Effective professional development in music for early childhood educators.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences of three early childhood educators working in preschools taking part in a year long music collaboration. The aim of the research was to gain a deeper understanding of how best to provide practical professional development in music by listening to how the participant educators perceived and identified their needs throughout the collaboration. The aim of the collaboration was to increase the participant's music skills and confidence through a collaborative model of professional development, to instigate long-term changes to music teaching practice. In this longitudinal, phenomenological study, the researcher acted as a consultant and mentor to the participant educators, offering materials, suggestions, guidance and expertise. Data was collected through a series of semi-structured formal interviews, regular observations of the participant's working, followed by informal discussions. In addition, each participant kept a reflective journal which contributed to the data. The data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This study does not attempt to generalise, but rather to gain a deep understanding of a small group of educators in the hope of identifying the essential aspects of an effective collaboration model of professional development in music, finding directions that may prove to be applicable to other early childhood educators. The study makes practical recommendations for a more systematic and effective implementation of professional development in music to improve the provision of music in early childhood education in Australia. This study found that a collaborative model of professional development, when conducted over a twelve-month period and located in the educator's working context, was efficacious in improving and establishing the participant educators' music skills, understandings and confidence, resulting in sustained improvements in teaching practice.

To meet the educator's needs, a music collaboration needs to address eighteen specific understandings, described here as the 'Group of Music Confidences', of which the first and key step was to identify and interrogate educators' negative self-beliefs around musicality. The study's focus was on the participants, and it is recommended that further research needs to be done which would include the impacts of changes to music teaching practice due to collaborative PD on student outcomes.

Declaration for Thesis

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the

award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other

institution. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no

material previously published or written by another person, except

where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Lucy Bainger
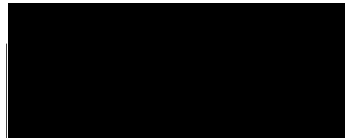
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Notice 1

Notice 2

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Without the courage and commitment to the extensive time, effort and personal challenges of the three participants who took part in this study, there would have been no study. Their dedication to their profession in early childhood education is inspirational and the author wishes to extend her heart-felt thanks to them, for all that they gave of themselves to the project, and for all she learned from them along the way.

Lastly, a personal thanks to Patrick, who has always been so encouraging, right from the beginning.

List of Acronyms

AEDI   Australian Early Development Index

COAG   Council of Australian Governments

DEST   Department of Education, Science and Training

DOCS   Department of Community Services

ECCE   Early childhood care and education

ECE   Early childhood education

EYLF   Early Years Learning Framework

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

IPA   Interpretative phenomenological analysis

NP ECE   National Partnership of Early Childhood Education

NQA   National Quality Assurance

NSW   New South Wales, Australia

OECD   Organisation form Economic Cooperation and Development

PD   Professional development

TAFE   Technical and Further Education

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Figures

Chapter 1
Introduction

Parameters of the study

The central question of the study was: how can musically hesitant early childhood educators wanting to improve their music confidence and skills identify their initial and on-going needs, and how can these needs be effectively addressed through collaboration, to the point where a previous reluctance to do music was replaced by the confident and competent provision of music? This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how best to provide practical professional development (PD) in music by listening to how the participant educators perceived and identified their needs throughout a collaborative experience of PD. This involved the researcher working with three early childhood educators in a twelve-month music collaboration in a rural area in New South Wales, Australia. The participants' identities and the preschools they work in are protected by the use of pseudonyms throughout this dissertation.

The aim of the collaborations was to increase each participant's music skills and confidence to such a degree as to establish long-term changes to their music teaching practice. The aim of the research was to identify the needs of the participants, and how best to meet those needs, to an extent where positive changes in music teaching practice were established. The research was conducted with a grass-roots approach, finding out directly from educators how they felt about the PD in which they were involved. The collaborations did not adhere to a pre-determined plan; the aims and content evolved through the influence and direction of both the participants and the researcher throughout the collaborative period. This was a longitudinal, phenomenological study, where the researcher acted as a consultant and mentor to the participant educators, offering materials, suggestions, guidance and expertise. Data were collected through a series of semi-structured formal interviews, regular observations of the participants working, followed by informal discussions. In addition, each participant kept a reflective journal. The study is based directly on the verbalised thoughts, experiences, responses and reflections of the educator participants and what the researcher observed of their teaching practice.

Limitations to the study

A limitation of the study was that, because the researcher lives in rural NSW, the study was conducted in her community. Due to the relatively close nature of rural communities, the participants and the researcher knew of each other to some degree before starting the collaboration. However, the issues that arose in the collaborations were common to all three participants, which suggests that the findings of this study may be applicable to early childhood educators in different situations.

Being in a rural area, the researcher also had to consider the extra time needed to cover the distances between the three preschools for the fortnightly, and sometimes weekly, visits. In addition, due to the longitudinal nature of the study, it was correctly anticipated by the researcher's supervisor that a lot of data would be generated, and so the study was limited to three participants.

The study gave rise to many potential areas of interest as it progressed, and these are acknowledged where relevant. They are not explored as fully as they might have been due to the phenomenological nature of the research, which seeks to understand the lived experience of the participants; in this case the participants' experiences in a collaborative form of PD. (A comprehensive explanation of phenomenology can be found in Chapter 3.) These included general issues such as the impactof the limited space available for the children to move and dance about freely in many preschools, the general impact of inhibition and performance anxiety on teaching practice, the impact of pedagogical content knowledge on teaching efficacy, mentoring, and children's music learning and outcomes.

Contentions underpinning this study

The main contentions of this study are that:

- For professional development in music to be effective, it is necessary for an educator's self-beliefs around musicality to be identified and positively challenged, if they are negatively affecting their teaching practice.
- Through collaboration, an educator can gain the music skills and confidence necessary to develop a positive self-image around her own musicality and become an effective music provider.
- For such collaboration to be an effective form of professional development in music, it should be long-term and conducted on-site.

The genesis of this study

In the interests of transparency it is necessary to examine what experiences and attitudes the researcher brings to this study (Casey, 1992; Harris, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Over the years of being actively involved with educators as a primary music specialist, early childhood music educator and music in-service provider, the author of this study has found that educators face significant and particular challenges around music. For many years she has worked with educators who were looking for professional

development (PD) in music, both as individuals, and in groups. This experience has led the researcher to form the conviction that the usual teacher-training and provision of PD in music through in-services and workshops, despite her own and others best intentions, is inadequate in meeting educators needs, and this has motivated her to take up this research.

The author had noticed over time that the most successful PD in which she had been involved had occurred when highly motivated educators accessed the author as a music mentor, for informal music training lessons as an individual student over an extended period of time; weekly lessons for a year or more, for example. With each of these educator-students, there was invariably a sense of vulnerability and inhibition due to negative self-beliefs around their own musicality which acted as a major psychological block. Along with the usual learning content, the students needed sensitive reassurance and support over many months to establish the trusting relationship that would allow them to identify and challenge their own negative self-beliefs around musicality. This was an essential key to a more positive and hopeful outlook for the students, unlocking the possibility of seeing themselves differently; able to take up challenges they were previously very reluctant to confront. There also had to be enough time to gain real music understandings and practice to develop the practical music skills that an educator-student would need to feel secure enough to take into her teaching practice. This worked best where the educator-student took part in choosing materials, planning music sessions and in deciding when to tackle each new challenge.

In previous years, both the author and the educator-students with whom she was working had looked for resources they could use that would encapsulate the sort of information on music concepts and sequential music learning they needed for their classrooms. They needed practical information on how to integrate music learning and understandings into playful music activities. These sorts of resources were very hard to find, and so, with the encouragement of her educator-students and in-service participants, and at the invitation of an education resources publisher, the author created a resource for early childhood and infant primary educators called *Music Magic* (Bainger, 2007).

However, there was still a deficiency in this informal type of PD; the author was not able to observe educators at work, so could not fully understand their specific working contexts. She could not know how an educator implemented and carried out her music work in practice, nor could she see for herself the individual children to which the educator was often referring, regarding their behaviour and needs. The educator-students often reflected on how much more useful it would be to be able to work together in their working context in a formal collaboration; where the author could act as an on-site mentor, observing the educator working. This way the PD could be built around an educator's daily work, with direct reference to the realities she was facing. The author's on-going work as an in-service music provider, and her readings of research only strengthened this view, and when the opportunity arose she put her previous experiences into designing this study.

The focus of this study

This study focuses on the experience of early childhood educators as they participated in a twelve-month collaboration to develop skills and confidence in music. These educator-participants, like many early childhood educators, felt reluctant doing music with the children in their care, as they felt they lacked the necessary skills and confidence, even though they were all experienced professionals. Yet it was obvious to these early childhood educators, as they observed children's attention and responsive movements when hearing music, and their spontaneous play with making sounds with anything that comes to hand, that most if not all children are instinctively musical. This naturally creates a tension for any committed early childhood professional who believes that they themselves are not musical and are therefore unable to meet this need, because they want to nurture the holistic development of the children in their care. This study explores the inner experiences of three educators who took up the challenge towards resolving that tension by participating in music collaborations in a research setting.

Having provided the parameters, limitations and genesis of the study, the introduction continues with a general overview of current early childhood education (ECE) in Australia to illustrate why this research is timely and necessary. The research literature that informs the study, including studies that have called for this type of research, will be presented in the next chapter.

The reasons why this research is necessary

The importance of early childhood education

A nation's early childhood education system requires the support of government and the society to exist, and for this reason it is important to establish the overall context of the belief systems and debate that surrounds early childcare in Australia today. The many influences on our understanding of what constitutes childcare and the various factors involved in its provision are briefly discussed here, with reference to the most current information available at the time of writing. This identifies the general societal context within which this study takes place.

A child's early years engenders an instinctively protective and focused attention from parents, and when young children are placed in the care of early childhood institutions, they are expected to emulate that level of care. Thanks to an increasingly large body of research from different disciplines, including psychology, neurology, the behavioural sciences, and education, the importance of a child's early years as the foundation for an individual's future is beyond doubt, and the role of early childhood education is seen as a strong

positive influence on success in school and adult life (Brink Fox, 2000; Elliot, 2006; Heckman et al., 2007; Hooks, et al., 2006; Pitts, 2000; Strickland, 2001; Temmerman, 2006).

> It is now being recognized that the early years are the most significant growth period in a child's life. Experiences during this phase extensively influence physical and neurological developments, which drive biological, psychological and social responses throughout the entire human lifespan (Davis, 2008, p.17).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO), 2008 document; *The Contribution of Early Childhood Education to Sustainable Society*, states that child care is understood as the starting point in raising awareness of the significance of individual awareness of sustainability to the future of human societies and the planet as a whole.

> Early learning is important for shaping environmental attitudes, knowledge and actions. This is because early childhood is a period when the foundations of thinking, being, knowing and acting are becoming 'hard wired', and relationships – with others and with the environment – are becoming established (Davis, 2008, p. 20).

The 2011 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) *Education at a Glance* report states that 'Investment in early childhood education is essential for building a strong foundation for life-long learning and for ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities later in school' (p. 234). An earlier report into Early Childhood Education and Care (OECD, 2006) stated that 'Early education and care contributes to the public good, *e.g.* to the general health of a nation's children, to future educational achievement, to labor market volume and flexibility, and to social cohesion' (p. 37). In the face of this seemingly unanimuous recommendation of the importance of early childhood education (ECE), Macnaughton (2004) questions the ready consumption of brain research and acceptance of causality, suggesting that in advocating for the importance of ECE it is important not to lose sight of the complexity of children's life and learning. Her metaphor of the tree versus rhizomatic connections between neuroscience and education provides a valuable counter-point to consider;

> Doing science and implementing scientific findings are so difficult in education because humans in schools are embedded in complex and changing ntworks of social interaction ... and the ordinary events of life ... limit the generalizability of educational research findings (p. 94).

However, other influences outside of science offer significant insights to the importance of ECE.

Economic studies into ECE

A significant influence on politicians and policy makers is the messages coming through economic research that shows the long term beneficial impact of a strong commitment to early childhood, measurable in returns to the Gross Domestic Product and a reduction of reliance on services caused by social problems that result in costs to the state. For example, the Committee for Economic Development (CED), a think tank based in Washington DC, USA, which describes itself as an independent, non-partisan organization for business and education leaders, provides a forum for policy research on current major economic and social issues. Its existence speaks to the relationship between education and the larger community. Huntsman (2008), in a paper published on-line by the CED, illustrates how this connection between business and education can bring another level of rigor and relevance to the debate.

> There is little longitudinal research on childcare for the general population that traces outcomes for older children. The authors consider that determination of links between early childcare and children's development by third grade is particularly important because levels of achievement and social adjustment formed by this stage are highly stable thereafter. They found that higher-quality childcare continued to be linked to higher scores in maths, reading and memory. They also noted the relative independence of quality, quantity and type of childcare in relation to child developmental outcomes (Huntsman, 2008. p. 11).

Leading economic research states that children's attendance at some form of early child care, which provides the opportunity for early intervention, has many measurable societal, intergenerational and economic benefits, including a reduction in crime and teenage pregnancy, and increased productivity in the workplace (Belfield, 2005; Heckman, 2006). Every dollar spent on early childhood is returned to the economy three to five times, resulting in a boost to employment rates, earnings, GDP, and an increase in tax revenues of up to 2% or more (Bartik, 2006).

Across the globe, enrolments in pre-primary education has increased over the previous decade, although the effects of the global economic crisis may prove to nullify this increase. In particular, preschool attendance by children from economically deprived backgrounds has been found to lead to better developmental outcomes (Rao & Sun, 2010). The quality of early education that a child receives is a strong predictor of how well that child will perform at school (Mustard, 2007) and given the impact that schooling has on employment and earning power, early education can be understood to be of singular importance throughout the life-cycle of an individual. Economic studies have found that every dollar invested in ECE reaps a better return than money invested at any other point in a child's education (OECD, 2006). It would seem to logically follow that an affluent first-world country such as Australia would be committed to providing the best possible early childhood education.

However, the OECD Starting Strong 11 report into Early Childhood Education and Care (2006) shows that Australia is the lowest investor in early childhood in the OECD, with less than 0.1% of GDP (including public and private expenditure) going to ECE. Our spending on ECE as a percentage of our overall spending on education is far outstripped by countries such as Hungary, Guyana, and Mongolia (UNESCO, 2006). The discussion paper on education for the Australian Government's 2020 Summit (2008) states that 'Research suggests that teacher quality affects student performance more than any other variable' (p. 10), yet a - current dilemma is that 'Few incentives exist for PD' (p. 11). The same document points out that Australia is a moderate spender on tertiary institutions andethat spending has decreased over the past decade (p.12). This is despite repeated studies which show that investment in early childhood programs, especially for disadvantaged children, reap far reaching economic benefits for society as a whole; with returns of 16% through reduced rates of drug use, teenage pregnancies, child abuse, criminality, and reliance on social welfare, and correspondingly better school performance with a greater involvement in higher education and participation in the workforce, and health outcomes (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Heckman and Masterov's work presents a nuanced argument;

> We do not claim that all skills and motivations are formed in the early years …We are simply arguing that early environments play a large role in shaping later outcomes and that their importance is neglected in current policy. The available evidence on the technology of skill formation shows the self-productivity of early investment (pp. 35-36).

Heckman and Masterov's work draws on the large body of work in the fields of neuroscience and social science 'that has established that fundamental cognitive and non-cognitive skills are produced in the early years of childhood, long before children start Kindergarten' (p. 33).

With the election of a new federal government in November 2007 the continuing debate in the mainstream media around the value of children attending preschool has benefited from a renewed energy. This has been stimulated by the strength of findings in research in recent years around the importance of learning in the early years, which has been reflected in the media, representing views from the wider community on ECE in Australia. Manne's essay (Quarterly Essay, 2008) refers to the deep concerns around the quality of childcare. She quotes Pam Cahir of Early Childhood Australia; "It's rubbish to say we have quality child-care in Australia" (Manne, 2008, p. 50). The main reasons given for this are large child to carer ratios and poor pay and conditions resulting in a high staff turnover . The responses to this essay in the following issue of the Quarterly Essay, from early childhood commentators such as Dowse, Edgar and Biddulph show a diversity of views, attesting to the growing importance of issues around childcare in the public arena. The strength and influence of this research is reflected in how the current Australian government refers to the care and education of our young children, especially the most vulnerable. A report into the current provision of ECE in Australia gives two reasons for the Federal Government's interest;

first is the research in neurobiology that clarifies how influential the interaction between genetics and early experience is on brain development; and *second* is the rich evaluation literature that documents how early interventions have the capacity to boost lifelong cognitive, social and mental health outcomes. It is now understood that these two factors can also contribute significantly to a range of policy objectives: reconciling work and family responsibilities; maintaining and even increasing the labour force participation of women; helping migrants adapt and integrate into the economy and community; addressing demographic changes in the population (eg, ageing); and reducing child poverty and educational disadvantage (DEST, 2010. p. 17).

This study into how to improve the provision of ECE by looking at ways to make PD more effective for early childhood educators is timely in that current political conditions are arguably as good as they could be; the Prime Minister has long been vocal about the importance of ECE for Australia's future. As the federal Minister for Education, before becoming Australia's current Prime Minister, Julia Gillard showed a comprehensive concern for the broader aspects of ECE, for example, speaking supportively of the childcare workers union campaign for better conditions for early childhood carers and educators. She pointed out that one in five workers leave the child care sector every year and admitted that 'pay and status in the profession are low' and made the commitment to 'raise skills, qualifications and standing of our Early Years workforce' (June, 2008). Given the leadership her government has shown in their support for carers of the disabled in recent months, there is good reason to think that her concerns will be linked to action. Indeed, the introduction in 2009 of the first national guidelines for ECE, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is testament to this (the introduction of the EYLF will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). However, while the federal and state governments collect some data on the childcare sector, there is still no comprehensive picture of the status of workers or how their PD needs are being met in the early childhood sector in Australia (Victorian Government, 2006). More detailed information on those working in Australia's childcare sector is available in Chapter 4.

The importance of music in early child education

In addition to its intrinsic value as one of the human arts, the inclusion of music in education is claimed to improve children's overall cognitive outcomes and is an integral tool in developing higher-level thinking (Burton et al. 1999; Gallas, 1994; Jensen, 2001; Wright, 2003). A large and growing body of research shows that music activities and free music play, facilitated by skilful and professional educators, have a myriad of benefits for the young child, fostering a wide variety of developmental skills (Brink Fox, 2000; de Vries, 2007; Feierabend, 1990; Forrai, 1990; Jeanneret, 1997; Persellin, 2002; Pitts, 2000; Strickland, 2001; Temmerman, 2006; Wright, 2003). Music activities and music making are understood to be an integral part

of a child's holistic early education as musical intelligence is now understood to be a separate intelligence, according to Howard Gardner's widely accepted learning theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983).

Most of these claims are made based on relatively recent developments in neuroscience using sophisticated techniques to measure brain activity (DEST, 2010). Strickland (2001), in her meta-analysis of the research sources for these claims, suggests caution is needed in making claims that may be premature and potentially damaging to the veracity of valid claims in the longer term, but finds that there are many promising findings in research into the beneficial effects of music on brain development. Even a conservative summary of the benefits of music education suggests that powerful learning experiences in muisc have the potential to lead to valuable and diverse educational outcomes as music develops multiple skills and can connect with children of any cultural or socio-economic background (DEST, 2005).

Many directives from ECE advisory bodies now stress the need for music to be a significant part of ECE; for example; 'All toddler programs should make music and movement activities a priority in their classroom' (Wisconsin's Early Childhood Excellence Initiative, 2008. p. 1). A more comprehensive exploration of the literature in regard to the value of music in ECE can be found in the next chapter.

Current provisions of EC music in Australia

A sustained advocacy highlighting the value of music in education has not resulted in a flourishing of music programs in our education at any level (Australian Government, 2005; Jones, 2003; Stevens, 2003). The poor state of music in our schools is at odds with the views of our society as nearly 90% of Australian parents believe that music should play an important role in their children's educational experience. (Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO, 2004). The National Review of School Music Education (NRSME) (DEST, 2005), funded by the Australian Government, received the highest number of submissions ever; over 6,000, reflecting the importance of music as part of every child's education to the Australian community (Callaghan, 2007).

On past evidence, advocacy for music in early childhood might easily be viewed as a special domain for the eternal optimist. Research continues to substantiate claims for the importance of music in early childhood; the literature is consistent in the value of music, yet there is a wide gap between what we know about providing enriching music experiences for children and the commitment to ensuring educators have the skills to be able to provide those experiences. The hours devoted to music in pre-service teacher training continues to be eroded, and there is a lack of sustained PD available to educators in the field.

The NRSME (DEST, 2005) commented that the occasional music in-service here and there, which is all that is currently available to educators in the field, is not an effective way to give educators the skills needed to

confidently and skilfully provide music. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, educators often do not have enough music experience to draw upon from their own schooling because music has been undervalued and poorly provided (if provided at all) in education for so long. This leads to generalist educators feeling unsure and hesitant about how to provide enriching music activities and environments, and fosters the belief that music is a specialist area. Secondly, this belief is compounded by negative self-beliefs that many educators carry; they believe that they are not musical. As a preschool director said to the researcher, "music is too scary to most educators" (private correspondence, June, 2008). Thirdly, educators need the sustained support of long-term PD to gain a reasonable understanding of music and its provision in the preschool; and thereby gain the level of skills to feel confident enough to provide music.

The importance of a better skilled work force across the preschool/day care sector, as discussed above, combined with an understanding of the important role music plays in a rounded early education, emphasises the need for musically active educators. Music skills must be included as an essential part of an improved level of the early childhood educator's professional skills. In the mid-1900's, it was accepted that part of being a professional preschool educator involved the ability to provide music; it was not an optional extra, but an essential tool for educating and caring for the young child. This remains true today, yet reports show that many of our early childhood educators are not confident in doing music as they feel they lack the necessary skills to do so. The key to good ECE is 'the richness and appropriateness of staff interactions with children and their scaffolding strategies, especially guiding, modeling and questioning' (Elliot, 2006, p. 29) and an educator needs to feel confident of their own knowledge and experience in a learning domain to interact at a high level with children. Aspiring to a level of excellence in ECE means making improvements to the pre-training for student educators, and the PD of working educators.

It is now well established that many preschool educators are intimidated when asked to facilitate meaningful music experiences for the young children in their care, often avoiding music because they feel they lack the necessary skills and confidence to do so (Anderson, 2002; Bodkin, 1999; Harris, 1996; Mills, 1989; Nardo et al., 2006; Russell-Bowie, 2002; Suthers, 2004; Temmerman, 2006). In many preschools and day-care centres, music consists of simply putting on a CD for the children to dance to - a less than adequate learning experience for our young children (McLaughlin, 1991). The NRSME (Australian Government, 2005), found that 'music in our primary schools is poorly represented, both in quantity and quality' (p. 175) but did not include any reference to the provision of music in preparation for school in the early childhood sector.

> The fact that the foundation stages of music education were ignored in this government-funded review is indicative of how much work there is to be done in Australia to educate legislators, officials, the community at large, and even other educators about the importance of music education in the early years (Suthers, 2008 p. 60).

However, it can be inferred from the findings in primary schools that the abilities of existing early childhood educators to meet the music needs of young children are patchy at best. This is reflected in the lack of national and state guidelines for preschool music education in this country (Southcott & de Vries, 2006). The recently introduced national curriculum document, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), while a welcome step in the push to improve ECE across the nation, is worded so generally, particularly regarding music, that it offers little specific support to educators. This is not a new problem, as Suthers points out in her snapshot of current music provision in Australia.

> By being so broad, many of the curriculum documents render themselves almost meaningless in terms of mandating policy and close to useless for teachers genuinely seeking guidance for developing appropriate music education practice (Suthers, 2008. p. 58).

Taking steps to address this, the EYLF (Australian Government, 2009b) put out a follow up Guide to Educators (Australian Government, 2010a), a welcome step in offering practical guidance on how to implement some music activities in an accessible way, featuring photographs of children playfully interacting with an educator in engaging music activities. The EYLF places a specific emphasis on play-based learning, early literacy and numeracy skills and social development, to 'ensure quality and national consistency in early childhood education'(Julia Gillard, M.P, 2008). Exactly what constitutes a good music program will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter; it is enough for the purposes of this introductory discussion to suggest that a good music program crosses all these areas and many more, including the acquisition of specific music skills and understandings.

Music teaching practice – how teachers feel about doing music

Historically, like other first-world economies, Australia has struggled to provide adequate music education for pre-service teachers, resulting in educators who feel ill equipped to implement the required music components of the curriculum (Australian Government, 2005; Jeanneret, 2006; Suthers, 2008). Australia is a comparitively moderate spender on tertiary education in the OECD, with the lowest increase in expenditure over the past decade (OECD, Education at a Glance, 2011), and this is reflected in the shrinking of the arts componant in teacher-training courses (Southcott & de Vries, 2006). The recent trend of including music into a generic arts education unit further weakens music training. Even where music retains its own place in the curriculum, there is not enough time devoted to it to give trainees the skills and confidence they need to become effective music providers.

> Most degrees offer only one compulsory music education course (of twenty to forty hours duration) in one semester. This is clearly an impossibly inadequate timeframe in which to prepare students to teach music to young children and to develop their own skills and confidence (Suthers, 2008. p. 60).

In addition to inadequate training, educators are often hampered by having experienced a poor arts education themselves (Small, 1996), and may have even had negative previous experiences with music in their school education (Russell Bowie, 1988). Unless they were lucky enough to have been exposed to a musically rich environment at home, educators often lack any personal life experience to draw upon and pass on to the children in their care, creating a 'chicken and egg' syndrome of music skills deficit. In addition, in western culture, music has been traditionally taught, for the most part, as a specialist activity involving competition and judgement based on performance, leading to the assumption that only some people are musically talented.

This has created a dysfunctional culture (Miller, 1994); a climate of intimidation and inadequacy that affects the generalist educator. Educators are aware of the importance of music, but don't necessarily feel able to provide meaningful music experiences due to poor pre-service training, lack of musically enriched experiences in their own lives, or having had a poor music education themselves. There are many un-examined beliefs around music being a special talent available to the few, or that only proficient musicians can act as educators of music. Trying to teach or play with an area of human knowledge in which you feel inadequate is understandably well outside even the most dedicated educator's comfort zone. This study, through longitudinal case studies, seeks to identify how a collaborative model of PD can help educators to reassess their negative self-beliefs around musicality, and equip then with the skills and confidence they need to become musically active, providing enriching musical experiences for - children.

The urgent need for PD

Even if early childhood teacher training provided comprehensive music skills, the recognition of the importance of on going learning would make continued PD an essential component in a healthy ECE sector. Educators are exhorted to 'keep up', continually reflecting on the efficacy of their teaching practices, through observation of the children, and through self-reflection (Gardner, 2000). Dalli (2008) found that the early childhood educator's perspectives on maintaining professional standards added 'a rich dimension to existing scholarly discussions on professionalism which have tended to 'express expectations' about practitioners rather than express their professional reality' (p. 183). This suggests the main impediment to music gaining it's rightful place in the preschool is not so much a lack of commitment by educators as a lack of PD support available to them, to gain the skills and confidence in music that they need to be effective educators.

In 2009, an expert advisory panel was set up, made up of eleven experts in the field, including Marilyn Fleer and Alison Elliot, to report on quality early childhood education and care. Their report is informed by the valuable findings of the most recent research, highlighting the significance of how educators and children interact in an early childhood setting.

The research evidence is clear: the quality of social interactions between a child and his or her carers —or the relational environment—is the key driver of quality ECEC and achievement of optimal developmental and learning outcomes. … the three key quality variables — staff qualifications, staff-child ratios and group size—have been dubbed the 'iron triangle' of quality because they are interrelated. Rather than operating independently, these quality dimensions combine to create effective early childhood services (Elliot et al. 2010. p. 22).

The report acknowledges that the greatest impact on the quality of ECE is having qualified staff with a sound knowledge of the curriculum and the learning and developmental needs of children, with the additional ability to create enriching environments to fully engage children, leading to significant interactions between adult and child. It also refers to the deficit of well trained and effective educators available to the industry, and the lack of PD targeted to improve the teaching practices of experienced educators in the field.

Raising the effectiveness of early childhood education and care will most likely require a broad range of initiatives including increasing the supply of qualified early childhood educators, and providing targeted professional development activities that support, amongst other things, teachers' pedagogies including interactions with children. In the Australian context quality standards should include specifications about entry-level qualification requirements for early childhood staff coupled with a requirement for continuing professional development (Elliot et al. 2010. p.23)

While the adequate training of future early childhood educators is essential, equally essential is the PD of existing early childhood educators who are currently working in the sector, and have something the highly trained novice does not yet have; experience (Georgeson, 2009). Experienced but less-qualified staff may not be in a position to up-grade qualifications. Georgeson warns that:

The elevation of some practitioners with graduate qualifications to the role of 'agents of change' runs the risk of losing the instinctive and implicit expertise of those practitioners who, for a variety of reasons, might find it difficult to follow the path towards graduate status (p. 128).

In an inspiring address as part of the 2007 Adelaide Thinkers in Residence, Dr. Fraser Mustard placed ECE firmly in the mainstream of society by identifying it as a major socio-economic determinant of human development and health, speaking frankly about the inadequate commitment of our state and federal governments to ECE (Mustard, 2007). Mustard's comments identifying PD as a first step to improving the quality of ECE suggest a broad approach to PD, inclusive of both qualified novices and experienced educators.

You have to beef up the whole [early childhood education] system for a quality of staff and you have to also put in programs to allow the people in the field to upgrade their skills and to be registered and recognised for it (Mustard, 2007).

The work and exhortations to improve ECE by thinkers outside the traditional education parameters, such as Mustard, Heckman and Masterov, indicates - a general miss-match between the apparent acceptance of the importance of ECE at government levels and a corresponding willingness to commit to the necessary reforms and funding to ensure a high quality of early ECE with a highly qualified and well paid workforce.

The National Children's Services Workforce Study states that the average age of staff in the early childhood sector in Australia is 35, with an average length of service of 7.3 years (Victorian Government, 2006). This indicates that large numbers of experienced staff are lost to the industry, possibly because there is little scope or recognition for building skills and developing professionally.

Every teacher needs to feel like *they are growing*, needs to feel the excitement of new possibilities. If you ignore this, then your best teachers may begin to stagnate and you may lose them (Riley & Roach, 2006, p. 13 (italics in original)).

It is well known that early childhood educators are poorly paid and do not enjoy the same status as other educators, leading to low levels of morale (Elliot et al. 2010). It would seem that a lot of experienced early childhood educators are not being given the opportunity to grow. In conjunction with curriculum directives and policy initiatives, there needs to be an acknowledgement that it is the educators who put these education theories and policies into effect. Educators can be demoralised by PD that is perceived as irrelevant and ineffective (Helterbran & Fennimore, 2004). To successfully give young children the benefits of music we need educators who feel confident that they can successfully translate theories of music learning into a living experience for the child. We need educators who feel as skilled and confident in facilitating music play as they do with the other aspects of the early childhood curriculum. All those involved in this study are motivated by the evident need for a musically confident workforce in the early childhood sector because music and that workforce play such an important role in shaping the future adults of our society. This study seeks to explore how to effectively bring this about by looking at how a collaborative model of PD in music could lead to improved music teaching practices, and therefore, a higher level of quality early childhood education.

Current professional development opportunities in music in NSW

Although there are sporadic PD programs for music available each year in NSW there are only one-off in-services, usually offered in the capital city. As yet, there is no comprehensive PD music available to early

childhood educators in NSW that provides on-going support to develop skills over time. The ECE sector is reliant on in-services that are provided in the main by the creators of resources who are effectively using the in-service model to introduce a resource product and to sell it. In the researcher's experience, this gives rise to the educators being given a taste of music possibilities that can only be translated to effective teaching by firstly buying the product and then, only by having the necessary skills to be able to utilise the product. With the best intentions of the private in-service suppliers, the in-service risks becoming something of a promotion exercise, as selling product is the way such enterprises are funded, rather than providing bone fide support to educators.

This is not to suggest that these promotional in-services should not be part of the PD available, but rather to understand that alone they do not constitute an adequate solution to the needs of educators. PD for the preschool sector in the Southern Highlands area of NSW offers few opportunities in music; for example, in a search for music in-services of all the different PD providers in NSW, the author found a total of five music in-services available across the state in 2008, each usually around two hours in duration. PD providers include Early Childhood Australia, The Lady Gowrie Foundation, and the Early Childhood Training and Resource Centre (ECTARTC), and occasionally other private providers as referred to earlier.

There is an additional challenge to meeting the needs of ECE; outside of the major cities, the standard of ECE provision is harder to maintain (Robert, 2000). The NRSME (2005) review 'revealed cycles of neglect and inequity, particularly among young Australians in geographically and socially disadvantaged areas' (Gibson & Anderson, 2008, p. 109). For educators in rural areas, such as the Southern Highlands where this study was conducted, it is often difficult, time-consuming and expensive to access PD that is usually only provided in the capital cities of Sydney in NSW or Canberra in the ACT. Almost no PD in music is available to more remote rural areas. When the researcher asked directors of preschools in her local rural area about their up-take of PD, they spoke of the difficulties of finding time to get to in-services from a rural area (usually entailing a 4 to 5 hour return journey), the costs of covering staff to attend, and the cost of the in-service itself as being obstacles to accessing these opportunities. As Suthers (2008) points out in her overview of early childhood services in Australia, 'the relatively small number of early childhood educators and the vast distances between many of them often result in feelings of isolation' (p. 60).

In addition, the low profit margins of most child-care centres means their own PD allocations are too meagre to access many of the in-services. Although fees for PD are usually (but not always) covered by the individual preschool, educators are usually obliged to attend in-services in their own free time. If the PD is only available in working hours, the centre then has to find extra funds to pay for casual staff, and due to the very tight budgets of most preschools, this is not usually possible. Therefore time and costs often act as a barrier to educators attending in-services. Another barrier for more experienced educators is not being aware of the need for PD; the need to keep abreast of new developments in ECE and the need for on-going

learning. As one director explained; 'the older educators may not feel they need it [PD], and the younger ones have young families to care for, so it's hard to get them to an evening or a Saturday away from home for PD' (private correspondence, Nov. 2010).

This suggests that an assessment of how PD opportunities are currently made available to educators is long overdue. It is necessary that reforms to ECE look at providing accessible, on-going, funded PD services, conducted on-site, which effectively help educators to continue to build the skills and confidence in music that they need to be effective professionals. Given the weight of evidence that now supports the economic and social significance of ECE to the whole community in both the short and long term, the value of music to the young child's learning and development, and the importance of having highly qualified educators in achieving -the best outcomes for ECE, it is getting harder to excuse our state and federal governments (and by implication, the electorate) not being fully committed to investing in improving the standards of music in ECE.

A summary of this study's contentions

The Australian Education Review into ECE (Elliot, 2006) highlights the need for more research into the best ways to provide PD to early childhood educators.

> Professional development is important in maintaining professional competence but finding and funding in-service professional development models to suit the diversity of staffing needs within the early childhood field is difficult. Practitioners have dramatically different backgrounds and experiences so there are many different starting points. There is little clarity about what forms of professional development are most effective (Elliot, 2006, p.42).

As the findings of this study will show, PD can be effective when it takes into account the diversity of the qualifications and experience of ECE educators, and is flexible enough to serve the many different 'starting points' of different educators. The open form of collaboration used in this study addresses these realities, and seeks to identify an effective model of PD, based not on 'top-down' directives from policy bureaucrats or experts, but on the actual experience of three experienced educators working in the field.

This introduction has shown the need for this research based on the current imperatives that drive the need for excellence and best practice in early childhood education in Australia, and the current lack of understanding on how best to provide much needed music PD to educators, to ensure the early childhood workforce can implement and provide a valuable education to the youngest members of our society. In the information provided in the introduction, the main contentions of this study are reiterated here:

- For music PD in music to be effective, it is necessary for an educator's self-beliefs around musicality to be identified and positively challenged.
- Through collaboration, an educator can gain the music skills and confidence necessary to develop a positive self-image around her own musicality and become an effective music provider.
- For such collaboration to be an effective form of PD in music, it should be long-term and conducted on-site.

Previous studies have recommended that this is a valid line of research, as presented below.

Recommendations from the literature for this research

One of the issues that concerns practitioner researchers is how best to capitalise on the skills and knowledge that comes with experience (Fleer, 2002). The author acknowledges that the desire to share skills and expertise to stimulate and encourage otherwise reluctant educators to become active music makers with the children in their care was a strong motivation for her embarking on this research. The study is indebted to the work of previous research which inspired this research which is based on the following findings and recommendations.

In a review of ECE in Australia, Elliot (2006) referred to research that shows 'the importance of ongoing professional learning in maintaining teacher effectiveness and helping staff to implement evidence-based practice' (p. 42). Professional development needs to be targeted and appropriate, but there is little clarity about what forms of professional development are most effective (Elliot, 2006). This research set out to explore a particular model of PD as recommended in the literature. Gill (2004) points to the need for 'close-grained locally embedded work … in the particular spaces and places within which education takes place' (p. 13). Goodfellow (2005) suggests that professionalism is increased when practitioners inquire into practice. De Vries (2006) recommended that longer-term support and follow up in a collaborative PD model were essential to ensure that the impact of those gains on teaching practice could be sustained. Register's study (2004) recommended a longitudinal study of mentored music-training within an existing class-room model, involving observations and verbal feedback opportunities included in the mentoring.

Researching the links between teacher knowledge, practice and education Avis (2003) suggests that 'effective researchers should produce the research evidence that informs practice and good teachers should draw upon such evidence to inform and shape practice' (p. 386). Wiersma and Jurs (2009) recommend that long-term observers and practitioners with an in-depth knowledge of the context are in an 'advantageous position' to act as researcher in the classroom (p. 301).

de l'Etoile (2001) suggests that researchers should examine the changes in educators when receiving music training, which should be longitudinal, allowing for practice to establish skills and the opportunity of educators to be supported in facilitatig one-to-one musical play as well as group activities.

Wiggins and Wiggins (2008) called for more to be known about the musical background of generalist teachers.

> The lack of information about the music education of generalist teachers, their musical backgrounds, or how that impacts classroom practice is problematic for the U.S. and for countries that currently rely on generalists to teach music. We have not sufficiently considered the voices of these teachers or their sense of agency in framing the discussion about quality primary music education in the absence of specialists. Who are these teachers? What do *they* believe they can accomplish instructionally? What is their self-efficacy—their *competence* as well as their *confidence* to teach music? When they do teach music, what is happening in their classrooms? What does it look like when a non-musician teaches music? (p.4)

Ebbeck et al. (2008) found that hesitant in-service teachers who were doing music on a daily basis and therefore effectively practicing their music skills seemed to gain confidence, but that 'more research may be needed to explore the validity of this possible relationship between a teacher's quantity and quality of musical experience with young children, and his/her confidence levels' (p. 26). Kim and Kemple (2011) point to the need to examine in-service teachers' beliefs about music and its value. They call for future research to employ a:

> more comprehensive and in-depth assessment of teachers' musical knowledge, musical competence, and knowledge of methods for teaching and integrating music. These may then be examined in relation to how they impact teachers' valuing of music as well as their actual classroom practices regarding the teaching and integration of music (p. 145).

The sociocultural-historical context within which learners are working has a pervasive impact on their perceptions of themselves (Burnard, 2006; Robbins, 2003) and this is equally true of the educators participating in this project; the participant educator and the researcher's collaborative work is understood to be located within their individual experience and inner world, within wider social contexts, including children, parents and social norms. Just as sociocultural-historical theory (Burnard, 2006; Fleer & Robbins, 2004; Fleer, 2010) has influenced educators' thinking and understandings of working with young children, it has also informed this study, directly influencing the process and content of the collaborations.

Educating is a creative act, and therefore subject to the network of cultural systems surrounding, and embodied within, the educator (Burnard, 2006). Chen and Chang's research (2006) into the 'whole teacher' approach recommends that PD go beyond a simple model of knowledge transference, and address a participants' attitudes, practicing the development and application of specific knowledge and skills, and classroom practices. As Rogoff, (1998) states 'one cannot understand what the individual is doing without understanding how it fits with ongoing events … They are involved – part of the activity' (p. 688).

Burnard et al.'s (2008) definition of pedagogy as 'the art of musical learning and musical teaching' (p. 121) is central to the fieldwork in this study. Burnard et al. (2008) use the term 'embodied pedagogy' when describing the way a music teacher works with teenage students where skills and learning theory are embedded in suggested activities and processes (p. 118). A more detailed description of the research base for the collaboration content can be found in the following chapter.

Summary

Starting with an outline of the parameters, limitations and contentions of this study, this first chapter has introduced the main issues relevant to the study; its genesis, the importance of early childhood education and music in particular, the current provision of music and how educators feel about it, the urgent need for PD and its current provision. In closing, references were made to the recommendations from the literature for this study.

The next chapter examines the literature that supports and informs this research. The third chapter will examine the methodology used in the study, followed by an exploration of the specific context for this study. Three case studies are then presented in Chapters 5,6 and 7. The datum is then discussed at length over two chapters and the final chapter presents the findings and conclusions of the study.

Chapter 2
The Literature Review

The research presented in this thesis focused on the experiences of three early childhood teachers as they took part in a twelve-month collaborative model of professional development in music. This chapter explores the substantive research literature within which this study is situated; the general importance of music in early childhood education and its provision, the difficulties early childhood teachers face in providing music, modes of professional development (PD) opportunities available, the current understandings around collaboration, and current understandings of play, and how it connects with music learning. The premises upon which the study rests are also explored in this literature review: that music is intrinsic to human behaviour (Geoghegan & McCaffrey, 2004); that early education, and music education specifically, is of significant value to the young child (Geoghegan & McCaffrey, 2004; Kenney, 2004; Levinowitz, 1999; Mackenzie & Clift, 2008; Pitts, 2000; Puffer-Jones, 2005; Reimer, 2004; Strickland, 2001); and that early childhood music is compromised by the lack of skills and confidence that early childhood teachers currently face in providing music (Ebbeck et al., 2008; Mills, 1989; Richards, 1999). Lastly, previous research that has recommended this study is identified.

The importance of music

Humans are predisposed to be musical (Cross, 2001); and recent archaeological evidence of bone flutes suggests the presence of a well-established musical tradition being in existence over 35,000 ago (Conard et al., 2009). Blacking (1973) asserts that making music is a human cultural activity, and 'musicality is a universal, species-specific characteristic' (p. 116). Music pervades our lives; an essential part of the market place in shops and advertising, the home, the car, socializing and ritualistic events such as worship, marriage, birthdays and courtship. New technology is driven by public demand to constantly provide new and different ways to access music; the iPod being a recent example. As McMillan (1993) states; 'Music may be considered the one art form which most people incorporate into their lives in some way' (p. 115). It is through cultural activities that man can express consciousness of the world and his own experience of it, resulting in the existence of as many systems of musical expression and creation as there are human cultural identities (Blacking, 1976; Reimer, 2004). All human cultures place a high value on the music that is specific to that culture, through revering individuals who excel in making music and actively maintaining and renewing treasured music traditions for the pleasure and enrichment of many (Gerson-Kiwi, 1973).

Music as an art form is sometimes categorized in the West as a purely aesthetic art object; Pinker (1997) goes as far as describing it as 'useless', while in contrast, the Platonic ideal understood music as one of the arts

representing 'not the limited particularities of the world of appearances but the underlying, eternal forms behind them … the satisfaction of the intellectual need to grasp that which is *really* real' (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; italics in the original). In all cultures, music has always carried extra-musical meanings and been an integral part of everyday life (Stubington, 2007). Psychologists and anthropologists argue that music has played an evolutionary role in human courtship and infant-bonding behaviours (Tolbert, 2001), and the development of language (Papousek, 1996; Tolbert, 2001).

Guthrie (2005) puts forward a persuasive argument that all the arts, including music, are a sophisticated form of play, and as such are a particular feature of any dominant species within an ecosystem; the most playful species being also the most adaptive. Playfulness in general plays a role in human evolution as it increases neuron development and therefore brain function, intensifies the bonds between caregivers and children, increases the ability of that species to adapt to different and changing environments, by allowing individuals to safely explore and express optional responses to dangers, intrapersonal tensions, emotional fluctuations and physical challenges (Guthrie, 2005). Music, as a form of play, while not so obviously linked to environmental adaptation for example, does have the demonstrable power to create and regulate our moods and emotional behaviours, and has been shown to augment brain functioning (Papousek, 1996). Music can have an important role in creating bonds between individuals; for example, Pitjantjatjara musicians speak about their intense experiences of ecstasy, brotherhood and rapport' in ritual performances (Stubington, 2007, p. 117).

The musical predisposition of human infants (discussed in the next section) suggests that music is connected to our biological evolution (Trehub, 2001). Miller (1999) argues that following Darwinian theory, 'music is a biological adaptation, universal within our species, distinct from other adaptations, and too complex to have arisen except through direct selection for some survival or reproductive benefit' (p. 356). Pinker's (1997) view of music's pervasive role in the modern Western social fabric as being purely aesthetic, merely circumstantial, and without any deeper significance highlights the relatively recent and arguably ethno-centric argument that 'as far as biological cause and effect are concerned, music is useless' (p. 528). Other researchers suggest a much more significant musical consciousness that is biologically integrated, built into the human brain/body complex as an inherited mechanism, and therefore one of the ways humans feel, experience the world and the self, and communicate that experience (Dillon, 1999; Papousek, 1996; Reimer, 2004).

When working with young children, (picture a young child happily making music with saucepan lids) it is necessary to have a broad and flexible understanding of what constitutes musical behaviours. Stubington (2007) offers various ways that music can be understood, such as a sound with rhythmic, melodic elements, or as something that expresses (and causes us to feel) feelings and emotions with a subtlety beyond words, or as an art form aimed primarily at being aesthetically powerful. Stubington's ultimate definition is particularly

useful in the context of early childhood. She states that, at its roots, music is something that requires sound and people; 'Music is sound which people, within a social and cultural context, have produced or gathered, and arranged, framed and labeled' (2007, p. 1). Blacking (1976) offers a similarly useful definition: 'Music is a product of human groups, whether formal or informal: it is humanly organized sound' (p. 10). Others point to the complex role music plays in the expression of our emotions both as an interior experience and in our relationships (Forrai, 1990; Reimer, 2004). In many cultures, such as in traditional Tibetan groups and the Australian Aboriginal cultures, music is regarded as a healing power, with musical performances regularly prescribed as medical treatment for a sick individual or a dysfunctional social group (Stubington, 2007).

Music and the young child

Recent research, particularly from the domain of neuroscience, indicates that a child's experiences in the early years of life set up the neurological and biological pathways in the brain that can have a life-long effect in terms of learning, behaviour and health (Mustard, 2007). The earliest experiences of the human foetus in utero, three to four months before birth, are through the auditory sense (Jordan-Decarbo & Nelson, 2002; Wright, 2003). This continues after birth, with infants showing a marked attention towards their mother's singing and other consonant music, in preference to lower voices and dissonant harmonies (Nawrot, 2003). Trehub's extensive work with infant responses to music highlights the universal role of music in the relationship between mother and child (2001). The level of cognition involved in the infant's receptive musical skills as described in Nawrot (2003) is astonishing.

> In the early months of life, infants engage in relational processing of pitch and temporal patterns. They recognize a melody when its pitch level is shifted upward or downward, provided the relations between tones are preserved … infants can detect interval changes when the component tones are related by small-integer frequency ratios. They also show enhanced processing for scales with unequal steps and for metric rhythms (p. 1).

Mothers show universal patterns of behaviour in intuitively communicating with their infants, with cooing and melodic modulations (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006; Papousek, 1996). Observations of the musical responses of babies and infants all over the world indicate that musical behaviours are innate (Brink Fox, 2000; Cross, 2001; Custodero & Johnson Green, 2003; Reimer, 2004; Welch, 2005). Lullaby singing has been shown to be physically and psychologically beneficial to both child and parent (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006), and a time-honoured behaviour that deepens attachment, potentially reducing the effects of medical illnesses by hardwiring bilateral neural networks (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006). Trehub (2001) found that an infant responds more attentively to her mother's singing than to her speech. Brink Fox (2000) states: 'It is very clear that babies are musical, that they have innate musical behaviours, and that they use music as meaningful communication in their earliest years of development' (p. 22).

Therefore music is an integral part of life experience for our youngest children, whose brains are just as 'primed' to acquire the surrounding musical culture as they are to acquire the language culture they are born into (Cross, 2001). Accessing music as part of a shared experience with significant adults, such as the songs sung by mother to child, and more broadly, experiencing music in highly emotive and responsive ways within family and preschool life, are important factors in children's continues association with music learning (Dillon, 1999; Howe et al., 1995).

Music in early childhood education

Experience of all the arts is understood to be an essential part of early childhood education (Wright, 2003). Howard Gardner's influential learning theory includes musical intelligence as one of a group of multiple intelligences, which suggests that any complete education must include music (Gardner, 1983). This theory finds resonance with the concept, common to non-Western cultures, of musicality being an intrinsic and normal part of each individual (Cope & Smith, 1997). It also resonates with views on the place of music in the education of the young child in past decades in Australia, as this extract from a talk given at the 1956 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seminar in Melbourne shows;

> We employ the symbols of language to express our ideas in the mother tongue, so why not foster that language which lies very close to the finest and noblest of our emotional responses? It seems we hesitate to impart the mechanics of music to the very young as being too difficult, but play-ways and activity methods have revealed how children of even preschool age can handle the grammar of music. This we must develop (Bazeley, 1956, p. 24).

Music serves as a valuable tool to support other important learning areas, such as numeracy and literacy (Goldberg, 2000). It is easy to see how music can help in numeracy development in songs that involve counting, adding and subtracting through games such as "Five Current Buns", "Alice the Camel" or "Ten Fat Sausages". Literacy is supported through the structure and repetitive nature of songs, developing phonemic awareness, a necessary precursor to reading (Gromko, 2005; Lamb & Gregory, 1993), resulting in improved outcomes for early literacy development (Bolduc, 2008). Many children's songs feature rhyming words within a rhythmic structure, alerting the child to how words can be grouped according to sound, and familiar songs can be used to explore the concepts of print, and introduce text (Armstrong, 2000; Fisher et al., 2001).

It is not within the parameters of this study to examine in detail the extensive research into the affects of music learning on other areas of learning, so only a brief reference to illuminate context is made here. Current advocacy focuses on the inclusion of music for its perceived extrinsic benefits: creative, social, affective, motor and cognitive, and value in facilitating learning in other areas (Brandler & Rammsayer,

2003; Feierabend, 1990; Fisher et al., 2001; Orsmond & Miller, 1999). This is reflected in the views of parents when giving reasons for wanting their children to do music (de Vries, 2007a). Some researchers have questioned this trend of advocacy, warning that arguing for the inclusion of music based on these findings too exclusively may be counter-productive, pointing to the necessity for more research to back up some of the claims made (Brandler & Rammsayer, 2003; Overy, 1998; Strickland, 2001). Perhaps the most powerful argument for the inclusion of music in a child's education is still the value of music for its own intrinsic value and cultural connection with the wider society (Kim & Kemple, 2011; Pitts, 2000). 'Nurturing music skills should be considered essential in early childhood simply because of the richness it brings to one's life' (Feierabend, 1990, p. 16).

Many early childhood educators (including the participants in this study) use music through the day as a management tool to moderate children's moods (Armstrong, 2000; Goldberg, 2001). De Vries (2004) found that when supporting educators to do music in a preschool, one of the extra-musical effects was that music activities provided an avenue of energy release for the children. This is important in helping the children to focus their concentration and attention, as Armstrong (2000) explains:

> The arts channel bothersome feelings into constructive pathways, helping to reduce overall stress levels. Children who show their anger or fear … by banging noisily on a drum, or though jumping up and down in rhythm to a musical piece drain off excess emotion that may have clogged up their learning arteries. Artistic expression opens the heart to new learning, allowing children to gain control over their feelings and letting them transform strong emotions into new and creative energies (p. 121).

Early experiences in music have long-term effects that can be linked to skill development. Studies in the psychology of music education indicate that the development of musical aptitudes during early childhood is crucial to later musical success and involvement (Feierabend, 1990; Harris, 1996; Temmerman, 2000). The summary on early childhood education (ECE) in the latest evaluation of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (Australian Government, 2010) states;

> Holistic child development involves social competence, the ability to communicate and understand feelings (yours and others), curiosity, creativity, imagination, perseverance and meaningful relationships with adults, all in dynamic interaction (p. 85).

All of the aspects of development as described in the above quote are ideally present in music activities, where children are encouraged to play with sound in - all its forms, either individually or in small groups, learning to share - cooperatively, to participate creatively, to satisfy their curiosity, to be engaged in an imaginative context, to contribute ideas and practice skills, with the engagement and encouragement of the

educators working and playing with them. The wording of the quote above reflects the increasing influence of socio-cultural theory, which in this context represents 'a view of development in which interactions between children and adults are viewed as crucial to the process of knowledge acquisition' (Edwards, 2005, p. 39). Socio-cultural theory (now referred to as sociocultural-historical theory (Fleer, 2010) has at its core an understanding that a child's development takes place within a multilayered social fabric rather than within an isolated individual. Socio-cultural theory is currently a major influence on early childhood educators' understandings of learning and teaching (Edwards, 2005). The role of sociocultural-historical theory on the way the collaborations were conducted is discussed later in the chapter.

What does an effective early childhood music program look/sound like?

What constitutes an effective music program, and what learning outcomes can be expected from young children is a continuing debate. However, the literature offers suggestions as to the general music experiences and understandings that should be part of children's musical experiences in ECE. De Vries (2004) summarises a comprehensive preschool music program as 'including singing, playing instruments, and moving to music (p. 6). Temmerman (1997) describes the essentials as needing to acknowledge these principles;

> that the early years represent a significant period for enhancing musical development, improving intellectual performance and establishing a base for learning and formulate aims, plan content and learning activities, use teaching strategies and set expectations that are age and developmentally appropriate, and lay the musical foundation for lifelong musical learning. Most importantly programs need to build on the natural positive relationship young children have with music (p. 55).

Further exploration of the literature suggests that a good music program would allow opportunities for young children to;

- be encouraged to engage in musical behaviours such as movement, dance and playing instruments, and by exploring and playing with objects of their own choice, and musical instruments (Barrett, 2003; Connors, 2006),
- develop music skills by taking part in music making (Ashley, 2002; de Vries, 2006; Feierabend, 1990), and have their music competencies and contributions recognized and valued (Barrett, 2003; Kenney, 2004; McMillan, 1993),
- have access to musical environments, part of which includes stimulating interactions with adults that encourage them to extend their explorations in creative ways (Jordan-Decarbo & Nelson 2002, Wright, 2003),
- learn a repertoire of songs and develop good singing habits (Bannan, 2000, Barrett, 2003), singing songs at pitch levels suitable for their voices (Forrai, 1990; Gharavi, 1993),

- have educators who recognize and acknowledge children's own musical vocabulary, and validate their individual sociocultural music settings (Barrett, 2003),
- develop listening skills and explore music concepts in music games and activities that engage them individually and collectively (Barrett, 2003; Gharavi, 1993),
- interact, participate, watch, and lead music activities that allow them to engage in a meaningful way (Jordan-Decarbo & Nelson, 2002),
- create and improvise freely in role-plays and imaginative make-believe scenarios as part of music activities (Lucky, 1990),
- experience both active and passive listening, and be exposed to different types of music that they might not otherwise be exposed to (Ashley, 2002, Wright, 2003).

Structurally, a music program for young children should offer opportunities for spontaneous, open-ended free play as well as structured music play in groups facilitated by an educator, but in both cases, 'the participation and commitment of the playroom staff is crucial to the effectiveness of any program' (Suthers, 2004, p. 49). Another important aspect of a good music program is for it to be child-centred (Scott-Kassner, 1999; Tarnowski, 1999). As Blair (2009) explains:

> While the teacher is still the coordinator and designer of classroom musical experiences, the teacher does not need to direct every activity every moment. The teacher's role is important, but it changes to shift the focus of classroom instruction from what the teacher will do to what the students will figure out. (Blair, 2009, p. 44)

Current understandings place a strong emphasis on free play and unstructured exploration, for example by setting up music learning centres in the preschool and providing a musical environment that encourages a child to direct his or her own learning (Barrett, 2003, Kenney, 2004). A musical environment refers here to the physical items available to the child; such as found sounds and instruments, but equally to an environment free of correction and criticism, which values all musical behaviours (Berger & Cooper, 2003), something well within the grasp of the skilled and intuitive preschool educator.

Another important aspect of music group times is that activities be playfully presented, with opportunities to foster and encourage each child's creative input (Ohman-Rodriguez, 2004). A playful, inclusive approach is most likely to involve the children and engage their interest (de Vries & Poston-Anderson, 2002; de Vries, 2004), and this is more easily achieved in smaller groups. Playing with sound is, by its very nature, potentially noisy, so trying to facilitate valuable music experiences with large groups of children can be alienating to young children (Jones, 2008; Wright, 2003). Increased noise levels can also be very distressing in the short and longer term for the educators and children (Grebennikov & Wiggins, 2006) so smaller groups are a more effective setting for music activities. Smaller groups foster socializations skills (Jordan-

Decarbo & Nelson 2002) and create the room and space for a child to improvise and contribute more easily than in large groups, which tend to stifle children's music creativity (Morin, 2000; Scott-Kassner, (1999); Wright, 2003). 'Many young children find it difficult to tolerate large-group activities for more than a very short time' (Wright, 2003, p.189) and the overwhelming noise levels of a large group engaged in music can be very stressful for both staff and children (Grebennikiv, 2006; Vuckovic, 2008). Marsh (1997) points out that small groups also more accurately approximate the small numbers children choose when playing in free time without adult supervision, as children generally elect to play in groups of rarely more than six individuals, most commonly in a ring formation. Nuttall et al. (2009) refer to the 'enormous constraint' (p. 28) participants felt when trying to focus on individual children's learning and development when having to work in large groups.

The educator's role in an effective music program

An effective music program implies the presence of educators who can engender and share enthusiasm and interest in sound and music making with children in a productive, engaging and inclusive way; educators who are able to enable children's music learning (Hickey & Webster, 2001; Morin, 2001; Scott-Kassner, 1999). Recent sociocultural-historical theory calls for setting up situations that encourage interactions between the child and an educator who can offer avenues for further explorations and understandings (Fleer, 2010). Different approaches are useful in connection to music in free play. Wright (2003) urges teachers to be active but unintrusive participants in children's musical learning, taking the role of 'guide, resource and stimulator of creative thinking' (p. 191). In their work related to literacy in ECE, Casbergue et al. (2008) observed educators during free play who 'joined children at their play, extending conversations and inviting them to use props that encouraged engagement' (p. 175) and who offered creative possibilities. They found that children gravitated to their teachers 'enjoying extensive interactions' (p. 175).

Torff and Gardner (1999) suggest there are two layers of musical experience; experiential 'knowing within' and cognitive 'knowing about'. The first experiential layer is available to anyone apprehending music, and can be further developed by increased exposure. The second cognitive layer requires a more direct experience through play and active music making, leading to discovery and understanding. Educators need to clarify – the differences between these two layers of musical experience as it impacts upon their understanding of how to interact musically with young children (Wright, 2003). Focusing on the 'knowing about' will lead to a more teacher-centred approach, while an appreciation of the 'knowing within' will validate the child's need to explore, develop and test ideas for him/herself and lead to a more child-centred approach to practice. Providing the opportunities to experience this duality is the educator's task, by providing a musically rich environment for the young child, and the time, opportunity and stimuli to explore it. In this way the educator is a 'nurturer of consciousness' enabling the child to gain self-knowledge through music (Reimer, 2004, p. 27).

A lack of confidence – the main issue for educators

The hesitancy many in-service teachers feel with music in the early childhood sector is well documented in the literature, and some researchers have explored ways to address this (de Vries, 2004, 2006; Downie, 1999). However, more longitudinal, in-depth studies of teaching practice are needed to understand the experience of educators and their teaching practices (de Vries, 2006).

The most critical factor in the quality of a child's education is an effective, skilled and confident teacher (Chen & Chang, 2006; Elliot, 2006; Gharavi, 1993; Temmerman, 2006). Research suggests this can only be achieved with a teacher who has skills and feels confident in her own musical understanding and skills (Chen & Chang, 2006; Lam & Wright, 2004). While it is crucial that the educator communicates a positive attitude and approach to music, for the children to respond well (Anderson, 2002), the implementation of valuable and effective music content in teaching is hampered by the lack of preparedness felt by teachers.

The generalist educator can draw on musical experiences from their childhood education teacher training, and life experiences (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010). If an educator had a musically rich home environment, they are much more likely to have continued an interest in music, be it by actively making music themselves, or through a wide listening repertoire (Siebenaler, 2006; Wright, 2003). But what if this was not part of the educator's experience? Music provision in schools has been poor for many decades (Temmerman, 2006). Many educators attribute their unwillingness to teach music to a lack of personal music experience (Bodkin, 1999; de Vries, 2004; Ebbeck et al., 2008; Nardo et al., 2006; Russell-Bowie, 2002). This lack of positive personal experiences in music making leads to a 'chicken and egg' syndrome, or as Fowler (1996) puts it; 'this is a self-generating cycle. They [educators] did not get it, and therefore they cannot give it' (p. 171).

Sometimes, previous music experiences can lead to poor teaching practice. For example, Wright (2003) points out that despite current understandings of learning through play, group music sessions can tend to be delivered in a teacher-orientated way, rather than allowing the children naturalistic interactive experiences. For example, Scott-Kassner (1999) describes how highly trained musicians working with young children may emulate their own music learning experiences when urging the children to play 'accurately' and not allowing a child to tap an instrument on the floor because that is 'not allowed in music'. She points out that 'such approaches are antithetical to the best practices in early childhood music' (p. 24).

In addition to this, inadequate and misdirected music experiences in teacher training can also be problematic. Gaining the necessary skills, repertoire, resources and confidence to implement valuable music experiences takes time (Anderson 2002), involving educators in critical thinking and philosophy building throughout relevant pre-service and in-service education programs (Elliot, 1995). Brink Fox (2000) suggests that

training needs to include studies into children's musical development, and equip students with the practical skills. Despite this, the pre-service training of early childhood educators in music continues to fall well short of providing adequate training and experience, in either practice or theory, in the current courses available in universities and the TAFE institutions (Southcott & de Vries, 2006, Suthers, 2008). Teacher-training schedules now give music a minimal allocation of time (Russell-Bowie, 2010; Suthers, 2008). In addition, Russell-Bowie (2002) finds that many students come into their teacher-training with little formal music education and often with well-established negative attitudes to music and therefore poor self-beliefs about their own musicality. All too often music confidence appears to be absent, suggesting that the music component of pre-training - within teaching courses is not achieving its most basic objectives (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008).

Given the current pressure on tertiary educators to include more learning areas in- the pre-service curriculum, music has struggled to retain a meaningful place in teacher-training courses and, as a direct consequence, in the educators' teaching repertoire in the preschool or day-care centre (Anderson, 2005; Downie, 1999; Southcott & De Vries, 2006). Educators' beliefs around how to teach music are directly influenced by the curriculums of teacher-training institutions (Kim & Kemple, 2011). Certainly it has been found that in training generalist primary teachers, traditional skills-based music education courses 'do little to enhance confidence, skills and valuing' (Gifford, 1993, p. 43). Instead, giving trainees many opportunities to take part in rich musical free-play may well encourage the positive attitudes needed for them to then go on and gain the skills to provide those experiences to children (Bodkin, 1999).

This creates a working contradiction in the early childhood industry, where an increased emphasis on learning through play, and the understanding of the value of music for the young child collides with the reduction in the hours devoted to music in pre-service training (Anderson, 2002; Hocking, 2009; Jeanneret, 2006; Southcott & de Vries, 2006; Russell-Bowie, 2010) and negative self-beliefs. Such circumstances make it very difficult for an educator to develop a positive attitude and a feeling of enjoyment when approaching music (Anderson, 2002; Bodkin, 1999). When taking into account the impact an educator's feelings of happiness or unease can have on children's learning, this has a flow-on effect to the children (Ebbeck et al, 2008).

While many educators freely admit to their inadequacy in music, they do so with an expression of deep regret at the loss of opportunity for their children (Harris, 1996). The closing statement in a submission for the 1995 Inquiry into Arts Education to the Senate Committee on Environment, Recreation, and the Arts References sums up the frustrations felt by many arts educators and advocates:

> If I were to make one recommendation to the Senators it would be that we must come up with
> concerted strategies to break the vicious circle whereby students from deprived arts backgrounds

become inadequately trained teachers who are not equipped to teach arts in schools, thereby perpetuating the cycle! Everyone deserves at least one good aesthetic experience in a lifetime! (National Affiliation of Arts Educators, 1995, p. 289).

Only by improving current practices in education, teacher training and professional development can this cycle be broken. By providing valuable and engaging music experiences to all young children, pre-service and in-service teachers now, we can ensure that a store of positive experiences can be created from which to draw on for children in their care, now and in the future (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006).

- **The significance of notions and self-beliefs of musicality**

Due to lack of funding, music specialist teachers in the preschool are a rarity, so it is left to generalist teachers to teach music. Let down by their own 'arts-poor' education and teacher-training, it is not surprising that early childhood teachers rank music as the area they feel least confident in teaching (Bodkin, 1999; Mills, 1989; Russell-Bowie, 2002) and consequently feel un-equal to the task of providing music experiences (de l'Etoile, 2001; de Vries, 2006; Downie, 1999; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010; Gharavi, 1993; Harris, 1996; Hennessy, 2000; Holden & Button, 2006; Nardo et al, 2006; Scott-Kassner, 1999; Suthers, 2004; Temmerman, 2005). This presents a sociocultural-historical paradox; nearly everyone, educators included, listens to music as a normal part of the day, either by accident or design, yet many educators are not confident enough to facilitate musical behaviours in their work. As discussed, this is arguably caused, but definitely compounded by an elitist music culture and the poor self-beliefs of musicality this engenders in individuals (Cross, 2001; Ebbeck, 2008; Puffer-Jones, 2005; Siebenaler, 2006). What is at the root of these problems?

The notion of a person being categorized as 'musical' or 'non-musical' (as is often seen in the literature (see Lucky, 1990, for example), comes out of a competitive, dysfunctional musical culture, where the pursuit of excellence is lauded at the expense of democratic inclusion and nurturing development (Miller, 1994). The emphasis on performance in our music culture clearly has a detrimental impact on the receptivity of educators to becoming more musically active with their children (Elliot, 1995). Designations of being musical or un-musical can and do strongly influence an educator's attitudes and self- beliefs about her own musicality, and ultimately then, her self-beliefs about her ability to do music as part of her teaching practice (Hennessy, 2000). A simple example is that many teachers who are able to sing quite adequately still judge themselves as poor singers (Richards, 1999). Ebbeck (2008) points out that the fear of singing is culture specific; for example, in Hong Kong, where karaoke is a favoured past-time, early childhood teachers felt generally confident with singing, but in the U.K and Australia, singing was ranked by educators as very low on the confidence scale (Holden & Button, 2006; Richards, 1999). This is perhaps because for most of us in

the West, the only singers we hear are recording artists whom we find hard to emulate; we rarely hear 'ordinary' singing on a daily basis.

In a world full of recorded music, and our ears full of professional performers of music, our admiration for excellence in musical performance seems to obscure our understanding of the value of music making as an activity that anyone can engage in, at any level, for its own sake (Small, 1996). As Cross (2001) explains:

> In contemporary western culture there is a sharp distinction between those few who "produce" music and the majority who "consume" it; but the fact that the majority can consume music – listen to it, dance to it, and develop very strong preferences about it – suggests that even the silent majority are musical in having the capacity to understand music (p. 95).

Even though we surround ourselves with music in every conceivable way, and musicality is so obviously part of the human experience, the notion of being musical is seen as a special talent restricted to a chosen few (Burnard, 2010; Hennessy, 2000; Trendwith, 2003). In comparing notions of musicality in South African cultures to those in Western culture, Blacking (1976) writes:

> 'My' society claims that only a limited number of people are musical, and yet it behaves as if all people possess the basic capacity without which no musical tradition can exist – the capacity to listen to and distinguish patterns of sound (p.8).

This is evident in how the music that accompanies films, advertisements, worship, sporting events, television and radio programs and significant or everyday social occasions relies on the general ability in everyone to understand the language of music, and assumes we have the ability to listen and respond to music in a deeply personal way irrespective of our ability to perform music (Blacking, 1976; Campbell, 1998). This is in sharp contrast to the assumptions about musicality held by the Yolngu people, a traditional Arnhemland society in northern Australia, where, like tribes in South Africa, music is considered to be a basic life skill, and each person is expected to have a high level of inherent music skills, and is assumed to be musical (Trendwith, 2003). Trendwith makes the interesting point that 'one of the ways the myth of the 'talented few' is perpetuated in our own culture is by separating performance from practice' (p. 320). In the tribal setting there is no such separation – everyone learns on the job, as it were, by participating alongside more experienced individuals who take a 'special delight' in seeing the little ones learning and dancing alongside them. In our European-based culture, a music student's daily playing is usually referred to as 'practice' with the assumption that this will lead to a 'performance' of some kind, to be assessed by a teacher, examiner, or an audience. Traditional music teaching practices tend to focus heavily on the musical product rather than on the process (eg. Jones, 1986).

As a result, many people have had negative music experiences that have created a sense of musical inadequacy, often at the hands of teachers – for example; at school when being told to 'mouth the words', failing to be accepted into the school band, or being subjected to criticism at the hands of an instrumental teacher (Bodkin, 1999; Burnard, 2010; Hennessy, 2000; Miller, 1994). The dominant music teaching traditions of testing performance (and by implication, musicality) through examinations and competitions highlight only a limited aspect of musicality, often at the expense of creative and individual musicality (Miller, 1994, Stowasser, 2003). Anderson (2002), for example, suggests that some evidence of musical ability be a pre-requisite for entry to teacher education. Educators, like all other members of our society, have come through an education system which has not been conspicuous in its provision of quality musical experiences; 'nobody hates music but an awful lot of people hate school music!' (Dillon, 2004, p.17) Even those teachers who do have music skills have usually been immersed in the traditional notions of music learning as being more about notation and performance than informal music-making, which can lead to the problems noted earlier by Scott-Kassner (1999). Teachers are rarely trained well enough to have realistic expectations of how children's musical behaviours develop, leading to young children with immature vocal chords being labeled as unmusical by ill-informed teachers or other adults because they do not yet consistently sing in tune (Bannan, 2000; de l'Etoile, 2001), which can lead to crippling and long-term musical inhibitions. Welch (2005) confirms this:

> Negative comments from such teachers on the basis of perceived singing ability generates public humiliation in front of friends and peers and a sense of shame and inadequacy that can lead to a lifelong self-perception of musical disability (p.118).

Needless to say, teachers who have had such experiences perceive themselves to be un-musical and therefore find it very difficult to actively engage with children in musical activities (Burnard, 2010; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010). Suthers' (1999) reference to developing healthy self-concepts in children can be understood as equally true for adult teachers; 'music educators need to encourage children to develop a concept of themselves as music makers and not as simply consumers of music' (p. 309). It follows then that developing confidence around music with early childhood educators first requires an unpacking of these issues around musicality and the self-beliefs that inhibit them from being musically active in their work.

To feel confident a teacher must also feel competent; she must have faith in her own self-efficacy or ability to do a particular task, yet lack of self-efficacy in the arts has been found to be the strongest personal characteristic determining the use of the arts in teaching practice (Oreck, 2001). Educators' notions of musicality, and their related self-beliefs are intimately connected to their preparedness to include music in their teaching practice. Negative self-beliefs, when faced with the necessity to perform any type of musical behaviours, can and do result in educators experiencing inhibiting levels of anxiety (Russell-Bowie, 2002; Southcott & Simmonds, 2007; Wright, 1999). Most early childhood educators are in a position to witness

children's natural musicality on a daily basis, and are well aware of the benefits of music in ECE, but this does not automatically extend to a positive self-belief about their own musicality, creating a conflict in their professional life (Bainger, 2010).

- **Music provision in theory and practice – mind the gap**

What music skills can we reasonably expect of - early childhood educators? The current Early Years Learning Framework assumes that a qualified early childhood educator can include music in activities in the preschool, yet music is consistently ranked as the area in which educators feel least confident in teaching (Anderson, 2002; Harris, 1996; Suthers, 2004; Temmerman, 2006). In spite of this, it is claimed that generalist teachers previously not trained in music can be taught how to conduct an effective music program (Farmer (Ed) 1982; Gharavi, 1993; Wai Man Lam & Wright, 2004; Mills, 1998; Small, 1996; Young, 1975). With very few music specialists, generalist teachers need to feel able to do music; as Small (1996) puts it, 'Music is too important to be left to the musicians' (p. 214).

Early childhood educators were, in the past, expected to have sound instrumental skills and be able to accompany and improvise (Bazeley, 1956; Gell, 1949; Southcott, 1990). Australian preschool resource writers also clearly relied on a high degree of musical expertise (Farmer (Ed), 1982; Gell, 1949), something that is no longer part of today's teacher training courses. However, more recently, aiming to gain skills playing an instrument as part of early childhood teacher training has not necessarily been useful, as studies showed that many recipients reported that their confidence in music diminished as a result (Bodkin, 1999; Gifford, 1993). Judgmental attitudes from lecturers in assessing students in a music program often served to underline the un-helpful, and arbitrary distinctions between 'musicians' and 'non-musicians'; for those supposedly with musical talent and those without (Bodkin, 1999).

In a meta-analysis of the studies of pre-service training outcomes, Kagan (1992) notes that pre-service training tended to focus on theory at the expense of practical strategies and lesson content. This may be because music is still often thought of as "a subject to be taught" rather than "an experience to offer children" (Wright, 2003, p. 187). Skills-based music education courses are intimidating to teacher-trainees, and are therefore not the most appropriate way of preparing educators for music with young children (Gifford, 1993). Expecting a teacher trainee with no previous musical experience to pick up the necessary instrumental skills to use in a classroom through a part-time music course as a minor part of their teaching studies is inevitably setting up the trainee for almost certain failure, and could actually sabotage any enthusiasm for music the trainee might have had (Doreen Bridges, in private conversation with author, October, 2008; Gifford, 1993).

Research finds that, even when they are prepared to do music activities with children, many educators feel uncertain about how to link theory with practice (Deer at al., 1997). Sharpe et al. (2005) conducted a survey study to find out how teachers implemented the curriculum directives for music and movement, and found that while teachers felt music and movement were important, they were not necessarily able to implement them satisfactorily.

Young children have the ability to produce sophisticated musical behaviours that, when accurately observed by the educator, have vital implications for how music teaching and learning might proceed (Marsh, 1997; Whiteman, 2001). In her wonderful six year exploration of children's informal musical play, Marsh (1997) gives a rare insight into the complexity and inventiveness of clapping games and songs created by children in the playground, noting that they were often using rhythms and tonalities that far preceded their perceived skill level by teachers (Campbell, 1998). Supporting and facilitating further exploration of such musical play implies that the educator can readily recognise how music concepts are being displayed and how to utilise a specific instance of a child's musical play (Hickey & Webster, 2001). While an educator may be well versed in the theory of music's importance to a child, this level of interaction requires a reasonably sophisticated level of musical understanding in which the educator may not necessarily be adequately trained for (Deer et al., 1997). Put another way, teaching is dependent on knowing the basic structures of a subject and how the learner learns (Kenney, 2004). Music is a form of play that when formalized into concepts, can become increasingly theoretical. The cultural emphasis on this part of the music-making spectrum is a source of much intimidation and feelings of inadequacy by musically un-trained educators (de l'Etoile, 2001). However, Ohman-Rodriguez (2004) suggests teachers do not need to be musicians to be effective:

> The nature of fine teaching enables teachers to still be learners and collectors of knowledge. Music, while out of the comfort zone for many, asks only that teachers have a desire to learn along with young children (p. 52).

This view is supported by other research that suggests that instinctive responses to music indicate musicality in the first instance, that musicality is not restricted to theability to play an instrument or sing confidently (Blacking, 1976; Campbell, 2000).

The implementation of valuable and effective music content in teaching is often hampered by the lack of preparedness felt by teachers, making it difficult to communicate a positive attitude and approach to music that is crucial to ensure the children respond well (Anderson, 2002). Aspects of the literature indirectly support the author's contention that the point of connection between a child and the hesitant educator wanting to create opportunities for musical learning is music play, leading to the development of music skills for both child and educator.

The play connection – a window of opportunity for the musically hesitant educator

The word 'play' can mean different things in different cultures (Fleer & Dockett, 1999), can be defined differently within the same culture (Brooker, 2011; Fleer, 2010) and is defined differently by educators (Sherwood & Reifel, 2010). (see Appendix B for a detailed explanation of the way the term is used in this study). The researcher identifies strongly with Bodrovka's (2008) description on the role of play in the preschool setting, drawn from Vygotsky's theories of play;

> Intentional instruction in preschool and kindergarten can and should foster the prerequisites for the academic skills but it should do it by promoting foundational competencies that are 'uniquely preschool' and promoting them through play …
>
> Promoting make-believe play should be seen not as competing with academic learning but rather as enhancing it (p. 358).

Through play, young children learn to interact with their environment, and learn through trial and error. Play seems to be the most efficient way of learning for young children (Hargreaves, 1986; Kenney, 2004) and serves an important role in socialisation (Papousek, 1996). A very important part of play, and one that is not often referred to in the education context, is that the choice of playmates indicates affection and increases bonding, and that within the warmth of affection a child is much more open to learning. Guthrie (2005) places play at the centre of relationship;

> Relationships feed on the play process. There is something in the bonds between humans that is akin to play: smiles and giggles, expanded awareness, delight in one another, and the ability to enjoy imagining another's enjoyment – in short, the ability to love ... one would be wise to play: play physically, play mentally, and, above all, play artfully (p. 389).

When understood in this way, play is at the heart of the seamless absorption of the young into the music of their own culture through participation with family and other adults committed to their well-being as observed by Trendwith (2003) in the traditional indigenous tribes of Arnhemland, referred to earlier. The generally accepted theory of learning through play is understood in the wider context (Guthrie, 2005, Papousek, 1996) and is a primary focus of early education practice (Brooker, 2011; Fleer, 2010; Sherwood & Reifel, 2010; Wright, 2003). Tarnowski (1999) gives practical examples of how play can enhance cognitive development, stimulate divergent thinking and creativity, establish conceptual understandings, enhance social skills, emotional and language development, and enhance physical development.

Understanding the importance of play as learning has meant a re-appraisal of the importance of free music play. Children play with sound from an early age, initially vocally and later with found sound objects (Berger & Cooper, 2003). As they grow to school age children are able to orally transmit singing and clapping games

to each other, creatively improvising and extending the received versions by varying the music, text and movement in the process (Marsh, 1997). This playful learning offers a potent lesson to educators, as it suggests a pathway out of the inhibition that so many educators feel around doing musical behaviours, offering a genuinely valuable way forward for involving the musically hesitant educator in music making with the young child (Ohman-Rodriguez, 2004).

Green's (2008) work with developing music skills in older children is equally applicable to young children and their educators. Green states; 'what I am suggesting is that a playful approach to music-making is indeed a part of and a desirable precursor to music learning' (2008, p. 59). She suggests teachers encourage children to explore for themselves. Engaging the child in a co-player or 'conversation' style of teaching (as suggested by Manolson, cited in Tarnowski, 1999), and accessing their own 'knowing within' or their own experience of music (Torff and Gardner, 1999), educators can approach music as a form of play through an existing strength of connection, rather than from any exclusive musical knowledge (Lucky, 1990). The educator can tap into the child's innate interest in exploring sounds, through listening and playing and receiving the sounds into the senses, extending the child's spontaneous play with new and carefully chosen stimuli (Montessori, 1912). When learning and creativity are combined in this way, they constitute play-generated learning, and can be understood as a two-sided coin to be utilized by the educator to stimulate an open-ended cycle of on-going discovery for the child. Guthrie (2005) points out how easily creativity and learning can be misunderstood;

> Despite some overlap between learning and creativity, the two have different qualities. This duality is often hazy to educators and downright opaque to administrators and politicians. The qualities of intuitive play – its creativity and, at times, breath-catching new vision – are elusive and very difficult to talk about. They may be impossible to define and yet remain essential to scholarship, to art – indeed to being human (p.390).

Music play changes as a child grows (Suthers, 2004). Tarnowski (1999) describes how the educator can play different roles in the way they engage with children in music play. These roles include the traditional role of 'director' - demonstrating and instructing specific concepts, or the role of 'observer' – providing an engaging environment for the children but not interacting directly with them, the 'entertainer' – animatedly attempting to engage the children's attention, and the 'conversationalist' – 'where the teacher is an equal partner with the child in learning; neither partner dominates the learning environment as the teacher initiates, responds, and encourages the child to take a turn' (p. 29). This requires only that the educator become a playful and enthusiastic sound explorer and co-player, playing and learning alongside the child, rather than requiring her to have the skills of a music specialist or taking on an instructive role (Lucky, 1990). Tarnowski (1999) suggests the educator access all these roles to best serve the development of the child. (see the

Appendix C for an example). Lucky (1990) suggests that early childhood educators need to learn how to teach *with* music, rather than *be* a music instructor. Wright (2003) notes;

> A distinction between teaching and knowing may clarify the role of the adult in the musical education of young children. "Teaching" has more to do with the teacher's perspective, objectives, and attempts to communicate, but "knowing" evolves from the learner's explorations and attempts to invent, develop, and test ideas (p. 188).

Tarnowski (1999) gives various examples of how an understanding of music as a form of play shifts the focus away from the educator having to know and impart specific concrete musical facts and skills, to a more exploratory and experiential way of learning, giving the educator (and the child) the time and freedom to interact playfully within a musical environment. Wright (1991) suggests that by tapping into their own childhood, a teacher can become more receptive to the child's experience, exploring and playing around with sounds and music making along side the child in a playful way.

> In order to be receptive to children and their responses to music, adults must tap into the genius of their own childhood on behalf of the children with whom they interact. In practical terms, this means that they must remain open-minded, flexible, spontaneous, curious, playful, trusting, inquisitive and willing to learn by trial and error. In brief, they must think in terms of pure artistic action (p. 142).

Referring to play as 'spontaneous activity', Dr. Maria Montessori stressed that the first task of the educator of young children was to 'stimulate life – leaving (the child) free to develop, to unfold' (1912, p.87). Young (2006) points out that a child's improvised singing often goes unnoticed by eductors and how traditional models of group music sessions can overlook 'children's spontaneous musical behaviours' (p. 270). For example:

> It was very common to see children in rhythmic whole-body movements, stomping, galloping, running and bouncing around both indoor and outdoor spaces, which were voiced in rhythms matching their bodily movements exactly (Young, 2006, p. 274)

Morin's (2001) research into the cultivation of music play offers different categories that can offer another way to understand play, and which can be adapted and refined for music play;

- Functional music play (exploring sounds and music concepts)
- Constructive music play (extends exploration through improvisation, composition and instrument making)
- Dramatic music play (uses instruments and singing in imaginative, make-believe contexts

- Kinesthetic music play (focuses on movement to music)
- Games with rules (structured experiences involving all forms of music making and responses)

Artistic play broadens brain function and activates a wide array of neural networks and brain regions (Guthrie, 2005; Jensen, 2001; Strickland, 2001; Puffer-Jones, 2005), suggesting that play is in fact an adaptive behaviour necessary for survival (Papousek, 1996). Human infant play is characterised by enjoyment and creative engagement - inventive behaviour that supports the child to improvise on known elements, and accommodate new elements in the environment. In short, children's play is their work (MENC, 1992). Barrett (2009) describes how young children typically take a song they know well, or parts of it, and repeat it over and over again, usually with an accompanying movement or role-play, and very often with added improvisations that the child creates spontaneously.

Marsh's work (1997) with primary school children provides a valuable insight into how children can utilize and integrate the music they experience in school into their own play culture, as she observed the children she was studying taking games they had learned in school lessons into the school yard in their free, unsupervised time. 'By appropriating these adult-generated songs for game use, children claim them as their own, shifting ownership and control of adult material into their own domain' (p. 144). When the games were taught as part of a designated music time, presumably with more emphasis, the impact was different on the children's play. Marsh states the 'teaching of playground games by the music specialist teachers had a much greater impact on the playground repertoire and on the longevity of games in the repertoire' (p. 146). This transference could be understood to be valuable regardless of which direction it moves in – an attentive teacher can pick up ideas from watching children play.

Understanding how music lives in children's free play gives an insight into how music can be approached by an educator taking a co-player approach, learning about music alongside the children in her care.

Connecting early childhood educators to research

In their study focusing on how educators relate to research, Harrison et al. (2006) stress the importance of early childhood teachers developing an understanding and appreciation of the relevance of research as fundamental to their professional development. In practice, however, early childhood teachers find it hard to find the time to read trade magazines, rarely have access to academic journals, and nominate practical information gained from in-services, professional conferences, curriculum materials, and practical 'how to' teaching resources as their preferred sources to inform their teaching and policy practices (Chubbuck et al., 2001; Harrison et al., 2006). It is ironic that since embarking on this research, and having had unfettered access to the university library, the author has discovered an extensive amount of valuable information

directly applicable to her work as an early childhood music specialist that she was hitherto unaware of and unable to access.

The varying levels of qualifications of educators active in early childhood education contributes to the readiness (or lack of readiness) of educators to access research, with the more qualified teachers showing a greater interest in, and engagement with adopting new philosophies of practice than do those with limited qualifications (McMullen & Alat, 2002). Reflection on research is not currently part of the practitioners' culture (Bresler,1998; Harrison et al, 2006), perhaps due, in part, to research journals being expensive and written in a style that teachers find obscure or inaccessible (Sharpe et al. 2005) or as Harrison (2006) put it, even 'mysterious'.

Research into professional development

The on-going need for PD in music for in-service educators is well understood, as there is not enough time in pre-service teacher education to allow for a high level of skill acquisition (Borko 2004; Suthers, 2008; Victory 2008). Educators need practical support to develop skills (de Vries, 2006), such as a sound understanding of the basic music concepts, an adequate (and growing) repertoire of songs and games and the ability to present them in an animated, engaging way, with some knowledge of how to extend familiar music materials to extend the children's learning.

It is very difficult for educators to change their practice in any fundamental way, and particularly to alter their delivery, without high-quality, long-term PD that includes mentoring and additional training (Hooks et al., 2006). High-quality PD programs can deepen knowledge and transform teaching practice (Borko, 2004). Ideally, professional growth is a developmental process that continues throughout an educator's career (Chen & Chang, 2006; Fleet & Patterson, 2001). However, there is not yet an adequate commitment, nor the necessary funding, for PD in the early childhood sector in general, or to ensure that educators have the required skills to effectively facilitate music play and learning in particular (Hennessy, 2000). Ramey and Ramey (2008) with 35 years of experience researching the implementation of literacy PD, note; 'the widespread lack of a solid PD plan as an integral part of providing early education programs is shortsighted' (p. 45).

In Australia, as elsewhere, the different levels of training and qualifications of those working in the early childhood sector, the lack of funding available to community run preschools, and the lack of any coordinated provision of PD are the specific challenges hindering the adequate provision of PD to early childhood educators (Ramey & Ramey, 2008; Victorian Government, 2006). Professional development is the essential link between existing practice and improved practice, yet Ramey and Ramey (2008) found a lack of

evaluation of the efficacy of PD on participants' performance in their classrooms. They also noted that PD was often;

> not sufficiently practical or useful enough for their [practitioner's] own everyday classroom situations…PD participants often state that they would prefer receiving PD that is more focused on actually applying knowledge, that is translating the content of PD into specific classroom activities (p. 45).

Hooks et al. (2006) found that a large percentage of early education PD was mediocre, that those that were of higher quality included mentoring, additional training, and that follow-up was an essential step to accountability, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a particular PD program. Adger et al.'s research (2004) provides an interesting insight into how significant support for a particular learning area, namely literacy, can lead to a much more considered attitude to PD in that area. They describe how the renewed spotlight on literacy led to an urgent need for preschool educators with the necessary knowledge and skills, which in turn led to the implementation of large scale PD. Their research focused on the importance of listening to teachers talk about their experiences of that PD, as a way of finding out how valuable it is.

Previous research has been mainly concerned with a focus on children and development, with much less research done on teaching and professional development in the early childhood sector (Bresler & Stake, 1992; de Vries, 2006; Dockett & Sumison, 2004). Garet et al. (2001) found that there has been little attention paid to what teachers actually learn, in terms of practical content, from PD. The research that does look at PD tends to focus on pre-service educators, rather than those in the field, yet experienced teachers are the ideal candidates for gaining extended skills in particular areas of learning, as unlike the novice teacher, they are in a position to put new ideas and pedagogy into practice immediately. Loughran and Gunstone's (1997) study 'explores the consequences of a professional development program which attempted to … be responsive to teachers' concerns, context and workplace' (1997, p.161) and this was done by offering PD at the educator's workplace at times that suited the educators, and judging the success or failure of the PD from the educator's perspective.

Fleer's (2002) study found that 'many professionals commented on the limited Australian research available on the correlation between staff qualifications and outcomes for children' (p. 30). For reasons not fully explained, the study found that while researchers, curriculum developers and policy writers placed a need for research into qualifications and professional standards as a top concern, practitioners and directors gave it a low priority. In contrast to Fleer's study, a more recent NZ government study found that early childhood teachers valued on-going learning even more than their primary and secondary counter-parts, and were as keen to develop their skills through professional development, seeing a commitment to on-going learning as one of the hall marks of a good teacher (Kane, 2008). Unlike Australia, New Zealand has combined care and

education in early childhood as part of the overall education system, both administratively and through an umbrella curriculum for all children aged 0 - 6, regardless of where they are placed.

The literature suggests that PD is essential to improving the provision of early childhood education, but there is not enough PD available, and what is available is not adequate in meeting educators' needs.

- **What type of professional development?**

If both the commitment and funding were in place, what type of PD would best serve educators needs to gain skills (and therefore confidence) in providing music experiences for young children?There has long been an interest in researching modes of PD for primary and secondary teachers, but little of this research has confirmed the effects of PD on teaching practice or student outcomes, or looked closely enough at different forms of PD (Garet et. al. 2001; Ramey & Ramey, 2008). However, the predominant one-off workshop model of PD currently available does not promote teacher development because it cannot meet the needs of individual educators in their own context (Chen & Chang, 2006).

Borko (2004) states; 'intensive professional development programs can help teachers to increase their knowledge and change their instructional practices' (p.5) and points to three main areas of focus that bring about individual change: subject knowledge, understanding student thinking and instructional practices. Lieberman & Pointer Mace (2008) position PD as the key to educational reform, and their comprehensive summary of PD provision across the education spectrum identifies both problems and potential solutions that apply equally to the early childhood sector. They describe current PD as often 'fragmented, disconnected and irrelevant' (p. 226), ignoring teachers' experience. The current practice of the 'one size fits all' workshop model that constitutes most PD ignores the reality that teacher learning is both individual and social, and that true learning comes through practice (learning as doing), meaning (learning as intentional), community (learning as participating), and identity (learning through changing who we are). Lieberman & Pointer Mace suggest that PD should be delivered in 'continuous blocks of time devoted to a variety of ways for teachers to teach teachers the strategies that have been successful' and 'the building of teacher communities where teacher leaders can provide professional development with their colleagues' (p. 227) and include observing teachers in their classrooms. The PD that was delivered in this way 'helped to create *practitioner knowledge* (from teacher's experience), *public knowledge* (from research and theory) and *new knowledge* (from what was created together)' (p. 229; italics original). Lieberman & Pointer Mace strongly urge that teacher knowledge should be put at the centre of curriculum packages, creating communities of practice to advance teaching by providing collaboration, leading to a culture of professionalism.

Edwards (2007) states that 'more knowledge is needed to understand how [early childhood] teachers appropriate contemporary perspectives in their work with children' (p. 84) and that teacher research 'should

provide reflexive learning experiences for teachers in addition to contributing to the knowledge base' (p. 85). She recommends a stronger focus on practice, and the acknowledgment of teachers' skills; using their 'existing cultural capital' as the starting point for change and learning within the teacher's work environment.

The relatively small amount of research that has explored the efficacy of different models of PD provision in the early childhood sector has focused more on pre-service than in-service educators, and studies are few, and for music in particular, even more rare. Register's study (2004) comparing two types of music PD with teacher-trainees – workshop training and on-site modeling and mentoring – found that the latter model was more beneficial with more far-reaching effects in shaping teacher behaviours. Downie (1999) and Temmerman (2005) both suggest that educators need access to a music resource teacher or music specialist, as a way of accessing on-going PD in music. Their research was based around a music specialist demonstrating lessons over a short period of weeks or providing off-site training sessions. Follow-up assessments have been used to find out how the teacher-participants felt about research programs in which they were involved (for example, Sharpe et al., 2005). The MusicStart project in the U.S.; 'a system for offering practical and inspiring musical guidance to practitioners' involved two half days of training, and assessment of how the project had impacted on teachers' practice was done by questionnaires sent to participants, with a limited opportunity to observe teaching practice after the project had been completed (Mackenzie & Clift, 2008). De Vries (2005) documented the impacts of music PD on both staff and children, encountering difficulties as an observer, when a participant hoped he would do the music lessons for her, rather than attempting to do the music sessions herself; this has informed the design of this study. In a later study, de Vries (2006) found positive benefits of an 8-week period of music PD were particularly strong because the staff had had direct input in the way the PD was delivered, but a 3 month follow-up confirmed that the PD needed to continue for a longer period to ensure long term changes to practice.

While generalist teachers in primary schools have been more closely researched than their counterparts in the early childhood sector, inferences for the early childhood sector can realistically be drawn from their experience. Research design is important in getting an accurate view of outcomes. Wiggins and Wiggins (2008) suggest that "It is important to get beyond self-reports and look deeper into the everyday practices in the classroom" (p.7) and question the reliability of questionnaires completed by teachers on their own practice to get a realistic picture of what teachers are doing in practice, particularly in areas where a teacher is particularly challenged, or when a teacher has an inaccurately negative or positive self-belief about their competency.

- **Support for a collaborative model of professional development**

A collaboration model of PD that brings the music specialist into the participants' workplace to observe her teaching practice offers two obvious benefits; it offers tailor-made support to the educator in her own context, and allows for the sharing of teacher expertise on a colleague-to-colleague basis (de Vries, 2006; Loughran et al., 2003;, Nardo et al., 2006). It also has less obvious benefits. Hart & Conn (1996) found that a major cause for low morale amongst teachers was a lack of professional interaction and feedback, and identified that 'the opportunity to work with one another in a professional and collaborative environment is essential for high morale' (p. 27).

> One of the key findings has been identifying the essence of professional growth. This involves the relationship between professional interaction, feedback and professional development (where the needs and interests of teachers are met). Professional development results more from feedback and interaction between teachers than mere attendance at in-service programs…Teachers have complained about the lack of feedback more than any other aspect of their work. (p. 27)

Loughran and Gunstone (1997) found that collaborating with educators as part of their teaching day solved the problems of having to find staff to cover them, and relieved the educators of any guilt they might have felt as a result. Other important aspects of the collaboration model are that the regular observations of the teacher at work gives direct insights on how the collaboration is impacting on both the teacher's and the children's learning, and the close and continual contact between collaborative partners ensures a focus on content knowledge which is directly related to increases in skills and knowledge (Birman, et al., 2000). The lack of these two aspects in the traditional workshop model, evaluation and applied knowledge, is identified by Ramey & Ramey (2008) in their work on literacy PD in ECE. They found the most effective PD was through coaching conducted with the teacher on site, where the coach (or mentor) gave regular individualized feedback and used research and evidence-based content, and where participants and providers were invited to contribute input based on their individual circumstances (Ramey & Ramey, 2008). Birman et al. (2000) found that although it was more expensive to implement, collective participation that was conducted on site over a lengthy period, that focused on targeted content knowledge, was based on sound theory about how students learn, and involved the support teacher in observing and offering guidance was more effective than other forms of PD.

Elements of Chen and Chang's research (2006) suggest that elements of collaborative PD are very effective in practice, particularly for particular learning domains. They took the principle of developing the whole child and applied this to a 'whole teacher' approach to PD, designed specifically for early childhood teachers. The PD in their research focused on the use of technology, was delivered over a year and included extensive training in group sessions and classroom based assistance and technical support. They found direct correlations between educators' increased confidence; the acquisition of new skills, increased self-efficacy,

and an increase in positive attitudes to the learning domain. They suggest that this model, with clear aims and objectives, was ideal for learning areas such as technology, literacy and music.

In their comprehensive survey of music provision in early childhood, Nardo et al. (2006) stress the need for more collaboration, with early childhood educators calling for an 'organised network of consultants to increase classroom teachers awareness of their expertise about children and to diminish possible negative thoughts about their musical ability' (p. 289). In particular, the study recommends that;

> future research may involve case studies of exemplary collaboration between programs and specialists … reciprocal learning can be expected in a new vision for collaboration. Music educators and early childhood educators potentially could benefit from collaborative research as well (p. 289-90).

In their research into attempts to document teachers' professional knowledge, Loughran et al. (2003) point to the difficulties of articulating the knowledge that expert teachers draw upon to inform their practice because it is not always obvious in practice, and is often intuitive to the expert teacher. They suggest collaborative research as a way to connect teacher knowledge through one teacher talking to another about efficacious practices that are then translated back into practice;

> Both teachers and academics need to see this professional knowledge so that teaching can be better understood. In so doing this might lead to a situation whereby that which informs practice might be better recognized, valued, and used by teachers. Clearly, then, an important frame for the research effort … is the need to retain and effectively circulate the insights gained through successful collaborative teacher research (p. 870).

When referring to a collaborative model of PD for early childhood educators, the literature tends to focus on pre-service or novice teachers, with some notable exceptions. Bullard (2002) found that experienced educators wanted PD they could readily apply to their daily situation. Gray (2008) also found that teachers 'want to learn relevant skills that fulfill a need and they want to practice real-world application of what they are learning in a safe environment over time', and the safest environment for the educator is their own workplace (p. 85). Like Chen and Chang (2006), this research found that mentoring is a successful mode of delivering PD, providing there is a clear purpose, a clear definition of roles, a careful selection and training of mentors, adequate time put aside, rewards and accountability. When working together in collaboration, both the teacher being mentored, and the mentoring teacher are taking part in the general purpose of teaching; namely learning and understanding (Jewel, 2007).

The collaborative model, where trainee or novice teachers can access other more experienced teachers, has been researched within various project designs (Pavia et al, 2003; Jewell, 2007; Reeder, 2002, Varney, 2009). Register's study (2004) on workshop training versus on-site modeling over a month found that the lack of follow-up support in the workshop model meant that lasting change could not be achieved. While teachers reported feeling self-conscious when observed, the on-site mentor helped shape teacher behaviours and had a more far-reaching effect. Eddy (2006) suggests that a mentor who is supportive gives the participant another colleague with whom to discuss the craft of teaching, and from whom they can receive honest feedback and support.

> The use of a critical friend or mentor is a powerful professional development strategy that allows graduates and teachers new to our school to learn directly from more experienced colleagues, that provides opportunities for frank and confidential critical discussions, that fosters reflection and goal setting, that enhances career guidance, and that provides a unique opportunity to develop personal and professional relationships with colleagues (p. 4).

The collaborative approach, when undertaken democratically, allows both parties to grow professionally and personally, so the importance of the researcher recognising and acknowledging the participants as fellow professionals is an important aspect of collaboration (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Parvia et al., 2003). It is interesting to note that in Parvia et al's study the terminology used within a collaboration to identify the parties involved was significant; the use of terms such as 'mentorees' or 'proteges' were found to be problematic for participants (2003). For this reason, this study chose to use the term 'participants' in the field-work communications.

Research into collaborative PD done by Riley and Roach (2006) describe an 'emergent curriculum' model with six core practices, including the building of a trusting relationship, shaping promising practices by acknowledging existing skills, and encouraging self-exploration. Garvis and Pendergast (2010), in their research into novice teachers' attitudes to teaching the arts in primary school, show that an educator's willingness to be active in a specific learning area is related to past experiences and self-beliefs in connection with that domain, yet little is understood about how educators' self-beliefs around their competencies are arrived at. Chen and Chang (2006) agree; their work focused on teachers' attitudes, knowledge and skills, and classroom practices, supporting teacher growth from novice to expert levels of proficiency. This would suggest that it is essential to understand more about educators' self-beliefs and their impact on PD to be able target and to deliver PD more effectively.

Time to listen to the educators; giving educators a voice

Fleet and Patterson (2001) point out that policy makers and researchers have tended to speak for and about educators at a distance; about what they ought to be doing, for example, rather than listening to educators first-hand to find out what they are dealing with and what they need to fulfill the top-down edicts presented to them in curriculum documents. Wood (2009) refers to the 'top-down' approach inherent in the models of PD implemented around curriculum frameworks in early childhood settings. This study takes a 'grass roots' phenomenological approach to hear directly from the educators; as Hing (1993) puts it 'we must attend to their voice' (p. 111). For example, Riley and Roach (2006) based their research on the question "How do staff learn and grow?" because they felt that the early childhood education 'lacks a coherent theory of how teachers develop in a child-care setting' (p. 369).

The bulk of music research, especially in the area of early childhood, has focused on the child (Bresler & Stake; 1992, de Vries, 2006). Occasionally the focus has turned to the interactive role of parents in the early childhood education (Berger & Cooper, 2003; de Vries, 2003, 2007; Suthers, 2004). There is very little in the literature that seeks to gain an understanding of the educators' personal experience of teaching music, although a number of researchers have pointed out the need for this (Anderson, 2002; Bresler & Stake, 1992; Clark Saunders & Baker, 1991; Hing, 1993; McMullen & Alat, 2002; Zeek et al., 2001).

This is slowly changing, with more studies attempting to hear from educators by involving them directly in research (de Vries, 2006), and recording their words (de Vries, 2004, 2006). Studies set out to find out from elementary teachers what they felt the most useful music skills and understandings were in their eyes (Clark Saunders & Baker, 1991; Kelly, 1998). Anderson (2002) studied educators' attitudes to music and its importance to children and the difficulties educators face in providing music. Early childhood educators are consistent in their requests for PD that is directly applicable to their work (Birman, et al., 2000; de l'Etoile, 2001; de Vries, 2006; Ramey & Ramey, 2008). PD needs to address the particular challenges music brings for educators, such as a fear of singing (Richards, 1999) and anxieties around management (Scott-Kassner, 1999). Modes of instruction are linked to an educator's level of confidence in management (Grossman, 1992), and the more insecure a teacher feels in a particular learning area, the more likely it is that she will rely on an instructive, teacher-centred model (Blair, 2009; Kagan, 1992; Morin, 2001). Early childhood professionals have also expressed a need for research that recommends policy be based on evidence of best practice, to ensure that scarce resources can be used as effectively as possible (Fleer, 2002).

Educators are urged to keep abreast of the latest research, reflect on the efficacy of their teaching practices through observation of the children, and practice self-reflection (Gardner, 2000) but there are rarely any opportunities built into the early childhood educator's working life to do this; or to reflect upon and share their own knowledge with their peers (Loughran et al., 2003). It is all the more important, therefore to hear the voices of teachers working in the field (Hing, 1993; Zeek et al., 2001).

This chapter has explored the literature that informs this study, looking at the importance of music to the young child, and what research has to say about the effective provision of music. The lack of confidence linked to negative self-beliefs in educators around music, and the difficulty this creates in successfully applying theories of music provision to their teaching practice is well established in the literature. The significance of learning through play is suggested as a pathway for educators to start to interact musically with the children in their care. Research into various models of professional development, and the recommendations for a collaborative model are identified. The next chapter will outline the methodology used to do this research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This study aimed to gain a deep and detailed understanding of the needs of preschool educators when accessing professional development (PD) opportunities to gain confidence and skills in music. This chapter describes how the methodology used in this research aligned with the aims of the research; to find out from the educators how they experienced music collaboration, how they influenced it, what their initial and on-going needs and concerns were, and how these needs could be effectively addressed to an extent that led to

established and positive changes to teaching practice. This methodology of this study allowed for long-term field work, that accessed the perceptions of the participants involved, and that was able to find out about the effects of collaboration on teaching practice in both the short and longer term. This chapter will describe the methodologies used in this study by firstly explaining the choice of qualitative research, then examining the more specific research tools used: phenomenology, multiple case study, and participatory research in collaboration. The various aspects of the fieldwork design and data collection are outlined, and the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is defended. The following discussion outlines the methodologies considered and used in this research to ensure validity and reliability throughout the study.

The methodology framework

Research methodologies fall into two paradigms: quantitative research, where real events can be measured and quantified, and qualitative research, where real events are best understood through an analysis of detailed description. The intellectual roots of qualitative research can be traced back to Immanuel Kant who argued that all knowledge of the world was known through one's own subjective experience, mediated by mind, and limited to human interpretation and representation (Bresler & Stake, 1992). As Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) state, 'qualitative research yields useful knowledge (and is) also as legitimate a form of science as any other set of procedures acceptable to science' (p. 27). Qualitative research methods were employed in this study to gain an understanding of a particular human situation, using various techniques to support a disciplined and scholarly inquiry. Data were gathered using a range of descriptive research modes characteristic to qualitative research, including semi-structured interviews, observation, and reflective journals (Casey, 1992). According to Bresler and Stake (1992), qualitative research involves four research strategies:

>   1) non-interventionist observation in a natural setting,
>   2) an emphasis on interpretation of issues concerning the participants (etic) and the researcher (emic) perspectives,
>   3) a highly contextual description of people and events, and
>   4) the use of triangulation to validate information.

This study used all four of these strategies. The first of these; non-interventionist observations, meant that the researcher observed the phenomena as it occurred naturally, without any manipulation or external imposition (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009); educators working with children in preschools as part of their regular working day. The second strategy emphasised the subjective nature of the behaviour that was studied; giving equal status to both the etic and emic perspectives (Yardley, 2008). This honoured the phenomenological guideline that the researcher cannot presume to know what things mean to the participants they are observing. Instead, the researcher attempted to understand what the behaviour being observed meant to the people being studied (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). The third strategy built on the implications inherent in the

first strategy, and was implemented to gain a clear context by identifying the background experiences and attitudes that informed the participants' teaching practice, through an initial interview. Interviews, especially semi-structured interviews strengthen the phenomenological approach by investigating attitudes and opinions of the participants in their own words (Crawford, 2008; Brocki & Wearden, 2006). When participants are invited to illuminate and examine an issue by referring to their own personal experiences they become more absorbed in that issue (Alexander & Galbraith, 1997). The data collected from this first interview placed the beliefs of the participants into a specific context and could then be compared to the data collected in subsequent interviews, thus tracking potential changes in the attitudes and opinions of the participants over the life of the study.

The fourth and last strategy of triangulation, sought to enrich understanding of a phenomenon by looking at it through different perspectives. Originally a navigational term, triangulation is a metaphor that values different views as equally valid, giving them space to be represented, rather than trying to reduce data to a single, consistent account (Yardley, 2008). Triangulation in this study was achieved through a continuous analysis of the information collected longitudinally throughout the study from the three participants, comparing the data gained from each participant using various data gathering tools; three monthly interviews as mentioned above, fortnightly observations and discussions, and the reflective journals.
In this way, the study has a double layer of triangulation, the outer level being the parallel data from the three case studies, and the inner level being the utilisation of a variety of data collection tools.

The research tools described below were chosen to further refine these directives, and lead to gaining a detailed understanding of the participants' perspectives of their experience.

The methodology

A phenomenological approach

This study sought to observe, record, elicit insights through interview and discussion, and understand the changes to the participants' teaching practice, as a result of a working collaboration with the researcher, through the eyes of the participants. In addition to observing how an educator works musically with children, it was essential to incorporate each participant's own perspective and experience to gain a holistic understanding of how she is thinking and feeling throughout the process, and how she herself reflects on her work. Data collected using a phenomenological perspective allowed the researcher to meaningfully interpret the connection between how the educator talks about her music practice, and how she acts upon her beliefs when working with the children.

Phenomenology underpins ethnographic research, which is one of the arms of qualitative research. When applied to education, the ethnographic research process has been described by Wiersma and Jurs (2009) as 'the process of providing holistic and scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts' (p.273). Initiated by Edmund Husserl in the early 20th century, phenomenology is a philosophy that seeks to secure a basis for knowledge through identifying psychological knowledge (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). It addresses the reality that all data collected through interviews or observations is coming through a person's consciousness; both that of the participant and that of the researcher. Qualitative research requires the context of a phenomenon to be studied as part of understanding the data collected from the participants (Bresler & Stake, 1992). The use of phenomenology was particularly apt here as it aimed to 'capture as closely as possible the way in which the phenomena is experienced within the context in which the experience takes place' (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008. p. 28).

The distinctive element of the phenomenological approach is that the researcher seeks to record and understand the participant's experience; to gain insights into the lived experience of the participants in every day life (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Phenomenology is based on the concept that reality consists of the meaning of experiences of those being studied; for example, in this study, that of the teacher participants (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Each educator's own perspective and experience holds centre stage to gain a holistic understanding of how the educator was thinking and feeling throughout the process, and how she herself reflected on her work, fully represented in each case study. This satisfied the first part of the research question. The second part, concerned with the effects on teaching practice, was satisfied by the researcher's regular observations of the educator while working, the responses and participations of the children, and, when it occurred, the feedback from other colleagues. Data collected using a phenomenological perspective allowed the researcher to meaningfully interpret the connection between how the educator represents her experience of music teaching practice, and how this is reflected in her work with the children. This utilizes the theory of interpretation known as the hermeneutic, where the one who analyses must be understood to be part of the analysis. A double hermeneutic is in play because the participant's own words represent their understanding of their experiences, which are then analysed by the researcher to reach her understanding, but with the added perspective of the other participants' parallel experiences. This double hermeneutic was then triangulated by the researcher's observations of each participant's teaching practice, which led to another layer of data, leading to another level of analysis.

This process clearly relies on the interpretative legitimacy of the researcher (Bednall, 2006), and requires that the researcher treat her own input and participation with a similar level of analysis as the data coming from the participants – the researcher is part of the whole picture, and so any relevant philosophical context and bias must be fully disclosed and accounted for; it is incumbent upon the researcher to clarify personal views that may influence the study (Bresler & Stake, 1992, Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The personal experiences of the researcher have a direct bearing on which problem is chosen, how the study is set up, and

how datum is collected and analysed. Data can only be gathered through the prism of the researcher's own perceptions. Bednall (2006) proposes that a useful mechanism to ensure the interpretative legitimacy of the researcher is to identify the researcher's influence on the analysis through the notions of 'epoche' and 'bracketing' (p.128). This is drawn from Gearing (2004) who argues that the work of understanding the lived experience is 'a process reached through phenomenological reduction, epoche, or bracketing' (p. 1430), suggesting these terms are synonymous, even though he acknowledges that the exact meaning of the terms have not been fully determined. She is therefore obliged to 'bracket off' (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 105) her experiences from those of the participants, by clarifying her own theories, methods, ideologies, biases and general viewpoint; identifying how they influence her observations and analyses.

Bednall (2006) usefully distinguishes the terms more specifically, using 'epoche' to refer to the recognition of the existing modes of thinking due to past experiences influencing the researcher's analysis, and 'bracketing' to refer to the recognition of the researcher's thinking arising as a result of the fusion between that thinking and the interpretation, resulting in the emergence of an analytical conclusion. Examples of the kind of artifacts referred to here are units of meaning such as beliefs about best practice, pedagogy, relevant past experiences with educators and responses to particular collaborative instances. The mechanisms of epoche and bracketing as posited by Bednell (2006) have been put in place in this study by giving an account of the genesis of the study, outlining the researcher's previous experience and thinking leading up to the study (in the first chapter), illustrating the researcher's participation and responses within the collaborations (in the case-studies) and by making the act of analysis and arrival at conclusions as transparent as possible (in the discussion chapters).

However, the researcher's observations and analysis must always be based on, refer back to and be true to the participant's understanding of experience. Ethnography and phenomenology share many similar characteristics. The following observations by Casey (1992) on the importance of the researcher allowing for her own presence in the research are equally applicable to phenomenological research.

> Ethnographic researchers utilise their senses, mediated by their own personal values, to record data in written form. Ethnographers gather data on all human planes: the physical, the emotional, the cognitive and the ideological. Preparation to do so includes developing a strong self-awareness in terms of personal reactions and learning style so that the full cultural meaning of the events observed may be allowed to emerge (p. 121)

When observing participants, the phenomenologist cannot assume that they know what things mean to those participants. By inviting the participants to share their personal reflections on their own work the researcher can be privy to the more subjective aspects of the observed phenomena (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). With the emphasis firmly placed on the inner experience of participants as they describe and report their experiences

and reflections, it follows that the quality of the data is reliant on the quality of the contributions received from those participants (Nielson, 2000). In a phenomenological study such as this, it was important that the participants had ample opportunity to not only describe their experiences as they occurred throughout the field work, but also as they reflected on the whole experience. Acknowledgement and representation of the participants' own words, both in real time, and on reflection, were significant for the validity of the study.

While agreeing that phenomenological and hermeneutic methodologies are obvious methodologies to utilize to get an insider perspective on how teachers learn, Nuttall and Edwards (2009) argue that these approaches, when looking at small cohort studies that rely on teacher reflections, and relying on self-reporting as a form of data generation, are not sufficient in post-developmental times, as they only *describe* teacher learning and are limited in identifying what *provokes* teacher learning (italics in original). They argue that new theories, such as socio-cultural theory for example, make sense of individual perspectives through communities of practice, and that 'the best evidence of continuing professional learning will take the form of theories-in-action that are pedagogically sound and context specific' (p. 133). To answer this potential weakness, this study relied on research literature to ensure its central question was valid and relevant, and to ensure the approaches used in its methodology and fieldwork were appropriate. The study is context specific in that it is concerned only with early childhood education, and only with the learning area of music. In addition, the use of triangulation in this study seeks to answer the inherent weakness identified by Nuttall and Edwards (2009) in two ways; through continual observation of each participant's teaching practice to give a balance to their self-reporting through interviews and journals, and by making the researcher's experience and analytical processes at every level of the study as transparent as possible to the reader. Occasional divergences between the participant's perceptions of their own practice and the researcher's observations in this study confirmed the need for self-reporting to be balanced with another view point, or triangulated (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). See Appendix D for an example of a divergence that occurred in this study.

The 'Whole Teacher' approach to professional development

Chen and Chang (2006) put forward the 'whole teacher' approach as a conceptual framework within which to organise and integrate PD for early childhood teachers, involving a 'simultaneous focus on teacher attitudes, skills and knowledge, and practices' (p. 1)

The whole teacher approach requires that the expert works to gain an understanding of the educator's context, attitudes and beliefs, existing skills, and specific needs, whether they are a novice or an experienced teacher. From this basis, each teacher's progress is tracked individually, offering support, feedback and guidance in a tailor-made fashion. Based on the premise that 'teacher attitudes, skills and practices interact and influence each other' (p. 3), the development of self-beliefs and attitudes is positioned alongside teaching practice. Working in specific learning domains, the whole teacher approach acknowledges the relationship

between a teacher's confidence, and her readiness to develop skills and implement new practices (Chen & Chang, 2006).

In contrast, most current music PD is is provided through a a presenter imparting knowledge or materials, sometimes involving participants in activities, but with little or no input from the participants, or reference to their particular circumstances or needs. Only the external, objective aspects of the expert's knowledge are involved in thisscenario; it is not possible to accommodate the subjective realities that directly influence the teachers' practice; (Chen & Chang, 2006), or involve the educator in ways that would allow deep reflection, or build on skills and gain feedback

The researcher has 'insider' knowledge of this, having been called upon to provide music in-services as part of her work. The researcher has also attended music in-services with generalist educators to informally observe what happens; the educators' responses, how they feel about it afterwards, and how it affects their practice in the longer term. She has observed that the intentions of those giving the in-service are to give the participants what direct experience they can through taking part in sample activities that the participants could use with their children, usually with the insistence that 'anyone can do this', and to sell their product; usually books, CD's, or props. These observations are not a criticism, as there are very few non-profit music in-services available to early childhood teachers in NSW, and the for-profit in-services are responding to the demand to fill a much-neglected niche. As an author of a music resource and an in-service provider herself, the researcher is only too aware of these realities; her first hand experience confirmed for her how limited such in-services are in meeting educators' PD needs.

There has been research into mentoring teacher-trainees and teachers in their first year (see Benson, 2008, Strader, 2009, for example), but very little research has explored the implementaion and evaluation of mentoring programs (Pavia et al., 2003), the mentoring of experienced teachers (Jewell, 2007) or *in situ* mentoring. Pavia et. al. (2003) point out that the experienced educator is 'becoming more reflective and is interested in widening the scope of her professional knowledge and skills' (p. 250). In line with its' phenomenological perspective, this study incorporated Chen and Chang's whole teacher mentoring approach exclusively through individual, *in situ* mentoring.

Case Studies

Case study is a good strategy when inquiring into a real-life, contemporary context (Yin, 2003). When a researcher wants to find out how somebody does something, why they do it, and why they do it in a particular way, case study allows the researcher to examine these questions in depth by gathering detailed and authentic data from the research participants. A phenomenological case study lends strength to the data

as it gives priority to the participants' words, while seeking to arrive at an accurate depiction of meaning. By getting a 'close up' view, a case study can generate good raw material with which readers can identify through their own experience. Case studies in qualitative research are used to gain insights, make discoveries and interpret peoples' experiences and what they have to say about them, rather than testing a pre-determined hypothesis (Merriman, 1998). Case studies that supplement interviews with observation, such as in this research, are called observational case studies, and are one of the most commonly used designs in qualitative research (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Stake (1995) explains that 'the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization' (p 8). In a holistic context of real life, a participant's experience represents ordinary activities in daily life, observed or recorded with a minimum of intrusion, but with the understanding that the researcher is inevitably reliant and limited by her previous experience and value systems (Stake, 1995). In the same way, although a case study is not intended to be evaluative, it will be coloured by the evaluation inherent in the researcher's interpretation; 'of all the roles, the role of interpreter, and gatherer of interpretation, is central' (p. 98).

Merriman (1998) lists three main characteristics that define the case study; that of being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. In this research, the case studies are used to focus on a particular phenomenon; that of understanding how teachers gain skills and confidence in a particular learning area, and examining how this may be achieved in specific, but readily applicable general circumstances. It is descriptive in that the collection of data resulted in a 'thick' description of that process, examining the many factors influencing the process. These factors include showing the influence of personality on the issue, showing a longitudinal influence, including the participants' own words through quotations and interviews, describing the background history, both of the issue and the participants, and presenting the information gathered from different points of view; the participants and the researcher. The use of case study in this study is heuristic; one where the student is trained to find out things for himself (Oxford Dictionary), that is, it seeks to find things out without imposing prior assumptions, proceeding to discover something by trial and error. The case studies illuminate for the reader the unfolding experience and learning as understood by each participant as they were going through the collaborative process.

- **The multiple case study**

A case study allows the researcher to examine an issue in depth by gathering detailed data, in the hope that a 'close up' view can be applied for broader application (Crawford, 2008). Stake (1992) states that 'two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone' (p. 64) and this exemplifies the added strength in multiple case study, as a way of gaining different and parallel view points of the same situation. Generalizability is the main weakness of the case study method (Casey, 1992). This study widened its scope to include three participants in three different

locations. Three separate preschools were involved in this study, with the researcher working with one participant in each preschool. Limiting the study to three participants/sites meant the researcher could ensure there was adequate time and resources to gain rich data, give the required feedback, attention, support and resources to serve the collaboration with each educator, and fully analyse the data for the study. It also meant a deeper understanding could be gained which suited the phenomenological concerns of this study, and which strengthen its generalizability.

Clearly identifying an understanding, or theory, of what is being studied is an essential step in the design of a multiple case study (Yin, 2003). In this study, the researcher had reasonable grounds, based on the previous research findings in the literature, and her own experience, to suggest that a collaborative model of PD would be an efficacious way of developing educators' music skills and confidence. However, part of the research design was to take a heuristic approach to the collaborations, to allow both the researcher and the participant to find out by trial and error what constituted the most supportive form of PD, without imposing prior assumptions. This meant that rather than imposing pre-determined content on the collaborations, the researcher deliberately held back, allowing each participant to guide her own collaboration based on her own needs. Within this format, the researcher contributed in response to the participants, while at the same time encouraging the participants to step into more challenging learning areas such as singing alone, being more playful, planning sessions and defining pedagogy and long term goals, as the participant became more confident and receptive. In this way, it was possible to discover which aspects of the process of gaining improved music confidence and skills were specific to a participant, and which were common to all three. In this way, the multiple case studies were able to enhance the generalizability of the research by offering comparisons (de Vries, 2006; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

The participant researcher

Bresler and Stake (1992) identify a spectrum of participation research models ranging from purely observing, to the participant-observer engaging with the activities without directing those activities, through to an extensive participation where the participant observer works as a consultant providing in-service training to the teachers. In this study there were different levels of interaction between the researcher and the participants on an on-going basis, and the interactions changed as the collaborative relationships grew and more trust and openness was established.

Part of the researcher's task is to understand and acknowledge the impact of her own participation on the participants' inner experience; to expose the impact of the collaboration on the participants' perceptions and practice. When observing the participant working with the children in this study, the researcher was purely an observer, taking no part in the observed behaviour, in this case - the educator taking a music session. In the discussions following each session, the researcher became a more active participant, listening to and

noting the reflections of the participant on the session just observed, acknowledging the participant's account and responding with feedback and encouragement. Through work-shopping activities with the participant the researcher also offered suggestions for how to develop, extend or adjust content of the sessions where she felt the participant would be receptive to such suggestions. These discussions inevitably influenced the participants' own views of how they were developing professionally, and also influenced the participants thinking about planning for following sessions.

Collaborative research

In this study, the researcher acted as a consultant to participant educators who were facing challenges in an area of learning that they felt they had inadequate skills for, so the importance of establishing a trusting relationship between the collaborators cannot be overestimated. As Riley and Roach (2006) warn, 'only within a trusting relationship will the educator share her understandings, doubts and hopes for her classroom, and will be able to take risks and experiment with new ideas and practices' (p. 365). For the educator who comes from a belief that music is not something they can do competently, or feel that they themselves are not musical, a supportive, empathetic approach to collaboration is crucial. Only by listening and responding to existing attitudes, and providing enough support over a sufficient period of time can the collaboration effectively support the participant's learning (Chen & Chang, 2006).

As previously discussed, music making in our society has become increasingly specialised and remote, giving the impression that only those with special talents can aspire to musical behaviours. This impacts indirectly but very significantly on preschool educators, and therefore, on the preschool experience. When combined with a lack of meaningful music experiences in general education, this has resulted in many educators feeling uncomfortable and unskilled in providing music (Mills, 1989; Jeanneret, 1997). Previous school and tertiary experiences exert a strong and lasting influence on the individual teacher's attitudes, self-beliefs and beliefs on the teaching and learning of music (Rosevear, 2006). In an overview of studies into how the personal beliefs of educators impact on their attitudes to teaching and their acquisition of professional skills, Kagan (1992) found that these self-beliefs tend to be inflexible, and hard to change. Unlike many professions, most educators on entering the teaching profession work in comparative isolation, with little to no monitoring or supervision so there is little opportunity for those self-beliefs to be challenged (Downie, 1999). However, when involved in a collaborative process with a co-operating teacher whose ideas or beliefs offer an alternative view, Kagan found that the educator could begin to reconstruct their self-image to accommodate new skills (1992).

In using a mentor/practice model of collaboration, this study simulated the practice of the teaching practicum, long established as part of student teacher-training, which enables a teacher to develop confidence and encourages self-reflection on practice (Rosevear, 2006), but at a deeper level and for a longer period. In

this study, the experienced participants were given a level of support they had not experienced since their training, in a teaching/learning area they found more challenging than other areas of their work. Chen and Chang (2006) identified the gaining of confidence as a crucial factor in changing a teacher's self image and existing beliefs, allowing the teacher to see problems and mistakes as learning opportunities which they can handle as they arise. The researcher found that this was equally true for herself; in this way, both researcher and participants shared many commonalities on their individual but parallel learning journeys.

Collaboration ideally leads to the development of a relationship that results in a democratic, two-way flow of influence between the researcher and the participants, which the researcher understood to impact, to some degree, on the data collected. Young (1975) found that teacher traits, such as conscientiousness, determination, willingness to take the initiative, and an openness to new ideas may have more influence on positive outcomes from PD than theoretical knowledge. The collaborative model used in this study placed the participants as co-researchers in the sense that they were experienced teachers who brought many valuable skills and informed feedback to their collaborations, while the researcher, as co-collaborator brought particular skills which could be shared, added to, and influenced by, the existing skill base of each participant. The co-operative process shares a common goal, and draws on the 'collective intelligence' or 'intellectual capital' of both parties in the collaboration (Avis, 2003). The researcher found that she needed to continually reassess her methods and approach as the relationship with each participant developed. The phenomenological nature of this study accommodated ongoing shifts in perceptions of both researcher and participant (Casey, 1992), creating a window of opportunity through which true PD is possible for both mentor and participant.

Teachers may need reassurance that PD is an ongoing part of being a professional, and does not imply some inherent lack or fault in their skills as an educator. When a preschool director is supportive of staff extending skills and learning through PD opportunities, and actively models a willingness to continue learning, a strong commitment to PD is more likely to be fostered in the staff (Chubbuck et al., 2001; Clift et al. 1990). Encouraging a positive mental attitude towards life-long learning is an essential step in encouraging teachers to connect with PD.

In working as a collaborator with educators, the researcher must be sensitive to the feelings of the educator with whom she is working. Educators have varying levels of comfort in being observed while working, and with asking for assistance, feed back and support (Clift et al. 1990). The study by Chubbuck et al. (2001) into the perceived needs of pre-service teachers found that in-experienced teachers wanted non-evaluative, non-threatening support, with a lot of opportunities for analysis and reflection on their teaching practice. The novice teachers expressed a strong desire for practical, contextualized information rather than theoretical advice. (Chubbuck et al. 2001) These insights are applicable to this study as even the most experienced educator can feel like a novice when dealing with music.

- **The inquiring teacher versus action research**

At first glance, this study may appear to fall into the category of 'action research'. However, the expectation in action research that the participants act as 'researchers committed to critically examining their practice' (Freidman, 2001, p.160) was felt by the researcher to be potentially a hindrance to the study, even though it was also expected that the participants may voluntarily take on this role as their confidence increased. Instead, the 'inquiring teacher' model was used to reflect an awareness of the sensitivities required when collaborating with educators in an area which they tend to find confronting and challenging, on both the personal and professional levels (Johnston, 1994.) In a critique of action research, Johnston suggests that it tries to pin down improvements in a teacher's work in a dogmatic way through critique and justification. She asserts that 'teaching cannot be explained nor promoted as a systematic problem-solving activity' (p. 44). In contrast, she promotes the inquiring teacher movement as focusing more on the development of a teacher's knowledge through the processes of reflection and inquiry. This was the approach taken by the researcher.

Data Collection: Preparation

Site and Participant Selection

After an initial request for expressions of interest to eight local preschools, participants were informed of the study through posters sent by email to a targeted group of six preschools in the local area of the Southern Highlands. The Highlands is a rural area covering a large area, so the preschools were targeted based on the driving distance from the researcher. Four preschools responded, with three chosen to participate on the basis that they represented a cross section of the socio-cultural demographic in the area, were available at times when the researcher could observe the participant working musically with the children, and were able to commit to the full length of the study. The three preschools represented a cross section of the types of early education available in NSW; community based and privately funded. Two of the preschools, one privately run and the other community funded, were in one of the largest towns in the Southern Highlands area of NSW, while the third preschool is located in a village at the other end of the shire. All three participants were experienced educators with more than ten years teaching experience. The three participants provided a cross section of different levels of teaching confidence; while they all had similar levels of experience, they had different qualifications, and each started out with very different levels of musical experience and confidence.

Because of the density of data collected over the life of the study, it was decided that three participants would be a manageable number, allowing for deeper analysis while still providing a breadth of information. All

three participants in this study are female due to the almost total dominance of females in the early childhood industry. The researcher was unaware of any male early childhood educators working in the local district.

Most of the participants in this study were known to some degree to the researcher before the commencement of the study, due to the relatively small population of the local area, and the researcher's work as an in-service provider in the area over a number of years. Of the four participants, one had studied the piano for three years with the researcher and had become a friend as a result; another was known to the researcher as a fellow staff member of a school where she had worked some years before; and the other was known a little through attending in-services. Two of the participants had also taken part in an informal, non-commercial teachers singing circle open to any interested local preschool teachers, which met fortnightly at the researcher's studio over a three month period, to sing and learn new children's songs and music activities, and share experiences.

All the participants said they were attracted to participate in the study because of a perceived opportunity to develop their music skills and gain confidence through collaboration with the researcher.

Consent forms and ethics approval

Consent and ethical approvals were sought and implemented according to the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans (SERC) through Monash University, Victoria, Australia. (See Appendix A). Fieldwork, including interviews and observations, did not begin until the Explanatory Forms had been read, and the signed Consent Forms returned to the researcher in hard copy.

The constraints of this study

Being a longitudinal study, the study was limited to involving three participants due to the potential amount of data generated over eighteen months. In addition, conducting the study in a rural area meant there were time and distance limitations, as visits to two of the preschools involved a minimum of an hour of travel for each one.

Although the researcher was observing the participants working with the children, she did not interact with the children, as the study focused on the educator rather than on the children. Therefore the researcher gave no hands-on demonstrations, and had no direct contact with the children, other than sitting in the same room to observe the participant. This was to avoid the problems encountered by other researchers where the participating educators sometimes abdicated their role as active teacher to the researcher, or were further intimidated when faced with the unhelpful comparison between their own efforts and those of the 'expert'

researcher (de Vries, 2006; Downie, 1999; Jeanneret, 2006). It was also to avoid any potential imposition of the researcher's teaching style on that of the participants.

Another reason that demonstration lessons were not part of the collaboration was due to the difficulty in managing the ethical requirements in the fluid nature of a preschool setting, where children often arrive unexpectedly throughout the term, and where it is not possible to limit the amount of contact between educator and student in the way it might be in a primary or secondary setting. Close attention to each child is part of the researcher's way of working in small groups, and as Stake (1992) points out, 'it is essential to obtain special written permission from parents for personal attention to individual children' (p. 57).

In light of the discomfort the participants voiced around singing in front of other adults, it was decided not to use video recording to record data – to the vast relief of the participants, as it was considered too threatening and potentially inhibiting by the participants. Instead, when a participant assented to it, audio data were collected to record some audible content of music sessions during observations later in the collaboration, for the purpose of the researcher tracking any changes to the participants' vocal singing skills over the period of the study.

Data Collection; Fieldwork

Descriptive and interactive techniques were used to collect data in this study, including observation, interviews, reflective journals and collaborative discussions with participants. As described, fieldwork continued for a twelve-month period, and consisted of fortnightly, and sometimes weekly, visits by the researcher to each participant's preschool to observe the participant giving a music session. This was always immediately followed by a private, lengthy discussion of 20 to 40 minutes. A final interview was conducted six months after the last observations.

The interviews

This study used the in-depth type of interviewing that is grounded in the phenomenological tradition, designed to give each participant the opportunity share the meanings they attached to their lived experience. The interviews were treated as oral histories, as described by Wiersma and Jurs (2009) to record the entire conversation, capturing the vocal inflections, nuances of expression and 'thinking aloud' process that the participants went through in answering the questions. The semi-structured interviews used open-ended questions, and allowed the participants to digress as they wished, or re-visit previous questions as thoughts came to mind, so the participants could contribute to the interview and comprehensively describe their own experience in their own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In this way the participants could suffuse their

stories with a personal meaning and significance that increases the richness and complexity of the data (Eatough & Smith, 2006). This did result in rich material, but the researcher had to remain alert to the possibility of a greater influence from the researcher (Giddens, 1994). To mitigate this potential interference, each interview was transcribed, and emailed back to the participant for her to check and make any changes desired, which were then incorporated into the data record.

Four interviews were conducted, with three spaced throughout the year's fieldwork, and a final one conducted six months after the fieldwork had ceased, allowing the researcher to chart the participant's awareness of changes and developments in their thinking and practice as a result of the collaborations, both during and after the collaborations. Chen and Chang (2006) suggest that an educator's actions are, to some degree, the externalisation of inner thought processes. Teaching practice entails both the external constructs of knowledge and the internalisation of that knowledge, and that internalisation impacts on, and is impacted upon by the educator's understanding of themselves as a professional (Chen & Chang, 2006). The interviews gave the participants a framework to systematically describe those inner thought processes that constitute the background to their own practice, and any other aspects of their experience that they deemed relevant. The participants were invited to talk freely in a private situation, to provide in-depth information. The interviews were structured enough to allow the researcher to keep the participant focused on issues relevant to the study, but open enough to allow the participant to digress or develop a line of thought that was not directly covered by the researchers' questions.

Each interview lasted between one and two hours and was audio-taped, transcribed, checked by the participants before being analysed using IPA throughout the study, to identify trends, changes and fluctuations in the participants' reflections and attitudes as they occurred.

- **The first interview; finding out about the educator's history, context, attitudes and self-beliefs**

The first of three semi-structured interviews was used initially to gather information and inform the study. The first interview was conducted prior to starting the collaborative observations. Each practitioner was given the list of questions that formed the interview, to read and answer in note-form in their own time, a few days before the face-to-face interview. This was done to allow the participants to think deeply about their answers, and to go beyond a more superficial response.

To understand the wider context that informs an individual teacher's work and professional attitudes and beliefs, it is important to incorporate the influences of the teachers out-of-classroom and personal life experiences into the professional knowledge landscape of that teacher (Stratigos & Patterson, 2002). The interview questions were designed to address multiple dimensions of the participants' attitudes, skills, knowledge and practice, in an effort to acknowledge the whole life experience that each educator brings to

their professional life and to identify what they hoped to achieve from their involvement in the study (Chen & Chang, 2006). The first interview included questions on the participant's personal history involving musical influences from family and society, to incorporate socio-cultural theory (Burnard, 2006; Edwards, 2007). While originally created to understand children's learning, Burnard's socio-cultural theory was used in this study to apply to teachers; to understand the professional context within which the educator was learning and working; in this case, the preschool setting. This provided the socio-cultural context for the data collected (Burnard, 2006).

Kagan (1992) suggests that teachers project their own learning experiences onto their students. This is potentially problematic if the teacher's experiences around music were negative. Teacher knowledge is an important determinant of what children learn, so a teacher's previous experiences are very significant to education (Chen & Chang, 2006). Alter et al. (2009) found that their primary teacher participants believed that a teacher's knowledge of a particular learning area was directly proportionate to how well they could teach it. Before a useful theoretical framework for the technicalities of providing music can be put in place, it is recommended that the teacher be guided through their own musical history to examine their prior experiences and how this may colour their understanding of their students (Kagan, 1992).

Each participant was asked to identify those aspects of their personal history and experiences that they draw upon for their work to establish the participants' awareness of their existing knowledge, experience and practice, their attitudes and feelings towards their own practice, and the influences on that practice. The participant was given the opportunity to talk freely about their current thoughts and feelings around using music in their work.

- **The second and third interviews; reflections on the on-going collaboration experience**

The second interview was conducted half way through the study, and was designed to identify and track any perceived changes and developments in an educator's music teaching practice, her thinking about music as a learning area within the early childhood curriculum, her perceptions of her confidence and skills, what she had noticed about the children, how she was feeling about her involvement in the collaboration, and any other experiences she felt were relevant to the collaboration.

The third interview was conducted at the end of the collaborations, and in addition to areas of inquiry listed above, the participant was asked to reflect on any issues that she felt had impacted on her music teaching practice, and to assess the role of the collaboration as a means of music PD. A strong focus of these interviews was identifying how the participant felt about her own practice, how she perceived any development in her own music skills and confidence, with the intent of understanding the reasoning behind her answers. She was also asked to give her recommendations for an ideal collaboration design based on her

experience, for example, what she would change in hindsight. Both interviews asked the participant to reflect on her own self-beliefs around musicality, and if she was aware of any changes in those self-beliefs.

- **The final (fourth) interview: the collaboration in hindsight and on-going practice**

The fourth interview was conducted six months after the collaborations had finished. The researcher did not see the participants in the intervening period. The last interview sought to gain the participants' perspectives of how their experiences of collaboration had impacted on their teaching practice since the collaborations had finished. The long-term place of music in the curriculum and the use of it in the daily life of the preschool were discussed. The participants were asked again to give recommendations, with the benefit of a longer period of hindsight.

Observations

Observation provides much richer information than most other research methods, when wanting to understand what goes on within a particular social situation (Giddens, 1994). The participants' work practices involving music on a daily basis were recorded using the techniques of participant observation as described by Casey (1992), such as being as non-intrusive as possible. The participant was asked to direct the researcher where to sit, for example. In observing the teacher while working on a regular basis, the researcher's aim was to gain familiarity with the context within which the educator was working, to observe how the teacher was working, to note any perceived changes to the participants' teaching practices and/or feelings of confidence in teaching music that occurred over the twelve- month period, and to triangulate the participant's perceptions with the evidence of her teaching in practice. Being able to identify individual children, colleagues and specific instances referred by the participant in discussions was particularly helpful to both the reseacher and the participant. In this way, the observations provided the live context for all colaborative communications between researcher and participant.

An implicit danger in observation is that when people know they are being observed, they may not behave as they normally would (Robertson, 1987). As Stake (1992) notes, 'most educational case data gathering involves at least a small invasion of personal privacy' (p.57). In the early days of observation, the participants themselves volunteered at different times that they felt that they should prepare a lesson in a paticular way in preparation for being observed; either to showcase things they wanted to show that the children had learned that they were proud of, or due to a feeling of being examined in some way. Continual reassurances that observations provided the context for the collaboration, rather than being an examination of their teaching, - the trust that built up over a long period and an increasing ease with being observed, helped to mitigate this effect. This was further strengthened by the comaraderie that developed as a result of the

researcher having first-hand knowledge of what each participant was dealing with in their individual case, and therefore being able to share and acknowledge the participant's individual experience.

The researcher went to the three preschools to observe each participant on a fortnightly basis, usually for an hour, over a twelve-month period, from July 2008 to July 2009. Occasionally this was not possible due to a participant being absent due to illness, or other preschool activities, such as a school excursion or sports day. The researcher asked the participant to suggest where it was best for her to sit, making every attempt to become a 'part of the furniture' by remaining completely quiet, taking no active role in the sessions observed, or communicating with the participant or the children in any way during the session. While the children showed some curiosity initially, they very quickly became oblivious to the researcher's presence.

Merriman (1998) identifies the observer as having five possible stances; complete participation, the participant as observer, the observer as participant, the complete observer, and the collaborative observer. Of these, the third one; observer as participant, best describes the researcher's role as observer in this study, where the the observer is an insider but does not participate in the activities being observed as part of the group, the observer's activities are known to the group, there is some level of participation in just being there but this is secondary to the role of information gatherer. In this study, the observing researcher did not play any part while the participant was taking the music session; only in the discussions after the sessions did the researcher play a role in the teaching practice of the participant. It was in these discussions that the collaborative process was most active; where the participant could describe her own experience of the session, ask for feedback and suggestions, and start to plan the following sessions.

Observations were always focused on a designated group music time, where the participant presented a planned music session with the children. The educator's interaction with the children during times of free play (that were not observed by the researcher) was discussed in observations, and these interactions often impacted on the way the following sessions were planned. How a researcher focuses her observations is determined by the central concern of the study (Merriman, 1998). In this case the central concern was how each participant perceived the development of her own skills and confidence as experienced through her teaching practice as the collaboration proceeded. The researcher was observing to fulfill two roles simultaneously; as a researcher and as a collaborator. As a researcher, the task was to observe the participant's teaching practice; to note changes and possible development in confidence over the period of the study, while as a collaborator, the task was to observe the participant's context, intentions and outcomes for the purpose of giving the teacher support, in the form of ideas, materials, direction, guidance and feedback, for her particular circumstances.

In these observations the researcher took free-hand notes to refer to in the discussions, and as a record of the participant's work. The notes included the activities used, the presentation, teaching style, pedagogical

content, the children's responses and input, and the researcher's responses. Additional notes were made in the discussions. After the visit these notes were typed up as part of the researcher's data collection. Any material in the notes that could be of use to the participant, such as a basic record of the session and any practical ideas, materials or supportive feedback, went into a separate document and was emailed to the participant on the same day or the next. Occasionally, relevant music activities were audio-taped during observations to make a record of any potential developments in the participants and the children's music skills, particularly singing, over the period of the study. Although these were available to the participants they did not show any interest in listening to them.

The act of observation itself impacts upon what is observed, and these impacts need to be taken into account when analysing the data that arises from observations (Merriman, 1998). The four ways that observations impact on the participants as put forward by Merriman all have relevance for this study:

- The participants who know they are being observed will tend to behave in ways that present themselves and their work in the most favourable manner.

Periodically, all the participants volunteered that they felt nervous about being observed, and wanted to show good results. Occasionally a participant would say they made a special effort for the observed sessions.

- The discussions after each observed session and the feed back that results from them will further affect the participants behaviour.

In discussions the participants were invited to reflect immediately on what they had just done, sharing their feelings about it. This put the participant in a potentially vulnerable position, and called on the researcher to be sensitive to this vulnerability; wording any feedback in an encouraging and supportive manner that highlighted strengths in the teacher's practice.

- The relationship that develops between the researcher and the participant as the collaboration proceeds will also affect the behaviour of the participants and the observations and analyses made by the researcher.

As the study progressed, it was noticeable that the nervousness felt by the participants while being observed tended to decrease, replaced with a more equal, collegial working relationship. The participants became comfortable with offering their own critique of their own work, as well as being able to acknowledge when they felt they had done particularly well.

- As the researcher gains familiarity with the participants and vice versa there will be subtle changes, and the researcher must identify these changes and analyse them as part of the data.

As the study progressed, and the observation notes were analysed, specific themes emerged which helped to define the focus of the observations. These themes are also identified and elaborated upon in the discussion chapters.

Collaborative discussions

Through the discussions with the participant after each observation, further data could be collected; the researcher jotted down skeletal notes, and occassionally, wrote down quotes verbatim, identifying the concerns, needs, and developments as described by the participants themselves and as perceived by the researcher. This regular, informal communication over a long period of field work allowed for a flexibility in responding to unexpected outcomes and developments, for both participant and researcher (Giddens, 1994). Discussions were conducted immediately after each observation, when the participant sat down with the researcher for 20 - 40 minutes duration to privately discuss the session and any related issues. These sessions tended to become longer as the collaborations progressed. The researcher usually asked the participant "How did you feel that went?" to invite her to reflect on the session and encourage her to express any immediate feelings associated with the session. The participant was encouraged to de-brief; to discuss her intentions and how she saw the session from her own perspective. Initially the focus in discussions was to acknowledge and validate the participant's practice and offer ideas on how to focus on specific learning and understandings in the current activities as a form of extension. Later, the participant was able to direct the discussions more by asking questions, making requests for ideas, resources, and materials, or discussing pedagogy. The researcher offered feedback, observations of the children's responses and participation and made suggestions for where to go next and how to develop the work already done. When the collaborative relationship was more established, the participant was sometimes asked to outline her didactic intention to clarify her awareness of the pedagogy underpinning her work, and to encourage that awareness in the future. When appropriate, the participant would be asked to reflect on the children's responses, or identify specific problems or breakthroughs with individual children.

It was considered important to check the congruence between how the participant described the way they worked, and their actions. Argyris and Schon (1974) have labelled what a person says and thinks about what they do as 'espoused theory' and what they are observed to do as 'theories-in-use'. The interviews, reflective journals and discussions gave information on the former, while the observations clarified the latter.

Questions at any point were based on the researcher's intuitive perceptions of how the participant was feeling. For example, if the participant was clearly feeling confident after the session, the questions could be more searching and robust, but if the participant was feeling unsatisfied or self-critical, the researcher may have chosen not to ask any direct questions, instead giving the participant the room to express their

dissatisfactions, and commiserate, share similar experiences, and offer an antidote, ensuring the participant was left feeling reassured and philosophical.

As part of the flow of conversation, and in response to direct requests, the researcher responded with feedback in different forms; paraphrasing to clarify the participant's reflections, offering constructive reassurance and practical suggestions to improve or extend a particular activity, providing ideas for continuing and developing the children's learning, and noting down specific songs and materials that the participant might need in the future.

During the discussions, the participants often asked for ideas, suggestions, and materials in preparation for special events, such as Parents Day or Christmas, as well as background pedagogy and learning theory. Each participant was provided with blank cassette tapes, so the researcher could record songs or chants requested by the participant, on the spot. This allowed the participant to use this 'live' resource in the following days, without having to wait until the next observation.

The observation notes were transcribed for later analysis after each visit. Feedback, ideas and support offered to the participant were recorded by the researcher and emailed to the participant after each visit. In this way the discussions between the researcher and the participant were recorded as another source of data, linking the interviews, observations and reflective journal.

Collaboration and the participant researcher

Collaboration between the researcher and the participants took different forms, guided by the specific needs of the participants. All participants were given taped songs, reading materials, suggestions on activities, background theory and information, suggestions for planning and regular opportunities to discuss their work freely with the researcher. The participants were also invited to contact the researcher by phone or email between the observations and discussions, although this rarely happened. Occasionally, in one case, a participant was offered specific help, in the form of one-to-one singing coaching; to improve pitching, and to enable her to sing in the correct range for children. This was done free of charge as part of the collaboration.

Many educators apply a professional, reflective and critical approach to their practice, and the three participants in this study were no exception. The researcher wanted to honour this by ensuring the research collaboration acted as a support based on the participants' needs rather than an imposition based on the researcher's assumptions. The fluid nature of the collaboration, based on the educator's individual needs directing the collaboration, underlines the subtle difference between the 'inquiring teacher' model used in this study, as outlined by Johnston (1994), and the more systematic approach inherent in action research. Only by describing the collaboration, and the evident changes both within the participants and to their

practice can the most pertinent, relevant and useful aspects of collaboration be isolated, with the express purpose of then applying these aspects to the PD and/or training of educators in general, to improve the music education in our preschools.

The collaboration was designed to be as flexible as possible, with the researcher providing any practical assistance that was deemed relevant to supporting the participants. The form this support took differed with each participant; while one needed extra training to learn to sing in tune with confidence, another needed lesson planning support, and another needed help with managing music resources. In response to the participants' specific areas of interest and to further support the participants' learning and development, the researcher also provided relevant notes taken from research, resources or theoretical texts. Over the period of the study, (four terms) the - researcher was available to the participants as a general music consultant, via email, telephone and through the collaborative discussions. The researcher also offered to accompany the participant teachers to any music in-services they chose to attend.

Reflective Journals

Teachers use narrative to share and explore their practice naturally as a way of 'talking shop' with other teachers, and these narratives can be a way to de-brief, make meaning of current and past experiences, and identify new directions and intentions for the future (Johnston, 1994). Writing down informal reflections can be, as Kolb (1984] suggests 'potential source of powerful data' (p. 412). Using the data collected directly from the participants' words as recorded in reflective journals and individual interviews allows the individual voices of the participants to emerge (McGillen, 2000). After the first observation, each participant was given a reflective journal, which included notes to support and encourage the participants, outlining various ways to commit their thoughts, feelings and responses to paper in the journal. The researcher explained that the journal was to jot down any thoughts, feelings, ideas, responses - in short, anything arising from their own music work and the collaboration itself. The journals were collected three times at four monthly periods during the study, and photocopied for data collection and analysis.

While one of the participants was familiar with how to utilise a reflective journal, there was a general ambivalence to this form of reflection. The researcher included some notes to support and encourage the participants, outlining various ways to commit thoughts, feelings and responses to paper in the journal.

The participants were encouraged to use informal, narrative forms to describe what they felt and noticed about the processes in the study, and this was used in two cases, while in the third case, journal entries consisted mostly of outlines of session plans, pasted in with very little to no comment. Reflective journals have been found to be beneficial in other research involving student teachers (Baker, 2007), but the educators

in this study found it hard to find the time to make notes in their journals due to the demands of collaboration in addition to their usual workload.

The Analysis Method: IPA

At the beginning of this chapter, this study was described as a phenomenological, longitudinal, multiple case study. The data are analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The use of IPA, with its concern with the mental processes of participants, was especially appropriate for this reason. Smith and Osborn (2008) assert; 'IPA is a suitable approach when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal and social world' (p. 55). Although IPA is currently most commonly associated with the fields of health and psychology, its preoccupation with the participant's lived experience, its recognition of the centrality of mentation, (mental activity), its inclusion of the researcher's role in making sense of the participant's experience, and its use of in depth qualitative analysis makes IPA an ideal tool for this study (Smith, 2004). Intrinsic to IPA is the acknowledgment of both researcher and participant, creating what Smith calls a 'double hermeneutic', where 'the participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world (2004, p. 40).

When analysing the data, the presence of the researcher as the recorder and analyst of the data must be made transparent, alerting the reader where possible, to any underlying bias on the researcher's part that may affect the analysis of the data. The researcher must be aware of and acknowledge her own existing beliefs as a 'biographical presence' (Smith, 2004, p. 45).

Smith has defined IPA as being 'idiographic and inductive' (2004, p. 41). IPA confers upon the participants the status of being experts in knowing about and describing their own experience (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). To understand an individual's personal experience, in their own terms, the individual can be understood as a unit of analysis (Shinebourne & Smith, 2009). When this is placed alongside another individual's experience, as in this multiple case study, the detailed examination through analysis makes it strongly idiographic. The focus on the lived experience of each participant allowed for a 'depth, richness and texture' in the participant's accounts that made an in-depth understanding of each participant's experience possible (Shinebourne & Smith, 2009, p. 153). Smith describes the idiographic nature of IPA as a compatible link to the original emphasis of Husserl's phenomenology; that of identifying an individual's psychological knowledge.

IPA is concerned with exploring the relationship between what people think, say and do (Eatough & Smith, 2006). When placed in a new experience, this relationship is part of an unfolding and unpredictable process. This research had to be inductive in that it needed to be constructed on a broad question about teachers'

perceptions of their experience of a model of PD which they had not experienced before. Flexible techniques were required in allowing the participants to contribute to determining how the data werewere gathered and in allowing the researcher to keep an open mind as to the themes that might emerge from the data. This approach was validated in that issues emerged through the semi-structured interviews and discussions that had not been anticipated by the researcher when originally designing the research. In some cases, a participant became aware of an issue only after the researcher shared with them how it was identified independently by another participant. In this way, the idiographic and inductive characteristics of IPA can be seen to work together.

Smith et al, (1999) advises analysing one case thoroughly at a time, by reading a transcript a number of times to become familiar with it, noting any items that are repeated, and of interest and significance. Emergent themes are identified with key words, and the transcript read again to ensure the themes are represented in the transcript rather than being a result of the researcher's bias. As each case is analysed in this way, master themes can be identified and checked. These themes become the underlying structure of a narrative that gives a clear account of the unique experience of each participant and the shared experiences common to all participants, and at all times 'clearly distinguishes between what the respondent said and the analyst's interpretation' (Smith, 1999, p. 227).

Validity and reliability

Validity in research must be present at all levels of a study; the initial identification of a problem, the choice of research tools, the choice of methodologies, the tools of analysis, the reasoning behind the findings. Throughout the study, the information and discussion must be applicable to the research question and clear and transparent to the reader. The reader who is informed by their own background, experience and situation must be able to vicariously relate the content of the study to their own experience in a meaningful way. In the most general sense, Avis (2003) defines good research as ' that which is conducted appropriately, taking correct steps to ensure its validity, and that collects data that is fit for purpose' (p. 384). In designing research it is essential to establish the validity and reliability of the study (Crawford, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

This study used the qualitative method of research because it sought to understand the inner, subjective experience of teachers as learners through a particular model of PD. While it may seem an obvious assumption to suggest that the quantitative, empirical studies would produce the 'hard facts' and therefore the most generalisable data, this approach has been seen to fail in the past because the quantitative findings did not transfer easily into the real life complexities of the classroom (Avis, 2003). As Bresler and Stake (1992) point out, the researcher 'seeks to diminish subjectivity that interferes with comprehension and to exploit subjectivity for deeper understanding' (p. 86). As complete objectivity is unattainable, the researcher

used the on-going (IPA) analysis to continually check for misconceptions in her own understanding and to check for any anomalies in the participants' reflections in relation to her demonstrated practice.

Theorists of methodology have different suggestions of how to meet validity requirements. Bresler and Stake (1992) identify four criteria for establishing validity; it must be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable (1992). Alternatively, validity can be understood to satisfy the following criteria; sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance (Yardley, 2008). Wiersma and Jurs (2009) define reliability as 'concerned with replicability of both procedures and findings. Validity refers to the interpretation and generalizability of results' (p.296). Validity is further defined as being internal, in that data collected in a natural setting over a long period can be checked for possible observer effects; and external; where phenomena is typical enough that the findings generated by the data can be considered generalisable (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Understanding validity in this way, it is clear that a phenomenological study must be able to present a credible account of phenomena through authentic, detailed and accurate descriptions, illustrated with first person data directly from the participants. *In this study, the participants' experiences were expressed in their own words throughout the collaborations, and included their reflections six months later.* By clarifying a personal understanding, the researcher offers the reader a vicarious experience that is fully substantiated, both generally and specifically, by the data collected. The research must be transferable in that readers can relate their own experiences and situation to the content of the study. Transferability is gained from illuminating the context and the experienced phenomena in such a way that is recognisable to others in a similar situation. This was fulfilled through the recording of interviews, the notes taken of the fortnightly discussions, the observations by the researcher of the participants' practice observed in situ, and through extensive descriptions of the content of music sessions as outlined in the Appendices.

Dependability is achieved through a clear account of all aspects of data collection; interviews, observations, descriptions, settings, general context, feelings, experiences, intuitions, thought processes and reasonings to clarify perspectives of participants and the researcher, and lead the reader to a clear understanding of how the findings emerge from the analysis of the collected data. This was achieved through the recordings of interviews that were transcribed by the researcher, which were then checked by the participants. The case studies outline the individual experiences of each participant through their own words.

Confirmability, or accuracy, cannot be relied upon in qualitative research without repeated observations of the same phenomena, and with triangulation. This was achieved through fortnightly, and sometimes weekly, observations of the participants as they worked with the children. Inevitably, the research is influenced by the way the question is identified, the inherent bias in the researcher's observations and interpretations, and by the inclusion of the researcher's own perceptions. Rather than trying to deny the existence of this influence,

the researcher sought to give the participant's perceptions precedence, allowing the participants to influence the data actively and strongly, as recommended by Yardley (2008), through the use of semi-structured interviews, recording what the participants say in the discussions, inviting them to complete a reflective journal, and by asking them to read through some of the data collected and check its veracity for themselves. Both differences and congruity of perception are reported and discussed. The background and method explaining how the researcher arrives at assertions are made transparent to the reader through the detailed case studies.

- **A longitudinal perspective**

Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007) suggest that 'prolonged engagement' (p. 239) that allows time for the building of trust, gaining a deeper understanding of the culture and noticing anomalies that might lead to misinformation is one way of ruling out rival interpretations of data and strengthening validity in a study. This study was longitudinal; the fieldwork was conducted fortnightly, and sometimes weekly when requested, for a full twelve-month period, with a follow-up interviews conducted with *each participant* six months after the fieldwork. Yin (2003) states that 'the ability to trace changes over time is a major strength of case studies' (p. 123) and this was further augmented by making the study longitudinal as recommended in the literature (de Vries, 2006; Hooks et al., 2006), in this study – over an eighteen-month period. Casey (1992) identifies that:

> The advantages associated with longitudinal studies are that the subjects may come to be known in greater depth, the researcher may gain a more accurate assessment of the subjects' stability on the variables of interest, and trends may be identified (p.116).

The early childhood profession draws upon research findings made available through organisiations such as Early Childhood Australia, for example, to support a continuing growth of knowledge and understanding of quality provision, and a series of reviews of research have all recommended the need for longitudinal research (Fleer, 2002). The identifying of trends that Casey refers to in the above quote was a particularly important aspect of this study, as it was possible to chart changes in the attitudes, self-perceptions, confidence and teaching practices of the participant educators throughout the collaborations and beyond.

To strengthen validity in qualitative research, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) suggest that prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation are useful strategies; all three are part of the design of this research. The field-work involving persistent observation continued for a twelve-month period, was triangulated with the researcher's reflections, and again with the reflections of both the participants and the researcher through a final interview six months after the completion of the collaborations.

This chapter has explained the methodological tools used to conduct the study and examined their appropriateness by connecting them to the aims and contexts of the study. The following chapter will describe the context in which this study took place.

Chapter 4
The context of the study

This chapter will give an overview of the overall context within which this study is positioned by describing how childcare is provided in Australia, then in NSW, and in rural and regional areas in particular. Given the multiplicity of childcare arrangements and channels through which childcare is evaluated and reported is no simple task – if it seems confusing that is because it is. Relevant information on the provision of childcare in Australia and NSW in particular, and the NSW childcare workforce is followed by a description of prevailing pedagogy and current practice paradigms, with a close look at the directives available to educators concerning music in particular. Sociocultural-historical realities relevant to music that influence early childhood educators complete the overview.

Childcare in Australia

Childcare provision in Australia is a confusing jumble with each state overseeing different types of provision, policy, and regulatory regimes (Fleer, 2010; Suthers, 2008). In New South Wales, the state where this study was conducted, early childhood education is provided mostly through either commercial or not-for-profit community groups running two types of centres; early learning centres or preschools, and long day-care centres. Preschools are traditionally perceived to have a stronger focus on education, historically emerging from the late 19th century kindergarten movement with a focus on learning and preparation for school, and usually cater for three year olds and older. Day-care centres, historically linked to charity and welfare groups for the under-privileged, today cater for children from birth, and are perceived as having more of a caring role with less emphasis on education, often with fewer qualified staff. In the researcher's experience, this differentiation is not always a reliable assumption as so much depends on the overall direction and degree of motivation of the director and staff in a particular centre. Australia continues to lag behind New Zealand and other nations in respect to this division between care and education, with early childhood education being overseen, in NSW for example, by the Department of Community Services (DOCS) until very recently, when it has been transferred to the Department of Education and Communities, in March 2011. For at least the past decade, professionals across the early childhood sector have identified this as a major issue of concern as they have felt the use of the words 'child care' do not accurately reflect the professional nature of the work and the outcomes for children that educators continually work towards (Fleer, 2002). Fleer notes that this dualism, created by the diversity in administrative structures has 'permeated the whole early childhood profession and has created not only a chasm between sectors, but has entrenched the opposing views of high and low status within early childhood discourse in Australia' (Fleer, 2002, p. 24).

This divide impacts on parental expectations and how the centres are accessed. For example, a common practice is for a parent to place their child at a day-care centre until their child is three years of age, and then enrol the child in a preschool for the year prior to entering primary school. After more than a decade of record prosperity and high employment rates, Australia has seen a mushrooming of child care services, especially in the private for-profit sector, but a lack of strategic planning means that there has not necessarily been a corresponding growth in quality. In addition, preschool participation rates in NSW are the lowest in the country (Elliot, 2006). However, in recent years, the introduction of a National Quality Assurance (NQA) accreditation scheme, and most recently a curriculum directive, the Early Years Learning Framework (Australian Government, 2009b) has led to a greater emphasis on the need for higher levels of training for early childhood educators, and more consistent levels of care across the early childhood sector.

There is an on-going debate about the merits of including early childhood education (ECE) in the education system along with the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This is not significant for this study except to note that the current situation impacts directly on the availability of professional development (PD) to professionals in the early education sector. Looking at the experience of other countries suggests that including ECE in the general education system may lead to a better resourcing of the sector. UNESCO's 2007 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* looks at the merits and problems of including early childhood in overall education, as experienced by different countries.

> Selecting education as the lead ministry tends to increase attention to children's learning as well as to the transition to primary school. As in the case of Sweden, once early education becomes part of the school system, it is more likely to be seen as a public good – which can lead to increased resources and greater access. Greater involvement of the education sector in the early childhood years carries risks, however. As it is not usually compulsory, ECCE [early childhood care and education] often struggles for attention and resources within the education bureaucracy. Another concern, based on recent experiences in Belgium, France and Sweden, is that ECCE will be under pressure from primary education to become more formal and school-like (UNESCO, 2007, p. 174).

The NQA accreditation scheme is of significance here because it is the tool by which the quality of education offered in centres is to be measured. It is the only initiative that focuses directly on educators by making educational programs and practices its first area of assessment. Before November 2010, voluntary assessments were done to refine the evaluation process, which is to be implemented in January 2012. While this is still to come, it is relevant to the context of this study in that all preschools have been preparing for this assessment for the past few years.

Under the NQA, services will be assessed against seven quality areas, within which sit a number of elements. The seven quality areas are:

- educational program and practice

- children's health and safety

- physical environment

- staffing arrangements, including staff-to-child ratios and qualifications

- relationships with children

- collaborative partnerships with families and communities

- leadership and service management. (Australian Government, 2010, p. 89)

In 2004, the previous Federal Government had set up the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children to collect data to give a broad statistical picture of the welfare of young children in Australia, including attendance and access to childcare in its different forms. It is hoped that these two instruments will inform future understandings for researchers and policy makers. In the release of the first report in 2009, it was stated:

> It is understood that life success, health and emotional wellbeing have their roots in early childhood. Research shows that investing resources to support children in their early years of life brings long-term benefits to them and to the whole community (Australian Government, 2009a, p. 1)

The AEDI aims to assess the overall wellbeing of young children in Australia, and provides the first comprehensive picture of how Australian children aged 0-5 years are faring across five domains; physical health and well being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school based), and communication skills and general knowledge. The measures were taken as the children entered school, when they were about 5 years and 7 months old. Starting from 2004, 97.5% of children aged between zero and five years were tested.

The change of government at the federal level in 2007 heralded some important reforms to the early childhood sector. In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the implementation of the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE) (Australian Government, 2010), supported by a fund of $970 million going to the states and territories over 5 years. This is a significant commitment to achieving universal access to childcare- (Australian Government, 2010). This is to be delivered 'in a form that meets the needs of parents' and 'at a cost that does not present a barrier to participation' (DEST, 2008). The latest NPA ECE report for NSW (2010) showed that some of the benchmarks for children's attendance, and planned increases in the number of fully qualified teachers were over-optimistic and have been slightly revised.

Despite repeated calls for a commitment federally to a nationally coordinated childcare system, the Federal Government instead opted to introduce a national curriculum; the EYLF, endorsed by the COAG; launched in 2009. This document uses the term 'early childhood settings' to mean "long day care, occasional care, family day care, multi-purpose Aboriginal Children's Services, preschools and kindergartens, play groups, creches, early intervention settings and similar services" although in reality, preschools and kindergartens operate in a different sphere to other childcare providers. For example, the EYLF website sends any queries relating to early childhood to the Children's Services Centre (CSC) site, which provides services for anyone except preschools and kindergartens. The CSC is the main provider of professional learning for early childhood professionals throughout NSW. In the current training calendar (Feb-July 2010) there is one in-service available - given in the state capital, Sydney - with no music in-servicing available elsewhere in the state. This does not cover private entities offering in-servicing which is both instructional and promotional as the content invariably is heavily informed by the providers of resource materials, as described in Chapter 1.

Although the EYLF was not fully implemented at the time of this study's fieldwork, there had been introductory work done so that all the preschools involved in the study were well aware of its content. The only professional development offered to support the implementation of the EYLF was available to 'early childhood consultants to ensure that they can provide leadership in areas such as the implementation of the EYLF (Australian Government, 2010, p 36). As yet, there have been no initiatives that address the PD needs of the existing workforce. A welcome step was the release of the EYLF Educator's Guide in 2010, which gives a couple of real life examples of how a music activity might be conducted, but featured a music specialist, which is a luxury many preschools do not have.

Childcare in NSW

A pithy summary on ECE in the latest evaluation of the NP ECE gives a current picture of the larger context within which this research is positioned;

> Early childhood education in Australia is undergoing a major transformation as a result of the 2008 agreement through COAG to ensure 'all children in the year before formal schooling will have access to high quality early childhood education programs delivered by degree-qualified early childhood teachers, for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks of the year, in public, private and community-based preschools and child care.' Until the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education came into effect, Australia's investment in ECE has been 'abysmally low,' 30th out of 32 countries on the OECD ranked expenditure on ECE as a percentage of GDP in 2005 (Australian Government, 2010, p.85).

The field work for this study took place over twelve months, from September 2008 (the start of Term 3) to September 2009, in the Southern Highlands, a rural area situated between Sydney and Canberra, in the state of New South Wales. The NSW Government Department of Family and Community Services (DOCS) was, at that time, responsible for the regulation and funding for ECE. As already mentioned, this responsibility has recently been transferred to the Department of Education and Communities. As in the rest of the country, a wide variety of services makes up the provision of ECE in NSW; with over 4,000 children in government preschools, over 19,000 children in long day care services and the majority; over 47,000 children in community preschools, at an average cost of around $28 per day (Australian Government, 2010). Two of the preschools in this study were community preschools, while the third was privately run. Children attended a centre for an average of two days per week.

- **The challenges for ECE in rural settings**

The three preschools taking part in this study represent a cross section of the types of early education available in NSW; those that are community based and funded, and those that are privately funded with substantially higher fees. The Southern Highlands could not, by Australian standards, be considered remote, as it is about 2 – 3 hours drive to Sydney or Canberra, although a reliance on public transport doubles this time frame. Limited job opportunities and the general lure of the big cities means that, as a regional area, it faces many of the limitations of more remote areas, especially when it comes to the size of the pool of qualified staff available, and access to professional development (PD). Limitations on staffing and PD mean difficulties for parents wanting to access quality ECE, as acknowledged in the latest evaluation of the NP ECE; 'provision in regional and remote communities, where factors such as small numbers, high costs and limited or no qualified staff make sustainability very difficult (Australian Government, 2010, p. 94). During the fieldwork period there was no music PD available in the area.

Pedagogy and practice in current ECE

Policy, pedagogy and practice in Australia have been heavily influenced by research around the implementation of programs in the UK and the US. For many established and mature teachers in the field the dominant theoretical perspective in ECE in Australia has until recently been dominated by the developmentally appropriate practices of Piaget and others (Anning et al. 2004). However, in recent years the ideas of Reggio Emilia (Anning et al. 2004) and the socio-cultural perspective (more recently referred to as the sociocultural-historical perspective) have taken hold in teacher-trainee institutions, exerting a strong influence, particularly on recently qualified practitioners (Fleer, 2010). The EYLF emphasizes child-centred teaching and learning, and recognizes the value of learning through play. It is firmly grounded in sociocultural-historical perspectives with a continuing reference to developmentally appropriate practice (DAP).

The current pressure for ECE to focus on developing literacy and numeracy has seen some early childhood centres setting aside specific times to utilize formal kits for these learning areas, potentially undermining early childhood educator beliefs in their own professionalism. For example, educators are reporting that the time they value focusing on the children is being eroded by requirements to complete each child's work portfolio (Anning et al. 2004, Casbergue et al. 2008). In an effort to quantify learning outcomes in ECE, the AEDI states that 89.9% of children are getting an educative experience in a preschool program outside the home (Australian Government, 2009a).

Music guidelines in the EYLF

At the time that this research was being done, the research participants were being informed of the content of the EYLF as their main curriculum and guide The full extent of directives available to them are given here. The references to music in the EYLF are generally linked to the arts as a group and expressed as a series of outcomes:

> Children have a strong sense of well-being; when children - respond through movement to traditional and contemporary music, dance and storytelling (Outcome 3, p. 32).

> They are social beings who are intrinsically motivated to exchange ideas, thoughts, questions and feelings, and to use a range of tools and media, including music, dance and drama, to express themselves, connect with others and extend their learning (Outcome 4, p. 38).

Music is also seen as a form of literacy that helps children become effective communicators; using "language and representations from play, music and art to share and project meaning', and children and educators together 'sing and chant rhymes, jingles and songs'. Children are to:

> 'use the creative arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, drama, dance, movement, music and storytelling to express ideas and make meaning' and educators need to 'provide a range of resources that enable children to express meaning using visual arts, dance, drama and music' (Outcome 5, p. 41-2).

The role of music in developing an awareness of symbols and patterns is also included in Outcome 5; described as helping children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work; specifically to 'listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories and rhyme' and the educator is directed to engage children in discussions about symbol systems, for example, letters, numbers, time, money and

musical notation (p. 42). This is a very general directive giving little practical guidance to the educator, an on-going problem identified by Suthers (2008) in her observations of previous framework documents.

Current provision of professional development in NSW

Professional development (PD) for the preschool sector in the Southern Highlands area of NSW offers limited one-off in-services or workshops, usually through entities such as the Children's Services of the Wingecarribee Council, Illawarra Children's Services (where funding has recently been substantially reduced), and by individual providers marketing products. Other providers in the nearest cities (Sydney and Canberra) are Early Childhood Australia, The Lady Gowrie Foundation, the Early Childhood Training and Resource Centre and private providers. Some of these entities are supported in part by government funding, but according to directors of preschools speaking informally to the researcher, the PD funding to preschools is too meagre to support access to any more than a few in-services each year. Given the multitude of learning areas, this funding, by necessity, has to be spread very thinly, or focused on just a few learning areas. Music is only one learning area competing with many others. Opportunities for music PD in particular are very limited. In an informal survey of all the different professional development providers in NSW, the author found a total of five music in-services available to early childhood educators across the state (for both rural and urban areas) of NSW in 2008, with most of these available only in the capital city. Even if there were three times this many, this could not meet the need of educators.

There is no available information on any attempt by the NSW government to standardize professional development (PD) in the early childhood sector. Given that the standard of teaching is understood to be the prime determinant of quality in ECE it is hard to understand why the 2010 Annual Progress Report of the NP ECE makes no mention of the importance of, need for, or planned future provision for PD. In recent years, however, there has been an attempt to co-ordinate the provision of early childhood in the neighbouring state of Victoria. In 2009, the Victorian Government released the Inquiry into Effective Strategies for Teacher Professional Learning, which noted:

> The main concern that arose during the inquiry about the new requirements for teacher professional learning is that they address only the quantity of professional learning that is undertaken, not its quality. Unlike pre-service teachers, registered teachers are not currently required to access their professional learning from accredited sources. Instead, they may choose from among a wide range of professional learning providers (Harrison et al., 2009. p. 26).

The little discussion there is around PD in early childhood harks back to other levels of education, but the varied modes of delivery of ECE makes this problematic. Harrison et al. (2009) note that:

The Committee found that the regulatory framework for developing professional expertise in the early childhood workforce is more complex than for the school teaching profession, due the wide variety of services that operate in the sector (p. 131).

Even though it was recommended that incremental increases in salary should be tied to qualifications and on-going PD, the diverse modes of provision of PD compound the difficulty of regulating this; it was easier to encourage those working in the sector with no (or some) qualifications be supported to up-grade their qualifications through taking a higher degree course. However, as Harrison et. al., (2009) note;

Policies for professional learning for child care professionals should not focus on qualifications alone. Like other professionals, early childhood carers will benefit from participation in a range of professional learning activities, including many that do not lead to a formal credential. … the child care workforce would benefit from the introduction of such expectations, to recognise and support their continuing development, irrespective of their level of qualification (p. 136).

This appears to be addressing the potential value of more extensive PD opportunities. One submission to the Inquiry had suggested that a culture of professional learning needed to be established in ECE, and this could be provided by 'day-to-day professional learning activities such as action learning, mentoring and professional reading groups' (p. 145). This suggestion was met with the understanding from the inquiry that PD undertaken should be recognized and allocated time and resources. This reasoning is so evidently sound that it is hard to understand why it is so rarely mentioned in documents concerned with improving ECE anywhere in the country. Victoria, alone among the states and territories, has introduced a mentoring program involving an experienced teacher working with a new graduate for the first two years of the primary teacher graduate's professional experience. This program has met with acclaim both within Australia and internationally and has been reported to be overwhelmingly successful both in encouraging new teachers and reinvigorating their mentors. This is sorely needed in the early childhood sector.

The NSW Institute of Teachers has recently implemented a registration system for the accreditation for professional development providers, and teachers in the primary and secondary education sectors must complete one hundred hours of professional learning every five years (Harrison et al., 2009). However, not being part of the education system, this does not apply to the ECE sector. This might explain why there is research into the PD for primary and secondary teachers but so little into PD for early childhood educators; as previously discussed in Chapter 2.

Musicality and the socio-cultural context

It is outside the scope of this research to discuss in any detail the extensive but fascinating subject of the influences of prevailing music cultures on individual perceptions of personal musicality. However, in understanding the context in which the participants in this study are living and working, it is perhaps reasonable to speculate a little on the role these influences might have on the participants' self-beliefs, in relation to musicality, as members of the general public. It is self-evident that in the daily life of a person living in a modern western society, the majority of music is heard coming from recorded sources, performed by professional musicians. If the self-beliefs of the participants in this study are any guide, a person's claim to being 'musical' is generally tied to being a musician, and such a claim is assumed to be inherently based on one's proficiency as a performer; what Bennett (2007) describes as 'the commonplace definitions of a musician as "someone who performs"' (p. 185).

It is within this socio-cultural context that the participants in this study have formulated self-beliefs of their own musicality. These beliefs are pervasive, and often unquestioned, and in a broad sense can be understood to play a very influential role on an early childhood educator's personal and professional sense of self, and in particular, on their beliefs around their own musicality (Burnard, 2010), and their ability to be musically active with the children in their care. It also impacts heavily on levels of inhibition when being observed by others when engaged in musical behaviours. It is possible to discern, from the participants' responses in this study, how the emphasis on performance (and the exposure to judgment that this implies) that saturates almost all aspects of music in their socio-cultural context, plays a very significant role in their perceptions of their own musicality.

It is this self-belief that determines how early childhood teachers define themselves professionally in terms of how able they are to provide meaningful musical experiences for the children in their care. Any collaboration involving music must address this reality, even when the participants themselves may have not identified, and may be unaware of even holding such a self-belief. Until it is called into question, it is likely to remain a significant stumbling block, undermining all endeavours to develop a more positive attitude to music. This socio-cultural influence on early childhood educators' teaching practice and their willingness to engage in music behaviours will be clearly evident in the case studies that constitute the next three chapters.

The next three chapters present the case studies of the three participants.

Preface to the Case Studies: Chapters 5, 6 & 7.

The three case studies that make up these chapters describe the individual experiences of the three participants of a collaboration model of PD, in their own words. Each chapter is organised around one participant and the main challenges she experienced, which identify the main themes emerging from the analysis of the data.,. In the life of the collaboration, the challenges faced by the participants emerged in an interwoven fashion, and were sometimes only understood in hindsight, either through the participants' reflections or after repeated analysis of the data by the researcher. For the purpose of clarifying a large amount of data, each theme is systematically identified and discussed in a chronological fashion to facilitate the understanding of the reader.

- **Please note:**

The most important outcome of any professional development is not just the teacher's increase in skills and confidence, but also the consequent improved education and life experience for the children with whom they work. It is important to note that this phenomenological study focuses primarily on the experience of the individual teaching participants and their learning journey. It may be tempting for the reader to look for an equally clear account of the children's learning in response to each participant's changing practice, and while it is of equal importance that the children also develop music skills and confidence, this was not the primary focus of this study. The researcher regrets that the children's experience of the collaborations could not be described in more detail due to the parameters of the research question and restraints of space, and relies on the various remarks made by the participants to clearly identify some of the outcomes for the children involved.

Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the identities of the participants and colleagues, and their verbatim quotations appear indented in the text. Interviews were conducted throughout the collaboration;

Interview 1: Conducted before observations began.

Interview 2: Conducted 4 –5 months later, during the collaboration

Interview 3: Conducted 12 months after the first interview, and after the observations had ceased.

Interview 4: Conducted 18 months after the first interview, and 6 months after the collaborations had ceased.

Chapter 5
Case Study 1: Participant 'D'

D is the director of a small community funded preschool situated in a small rural village. The preschool is the only one in the area, the next nearest being 25 kilometres away. The preschool is funded through the Department of Community Services (NSW State Government) with some additional funding for special needs children from the Federal Government. Other funding comes from parent fees and from the local community via fund raising. D gained her Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst and has worked as a preschool teacher for over fourteen years at different preschools. She has been the director at the preschool since 2003. D is in her early forties, married with three children.

Disclosure of past association

D and her son both took piano tuition with the researcher for a couple of years. D stopped lessons two years prior to being involved in collaboration. During this time, the researcher was working on a music resource for early childhood teachers (*Music Magic*, 2007). In 2006, as the book was in its final editing stage, D's co-teacher volunteered to trial the book, used by a co-teacher over a period of a few months. D was not involved directly in the trial but it could be reasonably assumed that her co-teacher would have discussed it with D. When it was published, the researcher made a gift of the book to the school in thanks for their involvement. About six months before the study began, D's preschool hosted a free teacher's music in-service organised by a local children's services provider and presented by the researcher. As the study was conducted in the rural area, in a community where the researcher has lived and worked for over a decade, such associations were difficult to avoid.

Past music experiences

In understanding how a teacher feels about music it is important to clarify past experiences (Russell-Bowie, 2010). D initially described her own family as 'not musical' but remembered her father having played a Tijuana Brass record that the whole family enjoyed listening to. D had piano tuition for a couple of years as a child, and again as an adult. In her education, D did 'a bit of music' in primary and secondary school, with one experience being indelibly printed on her memory.

> A bit traumatic…we had to sing to this teacher – we were all lined up and there were two boys in front of me and my girlfriend, and we were all being marked out of 10 and the teacher marked these boys with a T/D. Turns out that meant 'tone deaf' – it was just horrific. That was it – I never made a sound after that (Int.1).

Of the three participants in this study, D was the only one to have had long episodes of formal musical training, and could read music fluently, yet this had not resulted in musical confidence.

> I learned to play the piano, [in childhood] but it was a real slog and not a cool thing to do at all, but I'm glad I did it because I can go back to that, but I still don't have a lot of confidence – like I don't play the piano for the kids at preschool and I know I should (Int.1).

Her experience with music teachers had contributed to a feeling of inadequacy.

> I'm thinking about some of the music teachers I've known in my life … how scary they were, and how kind of snooty they were (Int.3).

With her own children she felt she could have focused more on music as they were growing up.

> I wasn't overly aware of music … we did always have little percussion instruments at home and we sang a lot … I don't know that I was doing it with any kind of plan, but there was always music, always kids' music happening.

However, she was unsatisfied with the lack of music in their education, and wanted more.

> I wish all three of them had more confidence … I wish they had had more support for learning music at preschool. I would have liked music to have been a bigger focus through primary school, and it needs to continue beyond. It's got to be valued through primary school, and high school and not be one of those options – it should be a core subject.

D remembered a formative experience in her education that has clearly influenced her understanding of the value of music as an educator. It was difficult for her to find the words to adequately express the value of this experience and yet it was clearly still a vivid memory. This is perhaps one of the difficulties of defining the importance of the arts in education in general (underlined text shows participant's emphasis).

> I think it's such a beautiful thing [hearing the piano played live] – I mean I can remember teachers at school playing for us, and I <u>still</u> have such <u>fond</u> memories of that and there was such a – the music is <u>different</u> when it's live to when it's on a CD or it's just us singing it – there's just something – they [children] just love it, and it's hard to know what the value is, but there's something – I don't know – it's really stirring when they can have that (Int.2).

D wanted to take part in the study to equip herself with the skills and confidence to make music more available to children.

> I want to know more. If I felt more confident I would do more music…if I knew more songs and games (Int.1).

As a piano student with the researcher, D had clearly enjoyed playing but this came with a high level of anxiety related to 'getting things right'; she tended to be a harsh critic of her own efforts. She had identified an inner voice that ran a constant negative commentary as she was playing - a learned habit that impeded her learning and enjoyment. She found it difficult to 'switch off' the negative voice, but with encouragement became more accepting of her own efforts, to the point where she voluntarily chose to perform in a private student's piano concert, playing favourite pieces, and her own composition. She was clearly very happy to have achieved this milestone and described it as a major personal breakthrough at the time.

She was particularly keen to play a duet with her son as she was determined to break the performance anxiety she saw as a negative personal cycle, and to model a more joyful musical experience for her son than she had experienced as a child. One aim in her piano studies had been to learn simple pieces to which her preschool children could dance and move. Although she was perfectly capable of doing this, she did not have the confidence to play the piano in the preschool.

> Even though I read music I don't rely on that, you know - in case it's not right (Int.1).

This is an important insight into D's mental processes as it could be argued that this internal critic also played a role in her professional work. Previous research has found that people who had experienced formal music tuition were less likely to develop positive changes in perceptions of confidence in teaching music (Auh, 2004).

- **Teacher Training**

D felt that the music component of her university teacher training was lacking, and music undervalued as an area of learning.

> It was – well – inadequate! … a side issue. We had to do an instrument; it could be concertina, tin whistle and something else – I can't remember – but I did the tin whistle because the concertinas ran out – but you can't sing while you're playing a tin whistle so it wasn't much use (Int.1).

She felt there was not enough practical preparation that could be used in the preschool. She would have preferred to;

> Learn some basic music lessons – that would have been good – something you could use and build on later.

D's experiences throughout her education meant her performance anxiety was well established and unfortunately this was not alleviated at college.

> It was awful … a Kodály teacher got us doing all these hand things and I had no idea what was going on, and then she made each person sing. I must have had this look on my face because she never asked me to do it – I would have just died (Int.1).

She felt there was an 'us and them' form of music elitism.

> I think that there has been that elitist thing of well there's the musical people and then there's us! [laugh]- yeah, and that certainly wasn't helped at uni (Int.3).

D had thought a lot about how the lack of music in education affected future trainee teachers and therefore the standard of music offered to future generations of children;

> Where do you start with music if you've got a couple of generations that haven't had any musical training? If you get to the age of 19 and you haven't got much musical background then it's much harder to pick it up later if you've got nothing. So it's going to take a long while to change (Int 1).

- **Prior professional development experiences**

D saw the taking up of opportunities for professional development (PD) as part of taking a professional approach to her work, particularly in music, because:

> I just think we need to know more about it - we need to have higher skills. The more we understand the better we will be doing our work (Int.1).

She felt that developing music skills for every staff member was important.

If a teacher was not wanting to do a music in-service I would be telling then that they need to for their job (Int.1).

D and her staff accessed any PD they could but found their options limited and difficult to access.

There aren't a lot of people who do it, and when you've been to a person's workshop once, you don't want to pay to then go back to see the same person and see the same things re-hashed but you need that variety of people, because when you actually see … how they use their material, that's when you come back inspired to use it (Int.1).

As much as she enjoyed taking part in PD, and was prepared to drive the four hours round trip to Sydney or Canberra to attend a weekend workshop, there were drawbacks.

It's cost, time, finding someone to replace you while you're away and finding the variety of people to go and see. I get inspired all the time, but so often you have to buy too much and they don't explain all the concepts (Int.1).

She was open to gaining new information by reading about research but, echoing Loughran's(2010) words, she found the academic writing style obstructive;

This is where all research becomes difficult – if it's in high-falutin' language you've lost us, because we're very much hands-on 'how do I use that tomorrow' … and I think that's a daunting thing when you think – 'let's read the research on it' but you go – 'I'm not going to get it'… not that we're dumb but … (Int.1).

D's teaching practice before being involved in the study - in her own words

D reported that she and the other teachers in the preschool regarded music as an essential part of their work, and aimed to provide music activities on a daily basis.

I do provide a lot of musical opportunities for the children; we do a lot of dancing and singing all day and every day. The children like making up songs, yes they love making up silly rhyming songs, and we use songs for other learning areas … road safety, multi-cultural things – it's probably the best way to learn things – is to sing. We don't always do what we consider music lessons where we're focusing on teaching musical concepts, but in every group time there is some element of music, be it singing, finger play, or clapping a rhyme (Int.1).

In particular, D highlighted the confidence children gained from music making activities;

> Confidence - children, when they've mastered a particular skill or learnt a particular song or finger-play or whatever, the confidence that goes with that is fabulous … there's a whole lot of confidence and expression that they're allowed (Int.1).

She describes how the staff routinely used songs throughout the day; to guide the children from one space to another, to wash hands or clean up after activities, for example. Family members who play instruments had been invited to come to the preschool in the past. D defined the benefits of music as;

> Fine motor skills in finger plays and controlling an instrument, there's listening skills which is probably the biggest one, the turn taking…learning about rhythm and beat and those sorts of things … tuning their ear to listening and allowing their body to respond (Int.1).

In a later interview, she felt able to speak more freely of the fears she had felt around music, which she believed were shared by many in her profession;

> Music is the big fear. I think most teachers - 80% - are so scared of music that if they're going to skip anything it will be the music because they'll think – 'Oh well, I'll put a song on the CD – that's my music' or they won't do it at all because they are so afraid of it (Int.3).

D's Collaboration

The researcher's initial observations

D's preschool is in a quiet street, surrounded on two sides by open parkland. It has pleasant grounds that include an open area, a large sandpit, play equipment and a native garden. The winding paths are decorated with small mosaics made by the children on an indigenous theme. There are two teaching rooms; one large and a smaller one. The main room is divided into two sections; one is an open space of about 5 x 4 m with free play stations around it's edge; including a reading nook, a dress-ups corner, a piano, instrument boxes and other stores. The other section is taken up with craft tables placed at random. The walls are decorated with the children's current craft and art, and posters and exhibits relating to the teaching themes at any given time. The preschool provides services to around 65 local children between the ages of 3 - 5 years. There are three full time staff and two part-time. Most children attend two days a week, so there are about 26 children in the preschool on any particular day.

The atmosphere is cheerful and animated; the children enthusiastic and engaged with their activities and with the staff, who keep order in a gently authoritative way. There is an active sense of the preschool being an educative experience in the way the day is structured and the way the staff members work with the children. There appears to be a strong, long-term working relationship between D and her a co-teacher C. Usually another staff member will join in with music activities as additional support for a few children with special needs. Often a trainee teacher from the local TAFE is also there.

- **D's teaching practice - What the researcher observed**

Although she had inferred that there were sometimes established music sessions, D revised this after a couple of months of the collaboration.

> I'd never thought of structuring music as a 'it's a formal time' and 'this is what we do in this time' - it was much more ad hoc (Int.2).

The music sessions at the beginning of the collaboration generally involved dancing to CDs using choreographed movements designed by the co-teacher, or activities using instruments to help illustrate a story, and singing a small number of songs with the children, using a CD. The activities were generally quite structured and teacher-centered, with the children sitting to play instruments when instructed to, or listening to a story read by D from a super-sized book. The didactic focus of these activities tended to be on other learning areas. Dancing activities were more relaxed and free, with the children joining in enthusiastically. In general the children only sang with a CD, and only occasionally had use of instruments. The researcher observed a need for more playful and inclusive activities that would encourage the development of listening, exploration of concepts and more opportunities for creative involvement for the children.

The researcher observed that D was a skilled and experienced teacher, presenting activities in an animated and engaging way. D had observed in her first interview that the children were very enthusiastic about music, but occasionally the boys showed a reluctance to be involved in dance or movement activities, saying it is 'not cool' to dance. Given that most of the music activities consisted of dancing with choreographed steps to recorded songs led by female staff, this may be an example of the 'missing male' (p. 186) trend referred to by Hall (2004), that results in boys constructing a negative gender-based musical identity, where boys do not sing, for example, because it's 'something girls do' (p. 183).

The significance of beliefs around musicality

D had well-established ideas about her own lack of musicality that contributed greatly to her lack of confidence around doing music with the children.

I do love music (but) I don't feel particularly musical myself…I like singing in the car and in the shower. If I sang in a choir they would kick me out … I mime in church (Int.1).

Her comments indicate that her perceptions of musicality differed depending on whether she was referring to an adult such as herself, or to children. She thought of musicality in adults as being firmly based on evidence of being musically gifted, in particular, the ability to perform or improvise. This contrasted with her views on musicality in the young child, which she based on their responsiveness and enthusiasm for doing music activities.

I'd see it (children's musicality) as just that innate response they have when music goes on – how they join in or sing, or hum or move or tap – that's just their response and that's the musicality. (Int. 1).

Her experiences in the collaboration started to challenge her self-beliefs. After five months of collaboration, the researcher asked D if she felt differently about her own musicality.

Definitely! Definitely! You know I was talking earlier about the children recognizing that they are a musical person, that the musical person isn't just on the CD? Well I think I needed to change my perception too (Int.2).

D could sing accurately with a pleasing voice, read music and had composed music, yet she was not confident to use these musical skills in her work with children, mainly due to fear of judgment from her peers. This impacted directly on her willingness to do more music in her work.

I think the biggest thing is that there are other adults in the room … I will sing but I'm a terrible singer, but if you got me to play an instrument or do anything more complex I couldn't do it with other adults in the room - which is ridiculous! (Int.1)

After a year of music collaboration, feeling much more confident in her music skills, D's self-belief in her own musicality had definitely changed for the better but only up to a point.

I'm not as frightened to sing and do musical things in front of people, but … I'd still say I'm not very musical. I certainly am much more aware of my own musicality and also fostering that in children and seeing that's an innate thing that they have. I think I would always think of somebody who is musical – and I probably still do a lot – but somebody who can pick up a guitar and who can

improvise and play something really clever, or sing really beautifully and – performance – I think, well this was always the measure of – "Well they're really musical and I'm not" (Int.3).

D was aware of her musical abilities but seemed to dismiss and negate them out of habit, as if afraid she was not in a position to confirm her own musicality. Although these contradictions may come down to being a matter of semantics, they do help to illustrate the effect of self-beliefs that educators hold around musicality and how they influence their readiness to do music. Even though D felt her understanding of her own musicality had changed she was quick to feel the need to qualify this by insisting "I still don't think I have any musical gift'.

Early days

 In the first six months of the field work D suffered from intermittent ill health and as a result, only four observations in five months were possible. Perhaps because she was not feeling very well, D was initially hesitant about moving beyond her usual practice, often mentioning a fear of losing control, or things 'not going right' as her reason for not trying new approaches. An underestimation of her own musical skills combined with a fear of losing control of the children limited her willingness to extend her musical activity repertoire. She was reluctant to try new things, even with familiar materials, in the early months. Practical considerations also played a part, leading to using music more as a tool in other learning areas.

> Time is a big factor – it's already hard to fit everything into the day that we have to cover in the curriculum – but that's one great thing about music; you can cover other stuff using music, like road safety, hygiene, things like that (Int.1).

One of the main stumbling blocks D identified was that she felt 'lost, not knowing what to do with music'.

> I'm not sure how to build on things, and it will sound silly but listening to a CD is sometimes a bit of a challenging thing if you don't know what else to do with it. The playing of instruments is the trickiest to extend on – I have a very limited thing I do but …? (Int.1)

She was not sure how to make use of the music resources at the preschool, and lacked a sense of direction. She found it difficult to find specific pedagogical information in the resources, to guide her in knowing how to use materials and why.

There's a whole lot of music resources there that I don't know how to use properly; a song from this one and a song from that one …but they don't explain the concepts or why you're doing something. I don't really know where to go with it all. We've got some really great fun songs, but I don't know how to extend it beyond "Let's just sing along with the CD" which doesn't really inspire me that much (Int.1).

Initially in the collaboration D was encouraged to use materials that were familiar to her, with a focus on how to extend those materials in ways that offered new learning experiences for the children. Discussions looked at the dynamic pacing of activities, and varying and extending the children's experience of music concepts such as dynamics, tempo, beat and rhythm in playful, explorative ways. D was relatively comfortable with this approach, and incorporated it into the materials she had chosen for the end-of-year open family day at the preschool. The researcher could see that D needed to feel in control of the collaboration, and not pushed, especially when she was struggling with feeling un-well. The researcher provided ideas and feedback where she could for these preparations. D seemed to find this useful and it helped to build D's trust and give her a sense of being supported.

The existing casual friendship established between this participant and the researcher due to past connections did not necessarily make it easier to be collaborating. The expectations inherent in the collaboration were initially onerous for D as she was finding the usual workload hard to manage due to her ill-health and was away a lot. She was reluctant to make any comments in the reflective journal and managed to lose it before the end of the term. The researcher did not comment on this, but gave her another one in the next term. Although nothing was said, the researcher sensed that D felt she was letting her down in some way, and the researcher felt it necessary to reassure her that she did not 'owe' the researcher anything - she was free to work at her own pace.

- **Addressing performance anxiety: 'Gawd! I really was scared of singing then!'**

The anxieties that initially inhibited D's involvement and engagement with the collaboration centered around her lack of confidence in singing, and her consequent discomfort with being observed. She often expressed a nervousness about being observed, and it became increasingly clear to the researcher that she was inhibited by a significant degree of performance anxiety. To diminish her intrusion when observing, the researcher sat well back and out of D's line of sight as much as possible. In the following discussions, D tended to judge her own practice very harshly with comments such as "That was terrible!" - presumably to preempt what she feared would be a critique from the researcher. Even when reassured by the researcher that she had done something very well, and that she was not being assessed in any case, D would often wave this aside with a negating, self-derogatory comment. Although she had said in the first interview that she "sang with the

children all the time" - in practice this meant that she sang along with a CD. She explained that she felt uncomfortable singing alone without the CD, especially in front of other adults such as staff or parents.

depends who's in the room with me … I couldn't do it [singing] with other adults in the room (Int.1).

Managing the CD with an unreliable remote control, regular interruptions to the flow of a session made it difficult for D to stay with the children and interact freely. While she wanted to reach a point where she would not need the CD, she struggled with this for the first few months of the collaboration.

I'm still not confident enough to sing without the CD (Jnl. early March 2009)

Despite her anxieties, D insisted that singing and playing the piano for the children were things she would like to be able to do confidently. In the New Year she had recovered her health and was feeling much happier in general, and ready to take on this challenge. The researcher suggested, as she did with the other participants, that D build her singing confidence by moving out of her comfort zone in small steps (see the Appendix E for details of this process). For D, who was in the practice of using an animated voice to tell the children stories, this focused on introducing chants, presented with a clear beat and an animated style, then simple soh-me songs. As D gradually extended into these activities she started to gain enough confidence to tackle more complex songs, taking the necessary time to learn new materials well before presenting them to the children (underlined text shows participant's emphasis).

I sang today without CD – did it <u>lots</u> of times to get the tune in my head. Each time I felt more confident … <u>big</u> step! (Jnl. mid-March 2009)

This was backed up with lots of regular, positive feedback from the researcher whenever D attempted to sing alone. The recommended practice for a song to be repeated enough times for the children to start to learn it was also useful practice for her. She was able to use a vocal range that suited her own voice, although the researcher explained that she needed to bring the range up a little to make sure it was suitable for the children. By putting the step strategy into practice at her own pace, with less and less use of a support CD, D was very successful in overcoming her fear of singing alone in a short time, as her increasingly jubilant journal entries show.

Sang again today without the CD and actually like it more as it's more my range (not quite so high). Feeling <u>much</u> more confident! (Jnl. end of March 2009)

Significantly, there are no further references to how she felt about singing over the next three months of journal entries, as her entries now tended to focus on what she was noticing in the children's learning and

responses. This reflects Kagan's description of the evolution of teaching expertise (1992). When reminded six months later of the fear of singing she had described in the first interview, D exclaimed:

> Gawd! I really <u>was</u> scared of singing then!. . . Yes! I'm much more confident with singing to the children. And whilst I'm not about to go on Australian Idol*, I do feel it's not quite so dreadful. The more I do it the better I feel (Int.2).
> *Australian Idol; a current talent quest television program.*

Singing more independently, starting with her own repertoire then learning new materials, was key to getting a deeper understanding of how to create learning opportunities for the children. This new confidence in singing without CD support impacted on her daily practice to give her greater flexibility.

> I did sing with them anyway [before] but if it was on a CD I'd prefer to use that – where as now I feel - even if I learn it from the CD first, I can actually take it [song] outside and sing the same songs, and I don't need to move them [children] inside to do those things (Int.2).

She was also feeling more comfortable with singing with other adults around.

> I used to cut things short if I saw that parents were starting to arrive or, you know, if there was a parent there I'd "Arghhh!" [hides face] but actually I can now have them join in and help (Int.2).

As the collaborative relationship strengthened, D felt supported enough to became more and more actively involved with taking up suggestions from the researcher, and applying them in her practice. Part of this support was constant reassurance from the researcher that in her opinion, there was nothing wrong with D's singing voice.

> Yes, I do [feel supported] – yes – with you just saying 'you know your voice is actually OK!' – I know you need to say it a hundred times but it actually does help – 'You really can do this you know,' [playfully mimicking the researcher] – yes, it does help (Int.2).

The added benefit of singing independently of the CD was that she could engage with the children much more directly, unhindered by the interruptions inherent in having to manage the CD player. The researcher noticed that the children started to sing along with D more when it was just her singing. She also noticed that there was a better connection between D and the children as the musical games were now clearly very enjoyable for them both. The children's increased enthusiasm had a marked effect on D; she was more prepared to take some risks, to move a little out of her comfort zone and try new things.

In the early stages of the collaboration, D had felt nervous of being judged by the researcher while being observed. After the collaboration, when relating an incident involving her staff, she made clear how generalized this fear is amongst teachers and how it often stems from previous experience.

> I guess that's their understanding - they thought you were there to write reports on me [laugh]. Well I suppose most times if there's an adult sitting there watching you and writing notes that is usually what it is about! (Int.3)

D's initial discomfort had abated slowly with the growth of trust in the collaborative process.

> I'm more comfortable with being observed now – it was hard to start with, especially when it came to the singing, because even though you'd said to me "I'm not there to judge you, I'm not there to criticize you" it still takes you back to teaching prac days where everything being written down is about, you know, not pass or fail, but, well, it was hard to get beyond that but …because there's feedback about what I could do better so I'm actually OK with it now … you're not too scary! … It's actually nice to have you in the room (Int.2).

D was now aware that the observations offered the researcher valuable contextual information that allowed her to give D tailor-made support. She was feeling a much greater acceptance of herself as a learner, and of the researcher as a support, even when a session did not go as well as she hoped.

> I told one of my staff about a session that didn't go well and she said "Ohh – that must have been terrible and [the researcher] was there to watch!" and I went – "Well that doesn't matter" – so I haven't felt like I've been judged, which is nice, yeah (Int.3).

This ease with being observed was now evident in other situations. She described a moment in a staff meeting in which the staff were discussing their experiences while attending an in-service where volunteers were asked to join in and help demonstrate a game in front of other participants.

> One of the staff said "Well, we had to get up and do all these embarrassing things" and to me it was like "Oh! were they embarrassing?" [pleased laugh] (Int.3)

D was feeling confident enough to take music activities into an outdoor setting, now that she was not tied to relying on a CD. In her journal she was noting the skills she observed the children picking up.

> Turn taking, listening, keeping beat and rhythm … great team work, listening and moving to music. Chn tuned in to mood of music well and loved gentle slow piece. Felt confident to adapt old familiar

material … now much more aware of the depths and layers of learning happening through music activities. (Jnl. June 2009)

D had enough confidence now to accommodate temporary set-backs and use them in a constructive way as part of her learning experience.

> That is what's increased – the musical skills and confidence, because I can have a lesson that's partially good and partially disastrous and then I can modify it the next day … you don't give up on it. You don't go; 'Well enough of that – it was written in a book by somebody highly qualified but I can't do that!" so in terms of confidence it just pushes me to do it and then see that you can improve your skills (Int.3).

At the end of the collaboration D would not go so far as to say she could sing well, (which she could) but she was able to acknowledge how her confidence had grown. She was a little disappointed that her goal of playing the piano for the children was as yet unrealized, but the researcher was very happy to hear that D was not so much at the mercy of her internal critic.

> There was always a real nervousness of doing music when there were other adults in the room or people in the office, but that doesn't bother me any more – I mean I know I still have a few hurdles to jump over – like I couldn't do the piano because there'd be adults around – but it [singing] doesn't worry me at all – there could be a million adults in the room and it doesn't worry me anymore … I don't claim to sing well … but I'm finding that I'll sing in front of whoever's walking through … I'm not so frightened of singing (Int.3).

Now that she was more confident she was able to be more forthcoming than she had been initially about the elaborate measures she had taken in the past to avoid being heard or observed by parents.

> At the end of the day we used to make sure we were packed up because we never wanted to be doing anything when the parents arrived, but now I don't care – the room can be full of 25 parents and we'll be doing a singing game and it doesn't worry me at all – I don't even think about it, which is a really big change for me – yeah (Int.3).

This proved to be a well established increase in confidence. Six months after the collaboration had finished she reported still feeling perfectly comfortable with singing.

> I've overcome my fear of singing in front of people – it doesn't bother me one bit (Int.4).

- **Planning and the need for structure: 'a clear direction'**

Over the Christmas and New Year holiday, D had recovered her health and enjoyed a restful holiday. After a shaky start the previous year, it was a relief to the researcher that she was sounding well again and much more enthusiastic about the collaboration. She had also decided to break the big group into two small groups.

> We have new children starting every day for the next week so starting on Tuesday week would be good (to resume observations). It will actually be nice to start on a more 'formal' music program right at the beginning of the year. Think that I'll have more continuity and a chance to really start at the beginning and build up skills. I'm actually feeling quite enthused. (It's only day one - give me time!) (Email: January 2009)

D had felt her main problem was that she did not know what it was she should be teaching exactly, or how to structure formal music time even in the short term, in the practical 'we are doing this today because …' sense. Feeling motivated about the collaboration, and having identified the need for a clear plan, she started the New Year by looking through the preschool resources. She was looking for a framework to act as a basis from which to plan music sessions. She decided to use a resource for early childhood teachers written by the researcher which had lesson plans based around each concept (Bainger 2007). She was already a little familiar with it as it had been trialed by her co-teacher in the preschool a couple of years earlier, as previously mentioned. Rather than rely on this entirely, the researcher encouraged D to include other materials she already knew, and to source other resources to create her own session. Together they discussed how to create new learning opportunities in simple ways for the children using variations and extensions. The researcher suggested that D focus on a particular aspect of music (concept) as a way to start organizing materials to plan a session. For example, in one session D chose to look at sound textures and dynamic contrasts using the song "I Hear Thunder" (sung to the tune "Frere Jacques"), using instruments and cardboard boxes, and a chant about a lightening storm she had picked up from an in-service.

> Music group (2nd 1/2) thoroughly enjoyed thunder and train part with drums and sticks. 2 chn struggle to join and cooperate at times but felt group was successful and chn all keen to continue (Jnl. March 2009).

Although she was on a steep learning curve she was able to draw on her teaching expertise to maintain a focus on individual children, especially now that the groups were smaller. D was now fully engaged with the collaboration, and doing music sessions nearly every day with groups of about ten children, and repeating a lesson four times with different groups each week.

We are doing twiceas much music as we used to now (Int.2).

She relied on the resource book's CD at first, but as her singing confidence grew she took up the challenge of learning songs so she could sing more without the CD. Perhaps as a consequence of having more trust in her singing voice, D was also finding it easier to use new materials, and was able to extend her song and activities repertoire. The sessions included revisiting previously introduced materials but with fresh extensions, and she was able to respond to the children's requests for favourite games.

I feel I have a much bigger repertoire – a bigger grab bag and it's valuable grabbing (Int.3).

Having a guide to follow satisfied her need for knowing what to teach and why. This made a dramatic difference to her experience of the collaboration as a whole and to the amount of music happening in the preschool.

This year I decided to actually follow a program … it's a big change … there's been a structure to follow rather than just picking random musical things that may or may not work. It's really important to have a clear direction … there's benefits to it and it's more constructive. I feel there is enough support there now (Int.2).

She was now taking a systematic approach to developing the children's skills, focusing on specific concepts-. There was a concern for the researcher that this might lead back to a more instructional way of teaching but this was dealt with from another angle which will be discussed further on. In the meantime, D was using the management strategies suggested by the researcher to good effect, and her early concerns with maintaining control were rarely mentioned now. Because D was repeating each session four times, she was able to practice and experiment.

I'm feeling more confident about the process of chn's music development now and trust that with guided input they will build skills (and I will build mine) (Jnl. March 2009).

In discussions D had many questions, wanting to understand the underlying pedagogy behind the researcher's suggestions and feedback. This was a valuable opportunity to link theory with practice in directly applicable circumstances with individual children's learning.

I have a much better understanding of why I'm doing what I'm doing – and of the value of what the children are learning (Int.3).

The discussions also touched often on how the skills the children were learning naturally supported other learning areas. D was accessing varied resource materials, and reading the additional research information that the researcher periodically sent the participants on specific aspects of music learning. D was gaining a much deeper understanding of music pedagogy.

> I didn't realize how it related to everything else really – like mathematical concepts, building core strength and all sorts of things … feeling the beat and feeling the rhythm – yeah – just that being a whole part of them … I don't think I had ever seen things like acceleration and deceleration as music concepts before. I think my understanding of just how far music stretches into everyday things has really increased (Int.3).

She was able to reflect on the process she had been through, and stressed the importance of having a resource.

> The first half [of the collaboration] I struggled because I felt like I just had to kind of make it up and structure it myself and that was a pressure for me, I didn't really know what I was teaching, but then when I decided to follow a program I felt fine then, because having something to support me, I had something structured to use (Int.3).

If D was away, her co-teacher continued her music program to keep the children's momentum going. This journal entry suggests that D's increase in skills were being passed on to her co-teacher, helped by the children's enthusiasm for activities they enjoyed.

> I was away today and C decided to do (the song game) based on yesterdays success! Today was great too! C said they only did it 3 times and said that they "squealed with delight' as they played it. It's hard to believe that such a simple song/game is so popular and teaches so much!! (Jnl. March 2009)

- **The value of working in smaller groups: 'really build relationships'**

In the New Year, D had decided to take up the researcher's recommendation of doing music with smaller groups.

> Took half group. Chn thoroughly enjoyed the session and I felt comfortable and confident aside from the slight hesitation singing in front of other adults (namely [the researcher]!) (Jrnl. early February 2009).

When she took a bigger group a few days later, she was focusing enough on the children to notice the difference.

> Did same session with big group. Group too big to feel movement – next time will repeat with half group (Jnl. early February 2009).

She immediately saw the benefits for her and the children, and found the smaller group easier to manage when she was trying out new things. She found that she was able to gain a deeper knowledge of individual children.

> Nice to work in small group and really build relationship with children beyond 'crowd control' as it often feels in big group. (Jnl. April 2009)

To include all the children in the music program, she would introduce activities to one group then do the same session three more times with the other groups. Well after the collaboration was over, she reflected on how this way of working gave her the chance to practice.

> Doing it in our small groups, I'd do it with one group and know that I'll actually be doing that lesson four times, so I got to really practice it, so that was a really good model for me (Int.4).

- **The value of repetition: 'I can improvise and adapt more'**

In her early sessions, the researcher observed that D tended to do an activity only a couple of times before moving on to another activity, something the researcher had often observed in many teachers' practice. Anecdotally, teachers had talked to the researcher about being afraid that the children would quickly tire of the same song or activity. The researcher stressed that it was important that the children have the opportunity to memorise and master some of the materials, and encouraged D to repeat songs more often in a session, adding small variations and extensions to keep the material fresh and interesting to the children. Repetition would allow the children plenty of opportunities to hear the song and learn it in their own time, building their confidence. Although initially a little dubious, D was surprised to find this worked well for the children.

> I thought that the children might … get bored with the [repetition of] songs, but actually they are getting <u>more</u> engaged in it … and they actually really enjoy it and it really kind of tunes them in… Music is something they look forward to, something they're remembering and anticipating … it's fun. The kids love the routine – they love to feel comfortable and familiar with things (Int.2).

D found that the regular observation sessions that were part of the collaboration provided her with a structure within which to work that motivated her to plan ahead. Having established the value of repetition and extension, planning sessions was easier than first thought, as it was more a matter of extending materials rather than constantly coming up with new materials. Over time, as she became more adept at presenting a familiar song with new extensions and variations, she was further supported by the children's engagement.

> [Children] responding so well to repetition and extensions (Jnl. May 2009).

Repetitions also had the added bonus of giving D the chance to master new materials as well as the children, establishing them more securely in her repertoire. With mastery of an activity, she found the freedom to closely observe the children and notice how each individual was handling the activities, allowing her to teach at different levels in the same group.

> I've got a better awareness of which group I can take further, and which group I'll keep with the basics, understanding that they can't move on till they've got this really, or they can in little ways, kind of stretch out here and there but … starting with, all right – this is the concept I'm teaching and having done it with four different groups throughout the time and seeing the variation, that I've become much better at modifying the groups for the different children's needs (Int.3).

D described herself as needing a strong incentive to apply herself to the difficult task of doing the necessary preparation for the music sessions. Being regularly observed provided her with this incentive.

> I really need to be pushed and under a bit of pressure to do something I don't want to do! [laugh] or do something that I'm not confident with. It's been good that I've had to actually sit down and plan for group time (Int.2).

Having the chance to practice was clearly of great value for D. As her observed sessions were followed immediately by a discussion with the researcher, she was able to de-brief, iron out and clarify any concerns she had before she went on to repeat the session with another group of children. The content of these discussions, in particular any materials or practical suggestions, were noted down by the researcher and sent the next day via email. This proved to be a valuable means of support for D.

> Tuesday kids loved it [music group session] and one even called it AWESOME! Love using strategies from L the following day to 'practice' the group time and improve on aspects (Jnl. June. 2009).

These discussions were a valuable opportunity for the researcher to offer morale boosters as well. D's responses to positive feedback had changed. Whereas earlier she had tended to dismiss complimentary remarks, she was now more open to accepting them, putting them into the context of identifying strengths and weaknesses in practice as part of the working collaboration.

> Getting the feedback straight away – and the fact that the feedback is positive, because I can go "Arghhh! That was terrible" and you say "Well, no, actually it wasn't but you could do this, and this … and that's how you could turn it around" – those things are useful, especially when I can then go the next day and try it again (Int.3).

One reason why this collaboration worked as well as it did was because D was always ready to try and implement the researcher's suggestions and develop them for herself.

> Loving the explanations, reinforcement and extension ideas from [researcher] (Jnl. May 2009).

As well as implementing new ideas and learning new materials in the main resource she was using, D was including her own ideas and extensions more and more to extend the children's learning.

> Now I feel like I can pick and choose bits and pieces and it's extending that knowledge, now that they've done all the base work (Int.3).

She was also taking another look at the resources on the preschool shelves and finding lots there that she could now access and use that she had not known what to do with before.

> I feel more confident so I can pick up a new CD or book or see someone doing something and I think 'Yep, I can do that too – but not even just copy what's there. I can improvise more and adapt more, take the material and improvise with it, modify it, and link in things that I've learned (Int.4).

The twelve month collaborative process had provided the impetus to not only stimulate but also establish music as a permanent fixture in the working of the preschool.

> My teaching practice in music has definitely changed since the start of the collaboration – definitely- because I've had to do music – it's meant I've had to be organized, had to plan, and then to follow it through with the other groups, so it's been a really big part of our curriculum which has been really good (Int.3).

After the collaboration, D noted the value of the gradual process of the collaboration and how it gave her the time and experience she needed to gain skills.

> It's that starting small and then just building on those skills, and I think you then are taking the material and using it in lots of different ways throughout the week – yeah – so I found that really good (Int.4).

D's confidence had grown enough by the end of the collaboration that she was able to take constructive feedback and work with it, without seeing it as criticism. For example, she did a session that was made up of a succession of activities that required the children to be sitting, and after a while they were not particularly engaged. The session had not taken into account the children's need for change and movement. D was unhappy with the session, wanting to know how she could have done it better. The researcher pointed out that pacing was the problem. D recognized this immediately, and freely confessed she had not thought of this when planning, but it made perfect sense to her in retrospect. She felt confident that it was easy to fix, and the discussion looked at the various ways to include more movement and variety in the activities while still maintaining the teaching/learning focus.

- **Learning through play: 'I can have loads of fun with it'**

The Australian Early Years Learning Framework (Australian Government, 2009b) emphasises the importance of play-based learning. It was central to the collaboration that music should be approached as a form of play, rather than as a body of specific knowledge to be imparted through instruction. This approach to children's learning - that skills be developed through the child's own experience through opportunities for exploration and creative play was used as the model for the adult participant's learning.

A central hypothesis of the collaborations was that a teacher is more likely to attempt to introduce musical activities if they are freed from the expectation of being a music expert. Rather than expecting the teachers to gain expertise via in-services or resources, and then instructing the children, the collaboration emphasised play as a valid mode of teacher learning. The existing expertise that was already present provided the springboard; the children's expertise at play, and the teacher's existing expertise in working with young children, guided by the researcher, an early music specialist.

This had the important advantage of removing from the participants the burden of having to be 'experts'; holders of advanced theoretical music knowledge. Instead, like the children, the participants were encouraged to learn through creating opportunities for both themselves and the children to explore and experience music through play, taking part as learners alongside the children. To do this, the participants were encouraged to use a more flexible teaching style that positioned them as facilitators and co-players

rather than instructors. This is based on the researcher's assumption that teachers who are challenged by music will be more likely to attempt music if they have the space to gain authentic experiences that are largely free of direction or structured outcomes but driven by their own interest and curiosity. With the validation and support of the collaborator the teacher can discover and understand for herself the various elements of music and how to manipulate them for different effects and purposes. Through these experiences, and through taking the steps to 'making friends' with their own voice, they can begin to experience themselves as musical beings. These experiences are the basis from which they can start to build music skills and confidence of their own, in order to be able to create, facilitate and participate in music experiences with the children. This plays to the participants' strengths; relying on their existing skill base as early childhood educators, rather than burdening them with having to attain complex knowledge separately from that process. It also plays to the children's strengths; an inherent attraction to music and a readiness to play.

However, this approach brings up singular challenges of its own. To appreciate these challenges and how they were dealt with in the collaborations, this first case study seeks to illustrate the researcher's own thinking to illustrate how this aspect of the collaboration was conducted, as it was central to the collaboration. All the participants found this aspect of the collaboration a challenge in similar ways, so the researcher's thinking and methods used in this case study are representative of all the case studies.

- **The challenge of play: 'letting go and not worrying so much'**

The main challenge to this approach for the participants was that it required a shift in perceptions of what constitutes good teaching practice. Most teachers use this style of practice to varying degrees, but it is rare to see this approach well established in music because music is often associated with an instructional mode of delivery. In addition, where a teacher feels insecure there is a tendency to revert to a highly instructional style of teaching, with a strong didactic focus, (as previously discussed in Chpt. 2). D was taught in her training that one sign of a good teacher is that she maintains control, and acts in a dignified way. This can have an inhibiting effect on the teacher and tends to invalidate the opportunities available to the teacher to be genuinely playful at appropriate times.

> Well I think when I was taught at uni there was very much this, you know, you should be wearing skirts and stockings and you're not rolling around on the floor!- you know, you're behaving properly! [in a 'posh' voice] (Int.3)

This firmly links the ability to maintain control with professional competence. In common with many early childhood educators, D's teacher training had stressed the idea that a good teacher is one who is in control, keeping themselves and the children orderly at all times.

Yeah, it does very much come from that fear that we've been trained to have them all very contained (Int.4).

The fear of not being able to maintain control is an understandable deterrent to teachers, especially when contemplating doing activities with children in a more playful way, involving free movement or instruments. It is easy to imagine how a teacher sees a 'worst scenario'; a roomful of over-excited children running amok amidst a cacophony of noise. Although the other participants had been confronted with these fears, but had not talked of them until late in the collaboration, D was open in identifying her fear of losing control of the children in playful situations.

I'm mostly fairly relaxed [playing musical games with the children] …though it's not an area I feel fabulously comfortable with – depends on who's in the room with me … I think that's a little bit of thinking maybe I'll muff it up for the children and maybe lose control of the group. Free play with music would scare me the most - only because it has the potential to get out of control (Int.1).

Specific ways to stimulate and encourage a more playful way of learning were outlined in detail by the researcher, and ways to apply these ideas were discussed with D using materials familiar to her. (For more detail on this content, please refer Appendix F). This was a new approach for D, and she was fearful that the children might not participate, or 'play up' and she would lose control of them. Anxiety around control was the main impediment to D taking a more playful and inclusive approach to music activities. This had been mentioned in previous interviews, but D was even more forthcoming about the inhibiting influence of the control issue in hindsight. (It has been the researcher's long-term observation that teachers are generally unwilling to mention or acknowledge any anxieties around control as a matter of professional pride.)

Oh! -it's [control issue] <u>huge</u>. Yeah – if you haven't got the management of the kids they'd just run amok! (Int.4)

A teacher needs to be assured she can maintain a safe and workable environment conducive to each child's learning. However, too much control is the antithesis of play. However, teacher-imposed discipline becomes less necessary when it is in the child's interests to be involved in the games. There is a shift in emphasis, away from direct instruction from the teacher to self-directed control through a child's engagement. For example, 'rules' for a game can easily be established as they are part of the child's game lexicon; children create boundaries such as 'this is in and this is out' simply because it is more that way; the discipline is built into the game. This is not to suggest that there is no place for authoritative guidance, but that it is not always the most appropriate mode of teaching.

Part of laying the groundwork for working this way with music is to establish boundaries around sound levels. The children need opportunities to learn how to control the amount of sound they make, either through active play or when playing instruments for example. D introduced simple games that the researcher knew would easily engage the children for this purpose. Instead of constantly asking the children to be quiet, these games are based on the children needing to listen closely for when their name is sung to indicate it is their turn, so there is an incentive to pay attention. D found the children responded to this strategy, as they experienced the discipline of particular music games as being in their own interest.

> Initially they just want to run around [but then they see]… that there is actually value in being part of the group, and working with the group and working as a team and in waiting your turn, actually great benefit will come, much more fun than if you're just running around the room and screaming. It's quite structured but … when they can get up to dance and do their thing [they find] they do need to listen and do need to behave, there's limits and they can see that they can have fun and the limits are a good thing, which flows into all sorts of things (Int.2).

An example of this type of game is a movement circle game where a leader stops and starts the group's movements with a single gesture, such as raising an arm high in the air, or touching the ground for example. Later the same principle is applied when playing instruments. At each stage the position of leader is taken first by the teacher but quickly passed over to an individual child, and the children quickly start to think of different movements for different results. These gestures become part of the teacher's way of communicating non-verbally with the children, to manage sound and attention levels.

It was also suggested to the participants that a little bit of free play such as the children playing instruments as they were handed out was not necessarily a problem to be solved. If the children were given a minute to play freely to satisfy their curiosity, they would be more willing to keep their instrument quiet to cooperate in an activity. Having experienced the fun of stopping and starting games, and activities that focused on playing instruments softly in a pleasurable way, they were more ready to think about and monitor the sound they were making. For D, the successful implementation of these alternative ways of maintaining discipline while accommodating the children's needs to play helped her to relax her parameters around what was acceptable behaviour. This helped to remove the barrier to making more frequent use of instruments.

> I use them [instruments] a lot more now and we also do a lot more of the found sound things – I feel like I've got more control of the group …and that I can let them go and be free and noisy, and that I can get them back … so we can be far more expressive and free, and move around more – that's not so fearful for me now – I will gain control! [mock voice](Int.3)

D was now reassured that the combination of small children and movement and/or instruments was manageable, allowing her to relax into a more playful teaching style.

> You helped me loosen up on that too, because I'd been very "Alright! The instruments stay down!" [in a mock stern voice] because I didn't want to get out of control and you said to me "It doesn't matter if they all shake them as long as you've got a signal – and you've got a way to bring them all back", so we have really relaxed on that, and it feels like it's more playful because of that, but I think I can do that because I <u>do</u> have control of the group … that I can let that go – that they're not going to run amok, or if one went to, I could stop it (Int.4).

This change in her teaching practice affected her teaching generally.

> I know that I can easily get them to come back in and focus, so I feel like, generally, my management skills have increased – that's across the board, through letting go of that fear I think (Int.4).

She was finding that the increased appeal of the activities acted as a motivation for the children to modify their behaviour.

> Repeated group time … Each time had to briefly remove child from group who was disruptive. They only sat to side for short time and then joined in eagerly. Gave them a chance to watch what was required to participate effectively … other staff commenting about children's enjoyment of such simple songs (Jnl. March 2009).

Another important issue for educators in moving to a more playful interaction with children is their own personal level of inhibition. For a teacher who is accustomed to consciously presenting herself as an authoritative adult it can be difficult to relax that professional persona. This is not to suggest that the educator is expected to become a performing entertainer, but more that she welcome and show an openness to the children being playful, and respond playfully herself, openly participating in the spirit of play and sharing her enjoyment in the process. This is more easily done when the educator can see how much the children can learn in such situations. Combined with the reassurance that she could manage the children in such a scenario, D was able to let go of her more instructive teaching style to take on a much more playful approach. This was unexpectedly pleasurable for her.

> Another [improvement] is just letting go and being a fool [big laugh] – yes – [I'm] less inhibited I think – there's benefits all around from just letting go and not worrying so much about it. [I am] much more inclined to have fun with them and be silly (Int.4).

The researcher worked on the premise that a participant's skill base could be built through play, by using an informal teaching practice that positions the teacher as a co-player. Too often a teacher can look at learning in terms of teaching what they know, rather than working with what the children know or can discover for themselves through a play experience. By understanding that most young children are already expert players and will have much to contribute and share, the teacher can benefit from their input by facilitating and accommodating the children's responses and contributions readily into planned activities. When a teacher is sensitive to the importance of including the children as equal contributors she becomes much more open and responsive to their input. This brings a whole new potential to structured music sessions and to free play. D started to draw on her own playfulness as a way of facilitating the children's learning, and was finding she could manage the children well even when playing a game freely, with all the attendant excitement, noise, movement and interruptions that are part and parcel of engaged group play. Six months after the end of the collaboration, this was such an established part of her practice now that she had lost sight of her earlier fears around being playful with the children.

> I think they've really enjoyed that aspect, as that I've been as silly as they have been, and come up with ideas as silly as they have. I've allowed them to come up with really silly ideas, and that's been a really freeing thing actually, yeah, to think, "OK, I'm allowed to do that, that that's not just 'willy-nilly, being silly', that there's actually real value in that – that's been very freeing to have found that out (Int.4).

The researcher reminded D that she had expressed her unease around free play in previous interviews.

> Oh! Did I? Isn't that interesting! Well – I feel far more comfortable with that now (Int.4).

Part of being a co-player is giving equality to the children's ideas and input; inviting and including the children's spontaneous ideas and suggestions into the flow of the play. While the more verbally confident child will call out their ideas, another child may just quietly experiment without drawing the teacher's attention to what they are doing. D was encouraged to look out for these non-verbal explorations, gently acknowledging the child's action with something like "That looks interesting – can we all have a go at doing it like that?", acknowledging and adopting, a child's non-verbal input whenever possible.

It has been observed that children can often be found doing far more complex music activities in their informal play than they are expected to perform in their formal education (Marsh, 1997). Perhaps this is because they are the authors of the game and are motivated by their own interests through improvisation without authoritative interference from adults. In the collaboration, one of the aims of a game, after introducing it and becoming familiar with it, was that the leadership role be passed to individual children.

The inevitable confidence that the mastery of a game brings very soon leads to the children (and the teacher) finding ways to vary and adapt a game in new ways. This is the natural process of learning through play, and has the happy bonus of furnishing the teacher with new ideas and variations at the same time. Working with her existing skills, D found she could facilitate this process and learn from the children's creative improvisations and gaining music confidence and skills at the same time. The researcher encouraged her to build up her own reference portfolio, with a page for each song, game or activity recording her own and the children's ideas for future use.

Giving the children's input equality and having them lead activities can be time consuming, making it difficult to have time enough to do all the planned activities in that session. The researcher encouraged D to always be prepared to let go of her session plan to some extent to give priority to the children's explorations, to allow for the children's input. D was comfortable with this when she understood the overall direction. Understanding the children's improvisations and ideas as an essential part of empowered learning helped her to validate the children's play.

> Didn't feel as familiar and prepared but relaxed into group and let children's ideas direct the group a little. They are feeling free to express and explore and I'm feeling comfortable enough to follow that lead where it might go and know that I still have 'control' and that part of the lesson can be done later. Feel more confident to sing and to ad lib and 'play' with music (Jnl. May 2009).

The more encouragement the children got from D for their own ideas and improvisations, the more ready they were to voice their ideas. The confidence this engenders in the children is perhaps the most valuable aspect of empowering their input.

> Children more confident now to change words and make up own song (Jnl. August 2009).

D was finding that the children's increased level of engagement was connected to the children themselves having an individual sense of inclusion (a major reason for working with smaller groups of children), with the added bonus of making overall management easier.

> Yeah, I'm much more, [playful with the children] and oh! - they're [children] overjoyed when you use them [their ideas] straight away, especially, but they're more willing, I think -that's why they're more eager to join in, because they know they've got a bit of ownership of where it will go – which again, is probably a bit more of that management thing of - I feel I can give them back some of that and we'll still be learning, and we'll still be having fun, and we'll still be in control and be able to stop it when we want and move it in a different direction when we want, yeah (Int.4).

D was now accommodating the children's input, while at the same time following a learning sequence based on sound pedagogy. As the children responded to the changes in D's practice, their improvisations and suggestions became more varied and developed, and she became very flexible in response to this, comfortable to postpone her own plans when the children's involvement took an activity in a different direction. This neatly combined her professional needs to offer a quality music program with the creative needs of the children.

> Yeah, yes, I feel that I can incorporate that [the children's impromptu ideas] now, because of having that structure of - I know where we're kind of aiming, I can take their ideas and use them a bit more instead of being thrown by them, and if we head off on the wrong tangent – well- we've had fun anyway … so! [laugh] (Int.4)

Early in the collaboration, the use of 'found sounds' to explore sound - natural and everyday objects - had been introduced. In discussions, the researcher brought up some ideas for creating opportunities for the children to explore music in their unstructured free play. D was now quick to take up ideas that appealed to her, and to put them into practice. She liked to tell the researcher about what she had noticed during the week, and occasionally mentioned instances of the children's play in her journal.

> Loved [researcher's] idea of using 'Space Tunnel' in dramatic play area as hiding place for 'found sounds'. Was very pleased when 1 child who dislikes the tunnel happily went in to play a 'space instrument' – great fun and listening skills with "Where is pretty little Sally … over in the milky way" (Jnl. August 2009).

D's relaxed playfulness in the group sessions had long-term positive outcomes for the children in that it stimulated changes in the way that the preschool was set up for the children's free play.

> We have just set up a stage at the preschool right now, and they have got instruments and dress ups and the little echo microphones and they're having a wonderful time doing that, yeh, so they're doing little shows with each other and some of the songs are songs that we've learned but drama as well, and I think their confidence is coming out of the fact that we've had such a big music program all year as well. You'll have to come and see it – it's great! (Int.4)

For D (and the researcher), the most satisfying outcome was seeing the development and learning in music for the children.

Am constantly amazed at the depth and extent of learning through music. Even though trained to see value of play – fabulous learning going on through play – haven't been trained to always see the same with musical activities. A song is <u>not</u> just a song! (Jnl. August 2009)

- **An unexpected bonus: 'it's not just music things**'

An unexpected outcome of D's professional development through the collaboration was that her newfound confidence in music matters augmented her sense of professional competence in general. Although it seems obvious in hindsight, the researcher had not thought previously about how specific music skills would be applied in other teaching areas, leading to an increase in a teacher's general professional confidence. This was a very gratifying outcome for both participant and researcher.

It's increased my teaching confidence as a professional. It's seeing myself more as a professional; like 'Yeah – I'm actually really doing this – I really do know what I am doing' and it's not just in music things (Int.3).

There seemed to be a genuine change in D's professional self-belief. Perhaps a contributing factor to this effect was that D was continuing to use music as a tool for other learning areas, but in a much more deliberate and focused way. She had done this in the past, but because she could now sing freely and adapt materials more easily, this had helped to carry her new-found music confidence into other areas of her work. She was also much more aware now of the pedagogical strengths of multi-sensory learning, not only specifically within a music session, but also in other learning areas.

We are incorporating everything into it [music] – to learn the maths by singing, to learn the science by singing, to learn it all musically and artistically, because not only is it fun, which helps you to remember things, but it's also it's planting it in your brain in several different ways so you've got all these hooks to retrieve it. Yeah, so it's not just located in one spot in your brain, it's multi-sensory learning. Music is just so linked with development in all areas (Int.4).

The other participants had also commented on how a development in music confidence had a transfer effect and the researcher was interested to find out if the experience was similar for all the participants. She asked D if she could identify more closely how her confidence in music translated to a more general confidence.

I think it's [a feeling of] definitely more confident in <u>all</u> your teaching areas. It's because you are conquering a huge fear – because music is the thing we fear most – so it's overcoming that fear thing. And also because it's not just a one off thing… there's a mastery thing happening, so you're building your skills which gives you confidence – you give yourself the skill base to do it (Int.4).

In the last observed session, with a memory of the level of D's anxiety at being observed early on in the collaboration in mind, the researcher light-heartedly remarked that it must be quite a relief for D to know this was the last observed session. She was surprised by D's serious response:

> No – it really isn't. I thought to myself this morning that – "Oh gawd! I'm on my own now! … it all made me realize how little I knew before or understood about what can be done, what's involved in music. And there's still so much to learn! (Discussion, August 2009)

Summary

When following D's process through the collaboration, it is interesting to note how the same words can carry very different meanings over time. D's descriptions of her work with music at the start of the collaboration and her descriptions twelve and eighteen months later use very similar wording yet these words represented very different teaching practices.

> It's [music] all throughout the day now – we sing for every transition … we're clapping rhythms and using our bodies in different ways, keeping the beat – it's 20 times through the day it's happening (Int.3).

D's music collaboration had very positive outcomes. Having overcome the inhibiting performance anxiety she felt around singing and playing percussion instruments with adults around, D now found it relatively easy to access new materials from a wide variety of resources, and was demonstrating an increasingly sophisticated understanding of music concepts, how to develop children's musicality and the pedagogy underlining a music program. Her understanding of the many different ways to engage the children in structured and unstructured music play had led to changes in the set up of the preschool space, and she was now able to plan ahead, and create interesting music sessions that strongly engaged the children. She was confident enough in her music skills to be able to focus strongly on the children, often commenting on individual children's responses and learning in music. D felt that her ease around taking a more playful approach in music sessions had changed her teaching style in general, as she was finding she could successfully apply this approach to all other areas of her work. The next chapter presents the second case study.

Chapter 6
Case Study 2: Participant 'S'

S works in a community preschool located in a large town. She has a Certificate in Childcare Studies, an Associate Diploma in Social Science (child studies) and completed four units in a Diploma of Education over ten years ago. She has worked at the preschool over a period of 18 years, taking time out to have her two children. The preschool caters for about 60 children aged two to six years, with two main groups of twenty children on any given day. On the preschool's website, music and movement is listed as a regular daily half-hour activity.

Disclosure of past association

The researcher met S about a year before the study started when S and P, the director of her preschool, attended an in-service presented by the researcher. Some months later, the researcher was invited to give a full-day music in-service for all the staff at their preschool. About six months prior to the start of the study, S and P, with another colleague J, also attended an early educators 'singing circle': an informal evening of singing children's songs at the researcher's home, offered free of charge to early childhood teachers in the local area. A small group of about eight teachers came fortnightly for about three months.

Initially, it was the director of the preschool who first volunteered to be a participant in this study. In preliminary discussions with the researcher, the director explained that S also wanted to do it. The director felt quite confident about doing music where-as S did not, and the director eventually decided that S should do it as she would benefit from it more. When asked why she wanted to be involved in this study, S's response encapsulated her basic approach and motivation.

> Because I like to learn, I like to learn new things all the time … to grow in confidence and grow in skills and then give back to the children (Int.1).

Past music experiences

S had various experiences in her childhood and education that had led her to a negative belief about her own musicality. S had a degree of difficulty in her early education due to problems with her hearing.

> I struggled with music at school, my school experience was not good, but I had a major hearing problem – I had to have grommets and missed a lot of school (Int.1).

This was not understood by her teachers to be a contributing factor in her inability to recognize or understand changes in pitch; instead she was told that she couldn't sing, which had a lasting effect.

> As a child I suffered a bit from 'Oh you can't sing' and that sort of thing, and I think that does carry – those sorts of things (Int.1).

As will become evident, this experience underpinned S's long-term lack of confidence in doing music with children in her work as an early childhood educator. Like D, she had contradictory perceptions about her own musicality compared to that of the children.

> Children quite naturally have an ear for music … I'm not a musical person myself. (Int.1).

- **Teacher training and professional development experiences**

Music was a valued part of her teacher training, although S struggled with it.

> It [music] was a significant part of the course … I remember because it was something that I struggled at, but I feel the staff at that TAFE do an excellent job, they are well trained and willing to share their skills (Int.1).

Although she felt musically challenged, she had learned some valuable features of a good music program.

> One of the things I learned in my training and have learnt along the way in other training is the importance of varying the group experience, is that it shouldn't be all be just singing, it should be games, it should be getting up and down - dramatic, acting something out (Int.1).

Part of the training involved S writing up a resource book; an essential tool, but she had difficulty in making this relevant to her work.

> I remember thinking … well I'll never use this … there must have been half a dozen things I've used and that was all. It was just collecting songs and that sort of thing.

Like so many teachers, S felt she didn't develop enough confidence in her training, particularly singing confidence.

> Probably the confidence building [was the thing most lacking] … I do lack confidence. Confidence in my singing voice would probably be it. If you can help people to be more confident in presenting music in preschool or day-care that would be hugely valuable, hugely valuable (Int.1).

S described herself as a 'people-person', and this influenced her attitude to learning professionally. She was very comfortable with taking on the role of learner.

> I am a people-person and I like to know people so, and if I can learn from them or vice versa, if I can give to others, I do and lots of times it just comes back ten-fold; you know? … it just comes back (Int.1).

S was clearly an active learner and had helped to organise various music in-services and workshops for the preschool, and had also accessed parents with musical skills. She was happy to learn more skills from those parents, and to approach them for help.

> A mother of one of the children at preschool came in a couple of times to play music, sang songs, and I would go to her sometimes and say "Hey, I'm really stuck, what can I do?' and she would pull stuff out of her catalogue … I learned heaps from her. For example, we made up a Christmas song together (Int.1).

Opportunities for music professional development (PD) were limited in her experience.

> It is out there but you have to be the one who goes looking for it – you don't easily find it. I wouldn't say there was plenty and the problem is you've got to know what you're looking for, it's got to be worthwhile going to it (Int.1).

When asked about the workshops and in-services S had attended in the past she commented on how opportunities for PD were usually out of normal working hours and difficult to attend.

> You can always learn something but then it becomes a time thing; how much of your own time do you give up … if it was part of your working time, yes, but that almost never happens (Int.1)

PD is largely left up to market forces and is naturally variable in quality. Stand alone in-servicing is the most common form of music PD available, but S did not feel this form of PD was supporting her in an on-going fashion.

The trouble is … that you need something of really high quality but you need follow-up stuff afterwards, because I find - too much information to take in all at once - I can't retain it (Int.1).

S had already identified the format of PD that she felt would work best for her.

I need something that … I could do an hour a fortnight all year - I would get much more out of that, rather than a one day thing (Int.1).

S went into the collaboration on a high note. As well as attending a couple of workshops and singing sessions recently, she was using the researcher's published resource and other CD's and ideas she had gleaned from other sources in music sessions with the children. She was feeling more confident than she had in the past.

I quite like doing it [music] – more so than ever before because I feel I'm growing in confidence and gaining more skills. I feel more confident than I ever have (Int.1)

S's teaching practice before being involved in the study – in her own words

S carried a strong sense of the importance of early learning which she felt was at odds with the general society. She did not believe that society in general valued music in preschool.

Absolutely not … in the broader community I wouldn't think they give it much thought... They want quality child-care but as far as educating the children I personally feel that isn't coming across, and I think quality early childhood education is extremely important. (Int.1)

She described music as an essential part of early childhood education, and listed what she felt were the benefits of music to children. It was interesting that her list included more of the associated benefits of musical play than aspects of music learning specifically.

Self awareness of their body, producing sound and all that sort of thing, maths … they also get a sense of belonging and a shared experience, being part of that … attention span, learning to share, and there's all those listening skills; listening and recalling, you know – memory – there's just so much. There's awareness of other people and their personal space – that's a big thing with kids, about being aware of knocking somebody else, and balance, expression (Int.1).

Prior to the start of the collaboration, music was a strong part of the preschool curriculum and S was already doing a music session with the children almost every day. She felt the preschool provided plenty of resources for music.

> We are very fortunate – there are lots of musical instruments, lots of CD's, and if we say we want to do a music in-service she'll [the director] will organize it – there are opportunities to do things. One thing would be good – if we had a CD with a remote (Int.1).

S was working with a group that included some especially challenging children with special needs, and while this presented challenges, the positive response from the children provided a very real motivation for her.

> While we've got some kids with additional needs, we've also got some really responsive kids and the feed-back from them has been just amazing – they are really enjoying it so much – you can see the delight (Int.1).

In the previous case study, it was suggested that there are music learning opportunities for teachers who place themselves as co-players, and S had been getting a lot out of this approach.

> We are learning from each other and the more you do it the better you get at it. The little things you pick up along the way help you to feel more confident in what you can do, and having a go at things (Int.1).

S was using a variety of activities to engage the children in musical play, with the specific intent to touch on other learning areas, and was able to give examples of activities that had worked well with the children.

> Like "Five Cheeky Monkeys" … I photocopied five [monkeys] cut them out and laminated them – I could hang the monkeys by the tail and had someone come and act it out. I like to dramatize music with the children … I find the kids feel more involved - they want to do it … like we sing "Miss Polly" and we'll act it out (Int.1).

When asked how she would typically introduce a new song to the children, she described different approaches, most of which relied on a CD recording, but with some solo singing.

> Listening to a CD, singing with a CD, maybe sing alone, or ask someone to lead the singing who knows the songs. We would sing it with the CD but once we were comfortable with the song we would sing it without the CD – that's usually the way we would go. If we don't have a CD and it's something I know I will often say "Look, I know a song and it goes like this: you join in when you're ready", and then they quickly join in. (Int.1)

S also closely observed the children's free play and took opportunities to connect it to the more formal music sessions.

> One of the children recently, they were in the corner and they were playing "Knick Knack This Old Man" in dramatic play, so when we were doing music we all did that and we made up some actions and talked about the words (Int.1)

S had been using the researcher's resource for over 6 months before the collaboration. She had a rather patchy grasp of some of the music concepts.

> Beat, loud and soft, fast and slow, stop and start, things like pitch. I guess you would probably be talking about short songs and long songs and changing words (Int.1).

She was uncomfortable with the noise aspect of using instruments, and preferred to use them out of doors.

> My concern is always been stopping it from just becoming noise. I must admit, with instruments, when we had the CDs outside on the mat with instruments and scarves, to me that works better because the noise isn't such an issue (Int.1)

She felt she would do more music "if I was more confident – they do enjoy music". Despite her lack of confidence in music, S was adamant that she should be doing what she could.

> I think it [music] is part of the profession. I've always believed that even if I wasn't good at it, it was a requirement of your employment to present some music experience (Int.1).

S felt her own childhood difficulties with music and own lack of confidence helped her to identify with children who also had difficulties with music.

> I'm a little bit in tune with that myself with the children for that reason (Int.1).

S's Collaboration

The researcher's initial observations

The preschool is in the suburbs of a large country town. It has a large, well-lit main room with large windows looking out onto a larger outdoor play area, linked to a second room by a passage. The play area is divided up into specific play areas; an undercover veranda that runs the length of the building, a large sand pit area,

and another area with play equipment. Benches are placed at different places along the paths that link these areas. The main room where S worked was decorated with artwork and projects by the children, with a reading nook, some play tables, an area of tables next to a kitchen and staff room, and an open area bordered by shelving and storage areas. Next to this was an office and another staff area. The staff seemed organised, friendly and efficient. There were no visible music resources in the main room where S worked, as they were generally packed away.

- **S's teaching practice - What the researcher observed**

The researcher noticed that in the general run of the preschool, and with S in particular, the children were not accustomed to giving their full attention and tended to be noisy. The group was quite large, over 20 children of ages varying from 3 to 5 years. S regularly asked them to be quiet but not with any real expectation that they would. In introducing the music activities, she gave fulsome explanations, and when the children became noisy, she tried to continue with explanations over a high level of noise. The children were seemingly not accustomed to settling and being quiet and tended to interrupt and call out a lot, so had difficulty in focusing and listening. This was a consistent issue in the early music sessions.

In the first few months of the collaboration there was also the added demands of dealing with a child with high needs. If he became too disruptive and noisy another colleague would take him out of the music activities, waiting until he had settled down before joining the group again. The other staff in the preschool tended to conduct conversations nearby, which was another distraction.

Early days

After the first interview, the researcher wondered if S really needed the collaboration as it sounded as though she was already doing many good things in her music sessions. However, in the first observations, it became clear that while S was creating varied opportunities for musical play she was also facing various practical impediments to achieving a more successful outcome for her and the children. She was working with a group of twenty or more children, including one special needs child, with only one other supporting staff member. While this is often the norm in preschools, it does limit the full value of music experiences in various ways, as discussed in the previous case study.

A basic requirement of music activities is enough space for the children to move freely without the danger of continually bumping into one another. Although there was a designated space for group work in the main room where the music sessions were conducted at this preschool, it did not provide enough room for the large group of children to move freely. In early observations, the researcher noticed that S was struggling with maintaining order with the large group of children and this was exacerbated by the limited space.

Although her plans for a music session were usually thoughtfully planned and included varied activities, the consistently high levels of noise made by the children meant she had difficulty making herself heard, often having to raise her voice almost to a shout to speak over the children's noise. A compounding factor was that S's natural speaking voice was relatively soft. She often struggled to get the children's attention; she would ask them to be quiet in a louder voice, but when the children continued to chatter or interject she tried to speak over them without insisting on stopping until they were quiet.

The extraneous noise from other staff members was also a problem. It was often at such a level that the researcher would often find it hard to hear what S was saying to the children although she was sitting just behind the group. Extraneous conversations between staff near-by, phone calls conducted in the adjacent office with the door left open, or staff setting up chairs and tables noisily in the adjacent space all created a level of noise that distracted the childrens' attention and this proved to be a persistent problem. Sometimes the staff conducted conversations with each other or with parents on the edge of the large space while a music session was in progress, or interrupted an activity to ask S a question. Often the supporting staff member would remonstrate with a child in the group while S was talking to the group, loudly enough to make S hard to hear.

While all of these types of incidents are a normal part of the preschool day to some degree, in this preschool they often distracted the children and directly conflicted with S's ability to remain the children's main focus. This seemed to indicate a lack of awareness of the detrimental impact of a tolerance of high noise levels, for both the educators and the children, and highlights the many extraneous issues that can come into play when trying to improve teaching practice. Certainly the researcher noticed noise interference levels to be much more of an issue in this preschool than in other centres in her experience. As a guest in the preschool, the researcher was naturally limited in what she could do about the extraneous difficulties that S had to contend with in the preschool, other than to sympathize and validate her when she expressed her frustration and distress. However, the researcher could see many ways of supporting S in terms of her own teaching practice.

The researcher observed in the first months of the collaboration that, while S knew of a particular musical concept, she was not necessarily able to demonstrate it accurately for the children, or explore it in any depth. For example, while singing a song linked to different animals, she instructed the children to 'go slower' but continued keeping a beat in the same tempo. She sometimes had trouble in keeping time with music on the CD, and also had difficulty in clearly defining the melodic contour of a song, generally singing at a pitch too low for the children to match.

Like the other participants, when introducing an activity, S used an instructive style of presentation that required the children to listen for extended periods to her explanations before they could begin the activity and this resulted in the children becoming restless and inattentive. S also needed to learn to modulate her

voice more to keep the children's attention. When introducing a chant or song, she tended to use the same speaking voice without any discernable change in the rhythmic or expressive dynamic, so it was difficult to notice when she was moving from instruction to a demonstration of the song, rhyme or activity.

Also in common with the other participants, S found it hard to find the time in a busy work schedule and full family life to prepare for music sessions as part of the collaboration.

> Time to do enough preparation is a concern (Jnl. October 2008)

> Having time to do preparation is a big disappointment - I often have only a few minutes to pull my ideas and resources together (Jnl. February, 2009).

However, S was highly motivated and a very committed collaboration partner from the outset. Her positive attitude towards the children, and her strong focus on their learning, was consistently very warm and involved, and clearly a real strength in her teaching. The children's welfare was a strong focus for S throughout the collaboration. She was aware of where her difficulties lay, and appeared to be very open to any input, taking the whole project very seriously.

- **'If I was more confident'**

Despite her recent progress in doing music leading up to the collaboration, S identified her own lack of confidence as the motivation for participating in the study and the main reason she did not do more music. As mentioned above, she had attended music in-services when available and had been actively working on building her music skills to good effect. However, her general beliefs about musicality undermined her self-confidence. S tended to think of musicality as a gift granted to only a few from birth and demonstrated by proficient performance, and she reflected on these beliefs throughout the collaboration.

> You know - how sometimes people talk about having a gift? … it was someone who was just born that way, like a talent – and if you didn't have it – well – I used to think of myself as not having any musical talent, therefore – can't do it, so shouldn't even try to (Int.1)

> I thought it was something that children became aware of because their parents took them along to music lessons of some kind (Int.2).

S shared the contradiction that D had around musicality, in that her understanding of children's musicality was quite different.

> They quite naturally have an ear for music … they like being involved in music (Int.1).

Despite her self-belief that she was un-musical, S had persevered in her work before the collaboration in offering what music she could to the children.

> I offered them different types of music; tapes, CD's – not being a musical person myself I felt that was the best I could do (Int.1).

S was challenged throughout the collaboration to identify the basis for her own self-beliefs and consider a broader definition of musicality, questioning what being musical might mean. Some of the challenges S faced could be addressed through the collaboration, while others that relied on changes in the working culture of the preschool were beyond her direct control. However, she had skills and strengths as the result of her existing teaching experience, and a strong determination to develop her professional skills.

> I like to learn, I like to learn new things and I feel I can learn from you and I can also learn about myself and learn how to grow in confidence and grow in skills and then give back to the children (Int.1).

- **Lack of self-esteem: 'a personal trait'**

Occasionally S referred to a more general sense of insecurity that touched on the personal as well as the professional.

> That's a personal trait, I do lack confidence (Int.1).

S seemed to be operating out of a low level of self-esteem, which made being observed quite a challenging aspect of the collaboration. S felt very nervous, despite continued reassurances and support from the researcher. Her first journal entry can be regarded as an understatement as it was clear to the researcher that her anxiety level was considerably stronger than she describes.

> [Researcher] observed my music program. While a little nervous I felt comfortable having her there (Jnl. August 2008).

To lessen the impact of her presence as she observed the sessions, the researcher asked S where she would like her to sit. S preferred to have the researcher out of sight line while she was observing initially, but later moved her to different positions. In discussions the researcher underlined that she was there for S as a music mentor – not as a judge of her ability to teach music. In discussions she shared her own experiences; how

things sometimes went well and other times not so well, to illustrate that she was a colleague who was also always learning on the job. She spoke of having to re-think how she did things, learning as she went. S initially expressed surprise that the researcher was not always successful in her own work, but gradually came to respond and communicate as one colleague to another.

However, S sometimes seemed to feel that she would be expected to meet what she perceived as the needs of the researcher. It sometimes felt to the researcher that in some way S felt she owed the researcher a certain outcome in exchange for receiving her help and support, although this was certainly not a sentiment shared by the researcher. S sometimes seemed to worry that she had not achieved what she felt the researcher would have wanted. This was expressed indirectly; for example, S often said she 'wanted to do a good job' for the researcher, and to show proof that she had put the researcher's ideas and suggestions into practice; the inference being that she had to meet the researcher's expectations, rather than her own.

> Sometimes the time between when I see you again is maybe a bit long, only in that, some of the ideas that you give me I then use, but they haven't carried on to when you come back. Sometimes I feel that you are not seeing that I'm using your ideas, and I just think that's a concern, well, not a concern, well for your sake, so you knew that I'm doing them and you could see how they went (Int. 2).

Although she rarely referred voluntarily to feeling nervous, S was battling self-esteem issues that caused her to feel anxious and apprehensive.

> I just feel that I perhaps lack the confidence and skills, personal skills to put things across as well as I would like to (Int.2).

It only became clear at the end of the collaboration that all through the early discussions S was seeing any suggestions from the researcher as criticisms. It took time for S to understand that supportive suggestions did not automatically imply she was inadequate.

> Sometimes, when you're giving me all these new ideas, I've thought, um … oh – I'm sort of linking it with not having done a good job (Int.3).

The researcher had noticed that S was very self-critical and tended to focus on what did not go so well rather than on what did go well in a session. She was aware that S could potentially read supportive suggestions as veiled criticism. To avoid that, the researcher made a point of always acknowledging good aspects of a session and reinforcing the general positives in S's practice. She was careful to position her input of new

ideas as brainstorming rather than as directive advise. S responded well to this approach, opening up to talk about concerns she had in a more positive and constructive manner.

> It's been important for me that I've felt I've been able to be honest with you and that I haven't felt threatened (Int.3).

It is important to note here that S's tendency to read suggestions as criticism was not directly spoken of – S did not refer to it and the researcher's intuitive guesses were not confirmed until the end of the collaboration when S felt able to speak more frankly about her own experience. The researcher was still surprised at the extent to which S felt inadequate. In the face of S's general lack of self-esteem, gaining her trust and confidence was an evolving and slow process of giving consistent encouragement through positive feedback.

> But then I realize that's not the case, because you have given me lots of positive stuff as well, so that's sort of – so that concerned me for a little while - and then you gave me lots of positive feedback cause obviously I was doing the things that you told me, so I though "Right – we're on the right track!" (Int.3).

The researcher also continually referred to the collaboration as a partnership, emphasising that the work S was doing was helping her with her research. She sometimes asked S if she could use some of S's ideas in her own work, as a way of acknowledging and empowering her. This seemed to give S a lot of pride and pleasure. Gradually, over the course of the collaboration, these strategies helped S to feel more equal both to the task and within the collaboration, to the extent that S could eventually acknowledge the value of her contribution to the research.

> I felt the interview was more for your benefit than for me, so while I was happy to do it, I don't know that it was particularly useful for me, except it does connect those bits and pieces, and it's nice having a chat with you! (Int.4)

S had to grapple a lot with negative feelings, and it was not until she looked at things differently that she found a way of dealing with the collaboration in a more comfortable way. After the collaboration she described how she worked through her own inner thinking to arrive at a more comfortable way of accessing support.

> I did always feel nervous – however, it did change – my attitude change was; [you were] here to help me, not to criticize me, and to show me how to improve and what I can do with things, so it became a self-talk exercise for myself as lots of things are, and I did come to relax a bit more … but still the critiquing was there and I took that on board (Int.3).

Fortunately, S's determination to learn new skills ultimately won out over her fear of being judged. She managed to turn a challenging situation to her own benefit.

> Ah – that [being observed] I found hard at first, especially singing. It depends – I think having you in the room – I was more mindful and tried very hard, and I think that sometimes put me off, but by the same token, because I was trying so hard I was learning at the same time – I was learning what I could and couldn't do, so that was good as well. So I think having you there, and taking the notes – it's been a valuable learning experience (Int.3).

It took quite an effort on S's part to deal with her own inner critic, but eventually she came to value her own efforts. However, the researcher felt that perhaps due to her low self-esteem, S did not really ever get past the feeling of not being good enough.

> I had felt when you've come to do the observations I felt a bit stressed, and I know you told me that I'm not being judged, but when you're there I just feel really nervous about doing a good job, but over time I've been able to come to terms with that, feeling that I can only do as well as I can, and not to worry about it – I was concerned that I was being judged and not doing a good enough job. It's just a self thing – I have a bit of a self-esteem issue – I'm hard on myself, I expect myself to do better all the time (Int.4).

S's lack of self-esteem also meant that she needed support to make full use of the collaboration. As she got to know S a little better through the discussions after the observations, the researcher noted that S did not like to volunteer what she was struggling with. If the researcher saw S experiencing difficulties but was not referring to them directly, she would bring up an anecdotal parallel situation from her own experience to draw S out about her feelings around the issue at hand. S responded strongly to this tactic, talking much more openly about what she was experiencing and what she was thinking in the process. The researcher gained the impression that S was reluctant to say anything that might be construed as a form of complaint; for example, when the researcher mentioned that she herself found it a bit un-nerving being observed while working, S admitted with evident relief to feeling the same and that she had felt very nervous, but then quickly reassured the researcher, saying, "Don't worry, this is just how I am".

Through the collaboration, many of S's self-belief's around her musicality changed in response to overcoming some significant hurdles in her musical understanding, and developing specific skills. Her attitude to herself as a learner became more open and accepting.

Oh – I'm a lot more comfortable [with doing music], and I just think if something goes wrong 'Oh, well – that's all right.' Before I was much more hard on myself – I saw it as my fault, yeah. I have more confidence that I can do it, I enjoy it more, and I see it as something like 'Come on – let's just have a go with this' (Int.3).

- **Singing: 'I wasn't hearing it'**

S was determined to learn whatever she could, and to improve her music teaching skills. She had identified in the first interview that singing was the main area where she felt she needed to improve, and where she particularly lacked confidence. She described how her difficulties with singing undermined her general music confidence.

The singing is the most difficult thing - when I'm learning a new song or trying to teach the children a new song - having the confidence to do it, to learn it well myself, that learning of a new song, because I need to do it confidently for them. Sometimes I lose the words (Int.1).

Like all the participants, she was prepared to sing for the children but was particularly uncomfortable singing in front of other colleagues and parents. Instead she relied on a CD or other teachers to sing.

I'm not so much worried about the children (hearing me sing) as I am about the other adults (Int.1).

In early observations the researcher observed that S had difficulty in singing tunefully, and sang mostly in a monotone, confusing the pitching of each song, so they ended up all sounding similar.
She was aware of this to some degree, but it did not seem to deter her when singing with the children. Although S could usually keep an even beat, and was rhythmically accurate, the overall result was that all the songs were similarly indistinct, making it hard for the children to replicate any clear melodic shape, so most of the songs settled into a general soh-la-me chant. However, the researcher was able to reassure her that her rhythmic sense was good, and this helped the children to sing along when they could with enthusiasm.

S had attended an in-service and a workshop where the researcher had talked to the participants about how to go about learning a song (see Appendix G). While it may seem self-evident that listening to a melody and the words is the obvious way to be able to learn a song to a musically comfortable person, it cannot be assumed that this is obvious to everyone. Over the years of music teaching, the researcher has taken an interest in children and adults who are said to be 'tone deaf' or say they can't sing, to find out why this is the case. It has become evident that at least one reason for monotone singing is not any lack of control of the voice, but the inability of the singer to listen closely enough to hear the melody in the first instance.

If an educator has had the experience of being urged as a child to "sing along" to a song without having heard it enough times to recognize and understand a particular melodic shape (as the researcher has often observed in preschools), she may never have had the opportunity to know what it is like to hear and understand the shape of a melodic contour. After her initial experiences of hearing and understanding a melodic contour for the first time in singing sessions, S went on to gain a sound understanding of this issue, and to appreciate the importance of the role that listening plays in song learning:

> Previously I would have sung a song and expected – I don't know why! – I would have expected them to just sing it with me – but now I just let them listen to it (Int.3).

Some children focus on the words and do not pay attention to the melody, unless they are encouraged to do so. Other children do the opposite. Without an attentive educator to direct the child's attention to aspects of listening, the child may not actually hear or understand what she is hearing. It is not automatic that every child can learn how a song comes to be known and accurately replicated. Many children grow up being mistakenly told they can't sing or are 'tone deaf' as a result. S was aware that hearing and understanding a melodic contour was an area she struggled with. She had also had hearing problems as a child, and understanding melodic contour had remained a problem well after her childhood hearing problems were rectified. S reflected on this in the first interview.

> One thing I learned from you is [the importance of] hearing … and I'm thinking now that's why I never got it [at school], I never heard it, I wasn't hearing it (Int.1).

The researcher had noticed that when S referred to a particular song during interviews, she would often unthinkingly sing a few lines of the song to illustrate her point, and on these occasions she sang much more accurately than when she was observed working with the children. It is therefore possible that she sang more accurately when the researcher was not there to observe. When asked to listen to a melodic phrase, and especially if asked to echo it, the non-singer's attention is often overtaken by negative thought patterns along the lines of "I can't do this – I don't know how I'm supposed to do this", rather than being free to actually hear the sounds. There was not the time available to help S deal with this problem effectively in discussion times; so the researcher offered her some time outside of the teaching context to work together on learning to hear and understand melody more accurately. S had two one-to-one sessions with the researcher, and in these sessions the main focus was on attentive listening.

In the first session, the researcher asked S first to note and vocalize what she was thinking while doing simple echo exercises. As the researcher suspected, S was surprised to discover that she was not in fact listening as she had assumed she was. She became aware of her inner thought processes, and how they were sabotaging her attempts to actively listen attentively to sounds.

I'm often not listening when I think I am - instead I'm talking to myself and saying things like "I can't do this" or I'm thinking about listening or trying to guess when the sounds go up and down instead of just listening. (Singing session 2. November 2008)

Using simple techniques to firstly help S to free up her ability to hear and pay attention to recognizing what she was hearing, then to faithfully replicate what she heard with her voice, she became more and more accurate. She was also learning to listen in the same way to herself when she sang.

My ideas of music have changed hugely – like I hear my own voice where I never used to, and I feel more confident about singing (Int.4).

After the two sessions she was able to pitch a rising fourth accurately on a regular basis, and to approximate a melodic shape to more accurately reflect a familiar song. She came to an understanding of how a melodic contour could be visually represented as points moving up and down in space. This was unexpectedly meaningful for S – at the time she became quite emotional about it.

Like when we did that music pitches stuff … well that was very significant to me … like a whole chapter of a book has been opened up … it made huge sense to me, and I think because of little links like that I can see that right, if you work at it enough and you try hard enough you can … these chapters open for you in all sorts of ways .. so it's the creative link (Int.3).

In that session, she had been delighted and amazed when she found she could accurately arrange buttons to correctly reflect the melodic contour of a familiar song, by matching them to rising and falling notes in the melody as heard in her head. Nearly a year later this breakthrough was still very significant for her - she brought it up again in the last interview.

Like when you were helping me with the singing, and we were doing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", and I couldn't work out how to get it, and then all of a sudden it clicked, - I just thought "Wow! this makes sense!" – it only took me 50 years to get here (big laugh) but I can see how it goes and I just thought "Wow!" (Int.4).

The sessions also helped S to put different pieces of information she had into a more coherent whole – she was able to come to an understanding of how the different concepts existed together in music.

I do feel more confident with my voice, with understanding how music comes together – a better understanding than I used to – like how all the different pieces link together into a whole with the

beat, the high/low, and the rhythm and patterns in music – and the link between music and the core body – about hearing that beat, and the beat belonging to something that's inside us, how our hearts pump – they beat! – so it's that issue of linking all these things in (Int.3).

It was interesting that she felt she could learn to sing now, as an adult, because;

Most things I have learned, I have learned as an adult (Singing session 2. November 2008).

The one-to-one singing sessions were necessary to give S the support she needed, and convinced her of her own latent ability enough to change her self-beiefs.

Having had those music sessions with you has helped me hugely and to understand that … where I thought I couldn't sing – I do have the potential to sing and to sing quite well, so I'm learning that I can do it and it's just a matter of keeping practicing (Int.3).

S was now listening much more closely than she had been, and was now aware of the significance of listening in a new way.

I've noticed that when I'm learning a song, I'm learning to listen to how it's being sung, and not to push myself to try and sing it straight away, because there's no point in trying to sing it when you don't know it – you can't really do that, so if I don't know a song, I'm more inclined to just listen now – listening to how it goes up and down (Int.3).

Gaining a clearer understanding of "how music works" and gaining some confidence in her own ability to sing created a fundamental shift in S's thinking about both her own and the children's musicality.

I used to think of myself as not having any musical talent … but now I see that everyone has music in them – everybody has the ability to gain an understanding of music and music concepts, and it is something that can be enjoyed … like a certain part of it has to be learnt … but it's there in all of us, and it's just inspiring children, and ourselves, to find it and enjoy it (Int.3).

Feeling more secure in her ability to sing significantly boosted S's general confidence, and gave her a fresh appreciation of music in her own life – she was actively becoming a more musical being.

And I feel more confident about having a go and if it doesn't work it doesn't matter, and just all sorts of things like that. I think, for me, you know, even just in the family situation, at home, music has become more of an interest – because of that – like I bought myself one of those iPod things, and I

> go walking listening to that, and I put CDs on when I'm doing the housework, or cooking some soup
> and I put that on and enjoy it rather than listening to radio or something like that (Int.4).

S reported that she had received supportive and encouraging remarks from her preschool director and other staff members, and this had also helped boost her confidence. She was no longer shy about singing alone with adults in the room.

> Well actually that's a big thing – I'm learning to have the confidence to have a go at singing the song
> without the children singing along with me (Int.3).

- **Management issues; 'How do you handle that?'**

As noted previously, S had some difficulties with management of noise levels and keeping the children's attention. S felt inadequate in that she was not able to consistently engage a boy with special needs in music activities. Her difficulties in this regard is an example of one of the findings from a previous study; that many early childhood professionals feel they do not have the necessary skills and resources to cope with children with additional needs who are now integrated into mainstream classes (Fleer, 2002).

S often expressed her dismay at the difficulties she had with the children's lack of attention, and naturally had been reluctant to utilize instruments or more playful activities because maintaining control was difficult. As mentioned before, this problem was exacerbated by S's lengthy explanations and instructions. The researcher felt the first thing that needed to be done to bolster S's confidence was to help her establish a more attentive response in the children. S was familiar with one of the researcher's strategies from a previous workshop, so she was open to more ideas.

> You know how they all want to play, so I said "Hold your sticks in the air" – we did that and it
> worked really well – that's something I learnt from you and I thought that worked really well (Int.1).

Working with such a large group in limited space made things quite difficult for S. As the children tended to be quite noisy as a general rule and were often not responsive to S's efforts in getting their focused attention, S struggled to make headway in terms of engaging the children successfully. The researcher suggested that breaking the large group into two smaller ones would be more workable given the available space, both for S and for the children. S saw the value of this, and was keen to put it into action, but despite repeated requests throughout the collaboration, the director was not willing to allow this.

S struggled with getting the children to cooperate and often brought this up in discussions. The researcher suggested doing activities designed to establish clear boundaries and cooperation. She gave S more strategies

around demonstrating what she expected of the children, and encouraged her to play games that explored the contrast between sound and silence, so the children could learn how to create silence, rather than being made to stop a noisy activity unwillingly.

> With some of those clues you've given me – like the feather falling, I've done that … gee that's good – it gets them so quiet! Really listening to it. [Researcher; That's good – that was given to me by another teacher.] Yeah well that's so good those things have helped… and little games about getting their attention, the clapping and the patterns and things … and lots of things like you've said, like "It's S's turn to talk, and then it's your time", and using my hands… (Int.3).

However, S was working with a large group of over twenty children, aged between three and five, and this was a struggle.

> I've certainly picked up some interesting strategies for coping for bringing their attention back to me … but it's an issue with the big group and the additional needs children … it's really difficult working with the different skill levels of the children (Int.3).

S was now improvising with her own ways to manage the children's attention by adapting familiar songs.

> and another thing we're doing – when it's time for the children to come inside, I start singing "It's time to come inside" [to the "Farmer in the Dell" melody] – I use it to get their attention, like "It's time to look this way..", so I use music in ways that I didn't before (Int.3).

S had been in the habit of giving lengthy explanations when presenting activities, and the researcher felt this might have been a way of S clarifying for herself how to go about it. This was problematic in terms of management, as it resulted in the children becoming restless and inattentive. Without referring to this, the researcher made suggestions for activities that incorporated a different, less didactic approach. She stressed the importance of demonstrating a game without explanations so the children needed to use all their attention to work out how to participate. She also suggested that S always present material using a clear body percussion beat, and an animated voice when doing any of the activities, as a way of engaging the children's sustained attention. To be sure that S understood what she meant, the researcher demonstrated for S with whatever materials S was using at the time. S worked hard on this and gradually made big changes in her presentation. This was quite a challenging transition.

> I'm trying so hard to tell … to use less instructions and to make it into a story, like I said yesterday; that we're going on a musical journey … then I kept finding myself giving them instructions! Then I

lose them! And I think "Oh no!" and I'm clapping away and thinking – now what was I going to do; I can't even think what's happening! [big laugh] (Int.3).

Despite the large group and wide age range, S was finding the children were more engaged, easier to manage and were responding strongly to the suggestion that she present materials in a story line, or within an imaginative context.

> That focus problem … and I know that's because of the different age groups and the different skill levels but… the younger ones are really starting to focus a lot better than they were at the beginning of the year … we're getting close to half an hour before I've totally lost them, which I think is just wonderful (Int.3).

As well as having to deal with too large a group, there was only one support staff member available to join her in the music sessions. As the group often included a child with special needs, having only one support person was perhaps not enough. The needs of this child were such that the support person often needed to take the child out of the music activities when he became too disruptive or noisy, which meant she was not free to support S with the other children. Although S never directly complained about having to deal with this extra demand, her difficulties in including the needs of this child successfully into her music sessions was a consistent concern to her. Certainly in this case, with a group of over twenty children, S needed more support than was available. In the first month of the collaboration S was finding this a real problem in terms of being able to implement interactive activities.

> In a group of 20 children, keeping attention of all children while one child is asked to copy a tapping pattern is a concern (Journal entry, August, 2008).

Not being able to break the big group into two smaller groups ultimately proved to be a real impediment for S in realising the full potential of the collaboration; managing a large group with inadequate space limited the types of activities she could do with the children, and made management much more difficult. However, she made good use of the support available to her through the collaboration.

> Having you there, and having had the feedback and how to use and change songs – having all that input – that enabled me to be able to be more creative with tunes that I know, because I'm not particularly skilled at lots of tunes, but because of your collaboration I've been able to learn and use things I'm good at and use them in more than one way – make them go further (Int.3).

S faced another problem that was related to the general culture of the preschool, and one that she found very difficult to negotiate. As already mentioned, the general lack of awareness around managing noise levels in

the preschool meant that although there were no other groups of children near by, the music sessions were often conducted with a background of noise from other staff members nearby. This was a continual source of concern and distress for S, impacting on her work in the immediate sense and undermining her confidence. Other staff members often talked on the phone or to each other in areas close to the teaching space loudly enough to make it hard for the researcher and the children to hear S. In addition, a supporting teacher working with S would sometimes verbally discipline a disruptive or inattentive child at the same time that S was trying to talk to the children as a group. On one occasion a staff member called out from another room to question S about her lunch while S was working. S naturally found this distressing and undermining.

Sometimes those interruptions were really, really hard, really hard to deal with (Int.3)

In discussions she referred to these interruptions as something that caused her to feel her work was being undervalued by her colleagues, however unintentionally. She tried to address it in different ways; speaking about it to her director, turning up the volume of a CD, and making a point of closing doors to the adjoining rooms, but was unsuccessful in being able to bring about more consideration. In discussions she sometimes became emotional as she felt powerless to change it.

I'm just thinking about that [noise], and I should be able to do it [talk to the director], I should be able to do it, surely … it's always hard … and I did, I did speak to her and she did start … actually what I do now when I'm doing music is close that office door, because I know the music is loud too. I just do what I can (Int.3).

This amounted to an interesting working contradiction; the director was unfailingly enthusiastic and supportive of S's music work with the children, but was not conscious of the problems caused by the extraneous noise levels in practice. The disruptions continued to be a reoccurring source of distress for S throughout the study and she occasionally vented her frustrations in discussions. She was very reluctant to lay any blame – her main concern was not feeling able to do her job as well as she would like to in the circumstances. The researcher found that this particular collaboration required personal moral support beyond music work specifically.

Being able to talk and get things off my chest, and, and actually being able to verbalize with you the problem of the interruptions by other staff members, or whatever is happening in the room – to be able to say that that's difficult, and to have you say "Yes it is really difficult"- to be able to have my concerns validated by you has been really good, and to have that positive feedback that you've given me so much too, I think that's given me lots of confidence to keep going and keep trying new things, and to keep trying to make it work (Int.3).

Discussions were primarily focused on the observed session and where to go from there. S was becoming increasingly reflective in her practice, and this was evident in both the discussions and her journal.

> Well as much as I said I found it hard to make the time to do the reflective journal, it is valuable, because you're putting into words what you're thinking about and what you see. So I think that's one thing that's been good. And having the conversations with you afterwards – that's been really good too, just to be able to discuss how things went, and new ideas, and how to use things that I'm already using but in new ways, and how to use those interests of the children, how to run with the interests of the children (Int.3).

- **The challenge of the large group: 'Trying to meet the needs of all those children'**

In the first interview, S identified a tension in her work between working directly with the children and fulfilling other responsibilities;

> I really love the children themselves, but I find the political side of preschool extremely frustrating and I just want to put that right away and say; "Just leave me alone and let's just do the kids stuff". I get exasperated sometimes with all this record keeping … and writing the portfolios is a huge stress for me … I'm not really getting to know the children - I think we need to be trusted a bit more - that's what I have to do, is just trust myself just to do that and see what happens (Int.1).

S's frustration at being pulled away from 'the kids stuff' is shared by many others in her profession, with teachers reporting in a previous study that their time with the children was being eroded by imposed paper work, such as the required collection of work samples throughout the year to create a portfolio for each child (Fleer, 2002). The researcher noticed that S focused closely on the children's responses, despite her own learning challenges, often bringing up acute observations in the discussions that followed the observations. She was able to identify their individual learning needs and asked many questions about how she could take a child to the next level. However, she felt she was unable to meet the children's needs to her satisfaction while working with a large group of children ranging from three to five years in age.

> What I've found really hard is trying to meet the needs of all those children that are in that group (Int.3).

S asked her director again to do music in two smaller groups but the director was not supportive of this idea, perhaps due to not feeling able to manage staff to cover two groups at the same time.

One of the disappointments is that I have not been able to divide the children into two groups – I think that would have been … I can see great advantages in that (Int.3).

This creates an interesting contrast to the experience of the other two participants, where they both found the smaller group worked much better, for both themselves and the children. It allowed them to work with the larger group doing familiar music activities more effectively later on after presenting new material to the small group first. However, both B and D were directors and were therefore in a better position to implement this idea, while S was staff member reliant on her director.

- **Music learning through play: 'taking the instructions out of it'**

The researcher emphasized that the activities in a music session could sometimes be linked together in a narrative, as this engaged and stimulated the children, often leading to spontaneous improvisations. S was encouraged to see the children's ideas and input as important contributions that should be implemented through her with the rest of the group, to empower the children's creative input and extend an activity. This challenged her previous practice of explaining and instructing, as she now demonstrated an activity as a way of inviting them to take part, finding out for themselves through experience whatever it was she was wanting them to learn. She found this had an immediate positive impact on the children's behaviour.

I think that bit about making music into a story so they follow along, and taking the instructions out of it – you've talked about that a fair bit, and I've tried so hard … everything has improved (Int.3).

This often took an activity in an unplanned direction, taking up time and drawing other children in with their own ideas. With such a large group who quickly became rich contributors to the activities, S sometimes had to postpone a child's idea for the next session, but as she was doing daily sessions this did not dampen the children's enthusiasm.

If the children make a suggestion and I can see a way to go forward with that we do it straight away, and sometimes I say "Oh, that's a good idea – perhaps we can do something with that tomorrow or next week, yes, so I'm acknowledging it in that way. Big difference, yeah, big difference… and I've certainly begun to see musical skills in children that I didn't before (Int.3).

The researcher asked S to look out for non-verbal input from the children during activities and find ways of gently acknowledging a child's idea, then sharing this with the group. For example, when playing tapping sticks, it is common for a child to experiment by manipulating the sticks in different ways, such as playing them end to end, or rolling them together. Even though this would not be new to the educator, it is new for

the child and can be acknowledged as an interesting new way to play, drawing the children's attention to the differences in the sounds.

> I think it's just heightening that awareness of being at the children's level, and to … take on their learning. I think understanding a little bit more about human development and understanding about where they're at too has been helpful. Some of them don't have the words to say exactly what they're wanting to say, and to give them … that sort of invitation. … seeing the fun children can have and getting involved in the fun (Int.3).

As the children responded to having their ideas included and acted upon in the sessions, they started to pay closer attention to S, making management easier.

> In the last few weeks I've thought; "Wow! These kids are really attending – most of the time!" - not all of the time … but we're getting there – I can see this happening (Int.3).

Having their ideas validated engaged the children more deeply and encouraged them to play in a more explorative, inventive way.

> They're really <u>involved</u> in music … they're willing to, and they like to have their contributions acknowledged (Int.3)

S was able to be more relaxed and flexible with how her session plans played out when she saw how the children's participation in the content of the session increased their learning and willingness to participate and cooperate.

> I think [my teaching practice] has changed substantially … mainly in being prepared to take the interests of the children and go with them – not to be too rigid about what is planned in my head or in a book, but to go along with what happens with the music, and being prepared to change everything, just so we can incorporate that, so to make the music experience meaningful and purposeful for the children (Int.3).

In the discussions, the researcher aimed to increase the participant's understanding of music pedagogy by giving brief explanations for why specific things were important, or done in a certain way. A simple example of this was showing S the importance of matching her beat to the movements of the children when introducing songs or games. While her usual practice of clapping every second beat fitted in with her natural walking pace, it was difficult for the children as they have much smaller bodies and take smaller steps, so can more easily and accurately match their movements to crotchet beats as a general rule.

> I have a much clearer understanding of music concepts and how they work together, and how to hear sounds where I didn't hear the before, which gives me more confidence (Int.3).

S had been encouraged to value the repetition of songs and games as an important aspect of a good music program.

> …once where I would have thought "Oh, we've had that enough" I just keep doing it because I know it's important to the children … and just the sheer joy on the faces of the children when they're really getting it (Int.2).

This became part of her planning, and combined with a stronger understanding of pedagogy, she was able to utilize familiar songs in different ways.

> I think now I would do a lot more repetitive stuff but I would also have a lot more idea of where we're going to with it, and being ready to move on to the next stage if the kids are showing an interest in it – and being willing to go backwards too (Int.3).

She found this had the additional benefit of building S's confidence as well, as she effectively got the chance to practice along with the children.

> Repeating songs helps the children and myself become more confident with out skills. (Jnl. September 2008)

S was gaining a general education in music through playing with the children, and taking an active interest in music herself.

> Oh well yeah [increased understanding of music concepts] – listening to the children, tuning in and listening to my own voice, listening to the children's voices – you know, particularly in that game you got me doing with them about the – using our hands and starting up high … and the see-saw game – and all that sort of stuff, and I would not have done that before, definitely not, and I'm starting to hear how some kids really get it and some don't and I'm starting to hear, when you start down low (S makes her voice very low) I started to hear how some of them are still up her (uses a high voice) and I was probably completely unaware of that before (Int.3).

Using effective management techniques and imaginative contexts, S was also finding that getting the children up and exploring movement as part of a music session was more manageable than she had thought.

I'm more conscious of the role of music [in movement] - before it would probably have been more free movement but now, for instance, "let's creep" – exaggerated movements … modelling it more clearly, where as previously I wouldn't have thought about all those different movements like creeping, crawling, climbing and swimming – and I wouldn't have thought about adding more detail about what they would look like, you know, and what their eyes would be like; the imaginative stuff (Int.3).

The researcher had been fascinated to see the change in S's use of her own body when leading the children into a game through demonstration, in place of the previous explanations and directions. She turned out to be quite skilled and inventive in her ability to act out characters in a way that stimulated the children to expand their repertoire of movement, and this made sense when reflecting on how S had talked early in the collaboration about how she liked to use drama in music games.

Now it's so much more about being creative with the movements and linking it with language, it's about listening to that beat, and when's that coming down, and how the body goes with the tune with the beat. Even like doing that high and low sounds game now, you know how it's linked with the voice …Very different I think, very different (Int.3).

S was creating interesting activities to engage the children in different ways of exploring sound, using dramatic contexts, found sounds as well as instruments, and creating engaging listening games. Her management skills had also improved - the children were now able to lie quite still to listen to and identify a series of mystery sounds. This gave S the confidence to make much more use of instruments inside.

One thing is that we will use them [instruments] differently – music instruments don't have to be the bells and shakers etc; they can be a container with rice in it or a tapping stick on the table, or body percussion – looking for the different sounds – and they can be loud or soft and all those different sorts of ways to play – like found sounds, and like your voice is an instrument as well (Int.3).

S was keenly observant of how the children were taking ideas from music sessions and using them in their free play. She valued these instances enough to photograph them for the portfolios the teachers were required to compile for each child. This long quote is given in its entirety as it gives such a clear picture of how S's music work was impacting on the children, and how meaningful it was to her to see the children using music she had taught them, in their free play.

It's been interesting, you know, how some of the kids have picked it up outside … Zac was sitting at the table outside, and he's got two other boys with him and he's going "*Hello everyone* … now you

do it …. *Hello everyone*" … that song of yours we did, and he's singing it back ... using his hands on the table to bang his hands on it to get the beat. And another group of kids, and they had a drum and one is having a turn at playing the drum - I don't know if they were actually singing, but they're playing the drum and the others are watching, and then they stop and pass the drum to the next person, and they play, and one of the little girls who hardly ever says anything, Annie – yeah, well she was just <u>laughing</u>! and laughing, just for the sheer fun of it – the fun of the music and the turn taking; it was just beautiful. They were just playing, no teachers involved – they were just doing it themselves (Int.3).

S had asked for ideas to stimulate the children's free play around music, and had taken up a suggestion to place durable found sound installations and wind chimes in the outdoor play areas.

And the kids are showing a lot of interest in those wind chimes we've got up outside now … you certainly are seeing the kids internalizing it and sharing it with one another (Int.3).

S had been very responsive to the concept of validating and incorporating the children's input in music sessions, thus becoming an effective co-player. The richness of the children's input had encouraged her to move away from the instructive approach towards a more experiential approach in her teaching practice.

I understand that the children have a lot more music in them and they have a lot more to offer than just being taught, like instead of just being the sponge all the time – they can give me information as well; valuable information that I can use (Int.3).

Inviting the children's creative input and acting on it was proving to be a real strength in S's practice; she could see she was creating new opportunities for the children. The children's positive responses to this approach gave her a lot of confidence.

What I've really noticed is a change in the kids. I see a really big difference in the way they take part – they are just so full of ideas, and they know that you're going to listen, and because of that they come out with them, and they are really just much more engaged (Int.3).

Her understanding of learning for both herself and the children, had been affected by her own learning experiences in the collaboration.

We learn by doing … learn by being involved, hearing … learn by being immersed in it … that's what's important, and I'm trying to do that with the kids, and it's not too much of being talked at, or

… it's more about listening and let's see what we can get from this. [So do you mean experiencing it rather than gaining information?] Yes, yes!

S had not thought of music as a form of play before the collaboration, but more as an imposition.

No, I thought it was something that we just had to do – it just had to be part of the curriculum – we have to do it (Int.2).

S's general understanding of music with children had changed to the point where she was valuing it differently. She was also enjoying doing something she had previously found a struggle.

I certainly see a lot more importance in it. I remember a long time ago, I was just thinking well this is just something we <u>have</u> to do, but now I see a lot more educational value in it, I see a lot more <u>fun</u> in it, and I just – some days I find it difficult but generally I look forward to it, it's something I'm <u>enjoying</u> doing with the children (Int.3).

It meant a great deal to her when her director made a point of congratulating her on how successfully she had taken up the challenges in the collaboration. S was very surprised and very pleased about this, and was able to accept it as a valid observation.

[I was] very pleased, and …in my own self-assessment I would say that too – that I have more confidence; I know how to put a music session together, I know how to take the children's cues now, um, I know how to link other areas in with it, like maths, and the sounds of the words and what's rhyming (Int.3).

- **A change in personal and professional confidence**

S's sense of her own musicality had changed since the beginning of the collaboration. The researcher felt this was partly due to how well she had embraced the concept of allowing herself to be a musical co-player with the children, discovering her own musical responses in the process. This inevitably changed how she viewed herself.

As a musical person I'm much more interested in music, in learning songs and in really hearing what's in the music. … since being involved (in the collaboration) I've started to realize that I don't have to be like that, (no good at music) yeah, so that's just something that's been incredibly wonderful to me (Int.2).

This resulted in S making significant changes in her thinking and teaching practice around music. She had arrived at a broader understanding of musicality; one that incorporated her own responses.

> I think previously I would have thought musical skills was somebody who could play and instrument, whereas now I think musical skills is about understanding how music works and all the bits that are involved in it and how we can learn all of these bits even though we may or may not play an instrument and it helps us to understand music and enjoy music more – I can see how that all goes together (Int.3).

She was now listening to music in her personal life in a way she had not previously experienced in her life.

> On a CD I'm really enjoying just listening to <u>how</u> someone sings – I didn't do that before – I can hear the violin – hearing things I wouldn't have … listening much more closely – much more closely (Int.3).

She was making conscious choices to listen to music at home and becoming more discriminating.

> I feel it's relaxing – it makes you feel good – the music changes you when you hear it, and yes – I see that's musicality. I'm more fussy – if I don't like the music I change it whereas I wouldn't have done that before. If I'm reading or doing the housework I'll put on a CD – I didn't do that before (Int.3).

Gaining confidence in her music work had a general transfer effect, increasing her personal confidence as she had proved to herself that when she put in the effort, she was capable of improving her skills.

> This confidence … it's linked to all areas … and this is something I've noticed; it's because, doing this with you and because I'm seeing that my skills have improved with, um ... a bit of hard work – you know, putting a bit more effort into it, thinking more about it, <u>learning</u> stuff that I didn't know before (Int.3).

S found that having made big strides in her music learning gave her a sense of confidence in being able to learn other new things. She spoke of her recent attempts to learn new IT skills.

> And as I say to my kids sometimes, "you're smarter than you think you are", and I'm seeing that in <u>myself</u>, because learning new things, I now think … "well, if I sit here and stick at it, I'll work it out" … you know? … like - I'm not stupid – I can work it out! - and that's because of the music, it's

linked with the music, and I see myself on this evolutionary process … it's learning that I can do things (Int.3).

This newfound confidence had improved her self-esteem, especially in herself as a learner.

> The music… what I've been doing with you, continues to help me to know that I'm smarter than I think I am. That whole thing … that you're never too old to learn, and you can do things differently. I've learnt real things that I didn't think I had the capacity to learn, and I've learned that I can learn, and I've learnt that I can sing and I've learnt about sounds (Int.4).

It's important that the educator experiences pleasure when doing music – they are much more likely to do it with the children if they do. This was the case for S. Her attitude to music had fundamentally changed.

> Previously I definitely thought of music as something you teach, but now I think it's something we have fun with and play in that sense, but I guess I still see it as teaching a bit. It's a lot more fun – the children have a lot more fun (Int.3).

Summary

S's collaboration was very successful, despite facing significant difficulties; having to work with large groups with a diverse range of ages, and often having to cope with a high level of distraction in terms of extraneous noise. Despite these difficulties, she persevered and was able to develop and extend her musical skills and confidence, gaining a much more extensive understanding of music learning.

By the end of the collaboration she was able to create diverse and interesting lesson plans that indicated a clear grasp of music concepts and encouraged the children to take an active role in directing activities. Her strongest area was in her ability to work with imaginative contexts and focus on the children's learning; to facilitate and incorporate their creative input, acknowledge their spontaneous improvisations, and take them a step further in their music learning. Her self-beliefs underwent a dramatic change, and she discovered an ability to learn, and a musicality within herself that she had been previously unaware of.

The next chapter presents the last case study.

Chapter 7
Case Study 3: Participant 'B'

B is the director of a privately run preschool, situated on the same campus as a private primary school near a large country town. Her qualifications include a Diploma in Infants and Primary Teaching, and a Bachelor of Education. She had worked as a teacher for about 20 years, and before she came to the preschool she was teaching the Kindergarten class in the adjoining primary school. Most of her work had been with lower primary children and infants, and she had been directing the preschool for the past three years when she began the collaboration. She lives in the same town with her husband and two school age children.

Disclosure of past association

About seven years before this study began the researcher had worked as a part-time music teacher to some of the children in B's Kindergarten class. More recently, B had attended a music in-service given by the researcher about 9 months before the collaboration began.

Past music experiences

B described her parents as music lovers; social sing-a-longs with the family and friends were a part of her childhood. Growing up, B experienced two musically rich cultures; living with her family in Papua New Guinea and later in Fiji. She describes both cultures has having "a big impact on my appreciation of music" (Int.1).

In her primary education B sang in a choir, which she loved. She took classical guitar lessons for a time, and enjoyed singing in a school choir. She plays guitar a little, and her husband plays the violin and piano, and he and the children like to play and sing musical items at family parties, something B values highly. B felt she had a strong sense of her own musicality, having musical interests and experiences that give her a potentially useful basis for doing music.

> Listening to music, I love that. I have a strong interest in different types of music. I've always loved singing and music and so I've just always done that with children. I do like dancing - I used to do a lot of aerobics and trained as a teacher a bit (Int.1).

- **Teacher training**

B described the music component of her teacher training as inadequate. Although she remembered the teacher as being very good, she did not feel that she gained useful or relevant skills that she would enable her to do music with young children. This had a direct impact on B's readiness to do music with her children.

> (I want to do more music) but I've never been taught what to do (Int.1).

She described a training that focused on traditional music tuition at the expense of applicable knowledge.

> Our teacher tried to teach us musical notes … doing little performances and things like that was not as beneficial as …making up lessons and getting resources, things that you could get your hands on; we didn't have much of that. (we needed) building up the confidence more, of actually doing workshops and singing the songs …we didn't do the practical stuff … it just wasn't enough (Int.1).

Later in the collaboration, when she had more experience of what could be done in music, she reflected again on her teacher training.

> I was lost, not having something to go on, because I've never been trained in it [music] (Int.3).

B's music practice before being involved in the study – in her own words

The preschool catered for about 20 three year olds (Reception), and 20 four year olds (Transition) and had three full-time staff and some casual staff. Unusually well resourced, the preschool had access to an in-house primary music specialist who visited the preschool twice a week to lead singing sessions;

> Basically to sing little songs with them, and questions going around where they sing their names and things like that (Int.1).

In addition, the transition children (4 year olds) went across to the primary school to sing with the Kinder and Year 1 children each week.

> We go over to the music centre and A (specialist) runs it and we just sing all these songs with the piano (Int.1).

As the director, B had almost complete freedom in designing the preschool curriculum with her team and ready access to extensive resources. She could apply to the school's umbrella body for professional development, who rarely refused a request.

I feel I've got everything I need and I can go to the music centre to get anything else (Int.1).

B responded to the open invitation to take part in this study after attending an in-service presented by the researcher at a local preschool. This was the only music in-service she had attended, or been aware of in the area.

That's partly why I'm doing this, because I loved your approach … and I know it's an approach I can take on board ... your expectations of children … the way you plan a lesson, is what I would expect, what I would like to be able to do (Int.1).

As a result of this in-service B felt she was now more aware of different concepts that could be explored in music in early childhood education. She felt the children's music needs were not being fully met by the in-house music specialist and she wanted to take part in the study to learn how to take music further. Currently there was no plan or program guiding either her music work or the music specialist's singing sessions with the children.

Both [the music specialist] and I haven't really stepped out further and done a lot of music like doing tempo and beat and all that - it's more just songs, so I feel it's important for children at this age to go further. I tend to use the CD's a lot, just songs and enjoying singing and dancing [but] I can see that there's more that you can do. I want the children to be confident themselves in music (Int.1).

Her asserted belief that music is essential for young children explains her professional aim to gain knowledge and confidence in music, which she felt she lacked.

I guess (I want) to gain confidence, resources and knowledge; because I haven't ever experienced real lessons or been taught anything about music to teach children, so I would love any guidance what-so-ever (Int.1).

B described the preschool curriculum as based on the educational theories of Reggio Emilia, in which music was considered an essential part of early childhood education. B often referred to using music as a tool for managing the mood of the children; most specifically, to calm them down, as she was very aware of the children's general mood. Keeping the children calm and quiet was a high priority for her.

And next week (at a concert) I'll know to keep it very calm because … it will be very exciting … so I'm very aware of that with the children (Int.1).

She also felt that a quiet atmosphere was better for the children's learning.

> Children pick up their learning skills better when they are calmer, … and I've learned to use my voice a lot too, by whispering, just calming them down (Int.1).

B had been finding it challenging to maintain the degree of control she wanted when doing music with the 2 - 3 year old Reception group.

> The Reception group are … a very young group and at the beginning of the year they were like babies and we found it very difficult even having some of them sitting down with me and singing songs with them but not in a circle, but then we were pretty firm at getting them used to sitting and having group time and now they're used to that, but they're reluctant (Int.1).

B talked of music as a management tool and a context for teaching in other learning areas, rather than as a specific learning area having it's own skills.

> Music gives the children the basis for rhythm … their personality almost, the way they grow up … they identify with different music ... it heightens the senses …it would probably help them with reading skills … helping them to learn. The children just love music and gain so much from musical experiences (Int.1).

She referred to always wanting to include 'content' in music activities, such as shapes, counting or numbers.

> I always integrate my learning into songs - I like to include learning in the song (Int.1).

When she was asked what she would most like to achieve in the collaboration, she again focused on music as a management tool.

> I would like to include singing and music just between other activities or moving from one area to another … and at the end of the day … I could use it if I was more confident in keeping them settled at that time with songs (Int.1).

B's Collaboration

The researcher's initial observations

The researcher's first impression of the preschool was its obvious affluence. The preschool building is set in a large lawned area, with a shaded area and sandpit. Towards the end of the fieldwork period, part of this area had been landscaped to create a terraced native garden area leading down to a tree house. The preschool has access to extensive school grounds, including a sports' oval, a school hall and a music centre close by.

The preschool building has a large main room arranged into sections using storage cabinets or bookshelves. Windows of different shapes are placed low enough for the children to look through. Furniture surfaces are decorated with green plants and an aquarium, and changing displays relate to current themes and topics. The largest area of the room is taken up with desks arranged as work stations. A separate small area provides a relaxing nook, and an open area of approximately 3 x 4 metres is reserved for group work. Most of the play materials were kept in cupboards behind drawn-down blinds. Some craft and artwork was displayed on the walls, but the room was dominated by displays created by the staff, such as a selection of scarves from different countries hanging across the room. Staff were polite and welcoming and there was a general atmosphere of quiet order.

- **B's teaching practice – what the researcher observed**

The collaboration started with the first interview, closely followed by the start of regular observations of the participant's music session on a fortnightly basis. At the beginning of the collaboration, B was coming to the end of her third year working in the preschool. She was still having difficulties adapting to the change from working in the primary school, often referring to her experience of working in preschool education as 'like a new career almost'. B's initial music sessions were very short; of 5 to 10 minutes duration, consisting mostly of singing along with a medley of nursery rhymes on a CD. The atmosphere in music sessions, as in the preschool overall, was somewhat restrained and controlled. When speaking to the children, B habitually spoke softly in a high sing-song style of voice, referring to the children as "boys and girls" and to herself in the third person. The most striking aspect of early observations was the children's low level of engagement. B organised them to be seated on the floor for most of a session, regularly reminding them to 'sit quietly', even when taking part in music activities.

- **"If I felt more confident'**

Entering the collaboration, B wavered between describing herself as doing music and singing with children on a regular basis, and needing to do more. She felt the main reason she did not do as much music with the children apart from some singing with a CD was a limited repertoire and because she lacked confidence.

> I would do more music if I felt more confident – I know it's important - if I knew more songs and games (Int.1).

She was particularly uncomfortable singing with other staff or parents around.

> When I'm on my own, just with the children, I just love it … it's just when someone else is watching or other people are involved (Int.1).

She did not feel confident enough to bring in her guitar to play for the children.

> I do play guitar … but I haven't been game enough to play it at school (Int.1).

B was aware that the music centre had a lot of music resources that she could look through for the collaboration, but she felt she did not know how to make use of them.

> I've had no one to guide me (in using resources) - I'm lost! (Int.1).

Early days; 'It was daunting'

Apart from the singing sessions with the music specialist, there was no current practice of the staff doing any group times specifically for music. B had talked about occasionally putting on a CD for the children, and that she used music generally a lot during the day, but the sessions the researcher came to observe were B's first attempts at leading the children in a dedicated music session. Initially, B modelled her sessions on the ones she had seen the music specialist do; a typical session being made up of a few songs where the children were seated, listening to B while she chanted songs that involved them singing back their name, or listening to B read a story. The children continued to sit to listen to the medley of nursery rhymes on the CD. There was no movement, instruments or game playing, and in any case, the play space was not large enough to adequately accommodate the twenty children in a group, unless they were sitting down. The researcher asked if it might be possible to move some of the furniture to create a larger space, or ideally to break the large group of twenty children into two smaller groups, to allow more room for the children to move more freely. She also made some suggestions for extension activities based on the materials B was using, to get the children up and moving.

B had expressed her unease at the prospect of being observed, and often commented on this in the discussions after the observed sessions. It was still an issue for her well into the collaboration;

> And especially when you have someone watching you too – do you know what I mean? – it's sort of - that was a struggle (Int.2).

The researcher tried to alleviate this anxiety early on as much as possible by acknowledging that being observed while working, even by someone who you know is there to provide support, can be a very stressful experience, and by asking B to direct her to where she would like her to sit. She also suggested that an alternative way to look at observations was that they allowed the participant to take part in the direction of the collaboration as they created a common context from which to work together. The collaboration was reliant on observation to give the researcher a clear idea of how to support B in her own practice in a highly individual manner, and meet her specific needs, rather than a means of assessing her practice. To underline this, the researcher opened the discussion after each observation by asking B how she herself felt the session went. This naturally led to B directing the researcher through her own observations and questions, in how best to offer supportive feedback, and which new materials, activities and/or resources were most relevant, based on the day's music session.

- **Challenging existing ideas of good teaching practice**

Having had the chance to observe B while working, the researcher could easily understand how the thought of the potential noise and movement of the children playing instruments, or playing games would be very challenging to B's general need to maintain a high level of control of the children's behaviour. As she observed B's practice and listened to her reflections on her work in discussions, the researcher also realised that B had no first hand experience of how a fully engaged playful activity with a group of children might work, or what it might look like. She made positive comments where she could and suggested that B could introduce some simple activities that involved getting the children up and moving. These activities needed very little preparation as were very easy to learn chants, and most importantly, were likely to engage the children.

The researcher vividly described how the suggested activities could be presented and played in practice, emphasising how the teacher modelled clear movements using an animated chant, showing the children how to play the game by simply doing it, without instruction. She stressed how presenting activities through action would readily engage the children, removing the need for instruction. Giving the children a demonstration would activate their listening and attention to work out how to participate in the game themselves. In this way participating in the activities embodies learning. As the researcher was not free to demonstrate the activity with the children herself, due to the ethical constraints of the study, she hoped to inspire B to move beyond her current practice by giving her a clear picture of presentation and outcomes.

B liked to know the specific learning in any activity, so the researcher gave B a brief description of the underlying pedagogy, outlining the specific skills developed in such a game. She also discussed how this simple game could be extended to further develop those skills and offer different levels of challenge to an individual child in a group setting. In this way, differential learning was embedded in a game to stimulate

different levels of learning. The researcher made a deliberate point of describing the typical participation as excited and potentially noisy, ideally erupting into spontaneous ideas for additions to the game which were an excellent sign of concentrated engagement, and that this would be a good outcome. A simple strategy for getting the children to quickly refocus to manage the excitement levels meant that B did not need to fear losing control of the group. These descriptions were couched in terms of being good teaching practice, as a gentle way of indirectly challenging B's belief that good teaching was maintaining a quiet and orderly atmosphere at all times.

- **The emergence of a paradox**

Despite being very enthusiastic about these ideas, B did not yet introduce any of the new materials, or refer to them again. Thinking that her approach had been too challenging, the researcher took a step back and instead suggested ways B could make more use of her existing songs with extensions. In particular, the researcher talked with B about the importance of getting the children up and moving as music was most naturally expressed through movement for the young child. In response to B's requests for new ideas, she suggested simple chanting and instrument games that she hoped would lead towards more active music making, where the children could actively explore specific music skills. Ideas and plans arising from the discussions were routinely recorded and emailed to each participant the day after each observed session. However, B's music sessions continued to be fairly static and low-key. While the researcher felt that B was struggling with processing or utilising these suggestions in her practice at this time, B's journal entries recorded a different perspective.

> Planning to act out songs – I am feeling I don't have enough time – I'm looking forward to next year although I am trying out as many of the ideas as I can (Jnl. October 2008).

> I gained some great ideas from (the researcher) – I am doing one with both groups and they are responding well (Jnl. October 2008).

The researcher was hoping that if B were to try one of these activities, the children's enjoyment would encourage B and give her more confidence. Again, B was enthusiastic in discussions, taking cursory notes of ideas for the following sessions, and requesting the offered supports of taped songs, notes and word sheets from the researcher, but there was little evidence of her using these in her sessions. Confusingly, her journal entries at the time seem to suggest that she had not written down ideas or worked through them with the researcher, and therefore she did not feel confident.

> I feel like I need to sit down and write these ideas down and go through them with you so I am confident with the children (Jnl. November 2008).

These conflicting responses were confusing for the researcher. There seemed to be a consistent paradox at play here, between the positive nature of B's responses to her input in discussions being at odds with her apparent reluctance to act on it in practice. It felt to the researcher that the collaboration was making little head way. The researcher wondered if there was some better way to support and engage B to act on the input she was receiving, but could not come up with any more strategies. that Although B was taking part in the collaboration, the researcher came to the conclusion that perhaps it was not necessarily a high priority for her. However, after four months, B was starting to take new steps;

> I felt more confident today – especially not using the CD player as I have used it often as I didn't feel comfortable using my own voice alone...but I feel I am overcoming that with all these ideas…I felt as though I got the idea yesterday after (discussion) I just need to put it into practice. (Jnl. November 2008).

It was not clear to the researcher what B meant by 'the idea', but decided it was best to be patient and see what transpired. When B did focus on implementing a plan, she felt she had made a breakthrough, although it is unclear to the researcher what this was.

> It was after the last few sessions, writing lesson plans up … it suddenly all clicked for me – I know what [the researcher] was talking about – it was an Ah-ha! moment (Jnl., November 2008).

The researcher was now convinced by the vagueness of these entries that, despite her many positive remarks, B was in fact being hampered by having a much greater lack of confidence in her own ability to do music than had been acknowledged, and that she was threatened enough by the whole process of collaboration to be unconsciously using a strategy of avoidance. As much as the researcher wanted to clarify this, she felt that B's lack of confidence meant it would not be appropriate to question B directly on the remarks in her journal, or the apparent paradox, as she suspected that this would be too challenging, and potentially counter-productive.

In the second interview, B made a remark that alerted the researcher to the realisation that B's lack of confidence around music might be more generalised. When asked what she felt would make the collaboration more effective, B described how demonstration lessons would be a valuable part of the model. The researcher's response is in italics.

> I think that would be beneficial as well [as observing and giving feed-back] … doing lessons and showing the teacher what to do – a combination of the two, and working together with the teacher, like team teaching – it would build the confidence of the other teacher as well. That could help someone,

especially new teachers out. Especially with behavioural skills and situations and things like that. [*Do you mean, like general teaching skills*?] Yes, like that (Int.2).

Another complicating factor was that the researcher had been experiencing a very different dynamic in the other two collaborations, and had not fully appreciated just how differently the collaboration with B was operating. In short, it took some time for her to realise that B's positive verbal responses disguised a very real lack of confidence and that this required her to work with B differently. She needed to adjust her expectations and change her focus, working with B on her actual practice by suggesting very small adjustments and being more sensitive to B's more general professional insecurities.

- **A challenge in the researcher's learning curve**

However, as a result of this paradox, the researcher had developed a level of private frustration within this collaboration and felt she had to carefully reassess how she herself was working with B in the collaboration.She was personally very concerned about feeling negative towards B's practice, and felt it was imperative that she work through this so as not to jeopardize the collaborative relationship by carrying a negative attitude. On reflection she realised that her current mentoring content with B was on the wrong track, partly due to an initial misunderstanding she had formed about B's teaching practice stemming from the beginning of the collaboration.

Based on her first interview with B and early conversations and discussions, the researcher had made misplaced assumptions about B's teaching practice, which were confounded by regular observations in the early months of the collaboration. Initially the researcher had thought the difference between B's observed practice and her self-reported practice was a result of feeling uneasy while being observed, and that B would revert to a more assured practice as she became more comfortable. As this had not eventuated, the researcher felt she needed to reassess and think more deeply about what elements were at play. As described above, she came to the understanding that the root cause of the paradox was a significant lack of confidence on B's part, making her particularly vulnerable. The researcher realised she needed to be more patient, and resolved to encourage B at every turn to help her build confidence from the ground up, and in the meantime wait and see what transpired over time. She now worked with very different expectations, and on the premise that if B could feel more personally validated she might then be ready to look at alternatives to her current teaching style. Although there had been no overt evidence of stress in the collaboration, this change in emphasis from the researcher did subtly improve the quality of the relationship, even if it meant that things moved at a much slower pace.

As challenging as this was at the time, in retrospect the researcher found this to be an invaluable lesson as a mentor, and a very real insight into how a participant could disguise a very deep level of insecurity. She now

realised how a participant's lack of personal confidence could be expressed as feigned confidence, and that this could indicate that confidence was an even more significant factor than for a participant who could openly express a lack of confidence.

- **Taking a new path**

In a session around this time, B had taken the welcome step of encouraging the children to dance freely to a CD of nursery rhymes. Unfortunately the space reserved for group work was too small to allow a large group of twenty children to dance or move around freely. Athough they clearly enjoyed the prospect of moving and dancing, the children could only jiggle about on the spot to avoid bumping into each other. In the following discussion, the researcher gave very enthusiastic feedback to B about her decision to get the children up to dance, and made specific observations of how individual children clearly enjoyed it, hoping to encourage this to happen more often. She again urged B to consider enlarging the free play area and/or splitting the large group into two smaller ones for music, as it would give the children more room to move, and make B's job much easier.

B was still not ready to try this approach, but soon after this discussion, she introduced an instrument activity with tapping sticks where she asked the children to tap or clap and sing along. The use of the instruments was closely monitored, and movement was still kept to a minimum. The atmosphere was low-key, as there was a lot of time taken up with instructions around when to pick up, play, and put down the instruments. However, it was a start, and the researcher made a point of warmly congratulating B on introducing these types of activities. A very positive step was that B was working hard in weaning herself off relying so heavily on a CD. She started to sing songs herself with the CD as back-up support, and as she gained confidence she started to sing without the CD. This clearly was a source of satisfaction.

> I felt more confident today – especially not using the CD player as I have used it often as I did not feel comfortable using my own voice alone … but I feel I am overcoming that with all your ideas. (Jnl. November 2008).

However she was still thinking of music as a management tool.

> Music is really beneficial, especially with helping with routine and discipline (Int.2).

As a general suggestion, the researcher had talked about using praise to direct the children's attention to specific emergent skills. Part of B's practice was to habitually congratulate the children for 'being good' in a general way, which did not identify any particular behaviour that the child could understand as valued, and

therefore seek to repeat. In discussions, without directly referring to this, the researcher brought up the notion of utilising positive feedback to identify a specific action performed by a child, as a signpost to the other children and to build a more secure confidence in that individual child. For example, "I could see *Jenny* was listening and counting with her fingers really carefully then – is that how you worked out how many counts you heard? Well done, *Jenny*" was more supportive of the children's learning individually and collectively than a general "You were great girls and boys – well done".

With B and the other participants, any suggestions of this nature were worded gently and indirectly to avoid any suggestion of criticism. For example, when discussing an activity involving dynamic contrasts the researcher said: "A colleague once pointed out to me that you can get the kids to focus on a how they, maybe – made the sound louder, for example, by singling out one kid who's doing just that by using a big swing with his arm, and congratulating him on getting that effect – then all the other kids notice and try to do that too, and I found it worked a treat." This 'softly, softly' approach seemed to be particularly appropriate to B's needs. The researcher was now much more aware of how very inadequate B was feeling even though she was going out of her way to conceal her sense of inadequacy.

- **Management confidence and the significance of working with small groups**

After starting the new year, and feeling challenged by the new intake of younger children B asked for music activities that would engage the youngest children. In particular, one child was inconsolable every day for a whole term whenever her mother left – a very stressful situation for B. Although she had not yet taken up the researcher's suggestion of working in smaller groups, she was trying to introduce new activities and struggling with the large group. Her journal entries show the challenge of the new intake of very young children was prompting her to think again about changing the existing structure.

> I felt I needed to talk to [the researcher] to get some ideas of where to start with this group of children – very young and no idea of sitting … Planning on trying music sessions with smaller groups. (Jnl. February 2009).

Meanwhile, in response to B's request, the researcher walked through a small set of activities with B, stressing the particular importance of movement activities. B had by this stage started to use the *Music Magic* resource, and was introducing some new materials, and making some use of instruments. The researcher had talked about giving the children opportunities to play informally with instruments that could have a special place in the room so they were more available. B was agreeable to this, and was allowing the children more of a free rein in their informal play outside of sessions, leaving some instruments out on the shelves for the children to play with.

Last week, for example, after doing The Big Bass Drum, the children grabbed the instruments off the shelf and they were just playing them just naturally and we let them do that because it was quite soft. [*Have you seen them do that before?*] Not necessarily, and even over in the corner they were tapping saucepans and things like that, so it's just coming out (Int.2).

However B still had a conflict between her vocal support for the theory of learning through play and her traditional teaching practice, made evident in the objectives and evaluation of a typical lesson plan pasted into her journal, such as the exmple below. These objectives featured in every lesson plan pasted in her book, up to late May, four months before the end of the collaboration.

Objectives:
For children to experience being part of a large group
For children to sit quietly during group times
For children to become part of group discussions and voice their ideas and experiences.
For children to follow actions to any songs, finger plays and music.

Evaluation
Fantastic! Children responded very well to getting their own tapping sticks. Children listened to instructions well, learning how to sit in group time and follow instructions (Jnl. February 2009).

As she took up some new challenges, B was finding it hard to manage with the big group of children, and brought this up with the researcher in an interview. She presented this as a fresh idea.

I'm thinking when I teach a new group of children different songs of activities that I might just take a group of 10 children and do it with them first … so you can enjoy, there's more interaction … so I'm going to try that – and they can teach the others – I just thought it through logically and came up with that decision – is that sort of what you would do? (Int.2)

About 6 weeks after this interview, B finally split the group into two, and at the same time started to use more flexible structures in the music session. This resulted in something of a breakthrough.

I taught music lessons with 10 children – worked much better – children very responsive. Loved working with sound and liked using things in the room as sound instruments (Jnl. April 2009).

Working in small groups made a considerable difference for both the children and for B. Although the sessions were still passive and orientated around instruction, the researcher gave B positive feedback about any moves made towards creating a more active session, and focused especially on any invitations B offered

to the children for their input. She could see that B was making real attempts to move towards a more animated lesson, even though this was a big step out of her comfort zone.

During the collaboration, B brought up an important point about the specific challenges music brings to educators, describing music as being different to the other learning areas because it relies on specialist knowledge.

> I guess it's (music) just a different area from anything else that you do … like when you teach mathematical concepts of literacy or anything like that music is so very different – you have to have a lot of knowledge, and especially when you haven't had that knowledge it's difficult and you've got to research it and gain it from other areas. We're trained in literacy and numeracy as teachers, but not necessarily music. That's where people like me are struggling and trying to work out what to do (Int. 2).

This has been referred to by researchers noting that generalist teachers are understandably uncomfortable with learning areas where they do not have the foundations skills in place from their own education (Downie, 1999).

Being playful: A big step

While the importance of learning through play is accepted as a central tenet of early education by most educators, it can be a threatening concept in practice, especially if an educator's sense of professional competence is linked to maintaining a high degree of control of the children. B had talked often of how she liked to utilize music as a management tool.

> I tend to be very aware … I pick up on the children if they are very unsettled … so I tend to like to start the day very calm, with music (Int.1).

This can be very an effective strategy when dealing with fractious children. However, in B's case, it had overshadowed the role of music as a form of play. The researcher talked a lot about the opportunities available for learning through play with music, but B had not felt comfortable enough yet to introduce truly playful activities. However, half way through the collaboration B was starting to reflect openly about this challenge, after she had taken some tentative steps into new territory. Working towards taking a more playful approach to music sessions was a profound challenge to B's habitual teaching practice, but also to her own natural reticence as a person. It was unclear if B was genuinely unaware of how heavily her practice relied on the traditional teacher as instructor model, but she was getting a sense of her own inhibition, and this was

a crucial discovery for her. She had effectively identified the point where her personal sense of reticence was being challenged by her desire to grow professionally. Her understanding of best practice was changing.

> I guess I was in my own little rut … I feel I've become more confident in tackling new things, confident to try things. I feel as if I have just grown, in not being daunted by attempting things, now I will try different things (Int.2).

The need to retain a sense of being professionally appropriate was now acting as a catalyst for change, pushing her out of her comfort zone into new areas of practice. This is a vulnerable place in which to find oneself, and the researcher felt it was important that the collaboration take very small steps at a relaxed pace, with a lot of personal support, to remain effective. The researcher now understood that B was more insecure about making changes than she was prepared to admit to. However, as she made progress with introducing new activities and extending her teaching style, B's discomfort around being observed was easing, and by the end of the collaboration she felt it was not so much of an issue for her. Increased confidence seemed to have led to a more robust learning attitude of 'getting on with it', in both a personal and professional sense.

> I felt intimidated, [small laugh] a little bit, but it's just because of my confidence – and no, I've become more confident, and even being in this environment with other people around, I've had to become more confident with just teaching and getting on with it (Int.3).

Over many months, and only when - she felt she could do so without causing any negative effect, the researcher encouraged B to try out specifically playful music activities that the children would readily engage with, as a way of introducing different notions of teaching practice that she hoped would result in a positive teaching experience for B. With the researcher, she discussed the idea of building a session around the 'Wheels of the Bus' song which included the children taking an imaginary bus ride to the sea to eat ice-creams. She expressed surprise and delight at the children's learning and engagement. The response from the children was immediate and extremely affirming for her.

> In the second week when I did that lesson … attempted it with the older children and they were just fantastic … wonderful, and it was really good to get that response…I love the reaction of the children …I go away in the afternoon feeling great! (laugh) it was just enjoyable! (Int.2)

Supportive responses from colleagues were also very affirming for her.

> After the second or third music lesson they all said "Oh! That was great!" sort of thing …which is important, to give feedback to each other (Int.2).

For the first time, she felt secure enough to step back from the instructor's role and step into the role of co-player, inviting the children's ideas and taking up their suggestions for variations. She was now more aware and appreciative of the children's endless capacity for spontaneous improvisation.

> I am happy that these children just astonish me because I've never had a group of children who have made up verses … so they were just offering other verses, so we were doing that and it was so much fun, and I had the confidence to do that (Int.4).

B's acceptance of the rhetoric around the importance of play was now connecting with a new and real pedagogical understanding based in practice. This was a valuable first-hand experience, and reflecting on this later in an interview, she was able to arrive at a genuine understanding of the role of play.

> Just learning that they're learning through play, just knowing that they are learning a lot through play and that's the way you can actually teach as well – that was a big step (Int.3).

She felt that this was the most important thing she got out of the collaboration, something that had extended her understanding of effective teaching practice;

> I think that's one of the most important aspects (of the collaboration) is that I realized that it (music) is play, and ... it has to be play. And that you can bring the music into the play – I didn't realize you could do that, so that was really important (Int.3).

As B's confidence was growing, the researcher made a point of mentioning that one of the great aspects of working playfully with the children was that it could be fun for the educator too. Having a go was more important than having to get things right every time, and a failure was better than not trying at all. She pointed out that making mistakes and handling them with acceptance and humour was good modelling for the children. Intentional mistakes could also be a useful way to involve the children by asking for their help in remembering the words or melody of a song. This accepting and relaxed attitude around music behaviours would help create a more inviting learning place for both the teacher and the children.

To illustrate the idea that failures were part of learning, the researcher occasionally shared various anecdotes of 'disasters' from her own teaching experience, where she had forgotten words, or tried something and it had fallen flat, for example. She presented these as funny anecdotes to model herself as a co-learner and to moderate unrealistic expectations. She explained that while one group of children may love a particular song or music game this did not guarantee that every other group would love it too, and that this was just a normal part of the ups and downs of teaching music. In sharing these experiences, as she did with all the participants, the researcher was hoping to introduce the notion that failure was an inevitable part of success,

and the perceived success or failure of a particular activity did not necessarily depend 100% on the educator's presentation, as there were another factors in the equation. B was very interested in these types of comments from the researcher, and seemed to find them reassuring.

> I guess in a way it's sort of made me mature more too in just thinking that no-one looks at you, and that, it's just – and getting in and having fun. I think it's been a learning curve as well, and just yeah, playing the games (Int.3).

For the last five months of the collaboration, B had broken up the large groups into two and was now working with the children in smaller groups of ten or so. She was finding it was beneficial not just for the children, but also for herself – as she felt less exposed, and was able to focus more easily on individual children. B had tried a few little games and was able to apply specific management skills (See Appendix H) effectively to manage the excitement engendered by musical games, allowing her to relax a little.

> I taught Music lessons with 10 children – worked much better – children were very responsive. Loved working with sound and liked using things in the room as sound instruments (Jnl. April 2009).

In discussions the researcher made a point of always giving B very positive feedback whenever she showed any sign in her work that hinted at a more playful approach in her teaching style, and whenever she tried anything beyond what she had always done. Towards the end of the collaboration she was starting to tentatively try out some of the simpler games and activities that involved individual movements. She had started to include more movement, tapping a beat as she sang, encouraging the children to clap the beat when they sang songs and improvising with the children. She was noticing a change in the children's level of engagement.

> There's a lot more movement, a relaxed atmosphere, and things happening. They're much better in sort of listening and focusing, just with all the things that we're doing, and joining in with all the little games and things like that (Int.3).

B was gaining a deeper understanding of the role of play as the primary medium of the young child's learning. She had extended her sense of professional competence to include a more relaxed level of management. Although she had never mentioned being concerned about noise levels, or the children reaching a high level of playful excitement, her comments here suggest that these had been unspoken concerns that were now not so much of an issue for her.

> Where the children are actually doing a lot of it themselves, yes, where they're actually doing it – that's been a deep understanding, sort of knowing that they learn through doing, and the same as learn through moving, and that it's OK to have noise and to have that sort of thing happening in a music lesson. I think that's a big step (Int.3).

The researcher now felt that part of the reason that B did not feel comfortable was her own inhibition at being playful. This was only an intuitive guess, but at the end of the collaboration B confirmed that this was the case.

> And then I learned to relax more with the children, and I had to change my teaching approach as well because I tend to say 'sit quietly' and things like that, so changing my approach into a sort of play type situation, and that was, that was a big step for me, of learning – and it does work – I'm realizing it does work and that's the way you've got to do it with little children... I'm less inhibited, just much more confident (Int.3).

The smaller groups meant that the children were also feeling less exposed and inhibited, and as a result were also singing more;

> And even – we'll sing a question to them and they can all confidently reply by singing … that hasn't happened with other years in Reception – they tended to be a bit scared of singing but these kids are much more confident in doing that sort of thing, and singing back (Int.3).

It is very possible that B felt much more at ease when the researcher was not observing her practice, as her descriptions of her practice still contrasted with what the researcher was seeing. She was saying all the right things, but it was not being translated into her practice yet. The music sessions the researcher observed were still quite static, with only a little physical or playful activity for the children, as the emphasis was still on following instructions, resulting in a low key and restrained atmosphere with a low level of engagement. Any movement in activities was highly prescribed. However B's perception was different, perhaps because her focus was still more on how she was feeling, rather than how the children were responding, and she reported that she was able to relax more for music sessions.

> Being more relaxed and just going with the children – I love that – and that's been a huge shove …I guess one thing that you did say to me is that the movement is the most important so realizing that for the children to move it's so important, and all the other concepts that come with the music when they are taught in a sequential order sort of make more sense to the children (Int.3).

This dichotomy does not necessarily mean there was not a meaningful change for B, but that, while there was a shift in her thinking,
it had yet to take root in her practice. Six months after the collaboration was over, B felt she was comfortable singing, and she reported feeling more confident and less intimidated in general.

> I just do it (sing) without thinking about it – like moving more freely with the children and being less inhibited – in music time – or just when we are outside dancing, or anytime really. I just sing now, without any hesitation, and confidently… so I'm using my own voice a lot more (Int.4).

She described how she was now improvising songs herself, and was thinking about her work differently;

> It's different (doing music) in that I approach it differently. I'm a lot more confident, and I use different resources and songs, and all sorts of different places more, then making up my own songs with the children a lot more, and just singing on my own as well, and doing actions with them, and things like that (Int.4).

She was now more comfortable with the level of activity inherent in a good music session.

> I'm more relaxed with the way things are with music, like with the way – where the children are learning more. Where there's movement and you know that the children are learning …I guess one thing that you did say to me is that the movement is the most important so realizing that for the children to move it's so important … not just sitting down and working and things like that, actually doing a lot more (Int.3).

- **The teacher as learner: 'it's been a learning curve'**

In the process of preparing the educators to participate in the study, it had been explained that while a collaboration conducted outside a research setting would automatically include demonstration lessons, this could not happen in this particular study due to the university's ethical constraints. Even though she was made fully aware that these constraints were binding and not at the discretion of the researcher, B had struggled with this limitation and in the first few months, at each visit, she had repeatedly requested that the researcher do demonstration lessons for her. This came up nearly every visit for the first few months, requiring the researcher to go over the reasons why she could not give demonstrations lessons or work as a team teacher with B. On each occasion she underlined that she would endeavour to offer as much support as she could. B's initial reluctance to accept this created a slight tension, but eventually she stopped asking and appeared to accept that the collaboration would be as it was originally offered.

As noted in Chapter 3, the researcher had had lengthy discussions with B during the process of inviting interest from educators to be participants. It had been explained that in agreeing to be a participant, the educator was taking on a commitment to a regular music time, regular observation, and learning and presenting new materials. However, the researcher had cause to wonder in later months if B had agreed to be a participant with the hope that the researcher could become the main music provider, with B acting as a support staff member, rather than the other way around; the very situation the study was designed to avoid. This may have been a cause for disappointment or frustration for B. Coupled with the depth of her lack of confidence, this may explain some of the difficulties encountered in this collaboration.

To introduce any new materials, from the simplest chant to a new song, B needed to take the preparatory steps of learning the new material and familiarizing herself with the activity; envisaging how to organise the children in the space, and thinking about how to present the game to ensure it could be played successfully. To support this preparation, the researcher would workshop an activity B had chosen to do for a following music time, acting as a soundboard, and offering ideas. However, for B this preparation did not seem to translate easily into practice. This unfortunately led to some disappointments when B's attempts to introduce new activities did not work as well as they might have. This was more of an issue for the researcher than for B, as the researcher had previous experience of how engaged the children could potentially be by such an activity. Early on in the collaboration, B's journal entries show how she was grappling with taking ownership of the preparation. Despite this she was happy with her progress.

> I felt as though I got the idea yesterday after talking to you … I just need to put it into practice. I feel like I need to sit down and write these ideas down and go through them with you, so I am confident with the children. I really feel I am starting to grow and develop skills in Music (Jnl. November 2008).

To provide as much support as possible, the researcher's suggestions were offered with practical support. It is important to clarify here that the suggestions coming from the researcher were in response to requests from the participant, and were driven by the participant's own practice. There was no attempt to impose a ready-made, one-size-fits-all program. At the same time, things were not left up to the participant alone. The researcher often came up with ideas which she offered and outlined in discussions, and referred to a pedagogical framework that could be understood as a sequential structure that satisfied the curriculum framework. Over the course of the collaborations, the researcher hoped to illuminate a flexible didactic framework that ultimately underpinned a sequential program of music learning for the children. Of necessity this was a flexible model, responding to the current themes in the preschool's particular program.

B was starting to reflect on her existing practice, and becoming aware of the depth of a learning curve that required her to engage more directly with the collaboration.

I guess I was more dependent on music provided for me like CD's and that but now I'm having to think a lot more about the music and the lesson and the planning of it, and that's making me think and understand music a lot more and what I'm trying to achieve with the children, and my expectations (Int.2).

She was discovering that there was perhaps more to learn than she had anticipated. However, she was now feeling secure enough to speak about insecurities she had not felt able to disclose before. Her comment on her own musicality suggests that her general sense of musicality was connected more specifically to music skills.

I realize my own lack of musicality… I don't know anything, really, I'm starting from scratch (Int. 2).

In contrast to this reflection of her professional experience, B was observing changes in her personal musical responses outside of work.

I suddenly thought last week that I'm more aware of music, just even my own music and playing music. Often my husband will put on a CD and listen to it, and I'm more in tune with things, and I'm enjoying it more – I don't know why! [laugh] (Int.2)

Throughout the collaboration, it seemed that B was ambivalent in her engagement as a learner in the collaboration, perhaps for the reasons posited above. In the second interview, held after about 5 months of collaboration, B's own description of her level of engagement, as positive as it sounds on the surface, suggests why the collaboration was not as effective for her as it might have been. This seems to suggest that B did not necessarily view the workshopping done in the discussions as a definitive preparation for following sessions but more as a discussion of broad-stroke ideas from which she could cherry pick in an ad hoc manner. Again, this is spoken of couched in terms of growing confidence.

I feel as if I have just grown, in not being daunted by attempting things, now I will try different things, especially when you sing them to me and I just make an effort to remember one or two things and then do them myself and once I do them then I kind of do them always (Int.2).

The researcher had noticed that B had been making only very sketchy notes of the suggestions or planning content arising from the discussions, and given that she was going back to working with the children after a discussion, this must have made it more difficult for her to retain the information well enough to implement the ideas in future sessions. As mentioned before, the researcher emailed comprehensive notes on

workshopped ideas to each participant after the session, and she hoped this input would give B a level of support until she took more ownership of the content for herself. She was now familiar with the pattern of B's enthusiasm during the discussions for ideas that she did not then implement. Short of confronting her and asking why she did not act on her expressed intentions during discussions, the researcher was not sure of what to do about this. Yet B seemed to get a lot out of the discussions throughout the collaboration.

> To me, [the discussions after the observations] that's more beneficial, to me, ... just being able to talk out and get ideas from you, it's fantastic (Int.2).

> I thought the discussions were fantastic … because the feedback and the ideas and the direction were great – the most important part, I felt (Int.3).

She was putting less pressure on herself.

> You know there was a time when I was struggling with it, um, but then I thought "I'm just going to have fun with this and just do it slowly, in little bits" (Int.3).

When reflecting on the collaboration, B was conscious of the impact on her personally. Her words here describe the learning journey as she experienced it.

> I guess I expected a lot of myself and it just wasn't happening. I guess I've learnt a lot about myself in that way of learning new skills and how to teach myself new ways of dealing with the children. I've just got to be gentle on myself, and it does take time (Int.3).

- **Planning: 'I know where I want to go'**

B had indicated that she was aware of the need for a coordinated and sequential approach to music learning in her first interview.

> I would actually like to have more of a program happening – I guess that's why I want to do this (be in the study) …and I'd like to, sort of, fill in the gaps (Int.1).

Observations of her sessions, and listening to her comments in discussion times indicated that B was struggling to focus on planning and was finding it hard to make time to plan for music sessions. As a consequence she was only rarely introducing new materials, and tended to rely on her small existing repertoire. After giving positive feedback wherever possible on what she had just observed, the researcher tried to draw B into focusing on a plan for her next session, by building on the successes of the session she

had just done. However, B resisted this by continuing to ask the researcher what she thought should come next. In the first half of the collaboration the researcher responded with specific ideas and suggestions: simple songs and games to explore stopping and starting to establish good management by the children of sound levels, and the contrasting elements of tempo and dynamics for example, (along with the relevant pedagogy), that she felt B would be easily able to put into practice. Yet as discussed, B did not usually take up these plans.

The researcher recommended songs and games from resources to which B already had easy access, to make it as easy as possible for her. Initially B wanted the researcher to design the music sessions for her. The researcher was happy to make suggestions, but she also felt it was important to continually invite B's input and respond positively to her ideas, in an effort to build her confidence. While this level of support was to be expected in the early months of the collaboration, after three or four months the researcher started to suggest that it was time for B to have a go, with her support, at planning a short music session. She suggested B could read the discussion notes emailed after each session, or use an activity plan in the resource she was using, focusing on introducing one new element. For example, as she had been stressing the importance of movement, the researcher encouraged B to think of rhythmic movements she could model/suggest to the children when listening to or singing a song. To some degree, this approach was successful and B did start to introduce some new ideas.

B was finding it difficult to find time because, in her role as director of the preschool, there were many other tasks that had to be done. This is understandable, and perhaps her decision to participate in the collaboration had been made without factoring in the required extra time. Naturally, not having adequate time to learn and prepare for music sessions made it difficult for B to acquire new skills.

> I am feeling I don't have enough time for all I want to do especially with Musical activities – as all I am very busy with administration, reports, Reception and Kinder orientations, but … I am looking forward to next year (Jnl. October 2008).

Although B's difficulties in investing more time in preparing her music sessions was a source of disappointment for the researcher, she had to remind herself to consciously step back and accept that the aims and utilization of the collaboration were ultimately decided by the participant. She was concerned that the lack of preparation ahead of time sometimes resulted in a less than enthusiastic response from the children, which naturally had the unfortunate effect of undermining B's confidence in her progress. However, this was evident only from close observation – the remarks in her journal give no hint of things not progressing well.

> Thoughts over January;

Felt I was more confident singing and planning musical experiences towards the end of 2008. Grown in musical knowledge considerably since July. More ready to try new things. More confident in myself (Jnl. January, 2009).

The participants had been told at the beginning of the study that they could withdraw from the collaboration at any time, for any reason which they were under no pressure to disclose, yet B did not do this, even though she appeared to be struggling. She was still hesitant to access resources – she appeared to want a ready made plan by the researcher, rather than to make a start to try to plan activities or sessions herself. In the next term in the New Year, however, B chose a resource that featured a sequence of activities as her main support. She explained in discussions that she selected it because of the structure it offered, as it outlined lesson plans and a sequential learning of music concepts.

You know we struggled for a while until we found the resource that we wanted to follow and followed it to the 't' and it gave you confidence. I think, especially when you are new at something – having structure, and having something that was there that you could just follow, do with the children (Int.3).

Her tenacity paid off, as she slowly started to become a little more involved in putting some ideas into practice. Then came a breakthrough. B had often mentioned that she loved to read to the children, so the researcher suggested that she could create a music session around a familiar story line. Using *The Wheels on the Bus* story and song, B had the idea of extending it to include an imaginary trip to the beach. The researcher made some suggestions for related activities, and B added other songs and used balls and a parachute. Unfortunately the researcher was not present to observe this lesson. B was very excited about her success with this, feeling it had worked very well and she often referred to this particular lesson in interviews over the following ten months. It was a high point for her in the collaboration.

I was really surprised. The children loved the story and combining songs, dramatization and movement altogether. They were very focused and engaged through the whole lesson. Very good listening. … I finally feel as though I got the whole idea behind what you – (the researcher) have been encouraging me to do plus I added my own touch and it all seemed to work – I felt confident and enjoyed the lesson as much as the children (Jnl. May 2009).

The researcher hoped this success would inspire B and give her a much needed confidence boost. This was certainly the case, as she recorded in her journal:

I feel I need to become familiar with music and stories and ideas so I can pull it all together in a story form as I can see it really works (Jnl. May 2009).

However, she was still struggling to find even the little amount of time required to set up these activities in an effective way.

> I've got more direction of where I want to go, especially with teaching of the children, ... whereas I know what I want to do now, it's just having the time to do it. I've got a much clearer idea of how to do it, what to do – it's just having the time, making the time to do it (Int.3).

B was incorporating the songs she knew into story lines that created lots of opportunities for the children to improvise movements, making up new verses, and expanding their ideas around how to incorporate instruments and props.

> I guess also, at one stage when I was doing a lot of thinking about this music, it made me think about integrating different areas as well, so I did a lesson where I integrated some movement and story time, and singing and everything together. The children absolutely loved that lesson and they kept begging for it and that was really good – it just worked (Int.3).

B was now getting a much clearer understanding of what doing music with the children required of her in terms of preparation.

> I feel I need to have more time to sit down and listen to the CD to learn songs and write down the lessons and plan a bit more – I need to give myself more time to do that. I've got a plan but need to be more prepared beforehand – so it's more developing my repertoire so I want to do that, but I guess that just takes time, and it's getting out and doing it as well – singing all the time as well, singing along with the CD to develop my repertoire – I'll feel more confident when I've got that I think (Int.3).

However, finding the time to invest in these skill building activities was very hard to find, and months after the collaboration had ended, although aware that a plan would be useful, she had continued with a more ad-hoc approach.

> I sometimes go cross at myself, that I should be … following a plan and doing all of that, but I'm just enjoying the freedom (Int.4).

The upside of this was that she was more open now to informal musical interactions with the children.

And the other thing is being able to use music spontaneously outside or make up instruments, or just when the moment is right, and do it more spontaneously with the children (Int.3).

B was still consistently very up-beat about her increased confidence. She felt she had gained enough confidence in her own ability to formulate a direction for longer music sessions sometime in the future, and was aware of the way to learn new materials.

I think I've grown a lot in confidence using music in the games that I've learnt throughout the collaboration, and what I've actually done is made a list of all the ones that I've done so that it just reminds me so I can just do them on my own without the CD – like that – so just – yeah – making myself practice those, becoming confident doing it (Int.3).

She had more information about how to think about the learning content involved in music but had decided to postpone a more concentrated approach for the time being. There was still something of a disconnect in that instruments were used only rarely in the children's activities, and music still being used more as a vehicle to teach other learning areas, than as a learning area in itself. However, she spoke of her plans to extend the children's song repertoire and how she would introduce the music concepts through games and activities later in the year.

I'm happy with just being able to make up lessons and to direct the learning, and that's developed from the collaboration, a lot, but I'd like to actually start – I've got the confidence to look into the specific areas of music teaching, like the concepts and changing them as well. So I've got the confidence to look at them and pick out ideas and change them now. Using them independently, whereas the last two years I haven't been, whereas now I just let myself be free for a term or so and let those ideas just flow, and now I want to direct my learning into planning lessons for music, with more concepts in it, that's why I thought I'd tackle that in the second half of the year (Int.4).

B had seemed relieved when the collaboration was over, and described how she was making plans to focus more on visual arts in the next year. Her practice had gone through some changes, and she occasionally tried some different approaches while the collaboration was in progress, but the last interview indicated that formal music sessions or the encouragement of informal music play were not necessarily an established part of her practice, despite taking part in the collaboration. Although she had said she planned to follow the sequenced lesson plans in a music resource, six months after finishing the collaboration, B had not yet begun to actively work with any resources in a planned way, preferring to remain with a more incidental approach, describing this as acting freely and independently.

When I came back (to start the new term) I was going to use (a resource) and then … I suddenly had all this confidence, so I just did my own stuff. So I've just been doing my own thing – using the CDs a bit and then I adapt things in different ways. So I do a lot of that sort of … just making things up on the spur of the moment (Int.4).

B identified her biggest obstacle as being the challenge to manage the transition from working in the primary sector to the early childhood sector. It is possible that she was a little premature in taking up the added challenges of a music collaboration. Perhaps she would have been in a better position to connect more with the collaboration in a few years time when she had gained more experience and confidence in the early childhood area. However, the most significant breakthrough for B was her new awareness about music as a form of play, of the importance of teaching in a playful manner, and relaxing a little more with the children. The collaboration had challenged B's teaching style but had also offered experiences of what the children were capable of when allowed to interact playfully with an activity. Despite the tension that continued to exist for B between wanting to allow the children room to be creative and her need to maintain control, there had been a considerable shift in her teaching practice where she had found a place to accommodate both these needs.

It's come through me having that confidence to let the children be free and creative, and have those experiences, whereas I probably would have worried if children were talking too much or … whereas now, you know they've got great ideas (Int.4).

The confidence she now felt was acting as a gateway, opening up new avenues for her and the children.

I've grown a lot in confidence, using music in the games I've learnt throughout the collaboration …I understand all the skills involved and the teaching concepts … I have the confidence now to take the freedom to change songs, and use different things in the one lesson … the confidence to try new things …I've got the confidence to look into specific areas of music teaching, like the concepts … the confidence to pick out ideas and change them (Int.4).

She was also singing independently more and using the CD less, and beginning to incorporate more movement, dance, instruments and singing into storytelling sessions in a way she had not done before.

For the researcher, this collaboration was characterised by the disparity that existed between the impressions gained from B regarding her music practice and what the researcher observed of her practice. It was at times a confusing and disappointing experience. However, in the last interview she was heartened to hear that B was feeling much more confident. Her description of a recent activity she had done with the children where she had been delighted with their ideas to extend a Peter Rabbit game showed not only her new appreciation

of the children's creative input and her awareness of their development through such activities, but also suggested that she was using a more inclusive teaching style;

> I hadn't planned on coming up with other verses to Peter Rabbit today, but they did, and they just went with it … being so creative and … they were even putting up their hand, and doing that, so all these skills … and they really loved it – you could see that they really loved making up their own verses – we were doing it today and I could see they were thinking … ohhh! …we can listen to each other and develop those skills to be able to share ideas, and that's what they're doing (Int.4).

It was an unexpected and real sense of joy for the researcher to discover that B felt her confidence had grown not just in terms of music but in her general teaching practice as well. Earlier in this case study, there is a reference to the researcher's growing conviction that B was lacking in confidence in a more general way. The researcher had also felt that her work in the collaboration had not served B as well as she had hoped, but B felt differently. She felt it had strengthened her sense of herself, not just in doing music, but also as an early childhood professional. She described this as the biggest impact of the collaboration for her.

> Developing my confidence, and that's developed in every area ... as well as music … In the way I run the floor and just in everything – I feel much more confident (Int.4).

She was now able to reflect on her own lack of confidence and how her teaching practice had broadened to accepting there was more than one way to do things.

> I guess one thing I learned was at first I was not sure of myself, and then you let us just go freely, and so I learned more about myself, and I learned to listen to what I thought was right and go with it – that it was OK to do that – and so that's why I developed the confidence – and I think that's a wonderful thing I learned from the collaboration; that there's more than one way to do something (Int.4).

Summary

Although B would initially have preferred to be more of a co-teacher rather than taking music herself, she rose to this challenge, having to confront a high level of inhibition and lack of confidence as she did so. She made good decisions in using smaller groups and working from a familiar base, and was able to extend a little into new materials and using an imaginative context for a session. She also gained a much deeper understanding of music learning and understandings.

The next two chapters will discuss the main themes that arose from the case studies. The discussion culminates in the main finding; The Group of Music Confidences, a theory of professional music learning.

Chapter 8
Discussion: Part 1

This discussion is presented in two parts; Chapter 8 looks at the general themes arising from the experiences of the collaboration model in the first six months of the collaboration, and Chapter 9 looks at how these themes continued to develop throughout the latter six months of the collaboration.

Each theme is presented using a narrative form to reflect the longitudinal nature of the project; how the collaborative relationships with each participant developed over time, and how each participant's practice changed over time. The themes emerged through the practical work of teaching, learning and practice. As the content of this work may be of value to those with direct experience in this field, readers are directed to the Appendices for more detailed information where relevant.

The discussion is based on the voices and reflections of both participants and the researcher, illustrating how specific issues were identified, understood, and addressed. As the discussion will show, this was an essential aspect of the model as it can take a considerable time to nurture the necessary trust between the collaborative partners, and an even longer time for educators to learn and put into practice new ways of working. Throughout this process, the responses of the children to the changes in their teacher's practice, though not the focus of this study, must be understood to have played a major role in motivating the participants to make real and long-lasting changes to their teaching practice.

Introduction: Research in a collaboration context

This current study explored the potential value to early childhood educators of a collaborative model of PD in music. The researcher took the role of mentor in collaborations with three experienced teacher participants in different preschools over a twelve-month period. The collaborations challenged each of the participants in multiple ways, and each participant responded to those challenges in their own way. The participants were observed while working, usually at fortnightly intervals, followed by a working discussion and had open access to the researcher through email or telephone. They shared their experiences and reflections in four extended interviews over eighteen months, and each kept a journal which the researcher accessed at intervals throughout the collaboration. As the previous three case studies show, the voices of the participants give a clear picture of the process they each went through as they faced the specific personal and professional challenges of gaining skills and confidence in music. Figure 1 below shows how the collaboration worked on two levels; on one level it was applied professional development (PD) for the participant educators as part of their teaching practice, and on a second level; as a research methodology for the researcher to gain an

insider's, or etic perspective on how individual teachers experience and respond to this model of PD. The methods of collecting data for the research also formed part of the collaboration, so there was a continual feedback cycle created as the collaboration progressed.

Months: (post – collaboration)

1   2   3   4   5   6 7   8   9   10 11   12 / 13   14   15 16 17 18

| Observations of teaching practice & collegial discussions over twelve months |

Interview 3	Interview 2 &
Intervie	Intervie

| >   >   Continual collection and analysis of data   >   >   > |
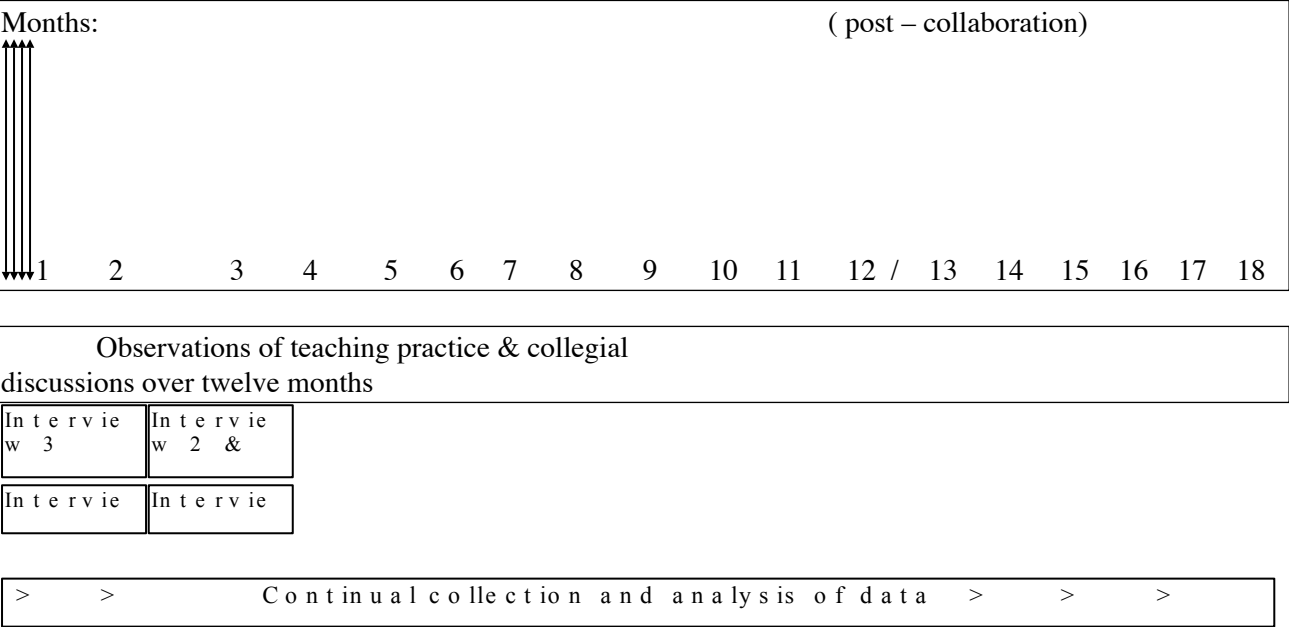
Figure 1: The Collaboration Time line.

As these cycles continued over time the researcher had the luxury of being in a position to analyse the data in the light of changing practices, and then again in hindsight, once the collaboration had been completed.

Figure 2 (see below) illustrates the dual nature of this phenomenological study, in that it was a real collaboration with educators working in the field as well as a research study. It is important to note the distinctions between the different purposes of the collaboration for the individuals involved. For the participants, the singular purpose of the collaboration was to gain confidence and skills in presenting music to children as early childhood educators. The researcher shared this purpose, aiming to provide the necessary specialist support to the teachers in the role of music mentor, while at the same time having another purpose; that of collecting research data.
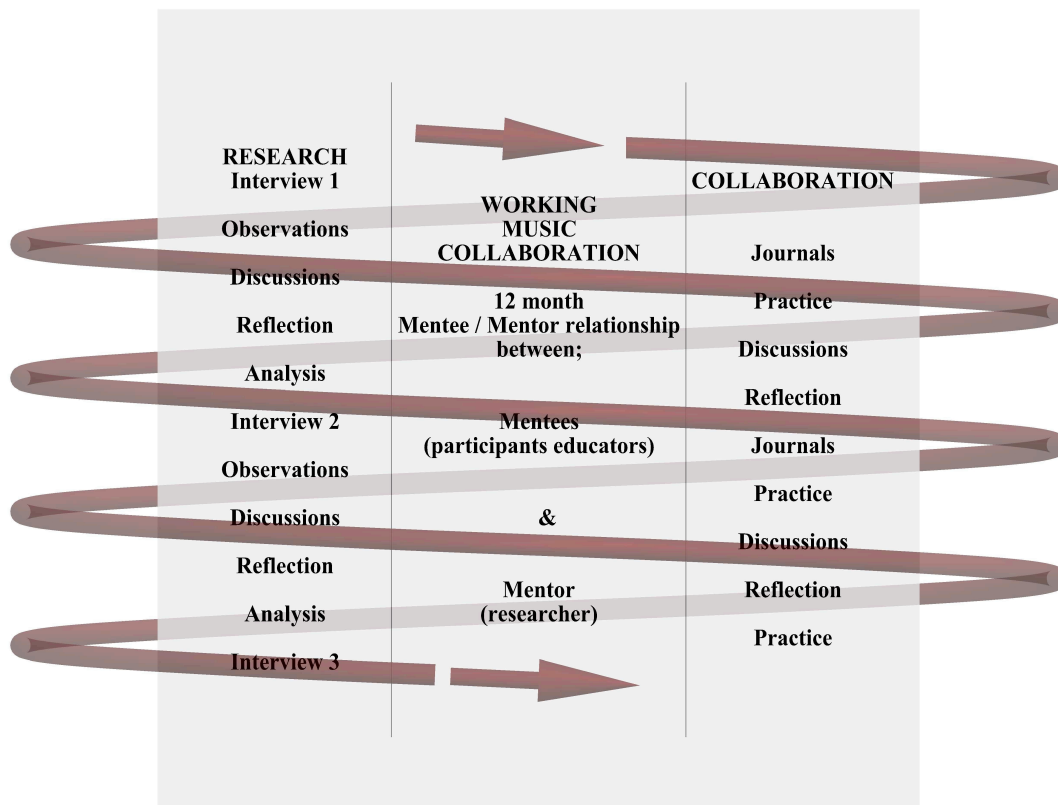
Figure 2: The dual feedback cycle of (a) the collection of data for research (left side) and (b) the workings of the collaboration (right side).

The focus of the data were to gain a first hand understanding of how each participant experienced the collaboration. Data werewere triangulated using various forms of collection (interviews, observations, discussions, journals) throughout the collaboration. This was essential as the data did not always correlate, as will be discussed in detail. In addition, a final interview was conducted and recorded with each of the participants six months after the collaboration ceased, to find out if, and if so, how the collaboration was impacting on their teaching practice in the longer term, and how the participants reflected on their experience with the benefit of hindsight.

The shape of this discussion

The first part of this discussion looks at the influence of existing self-beliefs, teaching practice and workplace realities that surrounded the participants as they began the collaborations; and the process of establishing the collaborative relationships, identifying the issues that arose in the early months of the study. Chapter 9 then looks at the established collaborations in their mature phase, following issues that influenced the collaborations in more depth; both those that were already apparent and those that emerged as the research continued. These issues were influential for all the participants but varied in their significance between

individuals. They emerge as the main themes of the study, and are discussed in the order in which they could be seen to influence the collaborations over twelve months of fieldwork. This does not necessarily reflect the order they appeared in the data. With the benefit of hindsight it can be seen that some issues were active but were effectively hidden, in that they were not always alluded to directly by the participants and therefore do not appear in the recorded data at the time they were active. There were different reasons for this: sometimes the issues were not consciously understood at the time and sometimes because they were too uncomfortable to bring up until a more trusting relationship had been established.

- **Please note**:

Throughout this chapter, wherever the points discussed address issues that were common to all three participants, all three collaborations are referred to collectively as 'the collaborations' for the sake of simplicity. It is made clear when an individual participant is being discussed, in which case the wording then refers to that particular collaboration.

The influence of existing self-beliefs and practices

Participants' current self-beliefs around music

The initial interview, conducted before the collaborations began, aimed to gain an insight into any relevant history that might influence how each participant took part in the collaboration. All interviews and discussions were conducted privately, one-to-one. Each participant was asked to talk about any previous musical experiences, as past experiences with music create a person's sense of one's own musicality, and to outline current attitudes and beliefs around music influencing her current teaching practice. The participants' sense of efficacy, and their self-beliefs around competency in music need to be clearly understood, as a personal lack of confidence in the arts is shown to be the strongest determining factor in teachers not doing music (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010; Oreck, 2001; Richards, 1999). As Russell-Bowie and Dowson (2006) point out; 'In every creative arts area, background is strongly, and positively, predictive of confidence and enjoyment in teaching' (p.7).

Negative past experiences with music, especially as a child at the hands of authority figures, can create unexamined convictions around one's own musicality that need to be brought to light and 'un-packed' before knowledge and skills can be acquired (Jeanneret, 2006; Richards, 1999). The case studies, and S in particular, have illustrated how these experiences led to quite definite self-beliefs, which had to be challenged and re-examined before real progress could continue. Teachers come to PD with their beliefs about themselves as learners and teachers, gained through their personal history and experience (Garvin & Pendergast, 2010; Kagan,1992).

Candidates often extrapolate from their own experiences as learners, assuming that the pupils they will teach will possess aptitudes, problems and learning styles similar to their own. They tend to use information … to confirm rather than to confront and correct their preexisting beliefs (Kagan, 1992. p.154).

Perceptions of musicality are significant for teachers because one reason for the fear around doing music is teachers having the perception that to do music one needs specifically to 'be musical'.

Certainly, the dominant commonality shared by all three participants was both a self-belief of not being musical, and a lack of confidence in doing music with children. This is an accurate reflection of how many, if not most, infant and preschool teachers feel about doing music (Anderson, 2002; Nardo et al., 2006; Russell-Bowie, 2002, 2010; Suthers, 2004; Temmerman, 2006).

When asked in what circumstances they would they do more music, every participant began their answer in a very similar way; "If I was/felt more confident …". All three participants expressed the wish to gain more professional skills and confidence, and that was the reason they had agreed to participate in the study. It has to be considered that in setting up this study, teachers who felt musically very confident might not have responded to the call for participants, and on the other end of the spectrum, those who felt extremely challenged by music might also have avoided contact with a music study. As very little research has looked at the uptake of PD by experienced teachers in early childhood it is not possible to define how representative these participants are.

Many ideas about ourselves in relation to music are absorbed, often uncontested, through our educational and social experiences. An educator's personal understanding of musicality; what it is, who does or does not have it, and how it can be accessed for professional purposes, plays a crucial, if often unexamined role, in how an educator feels about taking up the challenge of 'doing music'. The emotional context of a teacher's self-beliefs can play as large a part in their work as their professional experience and outlook (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010). The development of positive self-beliefs around an educator's self-beliefs around musicality can be seen to be of real importance to the success of PD. Negative self-beliefs around efficacy in a particular learning area are usually attached to previous negative experiences, leading to avoidance behaviour driven by fear and negative emotions. Garvis and Pendergast (2010) suggest that 'emotions attached to certain subject domains relay fear provoking thoughts to the cognitive processing for self-efficacy, creating patterns of avoidance behaviour' (p. 30).

The three participants in this study were unanimous on two issues; that music was essential for children, butthey felt they lacked the required level of confidence to adequately provide the children with that essential experience. A prevalent idea that seemed to underpin what the participants were saying about confidence was

their shared perception that musicality was necessarily linked to evident musical skills and experience, and to musical perforance in particular. This is not surprising when, for many people, and especially those in rural areas, the practice that goes into music making is rarely seen. Live music making is primarily witnessed in a performance setting; the vast majority of the music we hear is executed formally by professional musicians rather than by informally by amateurs, with the notable exception of street buskers. This all supports perceptions that music is a specialist activity. The assumption that musicality is authenticated by the ability to perform music implies that it is not present in those who cannot perform music (Burnard, 2010). This creates a potential vacuum for educators wanting to gain music skills in adult life – carrying the belief that only those adults that play an instrument or sing professionally are musical makes it very difficult to perceive themselves as musical.

- **A contradiction around musicality**

The value of focusing on perceptions of musicality is that they provide an internal context for how each participant was viewing themselves in relation to their own practice; and specifically how well equipped they felt to take part in musical behaviours with the children. In facilitating discussion with the participants on their self-beliefs and general understandings of musicality, it was interesting to notice the emergence of a contradiction in the reasoning the participants used in this study to describe their own musicality as opposed to that of the children they worked with. On one hand, the participants understood children to be inherently musical hence quality care and education in early childhood must involve music. On the other, the participants all carried the self-belief that they were not musical, and so felt ill fitted to provide this essential aspect of care, which diminised their sense of professional competency. As has been illustrated in the case studies, the participants seemed to be using two different sets of criteria to understand their own musicality or that of the children they teach.

As discussed above, the participants all shared the belief that an adult could only be described as musical based on the basis of product; the playing of an instrument or singing to a performance level for example, whereas a child could be understood to be musical based on the basis of process; the degree of their responsiveness, engagement and enjoyment of music activities, music exploration and listening to music. The rationale for the researcher focusing on the participants' perceptions of musicality in this study was that these perceptions provided an internal context for how the participants were viewing themselves in relation to their own practice and why, as suggested by Garvis and Pendergast (2010). The participants' responses showed a direct link between their self-beliefs and how well equipped they did or did not feel to take part in musical behaviours with children.

Another contradiction that emerged was that the participants were not always able to be entirely frank when talking about their confidence levels, and could diminish or even exaggerate their level of confidence to

disguise strong feelings of inadequacy. As the case studies show, regardless of how enthusiastic a participant appeared to be, or how positive their self-reporting sounded, this was not always a true representation of deeper feelings. This is a similar finding to the study conducted by Wiggins and Wiggins (2008) which also found a contradiction between teachers self-reporting positively about the music they were doing, yet not feeling enthusiastic or proud of what they were achieving. Young (1975) in addition found that the more skilled educators tended to rate themselves more poorly as to probable teaching success than do less skilled teachers, and this finding was corroborated in this study. There was a disconnect between the teacher's feeling of competency and their expressed confidence.

From the research point of view this shows the essential role played by the triangulation of data. If the reader were to hear only the participant's voice through the data, or only the researcher's, without the reflections and observations of both, the data would give a misleading reading of the situation (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). This is where the strength of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is evident. By continually revisiting the data, the researcher was able to gain different and evolving perspectives of her own input and the participant's input, and pick up and review elements at play at different stages of the collaborations that were not necessarily apparent to her at the time when she was closer to the situation.

- **The specific challenges of music as a learning area**

The development of positive self-beliefs around musicality is very important to the success of PD. While the participants felt experienced and skilled in other learning areas, negative self-beliefs made tackling music as a learning area very intimidating for them. Many educators are inhibited by the belief that music is an area of specialist knowledge (de l'Etoile, 2001), a specific learning domain, as B pointed out.

> I guess it's (music) just a different area from anything else that you do … like when you teach mathematical concepts of literacy or anything like that music is so very different – you have to have a lot of knowledge, and especially when you haven't had that knowledge it's difficult and you've got to research it and gain it from other areas. We're trained in literacy and numeracy as teachers, but not necessarily music. That's where people like me are struggling and trying to work out what to do (B, Int.2).

Music does share commonalities with other learning areas with which any experienced teacher would be comfortable. However, music also has some notable particularities that requires the educator to feel comfortable demonstrating (ie; performing) simple musical activities, to have specific music skills, and to be able to manage potentially high noise levels, especially when using instruments. It demands the flexibility and fluency to facilitate improvisation and free movement in shared spaces, and assumes that the educator will be able to respond appropriately to what the children do in an effective and informed manner. In

addition, learning new song materials, and planning sessions, in particular the preparation for new activities, are all additional time-consuming demands on teachers who are already quite time-poor.

Any one of these challenges can feel like an insurmountable barrier, and result in avoidance of approaching music all together (Russell-Bowie, 2010). For example, having to sing to the children was a common area of unease, and impacted directly on how the participant chose new materials to introduce to the children. The participants were all accustomed to using a CD rather than their own voice to introduce songs which limited the materials they could use. This illustrates how the teacher's own singing confidence influences the music to which the children are exposed. In particular, music brings up specific 'crowd control' challenges, potentially placing an educator well outside her comfort zone. Kagan (1992) states that if a teacher is unsure of herself while teaching in a certain domain, she will be 'obsessed with discipline and class control. Supervisors should expect this. Attempts to force a different focus may be misguided' (p. 163).

As was evident in the case studies, all the participants were relying on a more instructional form of teaching for music, mainly because they were confronted with the particular management issues inherent in doing music. This meant that they avoided using instruments or free movement, and did not use musical game activities very much, if at all.

- **Previous music training experiences**

Two of the three participants had university qualifications in early childhood education and one had previously completed some university units and had a TAFE qualification. B and D described the music component in their university teacher training courses as inadequate as they felt it did not prepare them for doing music with the very young child. S had a different experience – her TAFE course had a stronger focus on music, with some practical training in varying activities to include games and drama. This is consistent with Kagan's (1997) clustered meta-analysis of studies into pre-service training for teachers, where she noted that teachers need procedural, rather than theoretical knowledge, describing this as a genuine but mostly unmet need. The participants spoke of the need to have learned some basic music lessons and practical activities that they could take into their work as a springboard. That the music component in their training did not fully prepare these participants is not surprising as it is demonstrably not possible to provide the comprehensive competencies that a good teacher needs in an initial degree; a degree is just the beginning (Suthers, 2008; Victory, 2008). Therefore, on-going professional learning in the various learning areas, and particularly music, is clearly essential for teachers to develop, maintain and up-date their skill, as "even those who have reached 'virtuoso' status require ongoing learning to maintain their standards of professional practice" (Victory, 2008. p. 2).

All three participants were affected by both past experiences and current motivations. Both D and S had vivid memories of painful music experiences in their education that had left negative and painful impressions. Their recollections make it clear how damaging judgments made about them by authoritative figures had caused them to form negative self-beliefs about their abilities to make music. However, all three participants demonstrated a strong commitment to their own PD, believing that it was part of the early childhood teacher's job to provide quality music experiences and learning for the children.

Initially, S appeared to be the most musically challenged of the participants, having had negative early experiences and poor self-esteem, yet her commitment to meeting the children's needs over-came her discomfort and inhibition. In contrast, B was verbally very enthusiastic and apparently the most musically comfortable, yet found it difficult to fully engage in the collaboration with the researcher. D was the most musically experienced participant, but also the most self-critical, initially finding it difficult to engage with the collaboration. However, once a few issues had been resolved, she became very enthusiastic.

- **The challenges of working in a rural area**

All three participants felt they lacked support in gaining music skills through PD, either due to the lack of workshops or training in the local area, or due to the lack of variety. Living in a rural area reduces the PD available to educators in any learning area (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). S and D had attended various music in-services in the past, but B had not, apart from one evening in-service presented by the researcher, saying she had not been aware of any being available. D had accessed the most PD in music, but felt the need for more. However, she said that even if more in-servicing were available, attendance was compromised by the cost of covering staff, and the time in having to travel long distances, as most PD was only available in Sydney or Canberra, both a couple of hours drive away.

D's view is backed up consistently by anecdotal information gained from conversations between the researcher and various directors and early childhood educators working locally. For example, the director of a children's services body that provided the PD in the district explained that PD was offered mostly out of hours. As a result, the up-take by early childcare educators and carers was poor, as younger staff with family commitments were reluctant to give up family time, while the more experienced staff did not feel the need of the training. Often the funding restraints of the preschool meant that the teachers had to pay for the in-service themselves.

But even when in-servicing had been offered at a very low cost in her area, the difficulty of finding and funding extra staff during the week to cover those doing PD, or taking time out from weekends for early childhood educators and carers with young families was still prohibitive (private communication, November 2008). Lecturers facilitating the Early Childhood Certificate diploma course at the local TAFE confirmed that

music PD was very scarce in the area, coming mostly from private individuals, and that they were also aware that the issues of cost, time and distance were responsible for a lack of attendance, which meant private, for-profit providers were less likely to service rural areas like this one (private communication, 23, 29 and 30 July 2008).

- **Researcher's current self-beliefs and practices**

Just as the participants' previous music experiences influenced the way they approached the collaboration, so too did the experiences and theoretical perspectives of the mentor, which were active in determining how she guided the participants towards what she understands as good music teaching practice (Zeek et al., 2001). As the researcher is the conduit through which the data is analysed it is necessary to give a brief outline of the researcher's existing self-beliefs, theoretical perspectives and practice to ensure any influences or bias from her side is made as transparent as possible.

In agreement with Blacking (1976), the researcher believes music to be an essential component of the human experience, and is particularly interested in the role of music making and music play in the lives and care of young children. She was strongly influenced by inspirational teachers throughout her education; in particular, by the philosophy and personal influence of Katalin Forrai (early childhood music specialist) with whom she studied in Hungary in the late 1980's. Forrai's passion for early childhood music education was based on a specifically personal, loving and playful connection to the children with whom she worked.

Although Forrai is closely associated with the Kodály method she encouraged her international students to be flexible, using other methodologies and culturally relevant materials. For example, she agreed that it was appropriate to introduce diatonic materials early in the Australian context to reflect our social and cultural roots, as opposed to the almost exclusive use of pentatonic materials in her own culture. Over the years the researcher has continued to incorporate many other philosophies into her own teaching, and does not adhere to one discipline or theory in particular. The one constant is that she is a strong proponent of the importance of learning through shared play and personal engagement, where the educator scaffolds music learning through skilled facilitation of exploration and play, both formally and informally, in a continual response to the spontaneous input of the children with whom she is working/playing.

Over many years of attending and presenting music workshops and in-services for preschool educators, the researcher has developed the view that, despite her own and others best intentions, there was very little evidence of the traditional in-service model having the desired effect of giving educators the skills and confidence they were looking for. Through taking an informal but close interest in attitudes to musicality, the researcher has also formed the view that there are inherent problems with the way musicality in particular is understood in our society. Some aspects of the music education culture in particular have inadvertently given

rise to some unhelpful and commonly held attitudes that serve to inhibit the development and maintenance of a healthy sense of musical self-esteem in individuals. As Australian cellist David Pereira noted, audience members coming back-stage to speak with him often predicate their remarks with "I'm not musical …" or "I'm tone-deaf but …" (personal communication, 24.9.2011).

Commonly held views such as this inevitably influence the way many educators feel about their own musicality and therefore must be kept in mind when listening to the participants, as these beliefs can be understood to play a big part in how they approach a collaboration and how they take part in it (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010). The researcher herself used to wrestle with the seeming contradiction that while music making is a very important part of her life, she has no desire to perform in a formal setting. She has sometimes had to defend her position as a 'non-performing musician'; one whose private music making, both alone and with friends, continues to be one of her greatest pleasures in life.

The continuing discussion is intended to make transparent the connection between the participants' own words and the researcher's analysis of that data. Specific descriptions of the working nature of the collaboration are to be found in the Appendices, to give the reader a more exact understanding of how the collaboration was conducted by giving examples of collaborative strategies, specific materials and pedagogy.

Establishing a collaborative relationship

A collaboration is a working relationship; its success is largely determined by the quality of the relationship between the people involved (Hagger et. al., 1995). In the three collaborations that made up this study, there were many similarities but also some specific aspects singular to that collaboration. This suggests that, while there can be a basic framework put forward by the collaborator based on the participant's goals, the mentor needs to be prepared to be flexible enough to accommodate the special needs of each participant, while for their part, the participants need to commit to the extra time and demands that are inherent in taking part in the collaboration in good faith. This requires flexibility and accommodation on both sides, in order to negotiate and meet the needs of both parties.

Acknowledging participants' fears and anxieties

A fundamental change in the early childhood education sector in Australia during this study was the introduction in 2007 of the first nation-wide early childhood directive in draft form; introduced officially in 2009 as the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Part of this initiative was a focus on improving the levels of training and qualifications, and on-going professional learning in the industry. The participants were therefore working in a climate of upheaval that, by implication, questioned their educational competency, and this naturally raised self-awareness around teaching competency. Every teacher carries the internal

question: am I a good teacher? Kagan (1992) refers to teaching as a special art, made up of many distinctly personal aspects that demand respect;

> An educator's teaching practice remains forever rooted in personality and experience. Learning to teach requires a journey into the deepest recesses of one's self-awareness, where failures, fears, and hopes are hidden. Teaching seems to be a peculiar form of self-expression in which the artist, subject and the medium are one (p. 163).

This is a penetrating insight into the interior experience of the act of teaching, and particularly apt for music teaching in particular, due to the performative aspects of music. It points to the often confronting and on-going reflections on competency that is part of being an educator, which can raise personal vulnerabilities (Fleet & Patterson, 2001). In Suther's (2008) snapshot of music in early childhood in Australia, criticism that previous curriculum guidelines lacked practical information still applies to the EYLF. Even the follow up Educatos Guide to the EYLF released in 2010, although giving a useful description of a couple of sessions, does not indicate how teachers are expected to fulfill the demands of the Framework.

With the socialized beliefs around musicality as being a special gift available to the few that many educators carry (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2), and Kagan's (1992) observations in mind, it is easy to understand why the participants felt vulnerable and exposed when attempting to demonstrate musical behaviours with which they wanted their children to engage swhen they did not yet feel confident in these behaviours themselves. In the study, this unease was compounded by the additional stress of being observed on a regular basis by the researcher. All the participants referred to their specific unease at being watched by other adults in particular, when singing or doing musical things as part of introducing or demonstrating a musical activity to the children in the course of a music session. This has been noted in other research, where experienced teachers have been uncomfortable being observed, even by teacher trainees (Register, 2004) and points to the challenge presented by elements of performance inherent in doing music with children. This unease was symptomatic of a lack of confidence, and was often marked by an emotional quality of vulnerability and discomfort that constantly demanded sensitivity and tact from the researcher. This general sense of musical inadequacy could also be understood to impact on the participant's sense of general professional confidence as an early childhood educator.

- **Addressing a potential power imbalance**

The participants in this study found themselves in an unfamiliar place when taking part in the collaboration; as well as being seasoned professionals with a lot of experience they were now also students. Based on her own experience as a teacher, the researcher was aware that by definition, the participating teacher would tend to perceive the mentoring 'expert' collaborator as having more skills in an area in which - she herself felt

lacking. By participating in a collaboration, - the participant could feel vulnerable and fearful, as she was effectively opening herself up to scrutiny and potential criticism. This inherent power imbalance between mentor and mentee needed to be handled sensitively and respectfully (Bone, 2003; Bae, 2005; Stake, 1995).

While there is a body of research that examines how student teachers deal with the challenging position of being both a a mature adult and a learner at the same time (eg: Hagger et. al., 1995) there is little research that focuses on experienced teachers being mentored. The researcher thought it possible that an experienced teacher might feel confronted in a different way to the student teacher, in that they had more to lose, as they would carry higher expectations of themselves as professionals. The participants in this study found themselves in an unfamiliar place when taking part in the collaboration; as well as being seasoned professionals with a lot of experience they were now also students.

The researcher sought to address this in various ways. She stressed to each participant that their input, in terms of sharing their practice by agreeing to being observed while working, and sharing the inner processes that informed their practice, was essential to both the success of the collaboration and to the success of the research. Each participant was the 'expert' in her own learning processes and experiences. Sharing their perceptions was of mutual benefit as it gave the researcher the contextual information she needed to understand how to best to tailor her support to meet their specific needs. It also provided valuable data for the research and its long term aims. In this way the researcher hoped to involve the participants as partners in the research and also to take increased ownership of their own professional learning. To acknowledge the participant's input, and to ensure they had control of their own input, it was part of the collaboration design that the participants were sent transcripts of their interviews to review, and to make any alterations they wished to.

During the setting up of the collaborations, conversations with the participants revealed that they were feeling both optimistic and nervous. They all attributed their nervousness primarily to the prospect of being observed by the researcher whom they regarded as being an 'expert' who would be witness to the weaknesses of their work. The anxiety that they might be perceived as inadequate was confirmed by many comments made by the participants during the early negotiations and conversations before committing to the study, and early in the collaboration. As the collaborative point of observing the participant was to gain an understanding of how best to support the development of her practice, as well as to identify her individual context in order to be of assistance, it is understandable that participants felt vulnerable, and this is one of the inherent challenges of a collaboration.

Because the observations were the greatest cause of anxiety for the participants, the researcher referred to the observations as a necessary tool to help her establish the personal context of the participant's practice, in order to find out how best to support the participant from where they were currently 'at'. The observations

were an opportunity for the participant to gain tailor-made support, rather than an opportunity for the researcher to form any judgments about their practice. She also explained that she was on a steep learning curve of her own in terms of doing research, and that she was always learning when it came to music teaching, as she regarded her work as being a continuous learning curve. For example, when a participant spoke self-critically or dismissively of her own work, the researcher would occasionally share examples of where she had tried things herself that did not work out as she had planned, or instances where she had made embarrassing mistakes and had needed to experiment more before getting something to work. Talking with the participant as a fellow colleague helped to foster a more collegiate atmosphere.

The researcher wanted to acknowledge the participants as valuable contributors to the research being done around the collaborations, explaining that their perceptions were valuable and significant. At the same time, she did not want to burden the participants with any responsibility for the research. To clarify where the research stood in relation to the collaborations, the researcher outlined the shared responsibilities inherent in the collaboration but stressed that the participants had no direct responsibilities in terms of the research, beyond sharing what they wanted to of their thought processes and perceptions about the collaboration with the researcher. The researcher stressed that the study was only concerned with their personal responses, perceptions and experiences in relation to the collaboration; it was not concerned with assessing their performance as educators. If anything, the emphasis was on their evaluation of the collaboration.

- **Starting where you are 'at'; the importance of acknowledging existing skills and knowledge**

In her initial discussions with the participants, the researcher stressed that the starting point of the collaboration was wherever they were currently 'at' in their provision of music, acknowledging the participants' accumulated experience as skilled professionals who wanted to learn additional music skills. All the participants were working with children aged between three and five years of age. A general outline based on the overall aims of both the individual participant and the researcher was informally discussed and agreed upon, and revisited regularly by both the mentor and mentee. These early discussions were an invitation to each participant to express what they individually wanted. The researcher explained that there was no set plan to which they had to conform. Instead, each collaboration was to be directed by the individual participant, with input from the researcher, as the study aimed to find out what each participant particularly wanted and needed as they went along; they were 'in the driving seat' of the collaboration as it were. As a mentor, the researcher was there to listen and respond to the participant's requests, give constructive feedback and make suggestions based on her observations, and give support in any way she could to each participant based on their individual aims and needs, at their request. Each collaboration was unique as a result.

The researcher worked on the assumption that it would take time for the participant to develop trust in her; that the emotional needs of the participants came before her own need to impart what might seem to be useful directions, as her suggestions could initially be perceived by the participant to be a criticism of her work. In practice, this meant she needed to be patient and supportive by giving clear validation of the existing skills the participant brought to the collaboration, along with consistently positive feedback and encouragement. This was easy to incorporate in the discussions after observations. The efficacy of this approach was both confirmed and challenged at the end of the field-work period when S confided that she had initially heard suggestions for ways to extend an activity as implied criticism of her work. Based on what she was observing in S's practice; established music sessions with varied activities, the researcher had wrongly assumed that S would feel more confident, and had made suggestions for new activities to S early on, thinking she was ready for this. In retrospect, S's responses in the third interview made her realise she had been incorrect, overestimating S's level of confidence. At the end of the collaboration, when asked to talk about how she had responded to the collaboration S reflected: "when you're giving me all these new ideas, I've thought, um – I'm sort of linking it with not having done a good job" (Int.3). Although this changed as she became more comfortable and empowered, it was a reminder for the researcher as mentor; that suggestions can be interpreted as veiled criticism.

In the early weeks of the collaborations, the biggest challenge for the participants was becoming accustomed to being observed while working. To minimize the inhibiting effect of her presence, the researcher negotiated with each participant around where they preferred her to sit. For example, one participant asked the researcher to sit opposite her, behind the children, while another preferred the researcher to sit to the side, out of her line of sight. The researcher did not do any audiotaping in the first few months of the study, and later recorded only sparingly, as the thought of being recorded was particularly confronting for the participants and tended to distract the children.

For the first couple of visits it was agreed that the participants would continue with their usual practice, whatever that was, using materials that were familiar to them. S was already doing 20 minute music sessions that included songs and activities, but not instruments. D's sessions tended to be shorter and built around a story or a dance, while B's were sometimes as short as ten minutes, with dancing to a CD, for example. The researcher gave positive feedback in the follow-up discussions, highlighting strengths in what she observed in reference to how particular children had responded. She asked the participants where they were intending to go with any activity, offering a few ideas for variations and extension work where she felt it would be within the participant's current skill set.

The researcher made observation notes for her own data collection, in which she recorded her private reflections; uncensored responses to issues or difficulties she experienced and needed to work through in the collaborations. Although this study is concerned with the participants' experiences, the researcher was aware

that at times her own responses and attitudes could affect the analysis, and where this became significant, it is made transparent to the reader. However, the researcher's private commentary was not made available to the participants, just as it would not be in a collaboration conducted outside a research setting. Instead, she made a second version of the notes that outlined the activities presented, with notes referring to potential future extensions as discussed with the participant. This was to stimulate and support the participant and to relieve them of the burden of having to take detailed notes themselves, so they could talk more freely in the discussions.

- **A challenge for the researcher**

The methodology of this research was such that the collaborations were designed to be in every way like a real-world collaboration except in one respect; the collaborations would not involve the researcher in any direct contact with the children, such as giving teaching demonstrations, for example. This was for three reasons; ethical constraints, problems found in previous research where the researcher was involved in doing demonstration teaching, and to maintain the focus on the participants. To comply with the necessary ethical regulations for a research model that involved the researcher working directly with the children, every parent's consent would be needed. It would have been virtually impossible to ensure complicity with this over the period of a year, as the attendance of the children in the three preschools varied unpredictably, with new children coming in throughout the year. When offering PD in music in a preschool, de Vries (2005) found how difficult it could be to ensure educators would take up the challenge of doing the music themselves when there was someone more skilled at hand, even though they were there as PD support, not as a teacher. In addition, the study's focus was on the participants, and the researcher felt that to take on the additional role of co-teacher could compromise that focus and complicate the task of data collection.

When designing the collaboration as part of a research project, the researcher had to take the ethical parameters of the study into account. While a music collaboration could allow for the mentor to demonstrate lessons or activities outside the context of this study, this was not possible for ethical reasons alone. This exclusion was made clear to the participants before they committed to taking part; the researcher was not free to demonstrate or work directly with the children at any time during the fieldwork. However, on a second visit, one of the participants requested that the researcher take the role of co-teacher. The researcher reiterated why this could not be part of the study, but the participant persisted in her request, and continued to press the collaborator over the next couple of months to lead the music sessions in her place while she observed. This caused the researcher a degree of discomfort as she felt she was letting the participant down. She explained that not complying with the ethical boundaries of the study would completely sabotage the research, and eventually the participant reluctantly accepted the situation. Although there was no overt resentment expressed by the participant it is perhaps due to not achieving this wish that she was less engaged

than the other participants throughout her collaboration. However, although free to withdraw from the study at any time, she chose to continue in the collaboration for the full year.

The Collaboration Learning Curve

Everyone involved in the study, including the researcher, perceived themselves as being on a learning curve. The researcher was trialing a different and much longer-term model of PD and learning new research techniques at the same time. As experienced educators, the participants had taken the initiative to immerse themselves in a specific area of learning that they all found confronting and challenging, taking them through various stages of personal and professional growth. In his exploration of what defines expert teaching practice, Loughran (2010) sums up the development of teaching expertise by identifying the differences between novice and expert teachers in the following way;

- novices tend to view experiences and events as separate and isolated – experts search for patterns and relationships
- novice's approach to planning not as organised and focused – experts plan carefully to meet goals
- novices tend to be captured by immediacy of situation – experts not only aware of their thoughts and actions (in action) but also the impact of these on their practice (Loughran, 2010. p. 37).

Throughout the collaboration, it became apparent how accurate this summary is, as initially the participants were more focused on getting specific activities to do with children without wanting to understand the pedagogical value of those activities. They also tended to plan only for the next session. This summary is also in agreement with Berliner's (1989) more detailed framework of the development of expert teaching. Over the length of the collaborations, the participants' learning development reflected each step of Berliner's model, which are used in this discussion to provide a framework to map the progressive continuum of developing expertise the participants experienced.

Early Days

> **Stage 1; Novice: learning the elements, teaching is relatively inflexible and requires purposeful concentration** (Berliner, 1989. p. 40)

This stage describes the participants' practice at the beginning of the study. As the case studies show, music sessions were relatively static, with the children sitting more than moving. The participants used instructions and explanations to guide activities rather than demonstrations and explorative activities. Leading up to, and throughout the collaborations, the researcher and the participants discussed what aims they aspired to, and how they might be achieved. The initial focus was to work from what the participant was currently doing,

and what she felt she could do. These uniformity of the participants' aims was possibly because they were all experienced educators and being already a little familiar with the researcher's approach due to attending her music workshop the previous year, had some idea of where they wanted to go in their professional development.

The initial aims discussed and agreed upon for the collaborations were;
- Learning how to extend the learning of varying musical elements in familiar materials in contrasting ways.
- Moving into new areas of activity using new management skills specific to music.
- Experimenting with demonstrating activities and involving the children from the outset, rather than explaining and instructing (experiential learning, or learning through play).

The supports offered by the researcher/mentor were;
- Following each observed session with an informal discussion, inviting the participant to reflect on the session, express anxieties, make requests, giving positive feedback and
- Working at the participant's individual pace, with contextual support.
- Emailing notes containing suggestions and ideas arising from discussion to each participant after every observation.
- Giving ready access to the researcher/mentor via telephone or email.

The immediate challenges expressed by all of the participants were;
- Feeling uncomfortable and anxious with being observed.
- Feeling unsure of performing and carrying out demonstrations for children.
- Worrying that the children might not respond or engage with the activities.
- Managing the children's behaviour when introducing instruments and more movement.

Each collaboration started with that participant's current practice, using whatever materials were familiar to her. In response to both the expressed concerns of the participants, and what the researcher observed in early sessions, the following five issues evolved as the most meaningful areas on which to focus for all three participants in the early months of collaboration.

- **The importance of repetition**

The participants were asked to simply do any music activities they were used to doing with the children, and the collaboration would work from there. This was different for each participant, but the main thing the researcher first observed was that the participants were in the habit of going through an activity with the children in a rote way a couple of times at most, then moving on to another activity, generally singing a

simple song with some hand actions. Familiar materials were repeated without extension activities, and without opportunities for the children to improvise or explore different ways of doing that activity. Instruments and free movement were rarely included, if at all. Many of the children only started to engage with an activity well after it started and some only on the second round. Not surprisingly, the children's grasp of the materials was patchy; there was lots of room for them to be more engaged and challenged. As children tend to repeat a song, or snatches of songs they have heard or learned in their own unsupervised play, often with additional improvisations (Barrett, 2009), repetition can be understood to play an essential role in allowing a child (or adult) to gain mastery and confidence (de l'Etoile, 2001), out of which creative improvisation naturally evolves.

One of the first suggestions the researcher made to each participant was that each activity would benefit from repetition, but with additional variations and extensions to direct the children's attention to specific aspects of the music to extend their experience and learning. This process is most closely aligned with Samuelsson et al's (2009) 'developmental pedagogy' theoretical framework, where the child's learning occurs when (s)he discerns a musical element experientially through exploring how to vary it (p. 120). Learning through challenges embedded in activities as extensions keeps familiar materials fresh and engaging, ensuring that the child (and very importantly, the participant) have the time to explore the materials more fully, gaining confidence at their own individual pace. Revisiting an activity in following sessions with extensions created opportunities for differential teaching to meet the different needs of the children. In discussions, different ways to add variety and extend challenges that would involve the children more directly were work shopped. For example, the researcher recommended that the participant demonstrate the beat of a song or chant clearly in different ways for the children to imitate; using body percussion or an instrument, or asking the children to 'put the beat in your feet'. Not having experienced this level of repetition, the participants were initially skeptical, thinking the children would quickly become bored. However, they were soon reporting that the children were, contrary to their expectations, becoming more engaged than before. D, for example, had been worried about using the same introductory song for each session but was surprised at the children's response;

> The more we've done [that Welcome song] the more comfortable they are with it. I thought that they might - after a couple of weeks, they might actually get bored with the songs … I thought they might be a bit kind of, 'oh here we go again' but actually they are getting more engaged in it (D: Int. 2).

- **Involving the children**

A month or so into the collaboration, the researcher advised all the participants to work in half-sized groups if possible, as this was much easier on the children and the educators in terms of management, lowered noise levels (Grebennikov, 2006) and was much more appropriate in terms of how children actually play. This suggestion was most easily taken up by the two participants who were the directors in their preschools,

which they did a few months into the collaboration with excellent results. This prepared the participants for the next step; inviting the children to contribute by asking for their ideas for different alternatives for movements, actions or different words, for example, and to respond to the children's ideas by immediately trying them out. This meant being flexible enough to let go of a prescribed lesson plan enough to accommodate the children's input. Introducing extensions to a familiar song or activity tends to encourage the children to have their own ideas, as children are masters of inventiveness.

In observations, the researcher made a point of commenting on positive and creative responses from individual children to encourage the participant to accommodate the children's responses. This opened up a lot of possibilities for differentiated learning, as many of the children's ideas challenged all the children to extend their learning. Two of the participants began to try out this process in practice and over time began to discover how richly the children could contribute. They were noticing what Young (2003) describes in children during free play as their ability to 'absorb, adapt and be flexible to whatever presents itself, and to incorporate and blend it into the music-making' (p.54). Although this is a long quote from S, it shows the unfolding nature of how her readiness to respond to the children's input led into many varied and inventive activities, driven by the children's creativity.

> For instance we were doing, "10 Fat Sausages sizzling in a pan" … to introduce that we were going on a walk, and we asked the children what can they see, and some were saying hippopotamuses and giraffes, and some were saying, um, koalas and that. So …we brought really big sheets of paper out and we created our walk …we put trees and then we put dinosaurs - whatever the kids saw, and then the children were saying "Ohhh we've got butterflies on our lunchboxes", so that was an exciting thing to be talking about, the shapes and colours of them, so then we did the butterfly painting and introduced the movement game, pretending to be butterflies (S: Int.3)

The participants were also asked to look out for non-verbal input from the children, as this was a useful way to involve shy children who might be reluctant to contribute verbally. It was suggested that when a particular child contributed an idea, that the he/she be acknowledged by naming the new activity after the inventor. This had the effect of encouraging even the shyest children to contribute. As D explained in her case study, this also helped in moderating the behaviour of the more unruly children, acting as an incentive to encourage their cooperation. The participants also were now contributing more of their own ideas to vary activities as they gained a secure understanding of how to use materials in interesting ways to focus on specific music skills. Discovering that when the children knew a song very well they were more receptive to being guided by the participant to focus on a specific musical aspect of the song the participants were revisiting familiar materials in new ways. D wrote in her journal: 'It's hard to believe that such a simple song/game is so popular and teaches so much. The children quickly gave suggestions' (Journal entry; 10.3.2009).

As can be seen in their case studies, D and S in particular were experiencing firsthand the notion that establishing a secure repertoire with the children allows the educator to create scaffoldings for new learning opportunities. This was the basis from which the participant could respond to the different learning opportunities of individual children. For S, working with a large group of different ages and different stages of development, this was particularly valuable, as she had a large group with a wide range of ages.

- **Anxieties around management**

Music sessions by their very nature involve an increased level of noise, especially so when instruments are involved (Grebennikov, 2006). Only one of the participants referred to this as problematic in the first interview, saying she felt uncomfortable at the thought of noise levels escalating and not being able to control them. As observations began, however, it became apparent that all the participants were concerned with keeping control of the children's levels of excitement and insisting that noise levels be kept very low, which effectively sabotaged genuine musical play. A lot of time was taken up with repeated instructions to the children to be quiet, pay attention or sit still for example, which had an inhibiting effect in that it did not allow for the children to become fully engaged with music activities. Not surprisingly, the music sessions by all three participants rarely involved instruments, free movement or games. When instruments were used, they were for a specified task and played for a short time. Quite a lot of time was taken up with handing out and collecting instruments. The participants clearly had an unspoken need to feel confident that they could involve instruments for every child in activities without losing control of the noise levels.

Handing out, collecting and putting away instruments can be an unnervingly chaotic undertaking for an educator, especially with twenty children. To help deal with this, the researcher suggested that the bag or box of bells be placed in the centre of the group, while the participant adapt a song they knew (such as "If you're happy and you know it") with new words designed to direct the children to come out one by one to collect an instrument; "If your name is *Jenny*, get your bells, if your name is *Ben* get your bells". B had already been using this song with adapted words to tell the children when they could leave the group to get their lunch. The participants put this into practice and found it worked well, with two participants noting that it had the added bonus of encouraging the children to listen closely, eager to hear their name being sung.

From observations it was clear that anxieties over elevated noise levels were naturally an inhibiting factor for the participants, as was maintaining control. However, when the researcher asked the participants about noise or movement being a potential management issue the participants were reluctant to comment and avoided mentioning this. D had mentioned it in passing but did not suggest it was a major concern. As Grossman (1992) notes; 'for better or worse, classroom management and instruction are eternally married' (p. 174). Using IPA to go back over the interview transcripts and discussion notes it became evident, through passing but consistent comments, that concern about managing potentially noisy or very active music activities was a

significant challenge for the participants. This was not something that any of the participants went into any detail about, and looking at the emergent themes in the analysis, the researcher wondered if the participants avoided openly expressing concerns around management issues because they felt it might reflect negatively on their professional competency. She reflected that openly acknowledging fears around management conflicted with what the participants had said at different times about their core sense of what constitutes a good teacher; e.g., one who has good control of her class. Using instruments and a lot of movement in music sessions made this dictum more difficult to maintain.

Regardless of the researcher's assumption, the fact remained that the participants needed encouragement to use a wider range of more playful activities to fully engage the children in more extensive music learning. The researcher decided to encourage the participants to introduce a couple of music games that would help them to establish some clear boundaries around instruments. The games involved the children in developing a level of control around instruments and movement that would be fun for them, and make things easier to manage for the educator. She explained to the participants that the value of games that alerted the children to the musical interest of contrasting sound and silence, which they usually found funny and engaging, would also accustom the children to move or pick up instruments to play, and willingly stop or put the instruments down when asked to do so.

These simple instrumental activities were also strategies to develop a higher level of cooperation from the children. The games involved the children playing and stopping based on cues; initially from the teacher but then from individual children who were placed 'in charge'. Once familiarized, the games could be easily inserted in between other activities to regain the children's attention and cooperation, as an enjoyable alternative to having to impose heavy discipline. All the participants tried out these strategy games and found them effective. The children's enjoyment and cooperation gave the participants a sense of management confidence and they started to include instruments and movement more often in their sessions. They also started to leave some instruments out in music centres that the children could access during free play. B noticed that after introducing a song using drums, the children took a greater interest in playing the drums when un-supervised, saying this was something the children had not done before; "Last week, for example, after doing "The Big Bass Drum", the children grabbed the instruments off the shelf and they were just playing them just naturally and we let them do that because it was quite soft" (B: Int.2).

The issues discussed so far had all been identified by the participants themselves in earlier discussions. The following two issues became part of the collaborations as a result of the researcher's observations of the participants teaching practices. The general principles of teaching and learning through play, and the connection between management and playful teaching incorporated strategies that would enable the participants to move outside their usual comfort zones. As the mentor in the collaborations, she felt that

focusing on these two issues would best serve the participants in gaining confidence and skills, and develop the children's levels of engagement and learning in music sessions.

- **Teaching and learning through play;**

The researcher gave the participants a simple model she had created to generally encapsulate the cyclical process of learning music materials and improvising on them. This highlights the important role repetition plays in giving the children musical confidence and deeper learning, leading to creative opportunities, when they are able to play with an activity over an extended period. This cycle is the same for teacher and child, and is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Music learning cycle:

new materials or variation

listening + observing

listening + improvising

joining in with beat + repetition

mastery

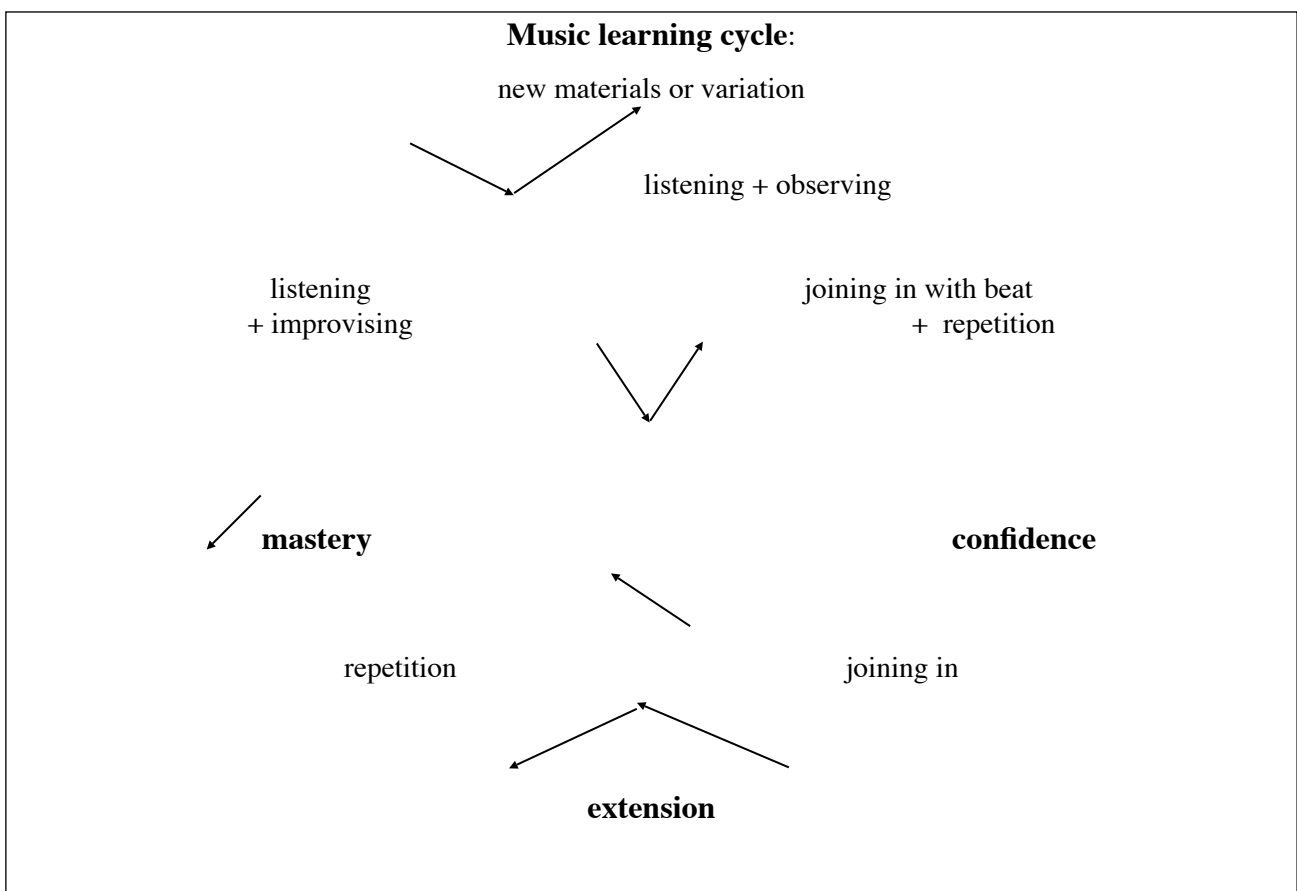**confidence**

repetition

joining in

extension

Fig. 3: Cyclical progressive music learning through repetition and extension (teacher and children)

Two of the participants started to apply the principles of this learning cycle and in the process became more interested in how to mine materials for learning opportunities with specific music concepts in mind. In discussions they were now asking more 'how' and 'why' questions about music concepts, leading to discussions on pedagogy. They often commented on how surprised they were that there was so much to learn, and how the children were enjoying the sessions, so much so that the sessions were becoming longer due to the children's engagement. In particular, they were gratified when seeing the confidence the children gained from getting to know materials well, and how ready they were to take part with exploring their own inventive suggestions.

Through the process of achieving familiarity, and then mastery with any materials the children interact creatively with the material, for example; by improvising with the words or melody or wanting to extend a game. The participants were encouraged to be open and responsive to any spontaneous ideas the children had, whether or not they seemed viable to the participant, as the nature of play is exploration. The researcher urged them to keep a record of this input by organizing a music resource folder, with a page for each activity or song, where their own and the children's extensions could be noted down for future use, as many of the researcher's extensions, and sometimes whole songs, had come from children she had worked with in the past. Once this pattern of repetition and openness to input was established, and the children had met with an open and enthusiastic response to their input from their teacher, the children started to improvise spontaneously more often. The participants commented often on their amazement at the inventiveness of the children's ideas. The value of this sequence of events was becoming very evident to two of the participants, a direct outcome of their preparedness to include the children as authoritative co-players.

> We've always had that one music time a day, but it's much longer now than it used to be … we might do music for an hour which is something we would never have done. Just playing games and all sorts of things like that with the children they bring up their ideas… they're just into it (S:Int.2).

Listening to educators talk about work, the researcher had found, counter-intuitively, that in general, early childhood educators are not necessarily equipped with strong models of how to interactive creatively and playfully with children when in groups, possibly because most group activities are done with too large a group of children to allow for the genuine individual involvement that is a hallmark of play. Nor are educators necessarily aware that engaging a child's learning through play can be an effective method of maintaining good management. In the first part of the collaboration, the researcher observed that the children tended to become inattentive and restless when a participant went into lengthy explanations or gave a list of instructions when introducing an activity. Without mentioning this to the participant, she suggested specific games that would give the participants an experience of a different approach which highlighted playful and inclusive ways of introducing a game. Her hope was that the participant would have a positive enough

experience doing this to over come any barriers to relaxing into a more playful interaction, leading to increased expertise, and a sense of confidence in this approach (Russell-Bowie, 2010).

Opportunities to make these suggestions came up naturally in discussions, when a participant expressed frustration with the children's behaviour or disappointment in the session and was asking the researcher for input on alternative ways to present materials. As the participants experimented with a more playful approach, the researcher was able to emphasize the importance of 'doing rather than saying' more directly, which meant taking out instructions and explanations and demonstrating an activity by simply doing it instead. This engaged the children immediately, who wanted to become involved and had to work out what to do, or how to join in a game, by listening and watching; in other words, by paying close attention to what their teacher was doing.

The pedagogy of this was described as giving the children the opportunity to learn through paying attention and through their own direct experience.

The next main pedagogical point she wanted to emphasize was the value and effectiveness of creating an imaginative context in which to base an activity as a way to direct the children to specific learning experiences, and to invite their creative input. This was intended to slowly and gently wean the participants off their previous reliance on prescribed, didactic instructional modes of teaching to one of open possibilities by being more like a co-player and facilitator. Loughran (2010) refers to the didactic explanatory style of teaching as an indicator of the less confident teacher: 'There is clearly a major difference between a classroom in which the transmission of information dominates and one in which students' experiences shape the nature of teaching and learning' (p.37).

This was a significant challenge to the participants' perceptions of their own role in facilitating activities, and to their expectations of how music sessions could be conducted, and it took some time to become accustomed to the different teaching style. The researcher had observed enough of each participant's practice to have some idea of the different degrees of challenge this would present to each participant, and this meant that she needed to work differently with each participant in the way she introduced these concepts. In different ways for each participant, being playful while still being able to manage the children was both a personal and a professional challenge.

- **The connection between management and playful teaching**

The researcher had noticed many times while working and observing in centres that understanding how to teach through play in the light of an educator's concerns around management is a significant issue in early childhood music education. A teacher's preparedness to playfully interact with the children was based on her confidence in being able to manage the children in varied activities. It was becoming very clear that there

was a real tension for the participants between feeling confident with management and learning/teaching music more informally through play. To achieve a workable balance in practical terms, the participants needed specific and effective strategies to maintain discipline while attempting to engage the children without having to resort to excessive instruction. - Involving the children in music activities by engaging and interesting them, rather than by simply telling them what to do, would requirea lot more thought and planning. Different modes of interacting with children have their place in the daily work of early childhood teaching, and it requires a high degree of flexibility on the educator's part to utilize and balance them for the children's benefit.

The glue that held play and management together most successfully for the participant was the children's engagement and willingness to cooperate. The more playful the participant was, the more engaged the children were, as was evidenced by comments made by S and D and the observations of the researcher, where they incorporated and participated in the free flow of the children's imaginative ideas. This created an on-going cycle of trust in the playful and inclusive approach. The strongest determinant of the participant's perception of her own success was an enthusiastic and engaged response from the children. This was also true for how her colleagues measured her success. As the collaboration progressed it was clear that the participants' application of effective management strategies were the key to taking up a more playful, engaging, child-centred teaching style. This is particularly evident in the experiences of S and D, as evidenced by the change in the type of activities they were prepared to incorporate. Revisiting and refining these two interconnected issues on a regular basis was central to the increase in a participant's confidence and the children's engagement and learning, and therefore to the success of the collaboration.

Overcoming fears and gaining skills

Stage 2; Advanced Beginner: episodic and strategic knowledge, more flexible. (Berliner, 1989, p. 41)

After roughly five months of collaboration, the second round of interviews gave both the researcher and the participants the chance to reflect on how the collaborations were going.
The participants' perspectives at the five-month stage were that they were:

- Feeling that their skills and confidence were increasing.
- Enjoying the increased engagement of children, and surprised at the richness of their input.
- Enjoying the more playful approach – having fun with the children in music sessions.
- Enjoying the individual support offered by the collaborative process.

- Wanting to work from one music resource that gave session outlines and a long-term plan.
- Feeling more prepared to try singing alone.
- Challenged by the extra time needed for preparation and learning new materials
-
- Finding the planning of sessions difficult, for example: pacing activities

In addition to these points, the researcher was observing that:

- Participants had enough confidence now to learn and introduce new music activities.
- Participants were making more use of the researcher as a source for ideas and support.
- Participants were still reliant on instruction but starting to move towards more playful interactions and presentations.
- Participants were evidently enjoying themselves.
- The collaborative process and learning outcomes were noticeably better for both children and educators in smaller groups.
- There was a strong correlation between participant's confidence, playful teaching, and children's engagement and cooperation.
- Children were showing development of specific music skills.

As the participants became accustomed to the rhythm of doing regular music sessions, their focus started to shift away from being observed to what they could gain from having the researcher there, accessing her knowledge for their specific situation and needs. This was due to the lengthy twenty to forty minute discussions that always followed an observed session, where the participants were able to reflect on their work, voice concerns, ask practical questions and hear validation and encouragement of their work. For her part, the researcher felt increasingly effective as she responded with a much clearer picture of an individual participant's learning style and her receptivity to input. She was also much more familiar with the learning of individual children and could discuss more relevant and detailed pedagogy with the participant. The discussions were now deeply grounded in the particular context of each participant's practice. All the participants had moved to the 'advanced beginner' level as described by Berliner, with continuing and emerging challenges that were to prove significant for the whole collaboration. They had independently arrived at the view that there were three main areas they most wanted to work with in their collaborations; overcoming the fear of singing without the CD, the need for a bigger repertoire - which meant facing the challenges of learning new materials, and gaining more expertise in planning and preparing for music sessions. Although the participants were working quite independently of one another, these three main issues are discussed collectively as they were experienced in similar ways with each participant.

- **Overcoming the fear of singing**

A singular stumbling block in educators creating meaningful musical experiences beyond just being a passive consumer of recorded music is the unease many educators feel about their own ability to sing (Richards, 1999; Siebenaler, 2006). All the participants felt they were comfortable with singing for children (although they did not all do that very often) but felt very uncomfortable singing with other adults in the room. The reluctance to sing in front of peers is documented in research (Richards, 1999). Given that working in any preschool means sharing space with other staff and parents means this is a significant inhibition to overcome.

All three participants felt that to do music well they needed enough confidence to sing unaccompanied, no matter who was in the room. Initially, the researcher suggested that the participant continue with a CD as she usually did, while at the same time making a conscious effort to use the CD as a support to gain confidence, with the ultimate aim of singing free of a CD as much as possible. This brought up varying levels of performance anxiety for the participants, and they all felt this had been one of the main reasons for not doing more music previously.

In discussions after observations, the researcher taught each participant some basic singing techniques, explaining that, like everything, improvements in singing take time, and practice was the first and best strategy. She tried to moderate fears and expectations by reminding the participants that they were not expected to sing like recorded professionals; their own singing was all that was needed. By modelling good singing habits themselves they would be also helping the children. This involved some key points, such as giving the children some movement activity to begin with so they were physically relaxed and breathing more deeply, rather than expecting them to sing while sitting down for extended periods, which was the current practice. It also meant helping the children identify what was their singing voice and how it was different from their speaking voice. This was a novel concept to the participants. The emphasis on the children's singing was deliberate: focusing on how to influence the children's singing seemed a less threatening approach than focusing directly on the participant's singing. Activities and games that focused on taking deep breaths, dropping the jaw to open the mouth and using good posture as part of the games acted as introductory forays designed to help the participants to become accustomed to using and hearing, and therefore befriending their own singing voices.

This was a slow and delicate process, but over three months, the researcher observed that all three participants were beginning to sing unaccompanied as part of each session. The children responded very well to this, and other encouraging remarks from other staff were especially valuable in building confidence. As well as singing, there were other challenges to focus on, and the researcher felt there would be the opportunity to revisit and extend singing skills later in the collaboration.

- **Extending repertoire: the challenge of learning new materials**

The participants were now showing a preparedness to take on the learning of new materials. The establishment of regular music sessions meant that the familiar materials were not enough to sustain the sessions, so a demand for new music activities, songs and games arose. In varying degrees, the participants were becoming relaxed about being observed, and were feeling more confident, especially as they saw increasingly positive reactions from the children. One of the agreed goals of the collaboration was to extend the song/activity repertoire of each participant and early discussions around planning sessions further highlighted the need for this. The increased confidence of the participants made it possible to introduce some new activities based on particular themes and learning areas the participant wanted to focus on, as well as focusing on a specific musical concept.

New materials are ideally presented in an animated way, which means the educator needs to be able to learn a new song to a level of confidence where she can present it convincingly to the children. While this sounds obvious, the task of learning a song is not necessarily well understood by educators. In the researcher's experience, one reason educators do not continually expand their repertoire is due to an easily overlooked obstacle; educators do not necessarily understand how to go about learning a new song. Knowing how to learn a song, particularly the importance of attentive listening, is a significant skill because it informs the way an educator expects children to learn songs. It is the difference between learning by singing along, or by listening.

A common practice observed by the researcher is that educators often expect children to sing along with a new song almost immediately, urging the children to join in after hearing it once or twice. This can result in the children merely approximating a melody, as the child has not had the opportunity to listen attentively and become familiar enough with the melody and words to be able to reproduce them accurately. In this way, children have missed the prelude to learning to sing a song tunefully; the experience of listening attentively and then hearing themselves 'tune in' individually with a melodic contour. An educator will find learning a song difficult for the same reason.

Previously the participants had learnt new materials by 'learning it off the CD', meaning they sang along with the CD with the children, and that they were limited to materials on CDs. As an alternative to this, it was important to provide an effective strategy to learn new materials. The researcher suggested that learning a song was like learning a poem or text for memory – it takes some dedicated time and practice. A few simple steps were outlined (see Appendix G), in order to make learning a new song relatively easy and quick, as any extra time was hard to find. The researcher explained that developing this skill had two benefits;

gaining an extension of repertoire, and a firsthand understanding of how to teach new materials to their children, as the process of learning a song was similar for both educator and child.

The time needed to learn a new song before presenting the song with its activity to the children placed a new burden on the participants, and the initial difficulty was finding time. Most early childcare educators are extremely time poor, as they are often balancing work demands with the demands of their own family life. For this reason, the researcher suggested that listening to, and learning to sing, new materials could be done while doing other tasks outside of work; driving or doing routine jobs at home, for example. When the participants put this strategy into practice the results were very gratifying for them and the children, who learned songs more quickly from hearing them sung live than from the CD. This also gave the participants a firsthand experience of listening as a specific musical skill that could be developed.

> When I learn new songs, I am more aware, where previously I would just try and sing something, I tend to listen to something more now, and try to learn the tune through listening and then singing it in my head before actually trying to sing it (S:Int.2).

All three participants did expand their repertoire to varying degrees, related to their levels of motivation. It was very much a chicken and egg situation; commitment was linked to motivation which was linked to confidence, so where commitment was low, it took longer for the participant to engage with this. However, even with a real effort from the participants, it was clear that more personalised support was needed to help each participant become more relaxed with singing. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

- **Preparation: presentation and planning**

Presenting new materials was directly related to singing confidence. When questioned closely about what it was that made them feel reticent around singing for the children without the CD, the participants all talked of feeling uncomfortably exposed. While singing a song, the participants were encouraged to keep a clear 'body beat'; by clapping, putting beats on the hip or pats on the knees, for example, as this would support them while singing and lessen the sense of exposure. The demonstration of a body beat also provided an entry point for the children in immediately engaging with a new activity, as their attention would tend to focus more immediately on a movement they could imitate, (the beat) as they widened their focus on the melody and words of the song being sung.

Seeing the children immediately engage by imitating her body beat, the participants agreed in discussions that they felt less exposed and pressured, and less inhibited by the sound of their own voice when keeping an active body beat. Repetitions of the song gave them time to practice the song singing alone, and the children time to absorb the song. As the participants gained experience of this process, they started to relax around

singing solo. Although there was room for improvement, the researcher felt this was quite a breakthrough, and the participants had enough to do for the time being, and she resolved to revisit singing later in the collaboration, as discussed in the following chapter.

As well as learning and presenting new materials, another important aspect of preparation was thinking through the session spatially and operatively as part of planning. The researcher observed that sometimes a participant had done a session without working through the practical details; such as creating the necessary space, having the required props or instruments close at hand, or clarifying boundaries up-front to avoid losing control of the activity, for example. This was problematic because when the session did not go well it undermined the participant's confidence. As the participants were already challenged enough, the researcher helped as much as possible in planning up-coming sessions. Based on their feedback, the participants were also invited to email their planned sessions for feedback before presenting them, but this option was not taken up.

In discussions the researcher worked with the participants to workshop an activity, encouraging them to map out and detail how they envisaged the children might physically and mentally participate in an activity. This involved thinking about how to link activities in ways that would optimize the children's interest and work with their energy levels while creating a coherent framework for music learning. As music activities had been ad hoc in the past, this level of thought and preparation was new to the participants. It was especially important that the sessions were engaging the children, as the children's positive response was the prime motivator for the participants as they slowly gained basic music skills and confidence with a more thorough understanding of the different elements in music. This practical attention to thinking ahead in practice in conjunction with theoretical understandings was an important part of the collaborations. S was referring to this when she pointed out: 'learning *about* music, about how music works, … learning new songs and learning new games and how to put things together, that's been great' (S: Int.2).

After five months of working together, the school year had finished. The researcher and the participants were getting to know each other much better, and had established good working relationships and were looking forward to continuing the collaborations in the New Year. Each collaboration was very dependent on how engaged the participant was in the process; there was great variation in this respect. Two of the participants had taken the opportunity to learn as much as they could, and were asking the underlying pedagogy of the work they were doing more closely. All the participants were thinking ahead to how they could do music with a new influx of children after the New Year based on what they had learned.

This chapter has looked at the development of the collaborations in the first five months of the fieldwork period, as the participants initially grappled with feeling inadequate and consequently uncomfortable at being

observed, then becoming more confident as they gained improved management skills, an interest in a deeper understanding of pedagogy and alternative ways of presentation.

The next chapter continues the discussion, looking at how the participants continued to grow in confidence over the next six months of their collaborations, and how a wider focus on the children's learning led to real changes in their teaching practice being established, leading to a deeper overall understanding of what a music collaboration should ideally include, for both participants and the researcher.

Chapter 9
Discussion: Part 2

Chapter 9 follows the educators' learning issues that dominated the latter half of their collaborations, and traces the establishment of significant changes in teaching practice. The longitudinal research model of a twelve-month collaboration allowed the necessary time for each of the participants and the researcher to reach a deep understanding of how to work together. The use of IPA meant that the ongoing analysis was influencing both the collaboration and the research as they progressed, as the researcher was able to reflect on the emerging issues and her own role as mentor. The participant's growing confidence meant they were more ready to deal with the most challenging aspects of the collaboration; gaining a deeper understanding of music pedagogy, planning and preparation, and continuing throughout, deepening the focus on the children; understanding and capitalising on their responses to foster creativity and learning. Singing and uninhibited playful interaction were areas of learning that took time to develop as they challenged feelings of inhibition, as they tapped into deep seated performance anxieties.

The participants' learning, thoughts and reflections, shared in discussion and triangulated by observations, could be continually tracked using IPA. The collaborations were works in progress, and although each was quite different, the use of IPA showed that the experiences and responses to difficulties and challenges were much more consistent than they appeared to be on the surface. The data showed that one participant could be quite open about a difficulty, such as managing noise levels or singing for example, while another participant might also be struggling with the same issues but would only allude to it indirectly. The researcher felt the participants had different reasons for not talking directly about an issue; feeling vulnerable in one case, or being as yet unaware of it in another case. Analysis of the data, and her own experience in the collaborations also stimulated the researcher to explore the academic literature on mentoring, as she identified issues that she felt needed more skill or understanding on her own part. All of the processes described above are part of the following discussion.

Early reflections

The collaborations resumed in the new year, continuing with the well-established pattern of fortnightly visits (or weekly when requested by the participant), which were always followed with a 20 to 40 minute discussion. All the participants felt refreshed after a long summer holiday and seemed highly motivated, having thought a lot about their music plans for the new term. A month after starting back a second round of interviews were conducted, where the participants were asked to offer preliminary reflections on their experience of the collaboration model as a form of PD.

It's very different from anything I've experienced. I've been to a few [in-services], and it's been much broader – whereas this is specific – this has been fantastic for me to do. This style could be used for literacy, numeracy, I think it's a very good form for teaching teachers (B: Int.2).

Well it's quite different in that it's one on one, it's all about me! [laugh] … so it's of great benefit, because the others – you don't get the individual feedback, like … if I haven't understood the whole concept of why, and what's being learned, and to have you there [explaining] … so all that one on one is really beneficial (D: Int.2).

For all three participants, the most positive aspect of the collaborations was the individual support they were receiving from the researcher in their own working environment. They were also getting lots of practice: according to all three participants, music sessions were now a regular part of most days. Gaining music skills and an understanding about music content had increased their confidence, and their skills in presenting music in an engaging way. Previous studies have shown that this is crucial to ensuring teachers use music more in their work (Kim & Kemple, 2011). While one of the participants was still at what Berliner (1989) described as the Advanced Beginner– stage 2 as referred to in previous chapter, the other two had clearly established changes in their teaching practice; the third stage of competence.

- **The need for a core resource**

As the collaborations went on, the focus on planning sessions and formulating an overall program required the participants to explore their own resource libraries to look for materials they could use, as well as using ideas from the researcher. The three preschools where the participants worked had a resource in their libraries called *Music Magic* (Bainger, 2007), written by the researcher some years earlier. S had been using this resource for some time before participating in the study. The participants had all had this resource for a couple of years and could have accessed it at any time but only S had done so. The participants accessed various resources but because they particularly wanted a sequential program with lesson plans, they all chose to use *Music Magic*, independently and at different times, as their primary resource.

The participants were all finding lesson planning difficult, and although *Music Magic* contained lesson plans, the researcher felt she could not direct the participants to use it as this might constitute a conflict of interest. She was also concerned that defining the resource to be used would sabotage the validity of a study where the needs of the participants were to be identified independently by the participants themselves, rather than assumed by the mentor. She sought to avoid any undue influence by not making any recommendations, but leaving it entirely up to the participants to choose their own preferred resources.

The researcher did encourage the participants to access a range of resources, rather than limiting themselves to one. They all needed support in utilizing resources effectively, either because there was no CD and they were unable to read music notation, or often because materials were presented without any guidance as to how to use them or what learning points were embedded in the materials. Again, to avoid a conflict of interest or influence the collaboration in an artificial way, the researcher did not discuss the *Music Magic* resource with the participants, but deliberately left it up to each participant to make use of it in their own way. As a result, the participants all used the same core resource in their own way, so although there were a few core activities common to all the participants, their overall repertoires were quite different.

With the benefit of the participants' feedback, the researcher could see in retrospect that taking this course of action caused a problem that would not normally occur in collaborations that were not part of a research study. D made it clear to the researcher in her second interview that, for her, it would have been more helpful to have been directed to use *Music Magic* as a basic program to work from much earlier in the study, as she felt things only fell into place for her once she started using it. B felt the same way. The researcher is still not sure, even now, what the ideal course of action would have been, but what is clear is that choosing a core resource that features sequential lesson plans to use as a starting guide would be beneficial to educators in any future collaborations.

Gaining confidences and competencies

> **Stage 3; Competent; identifying what is important, setting priorities, aware of timing and is able to target errors** (Berliner, 1989, p.42).

Six months into the collaborations, the shared aims were to;
- Gain deeper knowledge of music pedagogy (particularly children's musical development),
- Become more flexible with teaching and learning through play,
- Further develop the participant's singing confidence,
- Gain more confidence in planning,
- Develop reflective practice in relation to music,
- Explore how to use music to support learning in other areas.

The challenges for the researcher at this stage were;
- Clearly distinguishing between assessment and observation for collaboration purposes,
- Dealing with varying levels of engagement.

The participants had become more accustomed to planning a music session, and were now thinking ahead, talking about what music skills and understandings they wanted to focus on with the children over the term.

- **Developing a deeper pedagogy**

As referred to in Chapter 2, the researcher used the term 'pedagogy' in the way Burnard et al. (2008) defined it, to mean 'the art of musical learning and musical teaching' (p.121). Two of the participants were now working at the third stage as described above by Berliner (1989), while the third was continuing with a smaller repertoire and a more instructive style of teaching. Strongly-held beliefs about the role of teacher, often formed before training, are very resistant to change (McMullen & Alat, 2002) and moving away from an instructive style of teaching to a more playful, inclusive style is particularly difficult when an educator feels insecure with the content (Kagan,1992; Loughran, 2010). Two of the participants were now presenting materials in a more interactive way, inviting the children to join in the play in the first instance, thus avoiding long explanations or instruction. This was only possible now when they were skilled and confident enough to be more reflective about their work, philosophical about variations in the success of their sessions, and taking a longer term view of their own and the children's development and learning. This motivated a desire to examine more closely the underlying pedagogy specific to music learning and teaching.

D and S in particular were asking about different ways to present and explore a particular music concept, thinking more carefully about the various music learning opportunities inherent in specific materials and how to link different aspects of music learning in a sequential way over a series of sessions. They were also applying practical pedagogical understandings, such as matching their tempos to the children's (usually smaller and quicker due to their small stature), singing in an appropriate pitch range, and differentiating beat and rhythm. A closer focus on the children led to them identifying an individual child's needs, such as not yet being able to keep a beat, or move in a circle, or understand individual concepts. On the basis of these observations, they were now designing a music game differently depending on the needs of the children. They were also much more aware of the importance of targeting and developing listening skills in range of ways, for example.

Being able to identify specific music skills, the participants were now starting to think of music as an independent area of learning with its own skill base, and as a valuable area from which to develop many other skills, such as listening, comprehension, sharing, and counting to name a few. These were the essential understandings needed for the participants to be able to plan their own sessions, and focus on the longer term.

- **Deeper understandings of music as a form of play**

As previously mentioned, although the theory of learning through play is understood to be a primary focus of early education practice (Brooker, 2011; Fleer, 2010; Sherwood & Reifel, 2010; Wright, 2003), this did not

necessarily mean that the participants were equipped to facilitate music play with groups of children, or were comfortable with the change in teaching style that this requires. Further work was needed to support the participants to move towards a more playful mode of practice.

Understanding music as a form of play is a multi-faceted challenge for the educator; requiring an acceptance of play as a valid form of learning which involves 'doing', that 'doing' can be noisy, and that 'noisy doing' can be part of good learning, and an aspect of good teaching practice, just as much as quiet, concentrated activity. The challenges of teaching and learning music through play were gradually clarified for each participant in their own ways over the life of the collaboration and are discussed here as discreet issues that needed to be addressed in specific and individual ways for each participant.

Although their practice was beginning to change, at this stage the participants were still tending to often rely on being the 'teacher', in the sense of being the holder of knowledge that can be transferred to the children. As Loughran (2010) put it;

> Ideas that are firmly held prove difficult to shift or change. In some cases, no matter how often we are told or how carefully something is explained to us it is simply not sufficient to alter our existing world view – 'we cling tightly to that which we already know, feel or believe' (p. 57).

As the early part of the collaboration demonstrated, playful learning can directly challenge the educator's perceptions of good practice. As D mentioned in discussions, she had learned in her teacher training that a good teacher acted with decorum at all times and presided over an orderly, quiet classroom. In addition, most educators have had past experiences of music being presented as a serious pursuit, so understanding how music learning could be done through play was initially difficult to picture. However, the participants were all becoming increasingly aware of the option to step back into a co-player role as they saw how able the children were in taking ownership of activities with which they were familiar. Part of the movement away from an overtly instructive model was a growing acceptance of increased activity and sound levels in particular. Instruments were beginning to be used in activities more, and in a freer way, and there was a marked increase in the use of directed and free movement, allowing for a more playful atmosphere. The participants were still sometimes tentative when taking the less instructive but more interactive role of facilitator. With the increasingly successful application of management strategies, they were inviting and incorporating the children's input and letting the children arrive at their own understandings much more.

The researcher suggested at this point that the children could be invited to take turns being the leader of a familiar activity where possible. Strategies were suggested to encourage a child to take the opportunity as the leader to try out their own ideas. For example, two participants had now introduced a simple conducting activity with instruments that involved a 'conductor' using a 'music wand' to make clear gestures to indicate

contrasts such as starting and stopping, loud and soft, or fast and slow, to direct the children's free instrument playing. When the children were familiar with these gestures and could follow them, the next step was asking a child to take over the participant's role, being 'put in charge' as the conductor. Apart from the confidence-building and social benefits for the child, there was also the experience of coordinating the groups playing and hearing the result; improvising by manipulating a music element.

The children enjoyed this activity, and the participants were pleased at how well the other children were prepared to cooperate. S extended this activity to creating a special slot in her sessions for one child to choose a favorite song, and to come out and take up the wand to conduct the other children; leading the singing and beating time with the wand. She was thrilled to find that even a previously very shy little boy was prepared to take this step, as she felt it did wonders for his confidence.

Whenever a participant was observed experimenting with this approach, the researcher made a point of congratulating the participant regardless of the outcome, before offering any alternatives or advice. This approach also gave the participants the opportunity to differentiate an activity to better suit the different learning levels in a group. Giving the children an avenue of agency also allowed the participants to gain a window of understanding as to how the child was thinking and what they were learning. D and S found this approach to be effective. S found it particularly effective as it helped address her concerns of trying to meet the varied needs of a big group with a wide age range, as discussed in her case study.

- **Incorporating the children's ideas into planning**

The better the participants became at inviting the children to give input into activities, the more the children responded, creating a very positive cycle of creativity and engagement. The participants who did this most successfully were particularly surprised at the imaginative richness the children displayed, and how even the shyest children were ready to offer ideas. This effectively meant that the children themselves were creating extensions to activities which were very useful for the participant when programming the following sessions. Fleet and Patterson (2001) had a parallel finding, suggesting that it was important to validate the participants in using 'worthwhile knowledge emerging from genuine interactions with children as a source of planning' (p. 7). S was starting to do this, and finding that 'Now I do a lot more repetitive stuff but I also have a lot more idea of where we're going with it' (Int.3).

During observations, the researcher noticed that the participants were starting to respond more to some of the children's suggestions, but only when those suggestions were in line with the participant's session plan, or if the participant was sure that a child's suggestion was likely to work. The researcher encouraged the participants to take up a child's suggestions even if the participant could anticipate that it might not work; to

let the children experiment and find out about their ideas for themselves. As the children explored ideas that did not satisfy their objectives, they would work out other ways, and this exploration led to deeper learning.

Participants were now reporting in almost every discussion their surprise at the children's inventive ideas, so much so that the sessions were sometimes running over time before the participant's had completed their plans for the session. The researcher suggested that it was best to be flexible with a plan, putting it aside when necessary as it was more important to go with the momentum created by following the children's ideas. Exploring these ideas led to valuable experiential learning and, if time ran out, the planned activities could always be done in the next session. The researcher often observed how the children were creating new learning paths, both for themselves and for the participant, when their ideas brought up new challenges. Participants found this stimulating and surprising as it often led to some interesting and enriching outcomes.

During discussion times, the participants were now thinking ahead with ambitions for music in the future, voicing thoughts they had about what they would do with the new groups of children starting in the following year. At the suggestion of the researcher, after 8 months of collaboration, the participants were encouraged to formulate ideas beyond the immediate "what will I do this week in music", taking a longer term view and thinking about a music program over a whole term. This task involves the first three elements identified by Kagan (1992) in Stage 3.

While the planning was still primarily week to week at this stage, it was now more open, based on long term objectives, namely exploring all of the main music concepts appropriate for preschool music learning throughout the year. As their understanding of music pedagogy deepened, the participants were revisiting activities they had used in the past and thinking of new ways to extend learning and applying the materials to different contexts. They were becoming more creative and independent in their use of resources. The participants were now doing regular formal music sessions, usually on a daily basis in D and S's case, and at least weekly in B's case.

- **Small steps: Further work on the challenges of singing**

As referred to previously, learning new song and mjsic game materials and presenting them to the children inevitably lead straight to the most challenging and feared aspect of music for the participants; the lack of ease and confidence they felt with their own singing voices. The participants had made significant progress in the first few months of the collaboration, but continued to be challenged by singing, to a degree that the researcher felt it was necessary to develop singing confidence further in small step-by-step stages. It became apparent that more ongoing support was needed to focus on strategies to learn new songs. Learning new song materials had been promoted in the early part of the collaboration but the participants had not felt confident enough to do this, still relying on singing with a CD to introduce new materials. However, with the growth

in confidence that the participants were now showing, the researcher felt that they would now be more ready and willing to take up this challenge.

The participants varied greatly in their readiness to sing more; they were all generally self-consciousness about using their voice in an animated way. Two of the participants were shy of animating their voice even when reading a story. The researcher decided to work more intensely with each participant around developing a more deliberate and conscious use of vocal styles, starting with speaking. She employed a strategy that had worked successfully in the past with other educators, which involved taking small steps towards befriending one's own voice. These steps were integrated into the participant's daily teaching practice (see Appendix E for details).
 This gentle approach seemed to be much more effective now for two reasons; the participants were more trusting and responsive to the researcher's encouragement to consciously move beyond their comfort zones, and they had developed more confidence in general in doing music and were now ready to tackle this challenge more directly.

The researcher asked the participants to start with paying close attention to the loudness of their voice when speaking to the children, and suggested that they modify the volume strategically; varying the volume to gain the children's attention and encouraging active listening. For example, rather than speaking over the children when they were being noisy, it was suggested that they stop completely – their stillness and silence would eventually gain the children's attention, as they would be wanting to know what was happening next. Giving the children an agreed signal to ask for quiet, waiting for it, acknowledging and praising it, then speaking quietly would be less stressful for the educator and more interesting for the children. When reading a story, using interesting, unusual or funny voices would animate the story, and encourage the children to vocalise themselves.

The participants, like some children, were not aware that the singing voice is fundamentally different from the speaking voice in how it is physically prepared. The children should be given opportunities through games (the researcher gave the participants specific activities), to explore the difference between their speaking and singing voices, by exploring their shouting voices, their loud singing voice, their whispering verses, their soft singing voice, for example. Participants needed to sing in a higher key than they were used to, to ensure that songs matched the children's pitch range. To help them (and the children) explore their pitch range, various games such as variations on 'Making Sirens', or doing a vocal 'Roller Coaster' were suggested. One participant in particular enjoyed these games with her children so much that together they developed many interesting extensions of these vocal activities. As a result her children became adept improvisers, able to work on imaginative prompts to create wonderful improvised adventures that clearly delighted all concerned. These vocal adventures were repeated and extended over many months to become

quite elaborate, involving rivers and waterfalls, shooting stars, falling rocks, and dolphins diving under water – all with more and more extensive vocal slides and falls.

Starting with where each participant was able to work confidently, each step took different lengths of time to realise depending on the participant, but all three eventually reached a state of vocal self acceptance and ease with singing for the children. Most importantly they now saw their singing voice as part of their professional tool kit and as a work in progress, part of the ongoing continuum of professional learning.

- **The connection between learning to listen and tuneful singing**

Participant S continued to struggle with singing in tune and very much wanted to work on this aspect of her work. As there was no opportunity to address this in the preschool, the researcher offered to work with her in the researcher's private studio, to gain some experience of how music concepts such as pitch could be understood and replicated. For many years, the researcher had noted that children and adults who believed themselves to be 'tone-deaf', or could not sing, and related this inability to their voice, were in fact unable to hear music clearly for particular reasons, the main one being negative thought patterns intruding on their ability to hear and recognise what the sounds were doing. She suspected that this was the cause of S's apparent inability to sing tunefully. These sessions provided the researcher with further insights into the many hidden stumbling blocks that can hinder the process of a person understanding the different elements heard in a song, leading them to the erroneous belief that they are unable to sing.

Before these sessions, S held the belief that she was not musical, and unable to reproduce a melody accurately because she had been told this repeatedly as a child, which was still a painful memory. As an adult, simply being asked to listen to a bar of sung melody stimulated in her an emotional and cognitive state of confusion and inhibition; effectively blocking any possibility of her hearing the melody being sung. The singing sessions led to a breakthrough (details of what occurred in the singing sessions can be found in the Appendix I), as she understood for the first time the significance of the role of attentive listening in order to comprehend and internalise a melodic contour. This was a very interesting process; in a short time and with a little practice, her newfound confidence started to gain ascendancy, strengthening her motivation and ability to listen and comprehend what she was hearing. This proved to be very valuable, both personally and professionally, in shifting her self-beliefs. The researcher noticed that after these sessions, her singing in sessions with the children started to improve; other staff commented on it, and her comments showed she was well aware of when she was singing tunefully and when she was not. The accuracy of her singing was still very subject to her ability to overcome her habitual inhibition, but the researcher noticed that when she was listening to herself sing with focused attention on the melody, her singing was now about 85% accurate, whereas before it had been almost entirely monotonal.

- **Performance anxiety: fear of being observed**

Prior to the collaboration, the participants had relied on using CDs rather than their own voice to present new materials, as they were very uncomfortable with singing unaccompanied. In early discussions, the participants had agreed that, as part of the collaboration, they would be ideally moving beyond their reliance on recorded music, but due to their inhibition around singing in front of other staff, this proved to be a long-term challenge. The carer-child ratio requirements in early childhood education settings means there are always other adults looking on, unlike primary or secondary education settings. This creates a culture of what Nuttall (2003) describes as the co-construction of the teacher role.

For early childhood teachers, who almost always work as a group, the process of symbolic exchange with 'significant others' is both a covert mental activity (as it can be for anyone, at any time) and a constant, observable condition of their work. As a consequence, the opportunities to influence each others' understandings about the teacher's role are constant and overt, and can have an intensity which is unlikely to be experienced by primary and secondary classroom teachers on a regular basis (Nuttall, 2003).

Presenting new music activities, particularly new songs means the educator is required to sing and demonstrate movements, preferably in an engaging, animated way, watched by both the children and other staff. All the participants had identified that their main area of inhibition was with other adults looking on. At this advanced stage of the collaboration they were all singing much more than they had done previously, but all the participants still felt challenged by this aspect of the collaboration, even though they were determined to address this issue.

The participant's reporting of how they felt about their singing varied; in interviews they tended to sound more positive but in discussions after observed sessions they were more likely to admit to feeling nervous. Although B did not express fear about this she nevertheless avoided singing without the CD, and rarely sang alone, so it could be understood that she was in fact quite nervous about singing. D and S in particular felt a high degree of anxiety, afraid that colleagues and parents in particular would find them wanting, and even what the researcher would think of their singing. D felt even more anxiety about playing the piano at the preschool due to her fear of playing in front of adults, and she was afraid she would 'made mistakes' in front of the children. She was unable to overcome this fear even though she expressed a strong wish to be able to play for the children one day.

This fear of being heard singing or playing an instrument by other adults seemed to bear no relation to the participants' actual abilities. One participant could sing tunefully with ease but was extremely nervous and

refused to sing alone for half of the collaboration. Another sang alone occasionally but was unaware that she did not sing tunefully. The other participant was well aware that she unable to hold a tune in any recognizable fashion while being observed, but nevertheless persevered with occasionally singing unaided from the beginning.

The researcher responded enthusiastically to any singing by the participants in their sessions, and she often pointed out how transfixed the children became when hearing their teacher sing to them. Singing directly to the children was a positive way for the participant to get their undivided attention. When the participants began to ask about how to develop more singing skills (and if they did not, the researcher gently reminded them that singing alone was one of the agreed goals of the collaboration), she began to work with a step-by-step approach that focused on the participant becoming conscious and confident with the way they used their speaking voice first, leading to chanting, then free vocalization and eventually to singing songs (See Appendix E).

- **The value of working with small groups of children**

As demonstrated in the early stages of the collaboration, the participants were hesitant to discuss classroom management issues, but this began to change as a more trusting and open working relationship was established. It seemed also that once the participants had applied some specific management strategies successfully, they were now much more likely to reflect on their fears of being able to manage the children. One practical issue was the difficulty of working in large groups of twenty or more children; a circumstance that is not ideal for children's music making (Marsh, 1997; Wright, 2003) and difficult for the educator, increasing the management burden and confining what activities can successfully occur. In D and B's case, as both were directors, they were in a position to arrange for the sessions to be done in two smaller groups, but in S's case, her requests to work with smaller groups was rejected.

As a result, S continually struggled with having to manage her large group in music sessions. Unlike the other two participants, she had not been given permission to split her large group into two smaller groups, so she faced the most challenges of the three participants. B used the small groups for most of the time also. She did not comment on management issues except to say that she liked to always keep the children calm. Given that she remained the most concerned with keeping close control of the children, even when working with small groups, it is possible she was still too challenged by the more playful approach in her teaching to acknowledge this as a concern. D started to openly discuss her past anxieties around management when reflecting on her relief at how well things had just gone in an active and playful music session. She continued to work with two small groups, occasionally bringing all the children together to do activities that were familiar to them. Having gained confidence that she could manage the children, she was far more tolerant of the noise levels and freedom inherent in creative music making.

I use instruments a lot more now, and we also do a lot more of the 'found sound' things … I feel like I've got more control of the group during music, and that now I feel I can let them go and be free and noisy, and that I can get them back again, and, you know, quietened down again … so I feel like we can be far more expressive, and free, and move around more, and make more noise or whatever, and that's not as fearful for me now (D, Int.3).

- **The importance of collegial support**

As these issues around singing, performance anxiety and working with children in small groups demonstrate, the practical support from colleagues plays a significant role in PD conducted and applied in practice on site. The three participants all enjoyed active support and encouragement from their colleagues, either in the form of vocal reassurance and praise, acknowledgement of improvements, accommodating different groupings of children, or taking a supportive role in management. In S's case a colleague who usually joined her music sessions was a strong and tuneful singer and she helped to provide singing support in a generous and uncritical fashion, and both D and S benefited from other staff who offered acknowledgement and encouragement. They were also able to share a lot of their knowledge with other staff members, thereby increasing the pedagogical strength in music in their centres, and bolstering their sense of professional expertise. Judging from the participants' volunteered anecdotes, vocal praise from colleagues was tremendously important in developing their confidence.

Although S was well supported by her director with verbal praise and encouragement, her repeated requests to have two smaller groups for music were not accommodated, and in addition she faced the continual problem of extraneous noise interrupting her sessions. Noise levels are a constant issue for education work places. In a study of excess noise levels and their negative impact on early childhood teachers, a study found that '40% of the monitored teaching staff were exposed to daily or peak noise rates in excess of the Australian standard for exposure to noise in the occupational environment' (Grebennikov & Wiggins, 2006, p. 48).

This is an important operational issue that can be monitored and managed, provided those in leadership roles are aware of the problem and are prepared to deal with it. It is perhaps significant that this was an on-going problem for S, as a subordinate staff member, but it was not an issue for D and B, who were both directors. Music sessions, by their very nature, rely on what the children and the educator are able to hear clearly. For music sessions to be truly effective, they need to have a relatively uncontested sound scape within which to function; it is therefore essential that this be well understood by those in authority and other staff to ensure this is provided. These issues highlight how crucial the support of other staff can be in making full use of a collaborative model of PD.

Planning

Scott-Kassner (1999) refers to the unsatisfactory lack of music direction in early childhood settings being due to an absence of planned music sessions. Planning music sessions proved to be a significant challenge for all the participants, as it was not something they had previously done. D and B had not included formal music times in the past. Although S had provided formal music sessions, she had not previously focused on the development of particular music skills in a sequential way. Although the three participants had described music as a daily event in their first interview, it transpired later that this did not mean formal sessions being conducted with any learning sequence in mind, but rather just a filling in or management activity. As D reflected; "I'd never thought of structuring music as a 'it's a formal time' and 'this is what we do in this time' – it was much more ad hoc" (Int.2).

In the latter half of the collaboration there was more focus on planning; using imaginative contexts, pacing, and targeted learning of concepts for example. Analysis of the data collected indicated that there were issues for the participants around planning that the researcher needed to address more specifically, to help the participants to plan music sessions more easily and effectively, and these are discussed here individually.

- **Planning with a flexible structure**

To help the participants start to plan their own sessions, the researcher suggested that they frame the sessions with a beginning song and finishing song that remained the same for each session, and then focused on a particular concept, and build materials around that. A concept might be a particular aspect of music, such as acceleration in tempo for example, or a broader theme, such as a story that acts as a structure to connect different activities that explore different textures of sound. The participants found that using the same opening song helped both the participant and the children to settle into a receptive mode. Where this was implemented, the participants were surprised at how much the children appeared to enjoy this structure. After doing this for a few months, D often commented on how the children responded very positively to a structured, formal music time.

> They actually really enjoy it [the opening song] and it really kind of tunes them in so, and there's this real expectation of – 'Oh - what are we going to do next' so they're actually really looking forward to it [expressing surprise]. Actually they're really enjoying that structure (D: Int.2).

Structure in this sense is relative to the complete freedom of unsupervised play. It did not mean a rigid plan but more of a general plan, leaving space for flexible changes based on the children's input; requests for a favourite activity or spontaneous creative ideas that led out of an activity, for example. However, this level of

flexibility is a skill in itself that takes time and experience to acquire as it relies on the educator having enough musical knowledge and skills to be able to think and respond quickly. As Pope (2006) explains; 'Real 'planning' is the ability to switch from a plan and follow the children in a sudden line of interest. This implies long experience, and musical facility (p. 21).

If it was too much to expect the participants to have acquired the necessary level of skill at this stage, it was possible to suggest that they plan with an expectation of sharing the space and time in a music session with the children by trying out any ideas they came up with. This imitates how children play together, inventing and creating games in their own play (Marsh, 1997). With time, experience and greater appreciation of what the children could contribute, they would gain the confidence to respond more effectively. D and S were starting to work with these concepts of practice. B was enthusiastic about this style of practice in theory, but was busy focusing on learning materials and was not yet confident enough to relinquish her instructive, highly structured format. This is a challenge for many teachers (Loughran, 2010).

The participants were confident enough now to trust that by demonstrating an activity for the children, rather then explaining how to do it, the children could be relied upon to willingly exercise their cognitive, listening and observation skills to work out how to make sense of the structure of a game and how to join in. In this way, presenting an activity through demonstration acts as an invitation to the children. D was noticing how working this way was developing the children's social skills, as it strengthened the cohesion of the children as a group and consideration for others, while enhancing their music learning.

> Fantastic – feel like we're getting somewhere. We were amazed at how receptive they were and how much fun they had … feel like we can build so much on their ability to listen and do circle games and cooperate and work together – really the foundation of everything. (D: Jnl; March, 2009)

As the participants became more accustomed to preparing sessions and following a planned sequence of activities, they identified a fear of forgetting their session plan or specific details; the sequence of steps in an activity or the words of a song, for example. Rather than carrying around an exercise book or scrap of paper, the participants were encouraged to write a brief summary of a session plan onto a small card, which could be placed into a lanyard and worn around the neck to serve as a hands-free prompt while working with the children, without interrupting the flow of an activity. Two participants took up this suggestion and used it occasionally, but generally, the participants relied on using notes they kept nearby to prompt their memory for the session.

- **Pacing activities**

The more confident the participants became, the more they were able to identify the collaboration as a work in progress. Two of the participants in particular were becoming more reflective in their practice, and this included paying closer attention to how they were interacting with the children, and how the children were responding. They were sometimes finding that a combination of good activities in a session fell short of their expectations and they lost the children's attention. This was because the sequence of activities was problematic. The planning had not taken into account the fluctuations of the children's energy and concentration patterns, and their need for variety. Focusing on the activities from the children's point of view made a significant difference.

In essence, the participants were thinking about the sessions from the children's point of view as well as their own. Putting themselves into the child's position, the participants were becoming particularly aware of the importance of pacing activities effectively; planning sessions where sitting activities were alternated with more active activities, and familiar materials were done alongside new activities to avoid over-load, for example.

In discussions, the researcher noted that these two participants were discussing their own sessions with a much more impersonal attitude, critiquing their own sessions by acknowledging where things went well and where they did not, without it impacting on their sense of professional self-worth. They appeared to be much more relaxed and open about their practice, and as a result, the discussions were undergoing a subtle change at this point in the collaborations, conducted more like a constructive, on-going dialogue between colleagues.

- **Planning longer-term**

The participants did not yet feel able to plan more than a lesson ahead; longer-term planning would only come with more experience, but the researcher occasionally asked them to think about what they could potentially aim for over the next few weeks, and later, a whole term, for example. Certainly two of the participants had a much clearer idea of what they would do in music sessions after the first half of the collaboration, and were interested to see what they could do in music with the younger children starting preschool for the first time. The new intake of children was regarded as an opportunity to start a music program from scratch with a more structured and informed pedagogy, informed with a sense of how to develop music skills that could be built on over time.

Building on what they had learned in the previous school year, the participants felt they could go back to looking at specific music concepts, in a developmental sense with the children just starting preschool. They had a much better understanding now of the specific skills and competencies that constituted a child's on-going musical learning. Discussions often centred now on how to adapt activities for children of different ages. The participants were becoming aware of sequential learning around a particular concept, and how to

build on the basic skills the children were acquiring. Around the concepts of beat and rhythm, for example, giving the youngest children many different ways to coordinate their bodies and actions to beats at different tempos was a necessary basis on which to build other skills; such as the ability to count beats individually. Having developed these skills over time, older children could next be learning to hear and count syllables in words, connecting rhythms to word syllables and making patterns. It was not suggested that these skills be 'taught' as bits of information, but that they be embedded in many games that involved other concepts at the same time. Identifying the musical skills and understandings in a process like this gave the participants a sense of perspective and direction that they could not have had earlier in the collaboration. Familiar materials were now re-examined with the younger children in mind, and pedagogy discussions expanded to looking more closely at bedrock skills and how to extend them for older children. The participants were encouraged to explore how to improvise and adapt their materials to suit this purposes.

It was interesting that the participants expressed surprise that it was 'allowed' and 'all right' to arbitrarily change words to music materials; to adapt well known tunes to fit a theme, adjust the pitching of a song to better suit the children's vocal range, or create new verses to nursery rhymes for example. The focus was on tailoring songs and activities in their repertoire to respond to the day to day events and interests in the children's lives. All the participants found inventive ways to do this. The researcher often valued something they had created by asking if she could pass it on to other participants or use it in her own work. The participants were invariably eager to share their ideas and very pleased at the prospect of their work being of value to another teacher.

In this way, the participants had the opportunity to revisit, practice and develop what they had learned previously with the older group, with a different, younger group of children. The confidence that practice engenders has been noted in other research into educators' confidence in music (Ebbeck et al., 2008). They were now taking on more music groups with children of different age groups and developmental levels. Although they frequently talked about how difficult they found planning, the researcher was in a position to reflect on how differently the participants were thinking now. Prior to the collaboration, none of the participants had treated music as a specific learning area. It was very rewarding for the researcher to witness how much more music was valued; treated as a valid and important learning area in the curriculum that supported other learning areas, rather than being used simply as a filler, or management tool. Having gained music competencies of their own, the participants were now demonstrating a much more detailed understanding of music having its own specific concepts, skills and understandings, like other learning areas such as literacy and numeracy.

- **Planning using imaginative contexts**

The activities in a music session can be presented within an imaginative framework. For example, a session planned with a focus on tempos and dynamics could include songs like "Twinkle, Twinkle" and "The Wheels on the Bus", and "Sally Go Round the Stars" and start with the beginnings of a story about a magic space bus that can fly into outer space to visit other planets, past the stars … and so on. An imaginative context like this, initiated by the educator in a group play situation provides the children with a platform for their own innovations; a sort of shared play logic, allowing them to connect ideas with the other children, and take an activity into places of their own collective making. As Fleer (2010) points out; 'for young children, imagination helps make children's previous experiences and their motives visible to the teacher so that the teacher can connect conceptually and contextually with the children' (p. 147). Through noticing and analysing the children's imaginative input the educator can guide the children's attention to particular aspects of what they are doing, and thereby strengthen the individual child's awareness and comprehension of specific musical elements, within the imaginative framework.

This process was discussed with the participants who were asked to plan a session by connecting activities thematically. The participants experimented with using a story book or a simple plot as themes with increasing success. For example, B created a session connecting activities around a pretend bus trip to the beach, incorporating many songs the children knew but with adaptations, to which the children added an improvised ice-cream song.

> I put the whole thing into a picture for them, into a story, and there were songs as well, using CD's, we sang and did actions, and used the parachute for juggling the bean bags as well … they like it all fitting into the story… The children absolutely loved [emphasis] that lesson and they kept begging for it [big smile] and that was really good - it just worked (B.Int.3).

Wright (1991) points out that the young child's sensory and perceptual awareness is more attuned to her inner state of experience, making sense of a stimulus or following a thought process that may be hard for the adult mind to understand. This can make children's input seem both creative and obscurely lateral to the adult; interrogating the reasoning behind a child's ideas in the moment can distract the child from a hidden logic, hence the importance of not insisting that everything 'make sense'. In discussions with the participants, the researcher encouraged them to be flexible, letting go of their own expectations of how an activity might progress when the children had different ideas. This sometimes led to surprising and often delightful outcomes, as described in the case studies, and a greater acceptance by the participants of the validity of the children's input.

The participants had been working with these concepts in the context of music for some time, and it was implemented most effectively when the participant had found time to plan and prepare. The sessions were becoming much more fluid and spontaneous as the participants' confidence in key competencies became

established; skills such as solo singing, exploring concepts, developing a bigger repertoire, becoming accustomed to acting as a co-player; and freely incorporating the children's spontaneous input. It was also noticeable that the participants' increased trust in their own management skills meant they were showing a much higher acceptance of periodic spikes in the children's noise levels and free movement.

- **Finding preparation time**

Finding time to plan sessions in a very busy schedule of work and family life was always difficult for all the participants, and often sessions were hurriedly put together, which sometimes worked and sometimes did not. However, as the participants developed a wider repertoire of songs and music activities, they were able to improvise more effectively when needed. This situation indicated how little time is available in an early childhood educator's day to plan ahead, or to take time to develop new skills. It also suggests that it is important that a participant fully comprehends the commitment they are taking on, and are prepared to find the time necessary to fully engage in any collaboration like the one undertaken with the researcher.

The level of commitment shown by the participants varied, and this was most evident in the preparedness to plan sessions. It is in the planning that an educator's understanding of pedagogy emerges; in the activities they choose and in the way they anticipate the children's learning. Two of the participants demonstrated a deepening knowledge of pedagogy through the planning and execution of their sessions, while the other participant needed more time and support than the collaboration allowed to develop her practice to this level.

- **Music in other learning areas**

The participants had entered the collaboration with an awareness of how music could be used as a teaching tool for other learning areas, and this remained a strong interest. They were now seeing many opportunities to strengthen other learning areas, and how easily these could be connected to music skills. For example, numeracy skills were supported with games that focused on keeping a beat through counting, and listening to and counting beats in games to find out the time, or how many objects were hidden in a bag, for example.

> I just didn't realize how it related to everything else really – like mathematical concepts – building core strength and all sorts of things – yeah … and just the feeling beat and feeling rhythm – that kind of stuff – yeah just that being a whole part of them (D: Int.4).

> A better understanding – like how all the different pieces link together into a whole … and also seeing the link with other areas – like with maths – I was never quite so aware how maths was in music – and the link between music and the *core* body – about hearing that beat, and the beat belonging to something that's inside us, … so it's that issue of linking all those things in (S: Int.3).

B was still thinking of music as primarily a tool to be used for other learning areas, rather than as a learning area in itself, perhaps because of her lack of confidence.

> Mathematics, counting, shapes, and then I would bring in games as well, so I would have the whole lesson based on shapes, but using song, games - all of that. I also focus on numbers, social skills; things like that. So I always have content (B: Int. 4).

When asked how she thought how best to encourage teachers to do more music D pointed out that using music as a tool in other learning areas was a springboard area that would encourage hesitant teachers.

> I think if you can show how they [teachers] can link it through to the other areas, because I think most teachers are so scared of music that people would do more of it – and at least the children would benefit … even if the teachers can start by kind of dabbling in it a little bit because it's part of a maths thing or part of a health thing or some other group time, that they're starting to do it, and hopefully their confidence will increase then too (D: Int. 3)

The participants were finding that a session focusing on textures of sound led to extended vocabulary, and playing with chants was a good way to develop recognition of rhyming words. They used running games to develop recognition of shapes and colours. They also used games that incorporated physical coordination and balancing skills and were commenting a lot on the children's increased listening skills, which made management easier. Various music games were used to focus on counting sounds connected to reading numbers, and counting fingers. Counting sounds led easily to counting the syllables in words, learning and mastering songs developed memory, comprehension and diction, while the sharing of instruments and taking turns in games supported the development of social skills. Although the researcher had reservations about this as she could see how the participants might lose sight of the importance of gaining skills specific to music, the use of music to support other learning areas was of particularly strong appeal for all the participants.

However, the positive side of this was that when a participant was wanting to focus on a particular learning area; such as looking at another culture, different environments, shapes or colours for example, they wanted to incorporate the theme in their music sessions, and would request theme related materials from the researcher on a regular basis. This led naturally to an extension of repertoire, and to learning how to adapt familiar songs in different ways to accommodate new topics.

Developing reflective practice in music teaching

Dewey's concept of reflection in education; moving beyond a routine action to a more questioning and enquiring consideration of teaching practice is now a well established aspect of professional behaviour (Loughran & Dimova, 2009). Berliner's (1989) Stage 3 notes the ability of educators at this level to identify errors as part of their teacher development, and this was now a more prominent part of discussions, evolving naturally out of the researcher always asking, after each session, variations of the same reflective question; "how did you feel about that session?", " did you achieve what you had planned in that session?" for example. The participants were now spontaneously volunteering where they thought they had made errors in their thinking or responses during a session, or had not been adequately prepared, or had struggled with planning or presentation. They were more direct in asking for the researcher's feedback on their work; asking for ideas for different approaches and strategies. All three of the participants, to varying degrees, reached the stage of being able to accurately identify weaknesses in their practice, in a spirit of motivated reflection in order to improve by focusing on those areas, and were also noticeably more comfortable acknowledging their strengths. They were able to accept praise and acknowledgement from the researcher, and independently crediting themselves for the efficacy of their work when they identified positive outcomes for the children.

> I think my strengths now are that I can have loads of fun with it, that I'm not stressed by it now, and that I feel like I can take the material and improvise with it, modify it, and have fun, and play with the children with it (D: Int. 4).

> and I did a beautiful job singing it too – I was so impressed with myself! … yeah and some of the kids started joining in with it so it was really good. I actually think I sing better when you're not there [laugh] (S: Int.3).

To varying degrees, all three participants continued to work on honing their music skills, and demonstrated increasing confidence leading up to the end of the collaborations. Instruments and movement were being used in every session, and there was a much better understanding of the importance of how to pace the activities. Although the participants had not referred directly to concerns around maintaining control in the initial stages of the collaboration, a year later, they were comfortable in openly acknowledging this at the end of the collaborations. They now talked of feeling much more comfortable and accepting of the noise levels and general 'ordered chaos' inherent in a lively music session. As B put it in a discussion: "I have made a conscious decision to let the children 'go' and play more" (April 09).

There was a clear shift in the participants' perceptions of what constitutes a good music session, and now they were more comfortable with, and anticipated, higher sound levels and a wider range of movement as a

general part of music making. All three participants now assumed that music sessions involved much more active involvement from the children, and two of the participants had changed their teaching stylea great deal, by becoming generally more child-centred in their practice.

The significance of the children's positive responses to music

Even more than the support from colleagues, the most significant positive reinforcement for the participants that was now becoming consistently apparent at around two-thirds of the way through the collaborations, was the children's increased engagement and enjoyment in music activities, an important factor in developing educator confidence noted in other studies (de l'Etoile, 2001). This was not something the participants necessarily discussed at length, but it appeared regularly in their discussions, and was also very evident to the researcher while observing the sessions. It was now the norm to see the participants enjoying themselves in a playful, rowdy session in which the children had enthusiastically participated. The children's pleas to 'do it again' coupled with clear evidence of what they were learning was clearly confirmation for the participants, and naturally very gratifying for the researcher also.

The value of the children's enthusiastic responses to the participants' confidence can not be overstated. The participants invariably judged the success of a session on the basis of how the children responded. The difference in their body language was telling; when having had a playful session with the children, they had become much more playful themselves, sitting down for the discussion with the researcher full of smiles, laughter, enthusiasm and confidence. Being playful themselves elevated their mood. Reflecting on how much the children were learning in these sessions clearly gratified and inspired the participant on both a personal and a professional level. Two of the participants in particular were now confident enough to be able to focus much more closely on the children, and be able to notice responses and developments in individual children in particular, rather than being so concerned with their own performance as teachers.

> I was really pleased today with the children's responses and felt confident to 'go' with their ideas rather than stick with the lesson plan … very pleased with the listening skills and most of all by the sense of FUN! (D: Jnl; Feb 09)

Proficiency: Freedom to focus on the children

> **Stage 4; Proficient: intuition combined with skill, free to notice and focus on children, able to predict outcomes** (Berliner, 1989, p. 42).

The aims at this stage of the collaboration were a continuation of Stage 3, with a stronger emphasis on reflective practice and long term planning. The two participants who were demonstrating aspects of this level

of proficiency had a much more nuanced awareness of how to adapt and pace different activities to satisfy the varied learning needs and interest levels of individual children in their care. They were able to articulate with much more detail what they perceived as the benefits of music for the children, finding it much easier to utilise music in all the other major learning areas.

Having become more comfortable with using a playful approach, two of the participants and their children became increasingly engaged with the music making activities, reducing the participant's need to spend time controlling the children's behaviour. There was a noticeably stronger focus by these participants on the children's creative participation; inviting, listening to and incorporating their suggestions.

The researcher was now able to encourage the participants to deepen their focus on the children, in particular, to notice and act upon unspoken contributions by children not yet to confidently speak out. It is very important to both value and acknowledge an individual child's musical contribution or response, but also to allow the children to learn from each other, and be inspired by each other's creativity (Wright, 1991). As well as responding to volunteered input, the participants were encouraged to notice how the children were individually experimenting and exploring. The shy child will often experiment with an activity but not feel able to speak up to draw attention to their ideas. The researcher suggested that here the participant could gently respond simply by catching the child's eye and copying her actions without comment, or saying "That looks interesting – can we all have a go playing our sticks your way?" or "Would you like to show us your way of playing so we can try it?" Noticing non-verbal participation can play an important role in encouraging that child to feel valued and give them the confidence to potentially take the step of offering their ideas verbally next time. Burnard et al. (2008) observed this in teachers that 'were hearing their students, both listening to what they said, and trying to interpret their body language' (p.120). Two of the participants took up this practice to excellent effect – they used their existing teaching skills to consistently notice and acknowledge the children's unspoken spontaneous responses.

In other words, these participants were now combining their existing professional experience with their recently acquired music pedagogy to scaffold music learning opportunities for all the children in a group, while at the same time immersing their 'teaching' agenda in playful interactions with the children. Freed from having to be the expert, they could relax, confident that learning would take place without their having to instruct or point out to the children what they were to learn. This demonstrated a clear shift had taken place in their teaching practice, particularly in their attitudes and anxieties around classroom management.

The participants were allowing the children to explore freely within the activities, and allowing the children to contribute to and direct activities to a much greater extent by routinely inviting and incorporating the children's creative ideas, encouraging 'learner agency' (Burnard, et al., 2008, p. 120). The change in the atmosphere of the music sessions at this stage was vividly apparent, with lots of laughter and playfulness

from both the children and the participants, and eager participation and cooperation from the children. The body language of the participants had changed dramatically; S was now modeling expressive and creative movements in movement games, and D was happy to get down on the floor to follow a child's suggestion that everyone should be snakes instead of people in a song, laughing along with the children delighted by the silliness of the idea. For the researcher, this mutual gratification for both the participants and the children was perhaps the most delightful and satisfying aspect of the collaboration. She was now observing a notable development in the children's listening skills, and their cooperation and creative participation, along with and each participant's relaxed and responsive demeanor.

In the interviews conducted at the end of the collaborations, the participants talked about their own individual experiences of the changes in their practice.

> I use them [instruments] a lot more now and we also do a lot more of the found sound things – I feel like I've got more control of the group … and that I can let them go and be free and noisy, and that I can get them back … so we can be far more expressive and free, and move around more – that's not so fearful for me now – I will gain control! [mock voice] (D: Int. 3)

> Previously I definitely thought of music as something you teach, but now I think I understand …that the children have a lot more music in them and they have a lot more to offer than just being taught, like instead of just being the sponge all the time … it's something we have fun with and play … I have more confidence that I can do it – I enjoy it more. It's a lot more fun (S: Int.3).

> (I'm realizing) they (children) learn through doing, and moving, …and that it's OK to have noise in a music lesson.... I've learned to relax more with the children, and I had to change my teaching approach as well because I tend to say 'sit quietly' etc, so changing my approach into a sort of play type situation, that was a big step for me, of learning - and I'm realising it does work... I'm less inhibited, just much more confident (B: Int.3).

Stage 5; Expert: intuitive, non-analytical sense of appropriate response. Fluid, effortless teaching. Teacher often now unable to describe or unpack her cognition (Berliner, 1989, p. 43).

Berliner's final stage; that of the expert, was not a realistic outcome for any of the participants after working in this area for only one year. The level of expertise suggested by Berliner's Stage 5 would take years to realize, and perhaps more specific musical learning in a less contested space than the early childhood work space. However, at the conclusion of this research study all the participants were now much more confident and enthusiastic about their ability to continue learning and increasing their skills in teaching music. They were aware that there was a lot more to learn, and they all agreed they would ideally like to do another

twelve-month music collaboration in a few years time when they had had time to apply and experiment more with all that they had learnt in this collaboration.

Perhaps the most interesting change, and an unexpected one for the researcher, was that the participants all talked in informal discussions of how the successes they had experienced through teaching music playfully had transferred to and changed their over-all teaching practice. Their comments made it clear that overcoming the conflict between management and teaching playfully had played a dominant role in the collaborations, and this was also evident to the researcher. In short, a more actively playful approach to teaching and learning had been established. In addition to positive comments from colleagues, positive responses from the children had the strongest impact on each participant' perception of their teaching practice. This cannot be overestimated, because it was effectively the 'proof in the pudding' for both the researcher and the participants.

The findings and conclusion of this research are summarised in the following final chapter.

Chapter 10
Findings and Conclusion

The main contentions of this study into effective professional development in music for early childhood educators were that:

- For music professional development in music to be effective, it is necessary for an educator's self-beliefs around musicality to be identified and positively challenged, if they are negatively affecting their teaching practice.
- Through collaboration, an educator can gain the music skills and confidence necessary to develop a positive self-image around her own musicality and become an effective music provider.
- For such collaboration to be an effective form of professional development in music, it should be long-term and conducted on-site.

This phenomenological study aimed to gain a deep and detailed understanding of the needs of preschool educators when accessing a twelve-month professional development collaboration designed to assist an educator to gain confidence and skills in music. The distinctive element of phenomenological research is that it seeks to temporarily walk in another's shoes, to gain insights into the lived experience of other individuals. This longitudinal study sought to observe, record and analyse changes to the educator participants' teaching practice, to understand their experience and thinking as a result of a working collaboration with the researcher.

Three collaborations were conducted with the researcher acting as mentor; she observed the educators teaching a music session in their own work places, followed by an informal 30 minute discussion on a fortnightly basis for a twelve-month period. The collaborations involved in-service early childhood teachers with a minimum of ten years teaching experience, in three different preschools. This gave rise to the three case studies appearing in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Data werewere collected from the fortnightly visits, from four semi-structured interviews over an eighteen-month period, and from the participant's reflective journals. Data werewere triangulated with regular observations of the participant working with the children. The observations allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's circumstances; their reflections and reporting could be understood in the context of their music work with children.

The combined data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to allow the researcher to meaningfully interpret each educator's experience of the collaboration. IPA is normally associated with the domain of psychology, but is used here in the education field because it gives prime importance to the voice of the educator; it insists on a consistent link between the original data; the expressed

perceptions of the participants themselves, and the analysis; the analysis being the meaning the researcher derives from the data. The analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of significant themes, all of which have been discussed in the preceding two chapters. The findings of this study rest on the main themes arising from collected data. Before arriving at final findings, the participants were invited to take an active and reflective role in the research side of the study by both reflecting on their experience and making recommendations about the collaboration model of PD. This final chapter presents both the participants' and the researcher's reflections, then looks at the recommendations of the participants. The findings of the study are defined, leading to suggestions for further research.

Reflections on the collaborations as a professional development experience

The participants' final reflections

At the end of the field-work, the participants were asked to reflect further on their overall experience of their music collaboration and its effectiveness as a model of PD. Here is a summary of those reflections, collected into main points using the participant's own words.

- **The importance of confidence**

Before the collaboration, the experienced participating teachers all identified a lack of confidence as their impediment to effective music teaching and learning. They all felt that gaining specific music skills and practicing those skills, over time as they worked with the children on a regular and ongoing basis, led to a level of confidence that supported ongoing learning.

> I feel like that is what's increased; the musical skills and confidence, because I can have a lesson that's partially good and partially disastrous, and then I can modify it the next day
> … you don't give up on it … so in terms of confidence it just pushes me to do it and then see that you can improve your skills (D: Int.3).

> This confidence – it's linked to all areas – because I'm seeing that my skills have improved – learning stuff I didn't know before. I've gained music tools, like the voice and the melody and listening (S; Int. 3).

> I'm more confident in using music in different areas of the curriculum … I think I've grown a lot in confidence using music in the games … believing in myself in music, and learning the skills… it made me realize, and gave me confidence that I can do singing and movement and things like that without the CD's - I'm less inhibited (B; Int.3).

All three participants reported improved skills, greater confidence and, to varying degrees, less inhibition in their presentation and engagement of music activities.

- **The significance of individual, on-site professional development**

The participants all valued the individual support offered in their own working context. They felt it was important that the mentor would be familiar with their particular concerns, know their strengths and weaknesses, and be familiar with the individual children with whom they were working. As D had put it: "all that one-to-one is really beneficial … its all about me!"(Int.2). S noted that: "this style of thing that you are doing; coming and seeing where I'm at and assisting me in the environment that I'm working in is extremely helpful" (Int.2).

Although being observed was initially uncomfortable, being able to talk about a session and workshop ideas in discussions with the mentor (researcher) immediately after being observed was the most valued part of the collaboration design. Receiving notes by email about what was discussed the following day, including suggestions and practical support was seen as a particular benefit. This was often mentioned in passing in discussions earlier on, but became a given later in the collaboration. However, S did talk about how she felt about the individual nature of the collaboration in the last interview, summarising what had come up in passing comments throughout the collaboration from all the participants.

> Well I think the collaboration is much more specific for the group of children, and the centre and the teacher themselves. It's more flexible – you can actually come and see that group of kids. I mean you know what I can and can't do and you can explain it in a way that I can grasp more readily and I'm able to do it, so that far exceeds, say, workshops for that reason. When you come, you're in my [stress] environment. [In] a workshop you're sharing the attention of the presenter, whereas with collaboration, you're solely giving me the attention, and that's a big issue (Int.4).

All the participants felt that the collaborative style of PD was so valuable it should be applied to other learning areas, such as literacy and numeracy, although they had little faith that the early childhood sector could attract the necessary funding to do this. As D put it: "it would be fabulous to have mentors in all those areas but that's never going to happen". She suggested that the ideal would be to have one 'seed' collaborator working with a group of preschools in an area over any one year would be a viable way to provide systematic and on-going PD. They also all felt that collaboration would be invaluable at different points in an educator's career, especially in the first year out of teaching, after 4 to 6 years in the job, and for older teachers. As D put it;

It would be really great for first year outs, and every 5 or 6 years or so … I think it's also really important to those teachers who've been out for a long time, to re-visit – because it's very different now to how it was structured when we went to uni (Int.4).

Collaboration also allows an educator to work from where they are at; from their individual skill base. The participants often mentioned how being able to work from their comfort zone, and slowly work towards more challenging tasks was an effective way to bring about changes in their teaching practice.

Having had that feedback and being helped to use and change songs – having all that input – that enabled me to be able to be more creative with tunes that I know, because I'm not particularly skilled at lots of tunes but because of your collaboration I've been able to learn and use things I'm good at in more than one way – make them go further (S: Int.3).

All the participating educators had started off in the collaborations with a different set of skills and had worked on what they had, developing at their own pace and using materials of their own choice to reflect the needs of the individual children with whom they were working.

- **Changes to teaching practice**

The participants found the collaboration changed their music teaching practice in specific ways; such as being more musically active with the children, being more playful, planning more but also being flexible in accommodating the children's ideas and suggestions, for example.

Yes, it's [my teaching practice] has changed substantially. The point that I think it changed, is the one about being prepared to take the interests of the children and go with them – not to be too rigid about what is planned in my head or in a book, but to go along with what happens, and being prepared to change everything, just so we can incorporate that, so to make the music experience meaningful and purposeful for the children (S.Int.3).

At the same time as talking about seeing music as having a lot more specific skills than they had been aware of, the participants were also generally surprised to discover how genuinely playful music sessions could be. They found that the movement in their teaching practice towards a more playful and inclusive style of teaching had transferred to other curriculum areas of their work in a positive way.

It's increased my teaching confidence as a professional … I'm seeing myself as more professional, like … I really do know what I'm doing, and it's not just with music things … management skills have increased … across the board – I can teach them [children] much more (D: Int.3).

The very act of facing challenges that touched on both the professional and personal sense of self simultaneously, such as dealing with performance anxiety for example, gave the participants a sense of pride in their achievements, increasing their professional and personal self-esteem.

> I'm continuing to develop – I think "Yep, I can do that". I think there's a mastery thing happening, so you're building your skills which gives you confidence (D; Int.4).

> I've realized I'm smarter than I thought I was – I can learn new things (S; Int. 3)

As well as gaining confidence, these two participants in particular had gained an appreciation for their own learning skills, to the extent that they were prepared to try new things and so continued to develop their music teaching practice.

- **Outcomes for the children**

Although this study did not focus on the outcomes for the children, the participants' responses showed how their perceptions of the success of the collaboration was very connected to how the children responded to the changes in their teaching practice.

> What I've really noticed is a change in the kids – I see a really big difference in the way [stress] they take part – they are just so full of ideas, and they know that you're going to listen to their ideas, and because of that they come out with them and they are just really so much more engaged (S;Int.3).

> The children are focused and really into it all … they are learning more (B; Int.3).

The children's positive responses heartened the participants, motivating them to go further in practicing new skills and activities, as has been noted in previous research (Russell Bowie, 1988). The participants had commented many times in discussions on the creative capacity of the children they were working with, their surprise and delight strongly implying that this was an unexpected and enriching discovery. It increased their respect for the children, seeing them as active and contributing co-players as opposed to passive receptors of outside knowledge. Initially their remarks were suggesting that this particular group of children were unusually creative, but after working with a second group of children after New Year and finding them also very creative, their understanding changed to one of recognition that, when given the opportunity, most children have a lot of creative power and the ability to offer new directions in an activity.

> These children, they just astonish me because I've never had a group of children who have made up

verses before (B; Int.4)

I'm loving the way they come up with so many ideas! – and not just in music – there's this transition going on – when we sing for anything we do now – like putting on our shoes – they're coming up with their own ideas all the times and it's flowing between the music sessions and other parts of the day … there's a lot of foundation stuff happening (D; Discussion, August 2009).

While the experienced and expert music specialist may not be surprised at the participants' discoveries of the children's creative input, it was a new experience for the participants in the area of music, and this discovery had a highly motivating and encouraging impact.

- **Music and other learning areas**

All the participants had used music to some extent to support other learning areas prior to participating in the collaboration. Part of their learning in the collaboration was to gain understandings of the specific skill areas in music. As these understandings took hold, the participants moved full circle, connecting some of those specific skills to other learning areas, especially in the areas of numeracy (from counting beats and sounds etc.), literacy (rhyming in songs, comprehension of language and extended vocabulary), physical coordination (balance, learning dance steps, extended movements) and social skills (sharing, taking turns, listening to each other). They started to volunteer their awareness that the most significant aspect tying all these skills together was the children's ability to listen attentively, something that the researcher had stressed throughout the collaboration as a foundation skill that the child needed many opportunities to develop.

Music is just so linked to development in all areas; it's a crucial thing to get right, and to be confident in and to have as a part of the program throughout the day … I'm now linking music with science and maths – multi-sensory learning (D;Int.4).

[I have]a better understanding than I used to of … the rhythm and the patterns in music and the link with other areas – like with maths – I was never quite so aware how maths was in music – and the link between music and the core body (S: Int.3)

The skill of listening attentively was also something that S in particular came to regard as a skill she could develop more as an educator;

Listening! – listening to the children, to the tune, listening to my own voice, listening, um, to the children's voices … I would not have done that before, definitely not, and I'm starting to hear how some kids really get it and some don't … and I think that they have the capacity to hear more (Int.3)

S's own discoveries of the importance of listening in the singing sessions with the researcher led her to fully value its importance. As a result she focused on developing listening skills for the children in many different and creative ways. This was an example of the participating educator and the children forming a genuine learning community together, as co-players.

The researcher's reflections

Some of the main issues emerging in the collaborations were apparent only with the benefit of hindsight. This points to the significant difference between short term and long term PD. It was only over a long period of time, long enough to establish relationships of collegiate and personal trust, that the participants were able to realize or volunteer issues that were more confronting or challenging to them. It was also that length of time that allowed the researcher to be the recipient of professional confidences and thereby fully realize the role of mentor. The researcher would argue that the longitudinal nature of the collaborations was crucial in allowing the participants the time to gain enough confidence and skills to be able to realize and establish systemic changes in their teaching practice. Having many opportunities to observe the participants' work throughout the twelve months, usually fortnightly and sometimes weekly when requested by the participant, also highlighted the importance of triangulation. Wiggins and Wiggins (2008) suggest that self-reporting by participating educators in research studies is problematic when viewed as a definitive representation of an educator's teaching practice, and needs to be triangulated with observation of the educator at work to give a more complete picture of her teaching practice.

This field-based research not only led to increased music skills and confidence in the participants but was also a very valuable and rewarding learning experience for the researcher. In taking the role of mentor in a research project, the author was motivated by the desire to make a contribution to the education of young children, by learning more of how to share her skills and experience with her teaching peers more effectively, in a way that might bring about real change. In the process that desire was fulfilled by the progress the participants made. She felt inspired by their determination and courage, and equally grateful for their feedback on how to be a better mentor. In addition she discovered that the whole experience of mentoring influenced and augmented her own music teaching practice, an effect that has been noted in other studies (Zeek et al., 2001). The regular discussions acted as an active form of reflection for her, and she was especially delighted to find herself at different times asking a participant if she could use a particularly novel or fresh idea, and pass it on to the other participants and other teachers with whom she worked. This was valuable in extending her own song and music game materials, but also as an authentic way to acknowledge and value the participants' original ideas and input.

- **The pedagogy underpinning the collaboration**

The pedagogy underpinning the researcher's mentoring of the participants played a significant role in the collaboration, in that the participants, contrary to their previous understanding about music, were consistently encouraged to think of music with young children in two specific ways; firstly, music could be presented primarily in the context of imaginative and exploratory play, and secondly, music is an important and specific learning area with its own set of skills, as well as many other more general skills. This pedagogy, when combined with the recommendation that music sessions be placed in a setting where the group of children is small, around ten individuals, and there is ample space to move freely, changed the potential outcomes of music sessions. In addition, the educator participants were guided to act as a facilitator and co-player, rather than an instructor.

This led to the participants experiencing a different type of interaction with the children; something more intensive and engaged with each individual child. This was primarily because the shift in the educator's role meant that their task was to facilitate, support and respond to the children's imaginative behaviours and input, and to join the children in entering an imaginative world in an equitable way. It also required them to relate their didactic, conceptual music understandings to a child's improvisations in such a way that the child's musical understanding became transparent (for a more detailed description of this process, see Fleer, 2010, Chapter 10, as referred to in this study's Literature Review). This level of teaching is only possible when the educator has an informed understanding of an individual child's extended world and experience. If there is the space and opportunity for the educator to focus closely enough on each child's interactions with an activity the educator is in a position to notice what the child is discovering in the moment, hence the importance of working in smaller groups. This level of observation and awareness of individual children is also only possible when the educator is placing themselves in the activity as a facilitator and co-player in a given activity. This intensity of engagement and learning support between educator and child can only occur when the educator is consciously aware of the music concepts and understandings and the many ways these may be performed or expressed by the individual child. This aspect of pedagogy heavily influenced the researcher's mentorship in the collaborations.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations from the research participants

During the fieldwork, as shown in the case studies, the participants and the researcher identified key aspects of what they felt should be included in a music collaboration, based on their experience. At the end of the fieldwork, the participants were asked to reflect on the design of the collaboration, leading to

recommendations they had necessarily already talked about. It is fitting in a phenomenological study that some of the participants' recommendations be illustrated using their own words.

- **Twelve-months duration;**

All the participants felt that it was important that the collaboration went for a year, for various reasons.

> I think having twelve months is a really good time, with fortnightly visits, because it may take six months to build enough rapport, before they [teachers] feel they are not being judged (D; Int.3).

> I think [12 months] is a good time – it's been good to have it for two different groups of kids – six months would have been too short – you wouldn't have seen much change (S; Int.3).

> I think the timing was good - I don't think it would be good to go any longer, I think it was just right, the way it has been done (B; Int.3).

The many comments made by the participants in discussions about the value of the long-term nature of the collaborations demonstrated the importance to them of having the time to build the necessary rapport between mentor and participant leading to a trusting, non-judgmental relationship, and the time for the participants to practice and demonstrate new skills and understandings.

- **Other learning areas are a good starting point**

The use of music in other learning areas was generally a high priority, but D thought it was also a good entry point to attract educators to take up more music PD.

> The collaboration should show how music really can be linked to other areas – I think if you can show how they can link it through the rest of the framework that people would do more of it (D:Int. 3).

D saw the emphasis on using music in this way as a good 'carrot', an initial approach that hesitant educators would be more likely to connect to readily, rather than trying to deal with learning new music skills in the first instance.

- **The mentor: necessary attributes**

The participants were asked what attributes they felt were important to them in a collaborating mentor.

> It's the type of person … the most important thing is to be non- judgemental, to be able to give advice, a sense of fun, they really have to really know their stuff – they have to be far more experienced than I am (D; Int.4).

> It's important that you have respect and a rapport with that person – like it's been important to me that I've felt I've been able to be honest and that I haven't felt threatened (S; Int.3).

The need to feel safe and not judged was a consistent theme for the participants, as they all associated an observer with teacher-training experiences, where an observer was there to assess their practice. It took time and regular supportive feedback to lay this particular fear to rest, and a realization that the researcher observer was there to support and identify the participant's individual needs. This is a similar finding to Barrera et al.'s (2010) finding that mentors in collaborations should have a supportive role, rather than an evaluative or supervisory role. This was only possible over a long period – all the participants suggested that they only started to really relax and feel they were in a collegiate relationship with the researcher after about six months; half way through the collaboration.

- **Demonstration and team-teaching**

They all felt having demonstration lessons would be essential in collaborations not bound by ethical constraints, and D suggested that a collaboration should involve all the staff in a centre. All of the participants liked the idea of demonstration lessons and/or team-teaching with the mentor as a regular part of the collaboration, but not as a substitute for observed sessions.

> Having you work with me on the floor for the first part, then you observing and directing me, that would be good (B; Int.3).

> Doing it as a team, so I could ask a question when you're in the room here… seeing someone actually working with the children would be even better, to see how you manage particular children (S; Int.3).

> A demonstration lesson, even if it was once a term, because I think that also helps to build rapport with the kids, as well as all the staff – not just one – being able to watch that … and if that person could meet with all the staff, sharing what was taught during that lesson – what you are doing and why, it's extending everyone's knowledge (D; Int.3).

It is important to reiterate here that there were reasons other than just the ethical parameters for demonstrations not being included as part of the collaboration model in this research. As discussed in the Literature Review, other researchers had found various problems with the inclusion of music demonstrations when working with teachers, such as teachers making negative comparisons between what they saw as their own inadequate efforts compared to the expertise of the demonstrator, causing them to be even more reluctant to take up the challenge of developing their own music skills (de Vries, 2006; Downie, 1999), and the researcher felt there was a danger of the participant educators modelling their own teaching practice too closely on demonstrations, rather than finding and validating their own style.

- **Working with a core resource**

The participants agreed that it would be best to start out with a set core resource to help with planning sessions, as this was a particularly difficult aspect of music sessions;

> It's better to have a set resource … but when I look back over it, I liked the way you let us find our own way … but then when I found the resource that I wanted to follow, and followed it to the 'T' it gave me confidence – something simple and easy to follow … like having a structure, something with a lesson structure and something sequential (B; Int.3).

> There is a need to have a core resource – a starting point – a guideline to go by (S; Int.3).

> Definitely [start with a set resource] … I mean everyone will come with a different level of skill and they may already have something that they're happy to use, but … perhaps in giving them another resource [it would] actually expand their repertoire and then, as I've found, you can start putting in your own thing (D; Int.3).

As previously discussed, the researcher had avoided making specific suggestions regarding resources, but these comments show the necessity of setting a core resource as part of the collaboration design.

Summary of recommendations for music collaboration

All the participants' recommendations, along with those of the researcher, based on their collaborative experience in this study, can be summarized as follows:

- **Recommendations for the collaborative design**

1) The collaboration must take place in the participant's own work context.

2) Duration should be of twelve months with fortnightly visits.

3) Collaborations should be available to first-year out educators, and at intervals throughout an educator's career, including experienced educators.

4) Collaboration should use the same format as in this study, but with the possible addition of regular demonstration and/or team teaching lessons where appropriate.

5) Discussions are essential after each session and might also be useful before sessions.

6) Periodic interviews every four months play a valuable role as a form of mutual reflection for collaborative participants and mentors (journals also, but may be hard for participants to maintain due to time pressures).

7) In addition to feedback in discussions, the mentor should provide written feedback summarising the workshopped ideas after each observed session, getting the notes to the participant promptly, ideally within a day of the observed session. These notes should be kept and added to as an expanding resource for all the staff.

- **Recommendations for the collaborative process**

1) The participant and mentor should have the opportunity to meet informally for a semi-structured interview and discussion before observations begin, to find out about each other; in particular to:
   - establish what self-beliefs and expectations the participant holds about her own and the children's musicality
   - define mutual goals and identify and discuss expectations
   - confidentially air any fears or apprehensions
   - start to establish the necessary rapport on which to build a collaborative relationship.

2) If the participant is not the director of the preschool, the mentor should meet with the director to discuss how the collaboration may impact on the preschool and how best to support the collaboration.

3) To ensure the best chances of success for both the educator and the children, music sessions should be done in small groups of ten to twelve individuals maximum, in a space large enough to flexibly accommodate games and movement.

4) Initial sessions should be based around the educator's existing practice with familiar materials, and build from there.

5) Clear goals need to be discussed and re-visited throughout the collaboration.

6) The participant's history and self-beliefs around musicality (themselves and their children) need to be identified and discussed; and understood to be a significant influence on the participant's practice.

7) The mentor needs to openly acknowledge the participant's existing skills and strengths, and be sensitive to the participant's potential feelings of inadequacy.

8) The mentor needs to be expert, responsive, supportive, approachable, flexible, confidential, non-judgmental, encouraging, and gently challenging when appropriate.

- **Recommendations for the collaborative content**

1) The collaboration should acknowledge the participant's experience and current skill base as an early childhood educator in general, and music skills in particular, using these skills as the departure point for that participant's on-going learning.

2) A set resource should be recommended and used, ideally featuring sequential lesson plans, CD recording of song materials, and clear explanation of concepts and pedagogy, as a springboard for planning sessions (unless the educator is already using a suitable resource).

3) A sympathetic understanding of an educator's personal and professional inhibitions, and continual support and encouragement may be necessary, in particular, to motivate educators to move from an instructive style of teaching to play-based learning in music.

4) Educators will need specific strategies to feel they can confidently manage more playful activities involving games, free movement and instruments, etc.

5) Educators will need support and real examples of how to extend music materials with which they are familiar.

6) Educators will need support and real examples in placing music materials into an imaginative context to stimulate the children's engagement.

7) Educators will need support and encouragement in facilitating and flexibly implementing the children's spontaneous improvisations and contributions.

8) Educators will need support in preparing adequately for music sessions; for example: knowing how to learn new songs, having the necessary props, instruments, space etc. available for each session.

9) A regular supply of applicable and practical ideas and activities are needed to;
   - extend current repertoire,
   - develop new repertoire,
   - develop movement and coordination,
   - stimulate creativity and improvisation,
   - use instruments,
   - integrate music into other learning areas.

10) The collaboration should offer regular short- and long-term planning support and guidance.

11) It may be necessary to provide additional training in developing practical music skills and competencies; (eg: singing, playing and understanding beat and rhythm, understanding concepts) outside the usual framework of observing and discussing sessions.

12) The mentor needs to make music and play pedagogical understandings transparent to the participant in discussions, in relation to their current practice.

13) The mentor needs to be continually aware of the personal and professional vulnerabilities typically felt by educators in the area of music, and appreciate that forms of avoidance may be indicative of unspoken feelings of inadequacy rather than a lack of cooperation on the part of the participant.

These recommendations, along with the overall experience, and analysis of data making up the research, gave rise to the Group of Music Confidences, one of the main findings discussed below.

Research findings

General findings from this study

- Long-term support of a year's duration that involves a one-to-one collaboration conducted with the educator in her working context and with her existing skills can result in true gains of musical confidence and skills, leading to systemic changes in music teaching practice.

- Even when lacking in confidence, educators want to provide music for their children, and are prepared to actively work towards gaining music skills when the appropriate support is available to them. Crucially, they need the opportunity to re-assess self-beliefs around their own musicality to do this.

- A shortage of resources is not as much of a problem for early childhood educators as not knowing what to do with them. Initially they need music resources that offer structured and sequential guidance to plan sessions and clearly identify music understandings.

- Doing music with children in large groups is not as effective as working in smaller groups of between 10 to 12 children for example. Small groups will lead to better responses and outcomes for the children, and a more motivating and encouraging setting for the educator.

- The support of the director and other staff is an important influence on the success of collaboration, particularly in terms of available space, organization of group sizes, moral support and encouragement, and peer acknowledgement.

- Professional development needs to be conducted consistently over a minimum of twelve months and delivered on an individual basis to educators to result in positive sustained impacts on teaching practice.

- The content of music collaborations should be guided by the daily demands and practical needs of the teacher.

- Educators often carry self-beliefs around musicality that are in contradiction to their beliefs about the musicality of children. An educator's self-beliefs are a significant influence on their teaching practice.

The main finding: The Group of Music Confidences

The ultimate aim of this research has been to explore the efficacy of a collaborative model of music professional development primarily from the participant educators' perspectives. The collaborations set out to support the participant educators in gaining the sufficient skills and confidence to establish and sustain positive changes in their music teaching practice. The study shows that this aim was realised to varying degrees, by all three participants.

At the end of the collaboration it was now possible to confirm the main themes emerging from the data, which identified the challenges that all the participants faced in their collaborative journeys. Each of these challenges acted as a gateway to the further development of more advanced levels of skill and confidence, and can therefore be understood to be discreet and pivotal steps leading to specific music and educator competencies. All of the confidences listed below represent a summary of the main challenges faced by the three early childhood educators in this study. Coming to terms with these challenges leads to confidence, the vital element missing for most teachers doing music. Therefore the researcher describes the 16 specific competencies in this summary as 'the Group of Music Confidences'. Through these findings, the researcher has generated a theory of music professional development for early childhood educators; as this group of music confidences acts as a list of significant and essential signposts, identifying the main areas that need to be addressed in collaboration with for early childhood educators for their effective professional development in music.

It is not suggested that this is an exhaustive list, or that it should be utilised chronologically, because the way each issue is addressed in collaboration will be particular to each individual participant. The most important aspect of the collaboration model is that it gives the participant educators agency in their own learning, and that their learning is directly applicable to their immediate, as well as their longer-term needs. This study does suggests, however, that when each of these confidences are appropriately targeted within the collaboration model, this will constitute an effective form of PD that will be able to address an educator's individual areas of need, taking out the patchy, ad hoc, one-size-fits-all guess-work of current music PD for early childhood educators.

The Group of Music Confidences

Addressing self- beliefs;

- Understanding of musicality in self and others, un-packing negative music experiences and self-beliefs,
- Understanding the significance of music in early education,
- Acknowledging educator's existing skills and repertoire.

The teacher as student;

- Engaging with and focusing on children through child-centred, playful interaction,
- Preparing: taking time to learn and practice new skills (singing etc.),
- Connecting self with children as a co-player (applying own learning to children, as small steps),
- Developing sound understanding of music pedagogy (play, repetition, listening, improvisation) and clear understanding of music concepts (beat, stop/start, dynamics, tempo, pitch, duration etc) and how these are experienced and understood by children.

Music teaching in practice;

- Focusing on children (requires working with small groups of 8 – 10 children),
- Preparation; space, props, learning new song and game materials,
- Managing active music sessions (using movement, instruments, imaginative contexts)
- Learning through play (educator and children) with an equitable valuing of children's input, acting as facilitator or co-player, rather than as an instructor,
- Extending music into other learning areas.

Music session planning;

- Setting realistic goals and expectations for self and children,
- Connecting pedagogy to short and long-term programming,
- Pacing sessions to match children's receptivity and energy levels,
- Using resources effectively (extensions, accessing new materials).

The Group of Music Confidences can be summarised as follows:

The Group of Music Confidences

Addressing self-beliefs

Self-beliefs are extremely significant; the participant needs to be given the opportunity to explore the influence of past experiences and challenge concepts of musicality.

The teacher as learner; new skills and understandings

The participant needs strategies that validate taking a learning role in gaining clarity about music concepts and understandings, support to learn new repertoire and skills, and learning alongside children.

Music teaching in practice

Adequate preparation for varied, active and imaginative sessions, focusing on and accommodating the childrens' learning and creative input equitably.

Music planning

Developing realistic goals based on sound pedagogy, to plan activities that create an effective muci program.

Music Planning

Realistic expectations, sound pedagogy, understanding of pacing of activities and being able to utilize and extend resources effectively.

The main finding of this study is that a long-term collaboration that addresses the necessary issues as outlined in the Group of Music Confidences is a very effective model of music professional development. It was found by the participants to be superior to other forms of PD they had previously experienced. When conducted over a long enough period of time in the participant's work place, and when co-directed by both collaborators, collaboration allows the participants to gain significantly increased music skills, understandings and confidence, resulting in established changes in teaching practice that lead to effective music provision for the children in their care.

While the experience of a limited number of participants in a study cannot lead to any generalisations, the consistency of the nature of their perceptions and recommendations can validly inform future explorations in the efficacy of a collaborative model of professional development, and potentially be applied in future professional development programs. Future music collaborations could benefit by using the theory of the Group of Music Confidences as a structure for collaborative content.

The Group of Music Confidences are the distillation of the participants' and, to a lesser extent, the researcher's collective experiences, reflections and analysis throughout the collaboration. Because these confidence issues emerged as common to all three participants, the author proposes they could potentially be taken as a departure point for future studies and music collaborations, to assist music mentors working with established educators, novice teachers and teacher trainers in improving outcomes for early education educators wanting to gain skills and confidence in music. As D put it:

> Well if you could do this sort of collaboration to start everyone off and loads more training at uni then I think they would start more confidently because they've got that support (D: Int.4)

This study suggests that each of the identified music confidences needs to be examined, understood and addressed by both the mentor and the mentee in a music PD collaboration to ensure that those educators participating in a collaboration acquire the skills and confidence to enable them to make real and lasting changes in their daily teaching practice.

This group of music confidences, when embedded in an understanding of music as play, takes into account the involvement and contributions of both the educator and the children, positioning them all equally as developing musical beings. From the educator's point of view, the development of these confidences is a process that involves the creation of a playful and meaningful music making relationship with the children. Within this relationship, the educator is able to develop skills continuously alongside the children. In this way, music making with the children acts as a platform for the educator's ongoing learning, constituting meaningful professional development.

Potential applications of the Group of Music Confidences

The author suggests that the Group of Music Confidences, as outlined in Chapter 9 and summarised above, acts as a signpost, indicating the specific issues that need to be explored and addressed in a music collaboration in order to meet an educator's professional and personal needs in relation to providing valuable music experiences for children. The author has argued that each of these sixteen confidences plays a crucial role in equipping an educator with the necessary tools to be able to provide a meaningful music program, and suggests that these issues can be effectively addressed within a long-term collaboration model of PD.

Currently, only sporadic, short-term and uncoordinated PD focusing on music is available to early childhood educators. The group of music confidences that arise from this study is suggested as an effective template for the creation of a more effective form of music PD. It provides a comprehensive structure for the design and content of future music PD, in place of the ad hoc nature of current music PD, to ensure our early childhood educators' and children's educational and music needs are met more effectively.

Recommendations for future research

Further studies that trial the efficacy of a collaboration based on the theory of the Group of Music Confidences in the early childhood sector, with a larger number of participants and different mentors, would help to establish whether the theory is transferable and relevant for early childhood teachers more generally. Different mentors would bring different skills and perspectives to the collaborative model, and potentially extend the issues in the group of music confidences. This could be done as a pilot study in a particular area, where a mentor is actively supporting a group of preschools in an area, as suggested by one of the participants.

Further research is needed that focuses on helping educators identify existing self-beliefs around musicality and explore how these self-beliefs might be positively affected to engender a readiness to develop personal music skills. The specific skills and understandings identified by the participants in this study; around learning music materials, extending music learning through those materials, the clear identification of the music concepts that can be explored at the early childhood level and the pedagogy that underpins planning and preparation of music sessions, suggest that research into the efficacy of the music content students receive in their teacher training courses needs to be researched further.

This study suggests that although aware of the value of play-based learning, even experienced educators are not necessarily able to apply this to music. More extensive research is needed into how to support new and experienced educators in gaining the practical skills and understandings in which to ground their music teaching practice in play-based learning.

These collaborations involved experienced teachers. It would be interesting to see if the strategies and approaches used in these collaborations to build confidence could be applied to students in teacher training programs, and novice teachers.

The positive responses of the participants to the *in situ* nature of these mentoring collaborations was mostly due to the high degree of support the participants experienced. This suggests that the *in situ* mentoring model, as opposed to the group-based and off site PD mostly on offer, might be researched in other learning areas, and in other spheres of education as well as music.

A significant focus that was not included in this study is the specific music and related skills development of the children involved. Following the responses and learning outcomes for children involved in researched collaborations in particular would give a more complete picture of the learning outcomes for both practitioners and children in a collaborative model of PD.

The researcher found the use of IPA worked very well in this phenomenological study as it provided a flexible, accessible and illuminating gateway into the ongoing analysis of an increasingly large amount of data. The use of IPA in education research is still in its infancy, and this study suggests that education researchers consider using it more widely where appropriate.

It is a great loss to the industry that there are relatively few early childhood practitioners directly involved in research, perhaps due to the working demands in the sector, and the perceived remoteness of research in the minds of many practitioners. Finding ways to involve early childhood practitioners in ongoing research,

through an extension of this study in a pilot study in a large group of preschools for example, would be of potential value in bringing researchers and practitioners closer together.

Conclusion

From the data arising from this study, the researcher has generated the theory of the Group of Music Confidences, describing how a collaborative model of PD might be effectively applied in the early childhood sector to assist established educators, trainees and trainers in achieving improved outcomes for early education educators wanting to gain skills and confidence in music. The participants in these collaborations gained enough music skills and confidence to establish music sessions as a permanent part of their teaching curriculum. The main change to their feelings of confidence in music was based on the perception that they had gained practical music skills and understandings that gave them an improved grasp of the concepts and pedagogy involved in music learning. The main change to their self-beliefs was a more open perception of their own inherent musicality, and a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes musicality and musical behaviours in both adults and children. The main changes to their teaching practice was an increased confidence in being able to participate meaningfully in playful activities, and the understanding that learning through play could be achieved by moving away from a purely instructive model of teaching to a more imaginative and experiential facilitation of music behaviours. The main change to their perception of the children as musical beings was their discovery of the extensive and rich contributions children are capable of making to shared music play when encouraged to do so. The confidence the participants gained, both personally and professionally, led to changes in their teaching practice in other areas of their teaching as well. They all felt they would like to take part in acollaboration again, and felt the long-term collaborative model of professional development would be of great benefit to educators in other learning areas as well as music, but was particularly valuable and necessary for music.

A final word from the participants

Without the participants' commitment to best practice and dedication to their profession this study would not have been possible. It is only right that they should have the last word:

> Well, I thought it was a wonderful thing to do – it was great – thank you (D: Int. 4).

> It's been really good – I've learned heaps –I'm enjoying music now (S; Int.3).

> So thank you very much for the whole time - it's been wonderful (B; Int.3).

I think just that value, to have that awareness that music is a wonderful thing and that you can use it in lots of different ways, that you don't just have to listen to it, that you can create it as well - is a really good thing for kids to learn really early on, so they know that they can be a part of it, with the singing or getting up and dancing or just sitting and enjoying it - you know, that they're involved in it – seeing and experiencing themselves as musical (D; Int.1).

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Appendices

MONASH University

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date:	4-June-2008
Project Number:	CF08/1520 - 2008000761
Project Title:	Effective professional development for early childhood music teachers
Chief Investigator:	Dr Jane Southcott
Approved:	From: 4-June-2008 To: 4-June-2013

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained and a copy forwarded to SCERH before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to SCERH before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by SCERH.
4. You should notify SCERH immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project:** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to SCERH and must not begin without written approval from SCERH. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. SCERH should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by SCERH at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Ben Canny
Chair, SCERH

Cc: Ms Lucia Bainger

Appendix B: Defining play (Chapter 2)

Play is multi-faceted and very difficult to define, and it is not the aim of this study to offer a definitive definition, but it might be useful to clarify for the reader what the author is meaning by the term in the context of this study. In this dissertation, the author's use of the word 'play' is a general term that is grounded in the realities of the preschool context, describing a child's <u>voluntary</u> interaction with any object, idea or being that is of interest to the child. An act of play often involves fantasy and creativity interwoven with reality (Ayman-Nolley, 1992), where meaning is transferred from one object to another (Elkonin, 2005). It may be initiated and stimulated through curiosity, boredom, idle exploration or invitation from another person, supervised or unsupervised, formal or informal, open-ended or goal-oriented, planned or un-planned, individual or with others, based on reality or the imagination, structured or un-structured, moving or still, creative or copied. The author's use of the word play can include activities generated by an adult with which the child engages, as well as activities generated by the child herself, but it does depends very much on how the teacher and child interact. Bodrova (2008) describes play as being a way of enhancing academic learning. The word play as used in this study assumes that the child has some degree of agency or power to direct and influence activities, either through receptive or active responses, and as such, relies on the appropriate behaviour and responses of the adults involved.

This is intentionally a very wide and necessarily elastic interpretation, with the emphasis on the child's engagement being 'voluntary'. This does not mean there are no rules. Play implies an act of imagination, and imaginative context embodies rules (Fleer, 2010). It may not automatically be assumed to be always enjoyable or pleasant, as play can sometimes involve conflicts, uncomfortable emotions and challenges. In the context of this study, play sits within the reality that a child's attendance at preschool may not be voluntary in the first instance, and that the child may have been encouraged to participate in a particular activity, or asked to take part directly by their teacher or parent.

The main point of the author's arbitrary definition of play is that a child cannot be said to be playing if she is doing something she has been forced to do, and has no inclination to do. Play is a motivated act of engagement, and play and learning can, and often do intersect. Learning how to interact playfully, or 'following the reactions of the children with intelligence and sympathy' (Pope, (Ed) 2006, p. 21), and positioning the learning skilfully enough that it becomes play for the child, is the early childhood educator's primary task. The author would further argue, in agreement with Guthrie (2005) that, for humans at any age, play is perhaps the most powerful learning tool humans have at their disposal. The researcher identifies very strongly with Bodrovka's (2008) description on the role of play in the preschool setting, drawn from Vygotsky's theories of play;

Intentional instruction in preschool and kindergarten can and should foster the prerequisites for the academic skills but it should do it by promoting foundational competencies that are 'uniquely preschool' and promoting them through play …

Promoting make-believe play should be seen not as competing with academic learning but rather as enhancing it (p. 358).

Appendix C: Playful interaction (vignette) (Chapter 2)

This is a simple but very typical example of playful interaction based on children's spontaneous improvisations on a very familiar ritual. It only requires the educator to be responsive and appreciative of a child's improvisation. M (educator) is singing goodbye to each child while shaking hands (italics indicate sung phrases, bold type indicates increased volume).

M: *Good-bye Jacob*

Jacob: *Good-bye Mary*

M: *Good-bye Holly*

Holly: umm – thinking and smiling at M while shaking hands – *Good **night** Mary*!

M: What was that? (showing surprise and smiling) Oh – you are a funny silly-billy!

Holly: (skipping off and singing; *Silly-billy, I'm Silly-billy*, other children laughing)

M: *Good-bye Jessica*

Jessica: *Bye-bye, high in the sky* (bursts out laughing, doubled over)

M: laughing with Jessica, sings *Oh-oh – another silly-billy*!

         Jessica steps aside but stays to watch.

M: *Good night* – oh – I mean – *Good-morning* – oh! Whoops! *Bye-bye James*.

James: *Goodbye A**, high up in the sky, flying very **high***, (James sings the last word with a dramatic sliding pitch upwards)

M: Wow! That's like a whole song you've just made up! – how does it go again? (James sings it again in the same way, with some of the other children joining in randomly with bits of the phrase)

M: Sings along with James the second time, laughs, and puts her hand out to sing to the next child.

         James goes back to another child waiting to sing goodbye, laughing and saying – "Did you hear **me**?"

Delightful, spontaneous improvisations like this come when children have familiarity with the materials, and the security of knowing that their improvisations will be welcomed and valued.

Appendix D: The need for triangulation of self-reporting (Chapter 3)

Two events with two different participants are described here, based on the researcher's notes made during the fieldwork. As well as illustrating how the collaboration was typically conducted, these incidents also give an insight into the potential disparities inherent in a teacher's self-reporting. It is interesting to note that disparities in perception between researcher and participant involved in Example 1 tended to lessen as the collaboration went on, but those in Example 2 continued throughout that collaboration.

Example 1:

A participant had planned a particular sequence of music activities, involving a sitting game with instruments, and a few more active games involving role-plays and free movement. Throughout these activities, the children made impromptu suggestions that were acknowledged and/or readily included. One child was being very uncooperative, and the participant switched to a well known game that the children love. The child proceeded to go into a noisy tantrum and the support teacher decided to remove him from the group, taking him with her to sit nearby to try to calm him, quietly reading him a favourite book. Meanwhile, the participant re-focused the children with a little strategy game to engage them as a group, saying that the boy could rejoin them when he felt better. The children were unsettled, so she started another well known and much loved activity that all the children were familiar with. Again the children's suggestions for ways to extend the game were taken up. Quite soon, the distressed child wandered back into the circle and took part without creating any more disturbance. The children were still full of ideas when the session closed, so the participant asked them to remember their good ideas for the next music session.

After the session, as the children went outside, the participant turned to me, putting her hands over her face and groaned "Oh – that was just terrible! What a disaster!" We sat down for our discussion and I asked her why she felt it was so bad. She felt that the session lacked value because she had abandoned the planned activities, switching to the well known games instead. I said in response that I thought she had responded to a tricky situation with excellent strategies and had managed to re-engage the distressed child and settle all the others. She still insisted that she had failed because the children hadn't focused on the particular learning points in the way she had planned. I commiserated with her about how planned learning experiences can come undone, but pointed out that while the children might not have experienced what she had planned for that session, they had instead had a valuable experience in watching how difficult emotions could be managed in a positive and beneficial way. The planned activities could just as well be done the next day. She agreed but was still a little down hearted about it.

The participant referred to this incident a few times over the following months. However, as time went on, and she took up a more playful and relaxed style of working with the children, she started to view it in a different way. She brought it up again, but this time she felt it had made her realize that she perhaps needed to adjust her expectations to fit in with what was happening at any given time for the children, rather than

criticising herself too harshly. She could see she needed to respond flexibly, based on the circumstances she was working with, rather than slavishly sticking to her plan.

This participant consistently referred to what she felt was the result of her own lack of skill when activities did not go to plan. She also often said that she was still not singing well, for example, when in fact she sang quite well.

Example 2:

Another participant teacher had planned a music session based around the story *The Gingerbread Man*, involving a long sitting activity and a circle game. The sitting activity revolved around the children holding a paper plate figure (they had made them previously) based on the story. The participant read the story from a large picture book, directing the children when to jiggle the plate or lay it down to connect with the story. At first the children enjoyed this, but after many instructions they began to lose interest. They became restless and the participant had to interrupt the story regularly to direct a child to sit quietly.

The participant then directed the children to move out of the centre of the space and sit on the perimeter of the space. She began to present a game that is usually played with children standing in a small circle, bobbing up and down and patting their knees in time to a rhyming chant. When a child's name is heard in the chant he is to run around the outside of the circle fast enough to get back to his place while all the other children clap out five counts. However, the participant had mistakenly directed the children to sit against the wall, leaving no space for the child to run around the outside of a circle, so it was not possible for the game to work. Instead of rearranging the children, the participant directed the chosen child to move slowly inside the circle instead, which the children found confusing. The general atmosphere of this session was lackluster and low key.

After the session, the participant reported that she felt it had gone very well, that it was fun for the children, and that they had behaved quite well. She spoke enthusiastically in general terms, saying that she would repeat the session so the children 'really learned it'. The participant wanted to repeat the session and wanted suggestions. I responded by saying it was great that she was trying out a new activity, and connecting stories and craft work in a music session, and it would be good to include more movement and beat work in the first game next time by helping the children to form a more compact circle to make room around the outside for the running child. For the story, the children could choose who they were in the story and move freely around the room prompted by contrasting sounds from a few instruments, and could all be involved in telling the story, by being prompted – 'what happened next?' for example. The participant could use her dance skills to model different ways of using the body to embody the characters to encourage the children to explore different ways of moving. We discussed various ways that this could be practically presented and handled.

To extend the principles in the game, I suggested that circle formation can be made fun and interesting in different ways; for example, marking the floor with a chalk circle (the shape could be changed to fit in with learning different shapes in later games) so the children could dip their toes in the water while making a circle, to help them focus on the shape of their collective feet.

The participant was again very enthusiastic, saying how "doing things in a fun way is the way I like to teach". However, it was not evident in following visits that these suggestions (and other similar ones), had been taken up. There was a slight relaxation of control at times, and different activities were trialed but not repeated. This indicates how deeply the suggestions around playful, co-participation were challenging this participant's perceptions of good teaching practice, and in particular, her perceptions of herself as a good teacher; one whose professional credentials are understood to rest on how well she is able to manage and control the children. Although the researcher saw only a small change to the participant's reliance on instruction and very little input from the children throughout the collaboration, the participant felt her practice had changed a lot, reporting that she felt much more confident and that her teaching style had relaxed.

Appendix E: Small steps to singing confidence (Chapter 5)

- Vocal animation: The participants were asked to reflect on the different ways they used their voice as a professional tool on a daily basis; for example, when reading expressively to the children, when disciplining the children or calling for quiet or attention, and when chanting short poems. Together, the participant and researcher work-shopped doing these familiar activities, but in a more exaggerated and animated way. As they applied these variations into their practice, the participants adjusted to hearing themselves using their voices more animatedly, slowly building up vocal confidence, especially when rewarded with rapt attention from the children.

- .Vocal exploration: This step was done with the children, using a game called "Sirens" or a variation called "Roller Coaster". Everyone is asked to breathe their voice into their hand and hold it tight and take it for a ride. As the fist makes circles and big swings in the air, the voice freely matches the movement of the pitch to the movement. The pitching is quite random, no particular voice stands out, so the participant had the chance to let their voice move up and down, exploring freely without embarrassment. As everyone doing this game usually ends up laughing, the opening of the mouth and deep breathing helps make the vocalizing easier.

- Vocal awareness: After doing this, the participant was told that any sounds they could make when doing "Sirens" were sounds they could also sing. This came as a surprise, as all the participants had assumed that they had a very limited vocal range. They had tended to sing in a key too low for the children to match – a common problem. This suggested the possibility that they could manipulate their voice more than they had thought. The singing voice was discussed, described as being a different voice to the speaking voice, and provided games that helped explore this distinction for the children, and by default, the participants themselves ("Bee, Bee Bumble Bee", for example). Good singing habits, such as basic posture, belly breathing and dropping the jaw to help with the singing voice were all work-shopped through games with the children such as "Whoosh!" (where the children, holding hands in a circle, surge into the centre as if running into the sea, making the sound of the waves with big whoops each time) with extensions and new activities which were to be presented to the children, so that the participants were exploring and developing their singing voices along with the children.

- Vocal supports: The participants were encouraged to use an instrument or body percussion to tap out a beat when they were singing, as this was an essential entry point for the children when listening to new materials, but also would alleviate the participant's own feelings of self-consciousness. Choosing simple materials of a limited pitch range also made it easier for the participant to learn and present new songs.

- Realistic expectations: In discussions, the participants were often very self-critical of their singing efforts. The researcher observed that it was hard to feel confident as a singer as the only singing most of us hear is from recordings of professionals, so our expectations are often rather unrealistic. She stressed that any singing was better than no singing, and that if the participant sang the song a little differently to the way somebody else sang it, that this was not a problem, as many versions of songs exist and are equally valid.

Appendix F: Music learning through imaginative play (Chapter 5)

As a first step in establishing a more playful approach, the researcher encouraged the participants to introduce music games in a way that immediately involved the children. Rather than 'teaching' a song or game, they were to demonstrate it by showing (not telling) the children and involving them in the process, allowing them to be immediately part of an activity, through keeping the beat in a particular way, and through actions. As no verbal instructions were given the children had to listen and watch to find out how to participate. Linking songs and music games through an imaginative context created an extra dimension to

familiar materials. For example, when the children were learning a lot about space, D used this as a theme for a music session. The session included familiar songs; "We all walk in and we say hello", "Zoom, Zoon" and "Sally go round the stars" and a chalk circle she had drawn on the floor.

After the usual starting song, she explained to the children that today they were flying into space for their music. She suggested they climb into their rockets, and after the children had zoomed around in their imaginary rockets to the "Zoom, Zoom" song she called them back to the circle, telling them they had landed on the moon. The children had learned about astronauts wearing space suits and they made various suggestions about putting these on so they could breathe on the moon. D went along with this, and as various children talked about what was needed, they all played at putting on imaginary space suits, boots and helmets. D started to hum the "We all walk in" song with hands out to the children nearby to suggest through her actions that they all make a circle. The children recognized the song and while they were forming the circle she started to walked very slowly with large, exaggerated movements (which the children started to imitate) and asked the children to show her how they would walk on the moon.

After they had a moment exploring these movements she started to sing in a slow and 'under water' type of voice, and joined in with the song and actions but at a much slower tempo and with slurred words to mimic talking through their space masks. At the end of the song they got back into their space ships, and, at one of the children's suggestion they 'flew' off to another planet. Various suggestions were made as to the colour of the planet, and how they would move – they decided it was a red planet where everything happened much faster than on earth, and they sang the song again very enthusiastically with all the actions, but at double the speed. In another - session, she included the song "Sally go round the stars", inviting the children to find things in the room that could be the stars, moon and chimney pots, but the children extended the song with different words, to include the Milky Way, which they had been learning about that week. In this way, the imaginative context led to contrasts in tempo, a wide variety of movements, improvisations and adaptations of familiar materials, led by both the educator and the children at different times.

Part of play is to find alternative ways to do something; to create variations in words, rhythm, pitch etc. Children do this quite naturally, and are supported by a response such as; 'What an interesting idea – let's try that'. This approach mimics the way children create and play games when they are playing without adult intervention (Marsh, 1997). Put simply, it is a matter of 'doing it' and letting the children catch on in their own time while exploring concepts embedded in the play, and going on to make the game their own. This is in contrast to 'teaching' how to do something, or learning a song by rote, or using instruction to point out didactic points.

Appendix G: Learning a song (Chapter 6)

The participants did not feel confident learning new songs, as they tended to think that only 'musical' people could learn new songs with ease; they were not confident that it was a process that they could effectively do themselves. The researcher offered a four-step process, and revisited it throughout the collaboration to encourage the participants to attempt to learn new materials independently, to a degree where they felt they could sing to the children and teach them the song, rather than relying solely on a CD. They found these few simple steps made learning new songs less daunting, and they used the same process to teach new songs to their children. The parallel process of presenting a new song to the children and learning it is shown in italics under each step. They were encouraged to learn a song in the week before they planned to use it.

1. **Listen**: spend time listening to the song many times while doing other things without particularly trying to learn it – just listen, as you would to songs on the radio.
   Sing a song, asking the children to listen attentively. Sing the song a few more times, now with a beat on the body, and adding other actions that the children can immediately join in with, without asking the children to sing.

2. **Sing along**: A natural result of hearing a song many times is that the listener starts to anticipate the melodic contour and/or words and can start to sing along.
   Ask the children specific questions about what is happening in the song, to help with word identification and recognition.

3. **Memorise**: stop the song towards the end and complete the song yourself. Continue stopping closer and closer to the beginning of the song, completing it alone each time.
   Connect the song to a game or series of actions. As the children start to mouth the words, invite them to join in singing with you if they want to. Make out you've forgotten how it goes, and ask the children to sing the rest for you.

4. **Practice** to build confidence: To reassure yourself that you will be able to sing the song for the children, practice singing the song alone at home or in the car, until it is easy.
   Repeating the song and game over days and weeks, including improvisations that the children come up with. Listening games: Sing a phrase from a song without the words, and ask the children to identify the song and sing it back with the words, or speak a line and ask the children how it sounds in the song. Hum the melody of a song and ask the children which song it is.

The researcher explained that it would initially take some time on the participant's part to learn materials, and encouraged the participants to think ahead, allowing plenty of time to learn new material before introducing it to the children. In the same way, it was then important to give the children plenty of

opportunities to hear new materials through repetition. Even for 4 and 5 year-olds, it usually takes about six or more repetitions of a simple song. The participants were encouraged to aim to learn one new song a fortnight for a three-month period – a total of six new songs to slowly build up their repertoire.

Appendix H: Management strategies

The participants were reluctant to use instruments in music sessions in case the noise got out of control. The researcher suggested the following games that act as strategies to help the children develop control over when they play and when they stop, based on cues, introducing the children to an experience of attentive silence, and associating stopping with fun, rather then with a negative command. Giving the individual child the opportunity to be in control of the whole group gives that child a first-hand sense of the value of cooperation, and builds confidence.

Walk and Stop / Play and Stop (and variations.)

Walk the children around a circle while holding hands singing "The Walking Song", (*Oh well we walk, and we walk, and we walk and stop*!) stopping suddenly on the word '*stop*' at the end of each line. When the children know the song well, choose a child to be the leader.
Encourage the children to stop in a pose: perhaps balancing on one leg. Point out those children who are good at stopping, and any funny poses.
In following sessions, play the same game with other songs like Ring-a-Rosie or Oranges and Lemons, stopping in unexpected places, for indeterminate lengths of time.

Changing the words to The Playing Song, sing the words "*Oh well we play and we play and we play and stop*!" Again, choose a child to be the 'stop-starter', or leader.

Handing out instruments

Using the tune of *If you're happy and you know it*, sing instead, '*If your name is Jenny get your sticks*' , singing the name of each child until everyone has an instrument. At the end of a session, sing *If your name is Ben put our instrument back*.

Play your sticks like *Billy* does.

Give each child an instrument and ask them to find an unusual/weird/funny way of playing it. Pick out a particular child and ask the others to copy their way of playing, singing to any tune that fits; "Play your sticks like *Billy* (child's name) does (repeat 3 times) then keep them very quiet" with a drop in volume and putting the instrument down on the floor.

'Sticks in the air'

This involved the introduction of 'stop/start' games where the teacher invites the children to play freely on tapping sticks, for example, then slowly or quickly raises the sticks high up into the air without explanation, initially calling out "sticks in the air". The game is to copy the movements as quickly as possible, to avoid being last. The children start to notice when the leader is starting to raise their arms and respond as quickly as they can by stopping. A child is now chosen to be the stop/starter leader, taking control of the sound stopping and starting. This later becomes linked to a conducting game led by individual children with more variations.

The stop start games are an important way of introducing the concept of controlling sound and movement for the children in a creative way. Practical, simple non-verbal tools can be used to communicate when the educator wants silence. Over time and with practice, the children are able to respond more quickly.

Appendix I: S's singing sessions

Through the "Sirens" exercise, (see Appendix E) S found she had a wide vocal range that she had never used, and could also tell immediately the point at which a familiar melody was sung incorrectly. In contrast, her ability to identify pitches as comparatively higher or lower, or to reproduce two different pitches accurately, was inconsistent. Her singing was accurate only when she was 'tricked' out of the negative thought patterns (see below). S had developed the conviction that she didn't have the 'knack' of being able to sing. She assumed that it was something that some people could do but others could not.

- **Step 1: Identifying negative self-talk**

To counteract the long term self belief that she was unable to sing because adults told her this when she was a child, S was asked to think of what she was told as a misdiagnosis, rather like a doctor telling her she had a disease, only to discover, after getting second and third opinions, that the doctor was mistaken. S was asked to consider the possibility that the adults who told her she couldn't sing were not skilled enough to make such a diagnosis, and were in fact inaccurate in their assessment. This process of identifying the source of a teacher's negative self beliefs and challenging them is an example of the necessary 'unpacking' of negative self beliefs referred to by Garvis and Pendergast (2010).

S was then asked to focus on identifying what she was doing in her head when listening to a four note melody the researcher was singing. She discovered that she didn't actually hear the melody – rather she 'heard' an inner voice telling her that she couldn't do this, thus creating a self-fulfilling prophesy. She realised that she was unable to reproduce the sounds because she had not actually registered them in the first place.

When she was able to ignore negative inner thoughts, and relaxed into simply listening to the directions of the sounds, she was able to identify that a melody was moving in a predictable way, which is how it could be recognized.

- **Step 2: Replacing negative self-talk with attentive listening**

When attempting to sing back a short phrase, S's attention needed to be distracted from the habitual negative self-talk, and this was done with the help of a simple technique. S was asked to rub or tap the back of her hand while listening to the researcher sing a short melody a few times (initially only two soh / me pitches, then short melodic phrases) then sing back the melody she had just heard immediately. S was excited to find she could accurately reproduce the melodic pattern most of the time using this technique. However, when asked to sing a well-known children's song, the negative self-talk took over and she was not able to sing it accurately.

To shift her mental focus away from the negative self-talk, S needed to be given another way to connect to a melodic contour. Using buttons on a flat surface, she and the researcher explored how a melodic contour could be represented as relatively higher or lower points moving across a space. While the researcher sang the third (descending) line from "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", S was asked to rub the back of her hand, then report if the sound was rising or falling, then plot the buttons on a page. She was able to do this successfully, and as each interval was mapped, she could see the melody as having a specific sound shape made up of higher or lower pitches moving through time. S realized for the first time that she could 'see' what she was hearing, so the abstract terms 'high' and 'low' now had a distinct meaning in a way she had not been able to understand before. Although S used the terms high and low, she had not understood what these actually meant in relation to sound; she did not know what she did not know. She was delighted and amazed when she found she could now accurately arrange the buttons to fit more parts of the song, because she could match the movements to the melody in her head.

The researcher had noticed that in interviews, when S mentioned a particular song she would often unthinkingly sing a few lines much more accurately than when she was working with the children. S was also very aware of when she was singing out of tune. Through these two sessions, S discovered that when

she was feeling at all nervous about singing, she ceased to *listen to herself* and ended up singing in a monotone. Interestingly, this was followed by quite an emotional, tearful reaction, causing the researcher to reflect (as she had done in other similar instances), how important it can be to an individual's general sense of self to be re-connected to her own singing voice in a positive way.

After these sessions, S started to notice how listening to music opened up a new awareness of music for her. Listening to how she describes this new experience it is clear how much she was missing before, and how difficult it must have been for her to develop music skills.

> I've noticed that when I'm learning a song, I'm learning to listen to how it's being sung, and not to push myself to try and sing it straight away … so if I don't know the song, I'm more inclined now just to listen. I wouldn't have done that before. I notice I'm listening to how it goes up and goes down. I can hear the violin and … hearing things I wouldn't have … listening much more closely ... much more closely (Int.3).