

Strengthening Arts Education through Partnerships with Expert Arts Practitioners: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The Arts, covering well-known discipline areas, offer multiple benefits. Teaching these discipline areas, such as music, dance, and drama, can also have several multiple benefits. In visual and media arts, which are included in the Australian national curriculum, teachers are expected to obtain the required knowledge and skills, including confidence to teach subject matter. A literature review was conducted to explore the best approaches for providing necessary knowledge and skills to pre-service teachers undertaking teacher education programs, and in-service teachers engaged in professional learning and development. The study mainly focuses on the engagement of expert arts practitioners in this process. For this purpose, a comprehensive review of the literature was guided by two research questions: (1) What does the pertinent literature tell us about how expert arts practitioners support and enhance arts education? and (2) How might partnerships that involve expert arts practitioners help to strengthen and sustain professional learning/education for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and other stakeholders? In this paper, the findings of the literature review are summarized and presented thematically. They reveal that, at present, partnership models may offer an approach to enhance and sustain arts education. The study presents evidence that such partnerships can play a role in providing professional learning and education for pre-service and in-service teachers. However, the literature also suggests that current approaches to these partnership models remain insufficient to address the scale of the systemic intervention required to address current gaps in arts education, particularly concerning in-service professional development in arts education for Australian generalist educators and pre-service teacher training in arts education. Therefore, we propose that stakeholders consider engaging more expert practitioners through partnerships to provide practical arts education experiences and the need for such long-term collaborative initiatives.

Keywords

Expert Arts Practitioners, In-service Teachers, Partnerships, Pre-service Teachers, Professional Development/Learning

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Introduction

A growing body of research has articulated the benefits of arts education and engagement in the Arts for students (Ewing, 2010; Hetland & Winner, 2001; Ruppert, 2006). These benefits include improvements in academic and social skills, as well as the development of effective social behaviours. Engagement in the arts promotes values of cultural diversity in classrooms and improves students' critical and creative thinking skills (Ewing, 2020). There is an increasing recognition of the need for STEM, requiring both creative and critical thinking skills; therefore, the arts are included in the creation of the STEAM movement as a vital discipline area (Braund & Reiss, 2019). It is not the intention of this paper to re-introduce the effectiveness of Arts education, as many researchers have continuously presented the benefits through various publications. Instead, the main study foci are to explore effective ways of teaching and learning the arts, and conduct a literature review to identify the best approaches with a primary focus on the engagement of expert practitioners in such processes.

Lemon and Garvis (2013) identified pre-service teachers' (PSTs) attitudes towards teaching the Arts as being heavily influenced by their previous experiences in the arts. McLaren and Arnold (2016) claim that PSTs receive minimal training in the arts during their tertiary studies as a result of the Australian government undervaluing the arts and reducing funding for arts education (Ewing, 2020). Many PSTs often enter the field of teaching with limited arts experience and a lack of confidence to teach the Arts (Pagano, 2020). This can impact the value, interest, and content knowledge of a teacher to provide rich arts learning experiences to their students (Lemon & Garvis, 2013). Baguley (2019) points out that the reduction in time allocation for the arts in teacher education programs is a significant concern, which has resulted in PSTs and graduate teachers not feeling fully confident to teach the arts. This lack of support from authorities has resulted in generalist teachers being required to teach all five subjects of the arts in Australian primary schools (Ewing, 2020). Teachers with minimal experience in the arts are likely to struggle or avoid teaching the arts altogether (Alter et al., 2009). A paper from the Australian Educational Researcher (Kerby et al., 2021), expands on the challenges posed to the preparedness and expertise of primary teachers, under expectations to teach all five art forms; namely, dance, drama, media arts, music, and the visual arts included in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016).

To combat this issue, both PSTs and in-service teachers require further support to enhance their knowledge and skills in each arts subject as well as to develop a valuable range of teaching skills and resources (Alter et al., 2009), including building confidence and competence. It is also important to ensure that generalist teachers are improving their professional knowledge and can become leaders for change within their school (Fiske, 1999). To bridge the gap created by under-funding, under-resourcing, and a lack of professional learning, teachers must combine their pedagogical expertise with the experience of professionals from the relevant fields to deliver rich, engaging art education for students (Kerby et al., 2021).

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the current understanding of the role of expert arts practitioners in the arts education ecosystem. It was guided by two research questions: (1) What does the pertinent literature tell us about how expert arts practitioners support and enhance arts education? and (2) How might partnerships that involve expert arts practitioners help to strengthen and sustain professional learning/education for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and other stakeholders? These questions addressed the aim of the research project and established the parameters for selecting the literature. In addition, they allowed for the inclusion of a breadth of perspectives and ways of understanding ‘expert arts practitioners’ and ‘partnerships’ in arts education.

Literature review: A note on terminology

The literature considered in this review employed a wide range of terms to describe artists in arts education. For the purpose of this review, we have elected to use the term ‘expert arts practitioner’. This decision should not be read as a critique of other terms in use. Instead, it aims to create coherence across the different collections of literature discussed in the two phases of the literature review. Other terms in current use include ‘culture bearer’, ‘artist-in-residence’, ‘artist-in-school’, ‘teaching artist’, ‘visiting artist’, and ‘professional art practitioner’.

We also chose to use the term ‘partnership’ to embrace ‘arts partnership’, ‘artist-school partnership’, and ‘artist-teacher partnership’. This decision follows the lead of Fahey and Kenny (2021), who suggest that these latter terms have tended to limit how partnerships are understood and have served to advance dominant short-term delivery models. They argue that a more expansive understanding of partnerships is needed that recognises other approaches and

models, and includes what they define as “collaborative, respectful and equity-based partnerships” (p. 4).

Method

The literature review took as a starting point the argument that authentic learning in the arts (music, dance, drama, visual and media arts) occurs when the required skills and knowledge are transferred/taught by expert practitioners and culture bearers using similar resources and settings that they use in their own professional practice (Campbell, 2017; Mellizo, 2017; Nethsinghe, 2013). Using an iterative process (Wisker, 2015), we first scoped the literature and then developed the two research questions to guide the two phases of the review.

Phase One

Phase one of the review addressed the first research question: What does the pertinent literature tell us about how expert arts practitioners support and enhance arts education? A review of the literature was undertaken to (1) identify the relevant literature, (2) select studies for inclusion, (3) review the selected studies, (4) summarise the findings and report the results thematically, and (5) consider the implications for phase two of the review.

Phase Two

The second phase of the review addressed the research question: How might partnerships involving expert arts practitioners help to strengthen and sustain professional learning and education for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and other stakeholders? A review of the literature was conducted to (1) identify the relevant literature, (2) select studies for inclusion, (3) review the selected studies, and (4) summarise the findings and report the results thematically. Conclusions were then drawn from these two phases and presented as implications for the research project that this literature review supports.

Search Strategy

Both phases of the literature review involved a database search for relevant articles. This included a search of peer-reviewed journals via Project MUSE and ERIC, as well as a companion search via Google Scholar that involved mining citations. The review was limited to research papers written in English during the period 2005-2021 (Phase One) and 2010-2021 (Phase Two). It excluded theses or dissertations. This review, therefore, includes studies published before October 2021. Any studies published after this date are excluded.

Keywords in different combinations were used to search these databases. For Phase One, keywords drawn from the argument were used in various combinations to search these databases (e.g., “authentic learning” and “the arts”; “expert arts practitioners as teachers” and “the arts”; “expert arts practitioners” and “the arts”; “professional arts practitioners” and “arts education”; “culture bearers” and “arts education”; “cultural authenticity” and “arts education”; “authentic teaching” and “the arts”). For Phase Two, key terms, such as “teacher-artist partnerships”, “artist-school partnerships,” and “arts-school partnerships”, were used to identify pertinent literature.

Results

Phase One generated a smaller number of articles, typically written ten or more years ago. Phase Two resulted in a significantly higher number of articles published since 2010. The mix of different terminology and keywords needed to capture literature across scholarly disciplines and areas of focus presented a challenge for this small-scale literature review. As a result, we relied on the literature emerging through a process of “reading, thinking, applying, interpreting and writing iteratively” (Wisker, 2015, p. 67).

Abstracts of articles were reviewed and imported to Mendeley (© 2021 Elsevier), with articles selected for inclusion based on one of the following criteria:

1. The article addresses the topics of expert arts practitioners and in-service professional development for generalist educators, as well as pre-service teacher training in arts education.
2. The article makes a critical contribution to research about expert arts practitioners and arts education in schools.
3. The article addresses knowledge, practice, and/or policy about arts-school partnerships.

This literature review is concerned with arts education and partnerships, situated within the context of educational policy, curriculum, and directions in Australia. This includes the position of arts education in the Australian Curriculum and the implications for teaching practices and professional development. By necessity, the erosion and marginalisation of arts education are also implicated in the study. This means that we first address the background and context of arts education in Australia, starting with the Australian Arts Curriculum as background, followed by a brief overview of current movements in both Australia and

internationally. We then address some diverse understandings of the concepts, terms, and definitions that underpin this literature review.

Context: The Australian Arts Curriculum

This study is conducted in Australia, and the Australian Curriculum F-10 Arts is written mainly for 'non-specialist primary teachers' as a guide to what the best practices in the arts are (ACARA, 2016). As a methodology steeped in 'education' practice that promotes learning in the dimensions of arts practice (making and responding), it is designed to be delivered principally by teachers (specialist and non-specialist) who draw on a range of resources, including visiting artists and educational partnerships. As with the international literature, arts education advocacy groups clearly advocate that artists should not replace teachers (e.g., the National Arts Advocacy Fund, NAAF). However, there are currently significant gaps in the provision of both professional development in arts education for Australian generalist in-service teachers, and pre-service teacher training in arts education (Kerby et al., 2021).

In line with international trends, partnerships are likely to continue as a feature of arts education in Australia. For example, in 2019, NAAE launched a call for a National Artist-in-Residence Program (supported by The Greens). In 2021, the State Government of Victoria launched the Creative Workers in Schools Program.

What remains unanswered is whether partnerships will continue to be an ad-hoc delivery model based on short-term interventions, or if they can be developed as a systemic response that will both strengthen arts education and build meaningful and culturally sustaining relationships between schools and the communities in which they work and exist.

The Literature: Expert Arts Practitioners in Educational Settings

For the past two decades, scholars have been writing about the benefits of inviting visiting artists, teaching artists, or culture bearers into the arts classroom (Campbell & Lum, 2019b; Joseph & Southcott, 2013; Nethsinghe, 2011, 2013, 2016; Rabkin, 2012, 2013; Southcott & Joseph, 2010). This has been driven by two needs: (1) to increase diversity and representation in the multicultural arts classroom, and (2) to strengthen arts education in schools.

Two broad themes relating to the role of the expert arts practitioner have emerged in the literature that coincide with these needs. Firstly, the expert arts practitioner as an educational resource, and second, the expert arts practitioner as an academic collaborator and partner.

Collectively, expert arts practitioners are depicted in the literature as playing an essential role in sustaining a vibrant arts educational ecosystem.

Theme One: Expert Arts Practitioner as Educational Resource

Benefits

Two key benefits emerged in the literature relating to the expert arts practitioner as an educational resource. First, expert arts practitioners are considered to make a particular contribution by providing social and cultural context to the arts practices and traditions explored in the arts classroom. Second, they act as bridges between schools and communities. In combination, the expert arts practitioner can be considered an essential component of a culturally sustainable education ecosystem, with benefits extended well beyond the boundaries of the arts classroom.

1. *Providing social and cultural context to arts practices and traditions*

For all the value that print resources can afford instructors, there may be no adequate substitution for “human resources. [...] Not only can such “culture bearers” provide tangibility and creative energy, but they will additionally serve as human verification and extension of the music cultures under study. [...] Culture-bearing community musicians ... provide insights into the contexts that formed the musical culture over time. (Campbell & Lum, 2019a)

The idea of supporting increased diversity and representation by inviting expert arts practitioners or culture bearers into the arts classroom builds upon the field-defining work of scholars such as Olivia Gude (2007), Patricia Shehan-Campbell (2004), and Huib Schippers (2006). These individuals successfully established the role and value of expert arts practitioners in the multicultural arts classroom. They led to an increased recognition of the role these individuals can perform in situating arts and cultural practices within historical, political, social and cultural contexts (Bradley, 2012; Campbell, 2017; Mellizo, 2017, 2019; Nethsinghe, 2012, 2013).

The presence of expert arts practitioners in the classroom has been found to play a significant role in contextualising diverse practices and traditions through the reproduction of culturally relevant transmission and pedagogical practices (Mellizo, 2017; Nethsinghe, 2012). Such contextually located arts learning experiences have been found to scaffold student inquiry and understanding across the curriculum, assisting students in better understanding the role and meaning of the arts in their lives (Bequette, 2007; Campbell, 2004). These experiences can also

offer young people the chance to encounter other perspectives and ways of understanding (Carlisle, 2011), encouraging students to “question the centrality or normativeness of one’s own (also culturally specific) point of view” (Gude, 2007, p. 10).

2. Building a bridge between school and community

Scholars concerned with expert arts practitioners in arts education have also highlighted the way these individuals help to connect the arts classroom to the wider community in which a school is located (Carlisle, 2011). As Gude (2007) writes:

Including the perspective of artmaking practices that arise from within local communities into the school curriculum honours the most traditional and the most progressive aspects of social life—preserving what is good, challenging the status quo, and imagining new artistic and social possibilities (p. 13-14).

Collaborating with expert arts practitioners also connects schools, teachers, and learners to cultural knowledge held within their local communities (Bequette, 2007; Kukkonen, 2020). This opens up possibilities for forms of cultural mentorship (Burgess et al., 2020) and serves as a path to mobilise community cultural resources to support arts education (Brouillette & Burns, 2005). Importantly, for students, particularly those who may be members of marginalised or underrepresented or indigenous communities, the presence of expert arts practitioners in the arts classroom can create a bridge between their own cultural and social life and that of their school arts education (Brouillette & Burns, 2005).

Challenges

A spectrum of challenges emerged in the literature relating to the expert arts practitioner as an educational resource. Complicated ethical and social questions arise in relation to the process of cultural reproduction in the arts classroom, as well as the tensions associated with a shift from multicultural to intercultural arts education. While it is beyond the scope of this small-scale literature review to resolve these questions and tensions, the literature supports the argument that expert arts practitioners should be conceived as more than a resource to support and enhance the objectives of the arts curriculum.

1. The process of cultural reproduction in the arts classroom

While there is no doubt concerning the importance of providing students with both contextual understanding of diverse practices and traditions and insights into culturally relevant transmission and pedagogical practices, complex problems are still raised in the literature. These problems include ethical and cultural questions associated with the transmission

(repetition/re-presentation) of an arts tradition outside its ‘authentic’ context and/or by an individual who does not fully understand the arts tradition and practice for educational purposes. As Nethsinghe (2012; 2015) highlights, offering students insights into the contexts and conditions in which particular cultural practices occur requires representing, re-performing, or reproducing arts and cultural practices in a context that is different from their original context.

While the employment of expert arts practitioners may help to mitigate these complex problems, this requires that we understand their role and value as more than a resource to enhance culturally diverse arts curricula. However, this also demands consideration of how these contexts, practices, and traditions can and, importantly, *can’t* be reproduced in an educational setting. As Gude (2007) writes, efforts to foster diversity and representation in the arts classroom can reinforce “deeply problematic simplifications and misrepresentations of other cultures” (p. 10), there remains an opportunity for further research that will deepen understandings of the processes involved in the reproduction of culturally relevant transmission and pedagogical practices in the arts classroom.

Theme Two: The expert arts practitioner as educational collaborator and partner

Background

The model of artist-teacher partnerships emerged as a means to advance arts education in the early 2000s (Burnard, 2011; Kenny, 2010). While the idea of artists performing a role in arts educational settings is not new⁴ The framing of these artists as educational collaborators has become more common over the past two decades. As a result, artist-teacher partnerships have been extensively researched since the mid-2000s, with the benefits and challenges now well-documented (Hunter, 2014).

Such partnerships have emerged as a well-established response to policy and curriculum changes in many parts of the world, most specifically in support of the creativity agenda. Much of this work has resulted from Government initiatives, such as the UK’s Creative Partnership Scheme (2002-2011). However, partnerships are also associated with the need to address gaps in pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher professional development in arts

⁴ Kenny (2010) cites the work of Murray Schafer (1975) as the foundation to the idea of the role of the musician in the music classroom.

education, as well as the erosion of specialist arts teachers in schools. As Kukkonen (2020) writes, they are “one of the most widely used models for achieving access to high-quality arts education” and offer “a strategy to revitalize arts education in Canada and around the world” (p. 43).

As a consequence, the partnership model of professional artists coming into a classroom for a limited time period to work alongside the full-time teacher has “become a delivery model” (Burnard, 2011, p. 52) in the UK, USA, Norway, Ireland, Australia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. However, there is some variation and inconsistency across what the actual delivery model and pedagogical approach look like. Hall and Thomson (2021) find that, despite great interest in partnerships, not all have been “reciprocal, educationally ambitious and clearly defined” (p. 101).

Alongside this interest in partnerships, the benefits have been well-documented. Burnard (2017) argues that collaborations between teachers and professional artists have “been associated with fostering positive learning relationships, fostering wellbeing and enhancing engagement along with innovation, originality, ownership and control” (p. 211). Partnerships have been found to enhance resilience and confidence (Hunter, 2014); creativity (Burnard, 2011, 2017; Colley et al., 2012; Craft et al., 2012; Hunter, 2014; Locke & Locke, 2011); learning environment (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013; Locke & Locke, 2011); engagement, motivation and learning of at-risk students (Hunter, 2014); professional development for teachers and other stakeholders (Carlisle, 2011; Catalano et al., 2021; Galton, 2010); and self-reflexivity and critical thinking (Hunter, 2014)

Scholars interested in partnerships share many of the same concerns and beliefs as those discussed in the first phase of this literature review. However, a key point of difference is that the partnership model depicts the arts practitioner as more than a resource. As will be documented in the next section, the partnership model frames the arts practitioner as an active partner in all processes occurring within the education space. Establishing the claim for a decade of research contribution in Ireland, Kenny (2010) suggests that “a partnership approach appears to be the best way forward for arts in education practice” (p. 156). She also draws the connection to the role these artists can play in creating context for the arts practices in the arts classroom.

Importantly, the partnership model offers a well-researched and evidenced approach to respond to two key aims underpinning the research project this literature review supports: (1) to address

the two gaps in arts education: in-service professional development in arts education for Australian generalist educators, and pre-service teacher training in arts education, and (2) to contribute new knowledge about artist-school partnerships by advancing an ecological partnership model comprised of four key stakeholder and associated contexts. As Carlisle (2011) concludes, partnerships should be considered an “integral aspect of P-12 education” (p. 148), functioning as the ‘nexus’ of community and schools.

Benefits

The literature reviewed presents a strong argument in support of partnerships as a pathway to build networks and communities of knowledge that will enhance and strengthen learning across the arts curriculum. While the literature engages with the need to increase diversity and representation, it places more emphasis on how partnerships can sustain and strengthen the provision of equitable arts education. In other words, the underlying rationale for change is that arts education models that capitalise on partnership opportunities will be more sustainable and encourage collaborative learning processes, allowing for increased diversity and representation.

The following themes have emerged in the literature that demonstrate how partnerships can enhance and strengthen learning across the arts curriculum. Partnerships have been shown to:

1. strengthen the quality of learning relationships,
2. offer students ‘real world’ context for learning,
3. advance pedagogies for creativity and collaboration,
4. expand professional development for in-service teachers
5. build community relationships beyond the walls of the school.

1. Strengthen the quality of relationships

Burnard and Swann (2010), in their investigation of the ways in which primary and secondary school-aged students experience collaborative creative compositional workshops with teachers, musicians, and a composer, found a range of benefits for both students and teachers. These benefits included those associated with the quality of the learning relationships formed in the collaboration and the capacity for the collaborations to enhance the context for learning. Hunter (2014) in her work across the Australian Arts curriculum, observed similar improvements in learning relationships. Partnerships were found to build trust and foster and described as an “authentic feeling of connection” (p. 79) in the collaborative creative process.

Aubrey and Dahl (2013) describe this collaborative creative process as a “complex three-way learning relationship between children, artists, and teachers that was vital for children’s learning” (p. 1).

2. Offer students a ‘real world’ context for learning

Burnard and Swann (2010) describe how creating a ‘real world’ context for learning generated contemporary experiences of artmaking, which were more likely to be individually meaningful and relevant. In their words, “[t]his was real composing, with real musicians, for a real purpose” (p. 80). While they emphasise that this ‘real world’ context is not beyond the reach or capacity of the teachers’ own classroom practice, there are many forces and pressures that present challenges to teachers that can be overcome through partnerships. From the perspective of educational partnerships between schools, museums, and professional arts practitioners, Chalas (2015) documents the “learning opportunities that could not be offered in any other learning environment” (p. 74). Vesterinen et al. (2017) observe that teacher collaborations with community arts partners created “more authentic learning experiences for students” (p. 231). When connected to industry partners, this learning can be enriched even further (Hunter et al., 2018), making an important contribution to “a viable ecology of quality educational practice in the arts” (p. 1).

3. Advanced pedagogies for creativity and collaboration

There is a long history of collaborations between teachers and professional artists in participatory arts activities in schools and communities. Models of pedagogic partnerships between artists and teachers vary considerably. However, effective partnerships between artists and teachers in schools suggest that it is in the classroom creativity that innovative professional practices emerge (Burnard, 2017).

Burnard (2011) describes the ‘creativity agenda’ as a central driver in curricula and policy in education. She argues that various tensions and pressures hinder teachers’ ability to teach creativity. In particular, tensions between educational policy and pedagogical practice create, she argues, a problem of ‘translation’ that “is neither straightforward nor unproblematic” (p. 52). Collaborative partnerships between “pedagogic and multi-disciplinary artistic experts, positioned as equals” (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013) have been found to foster a “culture of collaborative learning” (p. 12). Such partnerships have been found to generate high-quality arts curricula, design, and resources (Mellizo, 2019; Southern et al., 2020). Importantly, Vesterinen et al (2017) describe partnerships as capable of fostering “inter-professional pedagogical

collaboration” (p. 231) that offers an approach to support 21st-century learning for students that is meaningful and connected to their lives.

4. Expand professional development for in-service teachers

Partnerships are recognised as a pathway for in-service teacher professional development, and a strategy for schools and universities to address the erosion of arts education in pre-service teacher education (Carlisle, 2011; Hunter, 2014; Hunter et al., 2014; Kenny & Morrissey, 2016; Morrissey & Kenny, 2021). Kenny (2010), in her interviews with eight musicians who had worked within the Irish music education system, found that partnerships offered a way to upskill both teachers and artists “in ‘real contexts’ through mutual learning processes” (p. 164). Chalas (2015) describes how partnerships can address the gap in pre-service teacher training around teacher knowledge and skills in utilizing cultural resources in their teaching. She observes that “the courses did not adequately influence pre-service teachers to later structure art into their curricula—a phenomenon the author refers to as lack of transference” (p. 76).

Snook and Buck (2014) make clear that the priority should always be on strengthening teachers’ capacity and confidence in arts education. While partnerships, they argue, “might offer a rich experience” in the classroom, the priority should always be to foster the skills, capacity, and confidence of teachers. Their research suggests the merits of well-designed, researched, and resourced longer-term arts partnerships that can serve all these purposes, while also providing professional development to teachers. Working within the discipline of dance education, they introduce the concept of “dance education artists” (p. 25). Morrissey and Kenny (2021) agree that partnerships should always consider their function in delivering effective teacher professional development, concluding that, in the absence of this function, partnerships “run the risks of providing teachers (and children) with still very limited, project-based, opportunities for learning in the arts” (p. 16).

5. Foster community relationships beyond the school walls.

While “partnerships offered multiple benefits to musicians, teachers, schools, and arts organisations/offices as well as the development of music education on a national level” (Kenny, 2010) they also offer ‘knock-on’ effects in the wider community.

Kenny (2014), in her investigation of a partnerships between a higher education institution, a resource agency and a primary school, found that arts practices can act as a “socio-cultural process where learning is “situated” and “shared” (p. 396). Her findings suggest that

partnerships based around “creative practices and social interaction” (p. 396) can generate an “inter-relatedness” that forges unique and important community relationships. To advance this idea, Kenny and Morrissey (2016) describe partnerships creating “cumulative communities” with “far reaching impact” (p. 50). Their research found that the impact of teacher-artist partnerships extends to principals, schools, teachers, parents, local communities, education hubs, arts and cultural organisations, and the children. As Kukkonen (2020) finds, “artist-school partnerships can contribute to overall growth beyond what is observed within the four walls of a classroom” (p. 52) and generate impact that potentially exceeds increased academic achievement or school attendance, or even creativity.

Such partnerships support art teachers in more than their “role to introduce students to a range of forms and genres and technologies; to help them develop skills and creativity, find meaningful forms of self-expression and debate ideas and different points of view” (2021). The role of art teachers is “also to help students make cultural connections out from and back into their homes and, more widely, to help them become active cultural citizens” (p. 105). Hall and Thomson conclude:

Effective school arts partnerships explicitly support and enhance the brokerage element of arts teachers’ roles. They provide teachers – and through them, pupils – privileged access to arts venues, skilled professionals and high-quality resources. They immerse teachers in arts learning at their own level and then encourage joint work on how resources can be made meaningful to school students. (p. 105)

Challenges

While the literature strongly advocates the benefits associated with partnerships involving expert arts practitioners, it also highlights challenges that need to be addressed. It is increasingly common for partnership programs and collaborations to be viewed as beneficial; however, the disadvantages are less often discussed (Hall & Thomson, 2021; Kenny & Christophersen, 2018). Given the challenges to sustainability, including problematic economic or political imperatives, it is unsurprising that there is a reluctance to acknowledge the “problematic dimensions.” (Kenny & Christophersen, 2018).

1. Relationship between time and sustainability: Short versus long-term programs

Sustainability has been identified as one of the key challenges to arts partnerships. This begins with problems associated with partnerships as a delivery model designed to respond to government agendas and the progressive erosion of arts education. It is, therefore, not surprising that inadequate funding and support to ensure the sustainability of partnerships

emerge as a dominant problem (Kenny, 2017; Locke & Locke, 2011). This has resulted in short-term programs, which Snook and Buck (2014) argue, from the perspective of dance education, “are not the answer” (p. 25). Overwhelmingly, short-term programs reinforce existing problems. They fail to strengthen teacher confidence and competence in teaching art forms, resulting in student experiences that are shallow and less connected to the tangible benefits and educational gains that might otherwise be possible. Instead, longer-term teacher-artist partnerships are considered “preferable to short-term partnerships to maximise benefits and for sustainability.” (Kenny & Morrissey, 2016, p. 93).

The literature suggests that time is the single most important factor in ensuring sustainability and determining the success of partnerships. Developing and sustaining partnerships require long-term effort, rather than short-term, one-off projects (Kenny & Christophersen, 2018; Kenny & Morrissey, 2016). Time is required for pre-planning by partners. (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013; Chalas, 2015) and for the ongoing “deep dialogue or debriefing” (Chemi, 2019). Time is also essential to build the shared commitment and support systems required to establish and maintain partnerships (Bowen & Kisida, 2019; Kenny & Christophersen, 2018; Kenny & Morrissey, 2016). Galton (2015) found that, in addition to allowing for student participation in decision-making, the teacher-artists partnership required time to build “a positive joint working approach” (p. 441) that allowed for co-teaching and regular reflection/discussion, both of which are critical to building teacher confidence.

2. The teaching paradox

A second key challenge to sustaining successful partnerships arises from the relationship between the teacher and the artist. Burnard (2011) describes this as the “teaching paradox” (p. 53). This paradox emerges from the “tension between their two different sets of tacit practices, beliefs, and professional perspectives” (p. 54) that needs to be resolved if an effective learning environment is to be created. Nethsinghe (2011) also explains that the tensions between teachers and artists arise when they work collaboratively. Burnard (2011) argues that we need to move beyond “divisive stereotypes of teacher and artist” (p. 55) to create “collaborative partnerships” that have been found to “create ‘spaces for teaching’ that resolve the teaching paradox” (p. 55).

This teaching paradox is exacerbated by what Kenny (2017) describes as the tendency to “dichotomise the roles of artists and teachers” (p. 256). Examining the relationships between artists and teachers, Kenny and Christophersen (2018) document the problems that arise,

including asymmetrical power relations, opposing ideologies, and competing discourses connected to professional expertise, identity, and tradition. Writing about music, they describe this as the “perception that the former brings ‘authenticity’ and specialist expertise” (p. 6) to the creative experience, “whereas the latter serves as an educational guide” (p. 6). As Christophersen (2013) highlights, there exists a prevailing perception that the “liberal” artist lends “authenticity” and specialist expertise to arts experiences while the “conservative” teacher merely facilitates these experiences, or worse still, takes on the role of a “guard” to manage behaviour. As Kenny (2017) writes, these “dichotomies are of course unhelpful and inaccurate” (p. 256).

The teaching paradox appears to have a profound impact on both specialist and generalist teachers, with the literature suggesting that, rather than helping to build teacher confidence, partnerships may cause teachers to lose confidence. This problem is most closely associated with the predominant short-term models. These short-term programs are often delivered to fill gaps that have arisen due to the removal of specialist arts teachers, the erosion of pre-service generalist teacher training in the arts, and the inequities associated with socio-cultural demographics and funding to schools. Instead of strengthening the competencies of teachers, such programs have been critiqued for marginalising and devaluing the work of teachers (Christophersen, 2013), which perpetuates the dichotomous idea of artist versus teacher, with teachers being sidelined and relegated to teaching or disciplinary roles and responsibilities.

While the literature presents substantial evidence of the benefits of partnerships between expert arts practitioners and teachers, there remains an opportunity to examine the role that partnerships might play in strengthening both in-service professional development in arts education for Australian generalist educators and pre-service teacher training in arts education. As a step toward this goal, this next section presents the implications for advancing research into partnerships as a strategic intervention aimed at strengthening arts education.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

1. Increased recognition of the pedagogical aspects of the partnership

The literature recognises the potential for expert arts practitioners to contribute to the development of pedagogies that will strengthen arts education. For example, Snook and Buck (2014) describe ‘dance education artists’ who are engaged on a longer-term basis to work with classroom teachers to develop the curriculum and build a relationship with both teachers and

students. They argue that these educated artists will ensure sustainability and coherence around the program, including maximising the benefits of visiting artist programs. Burnard (2017) presents a case for pedagogical partnerships that can help to overcome the system-wide challenge of “translation of educational policy into pedagogic practice” (p. 212). Once again, such partnerships involve artists and teachers co-constructing curriculum and pedagogy, requiring time, so they need to be approached as long-term initiatives (Burnard, 2017; Snook & Buck, 2014).

2. Recognition of the importance of the place of teachers in the partnership

The literature suggests that the role of teachers as both learners and educators has been overlooked in partnership research. Hall and Thomson (2021) argue that effective and sustainable arts partnerships need to “take proper account of the importance of teachers’ work” and recognise that “enhancing pedagogy and disciplinary knowledge are at their heart and define their purpose” (p. 106). In other words, artists should not be seen as a replacement for teachers or a solution to the lack of arts education, but rather as a means to enhance, facilitate, resource, and support teachers (Kenny, 2010; Kukkonen, 2020). This requires a shift in how the roles and professional identities of teachers and artists are understood. As Hall and Thomson (2017) caution, partnerships should not set out to “idealise artists’ teaching or to suggest some deficit in teachers’ practice” (p. 117) but should recognise that they each perform distinct roles. The roles of teachers and artists in partnerships are not interchangeable; their standpoints, their responsibilities, their training, and experiences are different. These differences are an important part of the case for artists to be featured, alongside teachers, in young people’s education in schools, to increase the diversity of their experiences. (p. 117)

3. Stronger commitment from higher education to supporting teacher-artist partnerships:

To facilitate the effective, creative and imaginative delivery of arts education in schools, ongoing professional learning and support which develops generalist teachers’ professional competence, confidence and relevant knowledge, must be ignited at pre-service level. (Fahy & Kenny, 2021, p. 10)

The literature suggests that higher education has a stronger role to play in both preparing artists and teachers for partnerships and building relationships with other organisations in the ecosystem (Chalas, 2015; Fahy & Kenny, 2021; Kenny & Morrissey, 2016). A case is presented for increased pre-service teaching training in developing approaches to access, initiate, develop, and sustain partnerships. As Galton (2010) found, a characteristic of

successful teachers is that they tend to look for opportunities to work in collaboration with others. This collaborative or partnership willingness is, Galton finds, an attribute or competence that needs to be fostered from pre-service training through to professional practice. Looking beyond the immediate training needs of pre- and in-service teachers, Carlisle (2011) argues that partnerships can “strengthen professional development of all stakeholders, including university faculty” (p. 148).

LOOKING FORWARD: From partnerships to an ecological perspective

Without respectful, reciprocal partnership then arts in education initiatives are in danger of becoming an act of misguided goodness where opportunities for deep engagement and learning can be missed. This is true not just for the children and young people for whom the initiatives claim to serve, but indeed for the teachers, artists, schools and organisations also involved. (Kenny, 2017, p. 256)

There is a need to look beyond a narrow view of the benefits attributed to partnerships to critically delve more deeply into how they function (Vermeersch & Vandenbroucke, 2014). Kukkonen (2020) argues that the partnership model has over-emphasised student benefits, and overlooked the benefits and implications experienced by other stakeholders (teachers, schools, parents, community members) and the broader social, political, environmental, and cultural implications. Partnership models have failed to recognise the fluid and interconnected roles and interrelational dynamic processes that occur between artists, teachers, and students, and the benefits that flow onto the community.

Alternative sustainable models that address many of the challenges discussed in the literature are emerging. Since the early 2000s, Yamazumi (2008, 2013) has been calling for the development of “hybrid educational innovation” that involves the development of “advanced networks of learning based on the principle of collaboration among a variety of participants both inside and outside a school” (p. 62). Jóhannsdóttir (2018) proposes the idea of “school-community networking” that will enable a similar expansion of “the object of school learning and breaking out of isolated school practices” (p. 298).

As a way forward for partnerships, Kukkonen (2020) proposes the concept of an “ecological perspective of artist-school partnerships” (p. 47) that she describes as “a web of relationships and multi-directional influence between local and broad factors” (p. 47). Such an ecological perspective, she argues, can help to develop a “sustainable arts ‘ecosystems’ where the arts are integrated into the social and economic fabric of a community” (p. 43).

Conclusion

Given the time constraints associated with this small-scale literature review and the iterative process employed the results and findings should be considered as a snapshot: one possible reading and interpretation of the literature examined.

The literature examined in this review provides evidence that, at present, partnership models may offer an approach to enhance and sustain arts education. It includes some evidence that such partnerships can play a role in providing professional learning and education for pre-service and in-service teachers. However, the literature also suggests that current approaches to these partnership models remain insufficient to address the scale of the systemic intervention required to address current gaps in arts education, particularly in relation to in-service professional development for Australian generalist educators and pre-service teacher training in arts education.

Instead, emerging research into models for ecological partnerships that better connect the various stakeholders and contexts involved in arts education appears to offer promise. The literature, therefore, provides a rationale for the development of ecological partnership models that engage expert practitioners to provide effective and authentic arts education experiences to all stakeholders.

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