, textbook
Personal skill development in each art form	Creative arts presentations (10-20 hours of practical art making), quizzes
Programming ideas and practice	Writing a program, textbook, creative arts website
Integration learning experiences across arts and other subjects	Lectures and tutorials, textbook, creative arts website, writing an integrated program
Students request for how they wanted to learn	Subject method
Interactive and practical learning experiences	Lectures and tutorials
Attendance at tutorials and lectures	Lectures and tutorials
Practice teaching arts lessons	Practice teaching opportunities
Balance of theory and practical	Lectures and tutorials, textbook
Resources	Creative arts website, lectures and tutorials, textbook
Opportunity to work independently	Quizzes, e-journals, creative arts presentations, writing arts programs
Classroom teaching modelled	Tutorials, videos on lectures
Available lesson plans online	Creative arts website

Table 1: Summary of students' requests for content and method compared with actual content and method of subject to confirm that the content of the subject responded to the students' requests.

Herrington et al (2003) indicate that, in order to learn effectively, and develop their confidence and competence, students also need to have authentic learning experiences. The results of this initial survey, along with the content and assessment items for the subject seem to be strongly correlated with the key criteria for authentic learning as seen in the next section.

2. Authentic Learning framework

The creative arts subject was firmly based on the framework for creating authentic learning environments and it ensured the students' learning experiences:

a) Had real world significance

The students wrote their programs and implemented them in a real classroom during their practice teaching session, using resources from the web. Their arts making experiences were based on their own needs and interests and culminated in a public performance to their peers.

b) Were ill-defined, requiring students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity

The arts-making assignment (creative art Presentations: CAPs) was open-ended in that the only requirement was for students to learn practical skills in music, art, dance and drama for 10 - 20 hours and present a digitised or live performance of what they had learned to an audience of their peers. Therefore students had to decide what new skills they wanted to develop in each art form, how they would learn these skills (ie web-based, software, face-to-face tutor, self taught from a book, community course, etc.), how they should present what they had learned and whether they would digitise their performance or present it live.

c) Were complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time

Assessment tasks were to be completed over the 18 weeks of the semester, with the quiz at the start of each of the six weeks of the subject, the e-journals being completed after each tutorial and lecture and input into the integrated arts programs being given both online and in lectures and tutorials. The arts-making skill development activity could have been started the previous semester but had to be completed by Week 18 of the current semester. Students were required to work on it consistently spending 2 – 3 hours a week developing their artistic skills.

d) Provided the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources

In order to develop their confidence, competence, knowledge, skills and understandings in relation to arts education, learning experiences presented the content in different ways based on Gardner's eight intelligences (Gardner, 1993), so students could learn using their own preferred intelligence. This also helped them understand that arts education could be approached from different perspectives, ie. written work, movement, singing, visual arts, online work, practical and theoretical learning, group and individual work, skill development and performance. Learning experiences were presented both online as well as in face-to-face situations to consolidate learning using a variety of perspectives.

e) Provided the opportunity to collaborate

The Master of Teaching (Primary) course is a Mastery level course so students were encouraged to collaborate on all activities as they were not competing for marks. This ensured deeper learning by students as they were able to discuss work online and gain ideas and confirmation of ideas from their peers. Students were also encouraged to complete the arts skill development activity in small groups so they could collaborate and learn from each other.

f) Provided the opportunity to reflect

After each of the weeks of lectures, tutorials and online learning activities, students were required to reflect on what and how they had learned and write a description, analysis and action related to these experiences. This assisted in consolidating their learning about all aspects of the subject.

g) Could be integrated and applied across different subjects areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes

The final lectures and tutorials focussed on students actively learning how to authentically integrate arts learning experiences across the curriculum with the other arts forms as well as other subjects in the curriculum such as literacy and Social Studies. Most of the learning activities in the subject were integration activities, with outcomes being authentically achieved in each of the art forms and in other subject areas as well as achieving generic outcomes.

h) Were seamlessly integrated with assessment

The lectures and tutorials were closely linked with the online assessment items. The students had to complete one quiz each week before the start of the tutorials and lecture on that topic, so they could gain an basic understanding of the topic to be covered. They also had to submit a weekly online e-journal which included a description and analysis of the artform they had covered that week online, in tutorials and lectures. The arts-making skill development activity was an assessment item, as was the completed integrated program they had to create.

i) Created polished products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else

The personal arts making experiences culminated in a final product that they presented to an audience of peers. The final program they wrote was a complete entity in itself, however it could also be adapted to be used in the classroom on their next practice teaching session.

j) Allowed competing solutions and diversity of outcomes

Each student had the opportunity to learn skills in each of the art forms through a unique and creative approach and therefore diverse outcomes were achieved across the cohort by each student in each art form.

3. End of semester survey

At the end of the semester, students were surveyed regarding the development of their confidence and competence in arts education throughout the semester. Ninety-eight percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had developed confidence and competence in this area. The students indicated that the following aspects of the subject assisted them in developing this confidence and competence:

- Learning new skills in each of the art forms;
- Weekly quizzes;
- Weekly reflective journals;
- Writing an integrated program;
- Teaching arts lessons in schools;

- Practical lectures and hands-on tutorials;
- Participating in integrated arts activities; and
- Researching the importance of arts education

These responses correlate with the Herrington et al (2003) framework for authentic learning as seen in Table 2, column 2. Table 2 indicates that the students perceived that what they had experienced in the arts education subject can be clearly aligned with the framework for of authentic learning environments.

Student's responses to how they developed their confidence and competence in arts education within the subject	Aspects of authentic learning framework (Herrington et al (2003) as related to components of the subject
Spending 10 – 20 hours learning new skills in each art form. Performing these creative arts Presentations to their peers; Choosing to play percussion scores as a group for the creative arts presentations Working together to learn and create in each of the art forms.	Have real world significance; Are ill-defined, requiring students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity; Are complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time; Provide the opportunity to collaborate; Create polished products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else Allow competing solutions and diversity of outcomes
Completing the quizzes to develop their confidence in the theory and language of arts education	Provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources
Teaching lessons to their Professional experience class	Have real world significance Are seamlessly integrated with assessment Allow competing solutions and diversity of outcomes
Writing and implementing an integrated creative arts program	Can be integrated and applied across different subjects areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes Are seamlessly integrated with assessment Allow competing solutions and diversity of outcomes
The practical lectures and tutorials	Provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources Have real world significance Provide the opportunity to collaborate
Participating in integration tutorial activities that showed how the arts could be authentically integrated across the curriculum	Can be integrated and applied across different subjects areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes Allow competing solutions and diversity of outcomes
Downloading a wide range of practical and relevant classroom resources from the subject website, including lesson plans and integrated programs	Provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources
Researching and writing about the importance of primary arts education in the classroom	Provide the opportunity to reflect Provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources
Reflecting on learning through e-journals	Provide the opportunity to reflect

Table 2: Students' responses to how they developed their competence and confidence in arts education, compared with aspects of the authentic learning framework by Herrington, Oliver and Reeves (2003)

Conclusion

This paper was written as a response to the decreasing time for the arts in teacher education programs as well as the low priority the arts have in schools and the challenges teachers face when trying to teach the arts in their classrooms (Bamford, 2006; Bresler and Thompson, 2002; Ewing, 2006; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Winner and Hetland, 2000). It described an arts education subject in a teacher education program which aimed to address these challenges.

The arts subject was based on the authentic learning framework criteria by Herrington et al which indicated that, in order to learn effectively and develop their confidence and competence, students also need to have authentic learning experiences. The subject also attempted to address the content and methodology that students requested in their initial survey allowed learning to be effective as well as responding to issues noted by teachers that stopped them from teaching the arts in their classrooms (DEEWR, 2008; DEST, 2005; Russell-Bowie, 2004; SERCARC, 1995).

The subject used a variety of approaches as noted in the literature, including giving students opportunities to practise arts teaching (Green, et al,1998), active and physical participation in on campus learning experiences, both in lectures and tutorials (Meiners, Schiller & Orchard, 2004), developing students' competence in personal arts-making to increase their confidence in arts education (Miraglia 2006), and providing students with authentic learning experiences (Herrington et al, 2003). By the end of the semester, most of the students perceived that they had developed their confidence and competence in arts education, with many of them overcoming their fear of these subjects and instead, becoming enthusiastic advocates of teaching the arts in the primary school.

Initially this development in confidence and confidence for students in relation to arts education looks very positive. However it would be useful to develop this description of a project into a longitudinal research study, investigating how long this confidence and competence lasts once these students are in the classroom, with the pressure to focus only on literacy, mathematics and basic skills tests. In some schools, the arts are not seen as important and it is in this culture that many of the students will have to work as teachers. Therefore the content that they have experienced in their preservice creative arts subject which focussed on integration will equip them to teach the 'important' subjects while authentically integrating the arts, thus enhancing learning in all integrated subjects.

Given the knowledge, understandings, attitudes and experiences the students have developed through this subject, the ongoing access to web-based creative arts resources and the confidence and competence they have achieved in each of the art forms, the students indicate that they have a strong foundation, enthusiasm and commitment to arts education. When teachers perceive that they have the personal confidence and professional competence in arts education, they are much more likely to teach the arts regularly in their classrooms (Bamford, 2006; Russell-Bowie, 2004).

In order to continue this development of confidence and competence in arts education, teacher education courses need to develop programs that enhance students' confidence and competence in the arts. Ongoing support and professional development needs to be implemented to ensure that these beginning teachers do not lose their enthusiasm and confidence in teaching the arts and to provide them with knowledge, attitudes and understanding to teach the arts confidently. Principals need to be aware of the challenges faced by teachers in relation to arts education and provide arts education support for both beginning and long term teachers (DEEWR, 2008; DEST, 2005; Russell-Bowie, 2004; SERCARC, 1995) so that the challenges to teaching the arts are minimised in Australian classrooms.

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