



Changing Places

Exploring different conceptions of early childhood teacher preparation in music education

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Executive Summary

Rationale:

The *Changing Places* project arose as a response to music learning activity seen solely in terms of a musical object, to be played or sung according to the conventions of performance practice without due consideration for the context of the children the locale or the potential of the children to do more. In early childhood centres in New Zealand music often takes the form of teacher directed activity, often using a CD player, with children singing and mirroring pre-ordained movements. The *Changing Places* project sought to challenge this practice through introducing child centred musical activities that presented new teaching and learning opportunities for the teacher and the child.

The idea to place an early childhood student with a music student to work alongside each other in a centre was to see how and if one could influence the other in this interesting 'unsettled space'. The early childhood student brought a child centred approach to learning, apart from music, and a sense of the spontaneous learning moment. The music student, while opportunities are afforded for a diverse range of activities, can adhere to performance practice and relations that limit their scope for making and remaking musical ideas. As the music students were enrolled in a music education paper this project afforded an ideal opportunity for students to challenge their perspectives and assumptions through engaging in a collaborative learning environment in the arts.

Objectives:

By bringing together the two groups of students in one project it was hoped that an informed exchange could be facilitated through the combination of an open ended learning approach adopted by early childhood educators with respect to the early childhood curriculum document Te Whāriki and the in-depth subject knowledge that the music students brought to the project. The complementary nature of the skills and knowledge each group of students brought to the project laid the foundations for a rich learning environment to develop for both sets of students. A key objective was to identify students' held assumptions/conceptions of early years music teaching and learning and, further, to explore unsettled or changed assumptions/conceptions as a result of the project design and interaction.

Methodology:

An ethnographic case study approach was adopted in this research utilising case studies in four early childhood centres in the greater Auckland region. The music students visited an appointed centre where the early childhood students worked six times over a period of three months between March and May 2011. All students first undertook workshops at the University of Auckland at which they were paired one early childhood and one music student before developing their own ideas around the themes of self initiated musical activity. Data was collected through: an online discussion forum set up to support the project; post session dialogues – which were recorded, transcribed and returned to the students; live video recording; students individual journals and student assignments. Findings were coded, analysed and organised into thematic patterns that demonstrated changed assumptions and new ways of working and thinking as a result of the pedagogical innovation.

Key Findings:

One of the most interesting findings was the way in which the ethos of the project – openness and active and engaged listening – that was established by the researchers imbued the relations and the project as a whole. The students developed this openness in their online dialogue, sharing ideas and developing new understandings between themselves as to the challenges of developing new thinking towards children’s making in music.

Since the students were able to show each other work that had been developed in each centre through the online forum this brought vitality to the discussion and exchange of ideas. As the project progressed students became aware of their own development as listeners, observers and responders working with the children as opposed to instructing the children in their making. Furthermore a respect for children to have their own space for making emerged, as well as a greater respect for the children’s process in making and creating their ideas. This sensitivity to children extended to seeing how children *make* their learning in different ways and in a holistic manner at times - as in how a musical sound becomes a soundtrack to an imaginary movie. Through the pairing system it became apparent how the elaboration of the students’ thinking evolved through their engagement in their own learning. This safe space became an opportunity to discuss many aspects of the role of music and the purpose of music in teaching and learning.

Implications for Teaching and Learning:

This project showed the advantage of a cross disciplinary framework within a collaborative teaching and learning environment. The development of a cross sector (ie. private training enterprise and university collaboration) initiative was viewed as productive. The interface between subject-specific students working with early childhood education students was perceived as a positive development and entering into the workplace was seen as a formative enterprise for both institutions. The use of the online discussion forum was integral to the development of an open-ended student led practice that was seen as exemplary in this instance. As a final recommendation it was felt by all parties that this project design should be given serious consideration within teacher education and subject specific courses at university level.

Changing places: exploring different conceptions of early childhood teacher preparation in music education

Introduction

This report outlines the findings of a research project—‘Changing Places’ which was designed to explore alternative practices in early childhood music teacher preparation. Two research staff and a small group of eight students from two tertiary institutions—The University of Auckland (UoA) and New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC)—engaged in a collaborative project where students were paired up and worked together with children on music teaching and learning activities in early childhood centres. The idea was to see if students from different training orientations (music education and early years) could work together to form new pedagogical insights, ideas and perspectives of early childhood music education.

The report begins with an outline of the background concepts and philosophical ideas informing the research and continues with a summary of subject-centred literature that guided staff and student action in the project. The project methodology is then presented along with a summary of key emergent themes and findings from the student collaborations. The report also offers recommendations for further practice and a summary of key points arising from the research as a whole. Finally, research outputs developed from the project are listed.

Background to the Project

The Position Paper

The Changing Places project was underpinned by a set of philosophical or theoretical ideas about pedagogy and practice in music. These were outlined in a position paper *Changing Places: Openness, pedagogy and Heidegger* written by the two research staff and formulated soon after the initiation of the project. The paper was presented at the Philosophy of Education Society Australasia conference in Hawaii in December 2009 (see research outputs). In this position paper the authors critique pedagogical problems and practices found in both tertiary music teacher preparation and early childhood teacher preparation—and relate this to the way in which students conceive their own subject knowledge and their resulting conceptions of teaching.

One problem associated with the music student teacher is the way in which over time music performances become increasingly seen as ‘objects’—or ‘music pieces’—that exist primarily for the purposes of accurate reproduction and/or the aesthetic and subjective inner world of the music listener. Pedagogically this overarching perception of music transmission impacts on the student musician in terms of their conception and realisation of themselves as music teachers. The danger being that in this kind of music-world-view, teaching practices become focused primarily on securing and maintaining specific performance outcomes regardless of the differing needs, aims and motivations of the young children with whom they are working. Further, over-reliance on certain kinds of performance outcomes can prevent other, more emergent learning to surface, such as

cross-modal learning (eg. dance/music) and child initiated learning generated from the impulses and creative actions of children themselves.

On the other hand, the early childhood student teacher's view of learning tends to be more holistic in nature in synergy with the Early Childhood curriculum— Te Whāriki —and its five strands: Mana Atua (well-being), Mana Whenua (belonging), Mana Reo (communication), Mana Tangata (contribution) and Mana Aotūroa (exploration). As such, Te Whāriki promotes the practices of making and developing learning ideas that spring from the children within the context of their families and centre environment. The challenge for early childhood student teachers is to bring these ideas and ethos into a music-learning framework. However in their position paper the authors suggest that the music-as-object ideology still maintains a strong influence in early childhood through packaged performance technologies and CDs which are frequently used in centres as background resources in mat-time. The researchers hypothesised then that the present project could offer alternative ideas and practices for the early childhood students in music engagement with the young children that would be more in keeping with the valued aims of Te Whāriki.

From a philosophical perspective the researchers' positions are referenced from Heidegger's critique of "calculative thinking" (cited in Peters, 2002, p. 8) which it could be argued in education is characterised by highly technical ordering of curriculum designs, atomised assessment and repetitions of pre-determined knowledge or aesthetic structures. The researchers posit that calculative thinking impacts on both music and early childhood teachers particularly in terms of shaping their thinking about music teaching and learning practices within specific performative conditions. In contrast the researchers maintain that a more open style of thinking can be adopted by teachers—one of being receptive or open to the emergent qualities present in any learning interaction. This sensitivity to emergent learning, or what Heidegger called "poiesis" (Heidegger, 1993, p.317) is something that the authors believe is desirable in early childhood education, and could be a rich way of thinking about teaching and learning in so-called performance learning areas like music.

Taking these pedagogical ideas into account, a unique opportunity existed where students from both institutions could join together in a collaborative project where they could learn from their respective contexts and engage together with children in music learning initiatives. In the initial phases dialogues between the researchers opened up potential for shared practice following an assessment of needs of students in both institutions (UoA and NZTC) with regard to their pedagogical knowledge of music education in early childhood. With both staff members involved in enquiry orientated courses about music and arts education an opportunity existed where a collaborative research programme could be established where students from both institutions could learn together and assist each other in the formulation of pedagogical understandings and practice in early childhood music education. This was also seen as a unique research opportunity, given that both staff concerned were publishing in music education research and also had a strong interest in developing innovative pedagogies in music. A collaborative and exploratory programme was also seen as a chance to investigate a different kind of early childhood teacher preparation in music and observe whether this different approach contributed in any way to changes in the musical, educational and practical teacher-world-views held by both groups of students.

Early Childhood Music Education Literature

There is strong support for a more open, exploratory and collaborative approach to music learning in the early childhood literature. This gave the researchers more confidence to pursue their project plan. Key research articles point to the early childhood music educator increasingly seeing music as an holistic learning mode in young children as opposed to a performative package or a mere time filling activity.

Alcock (2008) examines music and rhythm as a mode of creative communication and play. She points to children's drama activities, improvisation and spontaneous play commonly found in early years centres as examples of "rhythmic musicality" (Alcock, 2008, p. 328). Drawing from the concept of *musike*, Alcock sees rhythmical action in all engagements by children in the temporal arts (p. 337) and that children's artistic multilayered expressions are spaces of mediation, contradiction, communication and playfulness. She expresses some concern with the fact that this dimension of musicality is often overlooked. Teachers of young children need to learn to take on passive roles in child interactions, letting children generate their own artistic and rhythmic expressions by listening, prompting and encouraging them.

Similarly Barrett's (2006) research on children's vocalised interactions with carers, family and other children suggests a deeper mode of learning and communication that is often dismissed or not observed closely by adults close by. Barrett's particular interest is in the phenomenon of spontaneous song in young children—which she sees as a very real expression of creativity in a child, and the complex contextual environments that nurture this form of expression. Early spontaneous song making, Barrett affirms, becomes an expansion of "mutuality, belonging to, finding and making meaning, competence and elaboration" (p. 207) for the child. The ability for teachers to observe the role potential of spontaneous song in learning and foster opportunities for vocalisations to develop seems to be pivotal as a guiding pedagogical skill. Knudsen (2008) expands on Barrett's research to show how children's vocalisations, as fundamental forms of human expression, become "technologies of the self" or embodied learning tools that "act upon the self" to reinforce a certain mental state or mood. In other words, they become ways of knowing the self as self (p. 287). Musical learning, when seen in this way, becomes a vital means of understanding oneself and forming a sense of personal identity within a group. Knudsen is concerned about the fact that adults tend to lose their spontaneous vocal impulses and she promotes the idea that teachers need to nurture children's musical worlds for children and not primarily from a 'becoming adult' perspective. Knudsen calls for "playful musical interaction" with young children because it can lead to a "greater awareness of their creative potential and a deeper understanding of the musical nature of children" (p. 293).

Custodoro (2007) explores the world of young children's musical improvisations. She discusses the notion of "receptivity...which is a disposition open to receiving sources from which to respond and is sustained by mutuality and embodiment" (p. 81). Children become more receptive in this way through having ready access to musical instruments and experimental sound generators that offer opportunities for physical interaction and experimentation. Mallets and beaters become extensions of arms as children are offered opportunities to generate percussive sounds through physical manipulation. This in turn leads to collaborative creative music making and "reponsivity" (ibid.) as interactions and manipulations of sound sources become common-place. Custodoro thinks that such experiences are found in early mother-infant interactions where musical responsiveness is fostered

in a formative, intimate bonding relationship. Similarly, Young (1995) writes about a “pedagogy of listening” in early childhood music education that encourages teachers to step back, observe, and allow children to express their own musical ideas. When a musical expression is observed and fully expressed teachers can then respond actively, so that meaningful learning is actualised and pedagogical communication is effective and timely.

Gluschankof’s (2008) ethnographic research on kindergarten cultures found that each kindergarten had its idiosyncratic culture, which was formed through a combination of factors such as family differences, ethnicities, kindergarten teacher beliefs, and peer cultures. She examined kindergartens where music was considered an essential element in education and kindergarten life. Cultural differences that impacted on learning, she maintains, are evident in the music and music play observed in each kindergarten—and most particularly each place afforded a different kind of musical expression from the children.

These and other literatures point to a view of early childhood music education attuned to the learning child as an individual within an environment of social interaction and engagement. Music is seen as a mode of engagement, as a medium whereby children and teachers creatively interact, communicate and develop ways of being in the world—in other words ways of seeing the self as self within a social context. There is an increasing awareness of the need for teacher responsiveness or ‘responsivity’, of listening to children, letting them explore and of proactively working with them while considering their own particular cultures of learning. Music is seen as a holistic learning tool, as part of a child’s growth and development as a child—not primarily as something that builds towards what adults do. Taking this literature into account the researchers were interested to see if their students in the collaborative research programme, developed any understandings or practices that were in synergy with current early childhood music education research.

Methodology

A research design was constructed that utilised and brought together two tertiary courses—one in research in early childhood education for final year early childhood students—the other a special topic in the education of young children in music education for a group of final year BMus students with different specialisations (eg. composition, performance, musicology, arts, jazz). The idea was to bring together the two groups of students on one teaching project in selected early childhood centres. While the focus remained on the music learning of the young children in the selected centres the two groups of students brought to the project a different skill set and knowledge base. The early childhood students brought a good deal of personal work experience of working with young children to the project as they were all positioned in centres and working while undertaking their tertiary degree studies. These students had a more intimate knowledge of young children, of the teaching processes employed in early childhood centres, and of the early childhood curriculum—Te Whāriki. On the other hand, the music students brought specialised knowledge of music, musical understanding, and experiences of music teaching—mainly with older aged children. One key aspect of the project, then, was the complementary nature of the skill and knowledge set of the two student groups involved and how this provided an opportunity for rich pedagogical learning in ‘both directions’.

A qualitative methodology was employed which utilised ethnographic means of data collection within a series of small case studies—each case being a different early childhood centre where pairs of students worked. Each early childhood student ‘buddied’ up with a music student and was assigned a centre (where the early childhood student worked) and a specific time was negotiated with each centre manager for a ‘music session’ with the children. A joint ethics approval application was prepared for the ethics committees of both NZTC and UoA. This covered the complete range of ethical interactions such as: student-child, student-centre teacher, student-lecturer, centre manager-students, and parents-students. Ethical issues of importance were that of child safety, child confidentiality, informed consent, student accountability, lecturer accountability, and procedures to solve differences and potential conflict.

Once a small group of students was recruited for the research project from each institution, the lecturers prepared a series of music workshops for all students. Students were introduced to each other and worked together collectively on music activities and games initiated by the course lecturers. Student pairs were formed depending on a range of factors including locality, transport issues and student interest. Workshop time was allocated for student planning, for the sessions where student pairs would work together in centres with children. The workshops, led by the two researchers, enabled the students to get to know each other, establish working ideas together and develop shared goals for their partnered sessions in centres. The preliminary workshops consisted of testing out ideas for music learning, time for discussion, sharing of ideas and knowledge about the early childhood centres where student pairs would be working together.

Student partners then met in early childhood centres once a week for six weeks (23/3/11 to 11/5/11) and initiated music games, play and learning activities with young children at each of the four centres. Each pair worked together and explored different music interaction opportunities with the children and carefully followed where each interaction led.

As stated the idea overall was to see how the students developed their thinking, ideas and practice of music education within the context of the collaboration and the centre children and environment. This was undertaken alongside knowledge from key research readings (see literature review), reflective practice in the form of shared dialogue sessions (Reflections 1-6, date), online moodle discussion and journaling (Participant No. - Moodle discussion date) which gave the students an opportunity to discuss the project with the whole group each week. Selected music sessions were also filmed by a professional cameraman so that the researchers had a record of the student pairs working with the children and the kinds of learning outcomes and experiences that were realised within the sessions.

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers used a range of text, voice and visual means of data collection in order to explore evidence and ascertain the nature of the student interactions, pedagogical thinking and practice, and the contextual aspects informing each centre case. These were as follows:

Online Moodle

This provided the students with a space for group discussion, the interaction of ideas and the sharing of experiences. Students also wrote a weekly reflective journal that summarised what had been learnt and experienced during the weekly session.

Post-session Reflections

Immediately following each teaching session students met in another space to discuss and evaluate/debrief the session, compare experiences, and offer planning ideas for the following session the next week. These dialogues were audio recorded and transcribed into text for the researchers.

Live video recordings

Selected sessions were video recorded for first-hand capture of learning outcomes and experiences. Video material was edited following the sessions by the researchers so that exemplary moments of pedagogical interest and children's learning and involvement could be disseminated alongside text outcomes.

Researchers' Observations

The researchers visited each centre at least once to track progress and note first hand the student-child interactions that were going on. This was useful to compare and confirm interpretations of experiences later on.

Student Assignments and Evaluations

Students met with staff following the sessions and discussed their experiences in the centres. Also, students had to submit an assignment which included a literature review of early childhood music education and a reflective summary report of each teaching session.

Analysis of Data

Each of the data forms was watched and discussed by the researchers. Qualitative themes were extracted from text, audio and video responses following triangulation of evidence within the context of each case and the research aims in mind. This was deemed to be the most appropriate course of action because of the exploratory nature of the investigation and the emergent and experiential qualities of each student collaboration. Firstly, the researchers examined how each student group (NZTC/UoA) had changed or developed as music educators in terms of assumptions, knowledge, perception, powers of observation and pedagogical confidence as music educators.

Themes were suggested that emerged from student perceptions and experiences as a result of the collaboration. These themes exemplified the kind of student change and growth that developed in the project. A key overarching theme was the pedagogical thinking and practices that evolved within the child centred learning ethos that underpinned the whole project.

Data Presentation

The researchers took care to preserve the voices of individual students within the project report. Thus, a narrative approach that presented the student voice as direct quotes was used along with interpretive comment and discussion in the form of an 'emic' perspective from the researchers, taking into account all the data.

Brief Case Descriptions

Students undertook collaborative music education practices in four early childhood centres in the greater Auckland region. The four centres represented a range of different orientations and structures in early childhood education provision.

Centre 1: A South Auckland centre that is privately funded and licensed for 50 children and caters for ages from 4 to 6 years. It has 6 staff and an affiliation with Reggio practice.

Centre 2: A central Auckland centre that is privately funded and licensed for 100 children and caters for ages from 2 ½ to 5 years. It has 20 staff in total and has affiliations with both Reggio and Montessori practices.

Centre 3: An East Auckland kindergarten that is publicly funded and licensed for 40 children. It has 6 staff and has an affiliation with Reggio practice.

Centre 4: A community-funded centre on Auckland's North Shore that is licensed for 30 children and caters for ages from 16 months to 5 years. The centre has 4 staff and has a Reggio affiliation.

Findings

Qualitative data from the research was analysed and key themes extracted. The themes represent patterns of pedagogical interest that reflected the experience of the study programme from the student's point of view. Further, changes in the students' understandings and teaching and learning practices are summarised to express the impact of the programme on the students.

Shared Ethos

A common feature of the *Changing Places* project was the shared ethos that developed between the research staff and students of both institutions. The partnership in evidence between the two researchers operated as a role model for the students who formed pairs, one from each institution,

who worked together for six sessions in the participating centres. Of note was the 'fit' between the different skill-set and knowledge-base of the two groups of students on the one hand and the project aim on the other which was to develop knowledge and learn more about music education in early childhood through the student collaboration. The planned collaboration suited the needs of the students and the different knowledge each group provided fitted the learning needs in each student group.

Students worked in pairs; each music student was paired up with an early childhood student. The student pairs were very supportive of each other and were able to give each other regular feedback on their interactions with the children. They would often compliment each other on their respective skill set and saw themselves very much as learning together and establishing criteria for making their own evaluations of their collaborative practice. Notice the way in which this music student is praising the work of the early childhood student:

And I love the way you dance with the children, and there the children's concentrating about what the music is giving, what the beat is giving for you. So it's nice, just changing it and he enjoyed that. (Music Student 3, Centre 3, Reflection 2, 30/3/11)

Here, early on in the project the music student reflects on the participative element in the early childhood educator's involvement with the children.

The development of a shared evaluation process that legitimated the process that the students were engaged in was particularly evident. Here is one such incident in the second week of teaching:

ECE Student 3: I think they're doing really well, if you think about the first time that you came in and we did music with them, they had fun because we did all that dancing and stuff like that but I would never have imagined them to sit around and do what they're doing now because they're starting to get to know who you are and what we're doing... and more involved. I think the first session was we were outside playing on the drums and stuff and that went okay but it was a little more chaotic but this time it's a little bit more...

Music Student 3: More spontaneous, more natural...

ECE Student 3: Yeah the children are actually relaxed.

Music Student 3: I think that's the thing, we should just let them be; like even they don't want to join us, me and you, we can just play and then if they're interested they'll come in and we can make some music together. (Centre 3, Reflection 2, 30/3/11)

This confidence in assessing the process according to the student's own criteria showed in lots of ways how shared practice was developing in the student pairings. This confidence prompted the students to reflect on changing attitudes to music practice in the centre at the end of the project:

Music Student 1: ... that's one thing that opened up my eyes; this project has really made me immerse myself in the child's world. Trying to understand what they're doing, be like a part of them, like you and me being silly, playing around creating some musical instruments. It's very good the music that we made.

ECE Student 1: The teachers next door have got it, they're more aware of it now. They just let it happen. The children play the instruments, they get them out and start banging around

and usually the teachers would be like: “oh okay that’s enough now put it away.” Now they don’t do that anymore. They let them do what they want. They might say you can go in there and play with them but a lot of the times the teachers will actually go in there now and start playing with the children and being silly with them, rather than telling them to be quiet.

Music Student 1: In a way this is more like active training for instead of passive training, like you must do this and like supporting activities for the students to be independent. It’s not say training but making the children used to being around musical instruments. Do you see that?

ECE Student 1: Well it’s like a musician, he might learn how to play a song, but a musician will learn to play or create their own style or their own sound on their own. These children are doing the same thing. No two children are the same; no child will sit there and bang the same beat. They all do their own thing and one of them might be really hard and fast banging on the drums and the other one might be quite delicate. They are all so different and they are all so creative. And of course some of them might pick ideas up from watching their friends. I wouldn’t mind trying that a little bit differently. (Centre 1, Reflection 6, 11/5/11)

This is an achievement—to not only have inspired other teachers in the centre but to see how a musical activity can be read as something that is different according to the child and their context. Here we have an acceptance of the ‘other’ recognised in a quite sophisticated manner with reference to a musician. Once again the verdict that this is ‘good’ music comes from the students seeing the context of this music making as ‘active’ rather than ‘passive training’ offering support for the children exploring their own potential as makers not imitators. As such, this independence, becomes something that was valued by all the students though an acceptance of teacher led activity was not denied.

In the initial teaching sessions shared practices were starting to have an effect on the students. Here, handing out the instruments was noted by one of the early childhood students as an interesting strategy:

ECE Student 2: And it was a good idea the way you handed the instruments out one by one because the way I’ve been doing it just opening up the box and they just come and dive in and pull everything out and makes a huge noise but there’s nothing, no rhyme or reason to what they’re doing. But the way you handed them out one by one it became more peaceful and calmer, the way you had a couple of children banging on the cymbals.

Music Student 2: And they enjoyed it. There were fabulous moments when for instance Ben when he wanted the mallet because we had abstract conversation, now it was easy to just look for the mallets and I could understand and I gave them to him and also non-verbal conversation was I think highly supported today because we just looked at each other to see who is having the turn. So connection between the participants was supported which I think is good for emotional development.

ECE Student 2: Interaction between them.

Music Student 2: Yes. And they had to listen to let someone else have a turn, so yeah I think there were good moments supporting other areas of development. Maybe it was not so

much for music in terms of sound development but with the element of music I know that we've done something today for their emotional and cognitive and physical development. For me the impression is that we used music for their development. It was not the other way round. Maybe last time we used everything else for music but today we used music for the development of other things, this is my feeling.

(Centre 2, Reflection 2, 30/3/11)

Right from the start of the teaching sessions the students were supporting each other with critical feedback. In the following example an early childhood student gives feedback to a music student on their work with the children:

ECE Student 1: He [a child of interest] was really focused, and even [child's name] was sitting there quietly and you didn't really notice her too much sitting there but she listened to what you were saying (Centre 1, Reflection 1, 23/3/11)

One of the most interesting features of the project was the evidence of shared practice on the online moodle, which was set up for the project's duration. Staff and students involved were able to log on to the moodle each day and make a contribution to the ongoing, shared learning culture. The moodle enabled several types of contributions to be made: (i) discussion threads which any staff or student could reply to, (ii) journal entries summarising reflective notes on sessions by each student, and (iii) resources, multimedia clips, photos, websites, articles etc posted by staff and students.

The online moodle brought both groups of students together as a learning community even though they were writing and participating in the discussions at home and working with only one partner in a centre during the weekly sessions. The online discussion forum in the moodle enabled deeper ideas and thinking to be shared with the whole group that otherwise may have not been shared. Right from the onset of the project students were using the moodle to prompt and raise thoughtful discussions of philosophy and practice:

Music Student 2: The biggest challenge I think [is]... to [move] our heart/work/philosophy from a hypothetical place of 'fear' (...am I doing the right thing?, etc...) to a very prominent place of 'freedom'—the freedom of offering these children and the programme the very best of our actions...(Moodle, 20/3/11)

Through the moodle discussions students were also able to share some of their contextual or 'situated' knowledge. This was important for the early childhood students who were already working in centres and intimate and familiar with each centre environment. The early childhood students thus had an opportunity through the moodle to provide more situated knowledge for the music students who were coming into the experience cold. In addition, some centres were underpinned by particular philosophies of education, notably the Reggio Emilia approach. The moodle also enabled deeper understandings of 'Reggio' to be communicated to the music students:

ECE Student 3: In the Reggio approach, the teacher is considered a co-learner and collaborator with the child and not just an instructor. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate the child's learning by planning activities and lessons based on the child's interests, asking questions to further understand, and actively engaging in the activities alongside the child, instead of sitting back and observing the child learning. (Moodle, 12/4/11)

The combination of live practical experiences and the written online community experiences proved to be mutually supportive for both groups of students.

Listening, Observing and Responding in the Moment

Another common theme that was reported by both student groups was that the project enabled them to become more effective listeners, observers and responders—and thus more able to make teaching and learning decisions with the children. This was reflected in some students becoming more attuned to the *process* of music learning as opposed to the common orientation of aiming towards a music *product*—which in western culture is often viewed as a song or performance piece. This change in orientation reflected a change in the underlying assumptions they held about what music teaching and learning was all about.

Here is an example of two students recounting an incident in the fifth teaching session with a child:

ECE Student 1: She's actually really sensitive to sound because she was playing the triangle and she said "everybody listen to me." She wanted everyone to stop so I made them all stop and I think you were putting a CD on and she was playing and I'd respond and she just kept watching me and she'd do another little tune and then she'd wait for me and then I'd do another tune.

Music Student 1: Yeah that's like what we did, call and response.

ECE Student 1: Yeah and she was loving it.

Music Student 1: You can see that's improvisation there.

ECE Student 1: Yeah but she was the one that started it. She was the one that actually suggested we do the call and response. It wasn't anything that I'd suggested.

Music Student 1: I think we all did this together and she did a different one, like she did it differently.

ECE Student 1: She probably observed us doing a little thing, like you'd bang and I'd sort of do it and then you'd do it and I'd do it and she was probably also watching that thinking

Music Student 1: And she was trying to tap the lid as well.

ECE Student 1: Yeah.

Music Student 1: I think she's trying to improvise and I observed the other three and the two girls that were in front of me, more like following and just more reserved types. Like some kids they are very musical, some they're not but they want to be but you can see that we're trying to bring that out from them.

ECE Student 1: I don't know her name but I was trying to get her to do things, like I was whispering in her ear and stuff she didn't want to even participate, she was sort of sitting there and I was come on do it for me and she wouldn't and then when forgot about it she

came over and started doing it in my ear. So it was having the confidence to come over to me and do it but without all the attention being on her. (Centre 1, Reflection 5, 4/5/11)

It is the attention to detail that is so interesting in this reporting. The students find in the child's responses how she is able create something musical of her own and finds it so much easier with the spotlight being on her. At the same time as recognising the achievement of the children the students can see how patient they have to be in waiting for her to make the decision as to when to play her call and response improvisation.

This ability to wait for the children to develop their own activity and to be responsive to their spontaneity was reflected on by another pair of students in their last teaching session:

ECE Student 3: That's the first thing we found that we are directing them too much. When we sat and listened to our audio recordings we found more of our own voices than the children's voices and we saw that we were disturbing their own creativity. When they started to do something we'd say "do this" or "you try this, sing a song" and sometimes we started a song, like Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star and we expected them to join in.

Music Student 3: Yes to continue it or something.

ECE Student 3: Yeah wait for them to respond.

Music Student 3: But I think that was good in a way that we did direct the children a little bit because they do need like some form of starting point and then from that they continue their own idea. Like I found that one girl had some bamboo sticks and she grabbed a leaf and she went along that way and I would never have thought of playing the bamboo that way so by just observing and letting them kind of observe and think how to play an instrument, their own way has opened up my way of thinking to say "oh yeah this can make sounds, not just the way that we would think of it." (Centre 3, Reflection 6, 11/5/11)

The admission that too much time was spent in telling the children what to do was a frank admission of their practice at the start of the project. However as reported the development of the practice was seen as a combination of instruction and developing the children's independence.

The work of the early childhood students in documenting the work of the children was recorded in one exchange after again seeing the value of 'stepping back:'

ECE Student 4: I usually jump in when I'm doing music and start to analyse everything but gradually I've realised it is better to step back. I was thinking about my teacher at university, what I noticed what he does for a lot of lessons is he stops and just listens and then focuses in on tiny little details. It's that really careful listening, not just sitting and hearing, but really careful listening that's important, so I'm going to try and apply it to my teaching.

Music Student 4: Yes part of our role is to be an observer and what we do is we make learning stories with the children. So I've been trying to apply this thing of observing in our music sessions. That's our role as teachers we have to be observers as well as teachers. We can't teach if we don't observe so I can relate to your teacher and that article about listening by Susan Young. (Centre 4, Reflection 3, 6/4/11)

Again learning that there is space for the children was recognised by the students as well as trying to support them in their play.

The development of thinking about listening and observing also had an affect on the way both groups of students considered the expressive behaviour of young children in the centres that they might not have otherwise noticed. One music student spoke about the 'unseen child'—the child that was often quieter or less obtrusive in the group—and how the music activity seemed to give him a space to share and express himself with the group. Another music student noticed how the music focus brought out special interests and abilities in particular children:

Music Student 3: Another boy who usually holds back and just watches others play, had a full 15-20min (well, felt like that...might have been more or less) good attention span and full concentration on the drums he was beating. It was a solo. When others joined him, he did hold back a bit until we spread the drums out and he had some of his 'own space' to play (but still within the group of kids that joined him) he played some more. He is a South African...(Moodle, 5/5/11)

To many of the students the notion of listening became a pedagogy connected to the idea that teachers should give students space to be themselves and learn from actions sparked by their own interests. There was an increasing awareness of a "pedagogy of listening" (Young, 1995), and this reflected what they were reading in the early childhood research literature. It is interesting to see how the students were embracing the ideas and assumptions about being 'aware' of children's musical development through self-action coming out of the research:

ECE Student 2: Susan Young stated that through developing an awareness of the children and their music we should let them venture where they will. Even if it is out of the musical conventions. (Moodle, 11/4/11)

As the project progressed students appeared to become more aware of the special moments of interaction and learning. This amounted to observations of little moments of child responses, special smiles, small exchanges and nonverbal or expressive interactions. What was previously a noisy exchange from a child was perceived as an opportunity to listen:

ECE Student 4: However for me I now am more aware to listen rather than quieten children when they express themselves in this [noisy] manner and embrace their creativity...(Moodle, 8/4/11)

Another student expressed the capturing of special moments in terms of being an audience for the children:

ECE Student 2: Sitting still and watching helps you catch little moments of 'making music' and I think they like to play to an audience. (Moodle, 6/4/11)

In addition to listening and observing students reported that it was the nature of their responses to children's music making that stimulated and captivated them. One student noted that her responses to children as a kind of encouragement or affirmation that helped raise the enjoyment of the experience and spur them on to more learning:

ECE Student 2: I have also noticed that when they are 'making music' and we respond by moving, or dancing that this encourages them to continue, or do something a little different to see what our response will be. Yes, they do like to have our attention. It is amazing how much we missed before! (Moodle, 3/4/11)

Holistic Learning

As the project developed the students became more cognisant of the idea that music was very much part of a holistic learning for the child. This meant that the conventional boundaries between what was commonly perceived of as music and 'extra-musical' learning and behaviour were not so readily present in their pedagogical assumptions. Music learning happened alongside moving, dancing, stories, language, games and a whole range of physical and emotional experiences. The students from both groups caught onto music being very broader than one element in the imagination and life of a child and actively discussed notions of interdisciplinarity.

ECE Student 4: Drama is very close to music isn't it? You know they're role playing here all the time.

Music Student 4: They're very convinced by it too. Wow that imagination is everything you know they said you watch your foot because as far as they're concerned the fire was there and the hot lava; one girl actually panicked like she was falling in, "you're going to get hurt" they all said and we actually pulled her up because they wanted to save her and I was quite interested and thought wow she's actually really trying.

(Centre 4, Reflection 3, 6/4/11)

Music was assumed to have a strong connection with imagination and the power of music to stimulate the imagination was a common interest point for all the students. This was prevalent in a 'boom whackers' session initiated in one centre. A boom whacker is a homemade percussion instrument like a tube which when hit produces a percussive note...

Music Student 1: Some of the children let their imaginations run wild as they replicated the sound of the jungle with the boom whackers. I think we should incorporate an activity based on the sound of the boom whackers in the next session. (Moodle, 30/4/11)

The boom whackers took the students and children into some unexpected areas:

ECE Student 1: Also I noticed when we were doing, when we were all listening to the music, there are a few children that are saying oh that feels like there's monsters here and dinosaurs and things like that.

Music Student 1: All sorts of imagination.

ECE Student 1: Yeah so it would be quite cool to maybe get them to listen to more of that sort of music and tell us sort of what we did in class.

Music Student 1: Sort of story telling.

ECE Student 1: Tell the story about what's happening with a piece of music. Like that music that you brought in was really great.

Music Student 1: Yeah I was thinking I want to find music that has like the creature sounds and you can imagine what's going on it's kind of creepy.

ECE Student 1: Maybe we could try and do something like that and get them to, yeah and then they can listen to it, tell us how they feel and maybe start acting out some of the

Music Student 1: Share stories around.

ECE Student 1: Yeah.

Music Student 1: Probably from everyone, they might have ideas, good imagination.

ECE Student 1: Yeah go round the circle and ask them how they felt, how it made them feel or what story they thought it was telling. (Centre 1, Reflection 2, 30/3/11)

Here we can see the students gradually developing a sense of the dramatic infusing their work in the centre after the experience of the boom whackers. This evolution of the activity from sounds to activity to moving into narrative was an exciting process for the children and the students alike.

The students began to realise that holistic music learning was not only based on the ear, but involved sight, sound, smell, touch—a whole raft of senses. Students found that stories and narratives provided a good entry point for multi-sensing development and several centres created music activities based on musical stories that encouraged whole group participation and expression in the arts. Stories were developed that used 'bear hunts' and 'penguin journeys' among other things:

ECE Student 2: I really think that by using music and stories that we capture the children's imaginations and all their senses. They LOVE to be involved and they do not differentiate between any of their senses, as such. Sight, sound, smell and physical are all involved; kinesthetic, it's how they discover and learn. (Moodle, 17/4/11)

One student pair also showed some interest in developing a concept of musical theatre with the children however they were limited by the time frame of the project. This showed a willingness by the students to move into interdisciplinary arts experiences where children could participate in blended and mutually supportive arts experiences with music, dance, drama and visual arts.

Rethinking Concepts of Music and Education

Another key theme that came out of the project was the process of re-evaluation of the students' musical and pedagogical concepts during the course of the project. The special nature of the collaboration—bringing together two different interest groups—seemed to encourage a process where students were able to reassess their own concepts and assumptions about music and education. The interaction between the groups allowed for a space where students were free to

critically consider their knowledge and understandings while observing the practical implications of their reassessments in the centre music sessions.

In the course of the project, musical concepts like rhythm and improvisation became triggers for new ways of thinking about pedagogy. The students began to relate their observations of the children using these musical descriptors. The idea of rhythm was used to describe the way children fell in and out of different learning activities going from something systematic to “chaos” and then eventually settling on “what feels right for them” (Music Student 4). It was interesting to note how the students were picking up on how movement through various spaces of interaction occurred as a kind of ‘rhythm’.

Similarly music improvisation was something that was seen as akin to the creative responses the children were making within the musical activities they participated in. Students talked about how they observed the children’s “creative responses” and embraced them in order to “encourage more improvising and creative thought” (Music Student 1, Moodle, 12/4/11). The particular blend of music and early childhood thinking and practice, seemed to promote these kinds of innovative pedagogical concepts.

Early on in the project the students began to reflect on their efforts as teachers leading in a ‘do as I do’ fashion.

ECE Student 1: I think the songs they’re taught are quite, well I don’t know I think they’re more, they’re moving to actions but they’re being told to move to. Basically it might be “I can run, run, run then I stop. I can run, run, run and then I stop.” So all the children are running, stopping, running, stopping - there’s no imagination or no thought really it’s just imitating what they’re given.

Music Student 1: Music can be more – it can evolve all sorts of things that they can’t see but they can feel and want to bring out. (Centre 1, Reflection 2, 30/3/11)

This showed a developing critical regard for mindless imitative activity that is removed from the children’s musical imaginations.

Previously held assumptions about the concept of ‘noise’ came under critical review. The project’s emphasis on music also brought about a reassessment of noise—and the occurrence of loud noise—which is commonly dismissed as being annoying or a nuisance. The experience of ‘noise’, as reconstructed in the project, became a potential for learning and expression for both teachers and children.

Early Childhood Student 2: I have also realised, by observing other teachers, how often we shut the children down when they are making sounds (noise, before this project). I am sure that we will never look at music the way we used to and I am sure that the music students will see music differently too. (Moodle, 14/4/11)

Overall, the structure of the project offered a different perspective for each participating student. For the early childhood student, this meant looking at their educational practice from a ‘musical’ point of view. Ideas of rhythm, time and other musical notions started to surface in their deliberations and reflections. These fresh perspectives helped them reassess their assumptions about their work with children. For the music students, the project offered different perspectives of

their notions of 'music'. They were challenged by the early childhood context and the need to bring music realistically into the children's lives, within the spaces of their own context of development. This challenge was often met through the incorporation of more holistic teaching and learning strategies as discussed in the previous theme.

Summary of Key Points

The main idea of the *Changing Places* project was to see if students from different training orientations (music education and early years) could work together to form new pedagogical assumptions, insights and conceptions of early childhood music education. A collaborative and exploratory programme was also seen as a chance to investigate a different kind of early childhood teacher preparation in music and observe whether different approaches contributed in any way to changes in the musical, educational and practical teacher-world-views held by both groups of students.

It was evident that students participating in the research enjoyed working in the collaborative student pairs and the online moodle created an effective and motivating online community of learning that affected the project positively. This engagement led to many interesting outcomes. A key research objective was to explore changes in students' assumptions of early years music education practice. The themes that emerged from the qualitative data addressed this objective and helped to describe the contextual circumstances within which changing students' assumptions were realised.

The shared ethos that emerged through the course of the project propelled the learning experiences forward in a very positive way for each student. Although their individual responses were very different, each student enjoyed providing their own individual contribution to the group. The shared ethos was linked to the design of the project including the shared centre tasks, the expectations initiated through bringing together the different student groups and the construction of the shared spaces for dialogue in the research.

Further, the project prompted different kinds of pedagogical thinking and approaches—particularly those that put the teacher in the role of listener, observer and active responder. Students in the project found themselves taking notice of particular and special learning moments offered by the children, and their responses indicated they had become more sensitive to the children's expressive musical behaviours.

Students tended to situate their music activities within a more holistic framework involving other arts, language and physical contexts. Narratives and stories provided students with vehicles for musical expression and development. Gesture, movement, sound discovery and instrument building contexts further stimulated the children's responses. This involved reconceptualising music as an activity that was linked to the children's broader learning and development and the particular expressive opportunities in their centre environment.

The collaborative community that evolved in the group stimulated students to reassess their prior assumptions and understandings of both education and music. Student's prior knowledge of musical and pedagogical ideas were also challenged through the need for them to acknowledge difference brought about by the special early childhood context and the student pairings.

At the onset of the project it was difficult to tell if both groups of students held the fixed assumptions about music learning that represented the patterns of thought initially theorised by the researchers. This was partly because both groups were new to the project and had not had opportunities to articulate their assumptions fully. However, as the project progressed specific pathways of thinking that emerged were antithetical to the notion of Heidegger's "calculative thinking"—as reflected in the thematic strands that emerged from the data. For the music students this meant they were considering music less from the perspective of 'adult performance' and more from the viewpoint of the children and the holistic social environment within which musical activity emerged. Similarly, the early childhood students were prompted to look beyond teacher-led and imitative pedagogies to the musical expressions coming from the children themselves. The researchers also noted that these outcomes reflected current innovative thinking in early childhood music research that emphasised alternative child-based conceptions of music learning and teacher sensitivities as noted in the brief literature review in this report. Overall, student responses indicated to the researchers that it was possible to approach pedagogical concerns and change structures of thinking in music education through research-rich design and action.

Recommendations for Further Practice

Results indicated that *Changing Places* was a successful collaborative research project in early childhood teacher education. It is recommended that future teacher education courses be developed that involve collaborations between teacher education student groups (eg. early childhood, primary, secondary training) and domain specific student groups (eg. music, dance, language, science). Future programmes should be carefully planned and structured with careful attention to the research literature and the knowledge and skills brought into the project by each group.

Teacher education programmes based on practical fieldwork can be merged with research informed teaching concepts. Practical training (eg. in early childhood centres or primary classrooms) can be enhanced by domain specific inquiries that take students into deeper understandings and reflections of their work with children.

Further use and development of online moodle discussions have the potential to build learning communities and shared interests. An effective online moodle can be a catalyst and a tool for collaborative discussion and learning through a 'connected community'. It can also be a tool that assists in a deeper reevaluation of personal conceptions of teaching and learning.

A key aspect of the *Changing Places* project was the use of pedagogical research strategies that gave students an opportunity to reassess their assumptions, conceptions and ideas of their learning within a practical context. The project favoured a balance of direct, practical strategies with strategic space for student self-discovery that was underpinned with challenging theoretical ideas about teaching and learning. Future teacher education programmes would do well to incorporate self-exploration of ideas alongside more instructional components in environments conducive to the sharing of viewpoints. The students in the project gained from the way the project enabled them to rethink their conceptions of teaching and learning alongside carefully prepared practice-based experiences with children. Key to the success of the project was the setting up of spaces where collaboration and constructive dialogue could occur between the students and their lecturers. The

practical teaching and learning experiences of the students were reevaluated and repositioned through the dialogical spaces enabled by the research. These opportunities were critical for providing room for the students to look beyond normative or instrumental notions of teaching and find risky, alternative pedagogies that were more sensitive to the emergent needs of the children in their centres.

Project Research Outputs

Lines, D. & Naughton, C. (2009) Changing Places: Openness, pedagogy and Heidegger, *Philosophy of Education Society Australasia Conference*, Hawaii, December, 2009.

Naughton, C. (2010) Changing Places, *Ako Aotearoa Northern Region Symposium*, Auckland, Sept, 2010.

Lines, D. & Naughton, C. (2011) Changing Places: exploring different conceptions of early childhood teacher preparation in music education, *New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference*, Tauranga, Dec., 2011.

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