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A ukulele for everyone: a collaborative self-study of an initiative for student-owned ukuleles in an Australian university

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ABSTRACT

The limited time for music education in generalist primary and early childhood teacher education courses remains a persistent challenge in initial teacher education. An initiative for student-owned ukuleles was launched at an Australian university to enhance the skills and confidence of pre-service primary and early childhood generalist teachers to include music activities in their teaching. This collaborative self-study explores the experiences of four music teacher educators across several years and iterations of core arts subjects where pre-service teachers purchased or borrowed a ukulele. The initiative for student-owned ukuleles began during the COVID lockdowns and extended into periods of online learning and the return to in-person teaching. Data collection consisted of individual narratives, document analysis and reflective discussions. Thematic analysis was undertaken to identify emergent themes. In this article, we report how the initiative built community and connection, supported confident and unselfconscious singing, using a pedagogy informed by participatory music making. The findings highlight the potential benefits to supporting generalist teacher skills and confidence to use music in their classrooms and the value of self-study to transform our practice as teacher-educator-researchers. The findings may be of interest to music teacher educators in similar circumstances.

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Introduction

Developing generalist teacher skills and confidence to deliver music is one of the perennial problems of music education (Hocking 2023; Jeanneret and Stevens-Ballenger 2013). In a policy climate of ever-reducing contact hours (Hocking 2023; Pestana 2022) making the best use of available hours and developing innovative practice and pedagogies in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is vital. The value of singing and music making to support children's musical growth and enhance socio-emotional and other skills is widely reported in the literature (Barrett et al. 2020; Hallam and Himonedes 2022). Primary generalists and early childhood (EC) teachers play a key role in the music education of children. However, a lack of confidence and skills for generalist teachers in primary school settings and EC settings to include singing and music activities in their teaching is widely reported (Barrett, Zhukov, and Welch 2019; Jeanneret and Stevens-Ballenger 2013; Swain and Bodkin-Allen 2017).

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This article reports on a collaborative self-study (Samaras 2010), in which we – four music teacher educators (Fiona, Emily, Jennifer and Sue) – investigate our experiences of an initiative for student-owned ukuleles (referred to as ‘the initiative’). We reflect on our teaching experiences in the initiative from June 2020 to October 2022. The timespan includes consecutive iterations of core arts subjects (music workshops comprise one third of each subject) that first occurred during State-enforced lockdowns due to the COVID pandemic. While we have been using the ukulele in our teaching with primary and early childhood (EC) generalist pre-service teachers for several years, we commenced the initiative as an emergency measure in July 2020 in response to the switch to remote learning. We requested that our students purchase or borrow a ukulele so they had access to an instrument in their homes during lockdown. For students who were unable to purchase or borrow an instrument, the University purchased additional ukuleles which were posted to the students to borrow. We noted that there seemed to be a new level of engagement when the students had their own ukulele rather than using one of the University’s during classtime. As a result, the initiative continued since our return to hybrid and then in-person teaching. Our curiosity about what we noticed individually provided the impetus for this study in which we sought to critically reflect on our collective experience of teaching music when students had their own ukulele and construct insights which might help us understand more about our experience and which might also be of interest to other music teacher educators in similar circumstances. The study was guided by an overarching question: What are our experiences of teaching in the initiative for student-owned ukuleles to promote the skills and confidence of primary and EC generalist teachers to use music in their classrooms? The study contributes to our understanding of an aspect of our teaching practice, and our understanding of initial teacher education (LaBoskey 2004; Samaras 2010). Our project is specific to the Australian context. Frequently, government primary schools in Victoria do not have a specialist music specialist (Parliament of Victoria 2013), prompting a need for generalist teachers to teach music to meet Victorian Curriculum requirements (VCAA 2016). EC settings rarely employ a music specialist, therefore generalist teachers are expected to include music experiences (Pestana 2022) to address requirements of the Early Years Learning Framework (ACEQA 2022).

Literature review

In Australia and globally, many pre-service teachers begin teacher education with little or no experience in music (Barrett, Zhukov, and Welch 2019). Researchers highlight main issues impacting generalist and EC teachers’ preparedness to teach music are limited prior musical learning (Carroll and Harris 2023; Lowe, Lummis, and Morris 2017) and lack of confidence and competence (Jeanneret and Stevens-Ballenger 2013; Pestana 2022; Poulter and Cook 2022; Welch 2021). To address these shortcomings, music education ITE must provide a foundation for pre-service teachers to develop skills and confidence to include music during practicum experiences and as graduate teachers.

Singing is the most prevalent of the performing practices in music programs for young children and is identified as an integral component in ITE music programs (de Vries 2015; Hocking 2023; King 2018; Parliament of Victoria 2013). However, pre-service generalist teachers frequently report feeling inadequate about their singing skills (Barrett, Zhukov, and Welch 2019; Jeanneret and Stevens-Ballenger 2013; King 2018; Swain and Bodkin-Allen 2017). Singing is often used for integrating music activities with other areas of the curriculum and using singing for transitions, reciting common learning activities (e.g. days of the week), or to help with memorising aspects of numeracy or vocabulary (Barrett, Zhukov, and Welch 2019; King 2018).

The ukulele has gained popularity in primary and secondary school music classrooms in recent decades (Kruse 2018), supporting participatory music making (Bernard and Cayari 2020). Historically, the ukulele has been used extensively in Canadian music programs from

the 1970s (Cameron 2017) and there are a growing number of ukulele groups in community settings (Doebler 2021). In primary schools, the ukulele supports inclusion and access because it is affordable, lightweight, and supports playing chords and singing along instantaneously (Kruse 2018). It is often used as a beginner's instrument because of its small size and playability. Its versatility has made it popular for a range of musical styles (Doebler 2021; Kruse 2018) and to support singing. Giebelhausen (2016) reports that 'Music teachers like the uke because it encourages singing. Without even realising it, students find themselves singing while playing' (38). The ukulele is currently experiencing a wave of popularity across the world, beginning around the new millennium (Winston 2022). Simply, 'the use of the ukulele in classrooms and communities is growing' (Doebler 2021, 1).

The ukulele supports culturally responsive pedagogy (McKoy and Lind 2022). Importantly for Australian schools, the ukulele is a traditional instrument of the Zedath Kes (the Torres Strait Islands in between mainland Australia and Papua New Guinea) and Polynesian influences from travel through the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean are prominent in this music (Lloyd 2022). It is also heard in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music from mainland Australia, for example, during the Missions era of the 1920s–1940s (Lloyd 2017). Hogarth (2024) asks non-Indigenous teachers to showcase Indigenous knowledges in all areas of the curriculum, including music. Thus the ukulele has the potential to fulfil this role in Australian schools and early childhood settings in a meaningful, respectful and culturally congruent manner.

Research is limited into the use of the ukulele in ITE. In the USA, Smith and Secoy (2019) investigated teacher identity in relation to learning ukulele while Blackwell, Matherne, and Momohara-Ho (2022) examined teacher efficacy playing popular music on the ukulele with specialist music educators. Together, these studies suggest that the ukulele and YouTube can promote individual expression and self-directed learning in music and noted the impact of early life and in-class experiences on music identity development for pre-service generalist teachers. In Türkiye, Yılmaz et al. (2023) found that pre-service teachers experienced an increased sense of confidence in music making from playing the ukulele during COVID lockdowns.

Methodology

We adopted a self-study methodology to investigate our teaching experiences. Self-study is initiated by teachers to inquire into their teaching practices with the goal to improve those practices (Samaras 2010). As teacher-researchers, we are positioned 'inside' and 'as instruments of the research' (Samaras 2010, 12). We recognise that self-study involves practical and personal teaching knowledge related directly to the teaching context (Berry 2004). As self-study researchers we reflect on our teaching practices and contexts, and on ourselves as teachers (Berry and Kitchen 2020). Collaboration is integral to self-study research. Critical friends support researchers to 'encourage and solicit respectful questioning and divergent views to gain alternative perspectives' (Samaras 2010, 72). Our team of teacher educators functioned as a *critical friend team* (Samaras 2010) to provide feedback and to critically interrogate ideas and claims.

The initiative for student-owned ukuleles began as an emergency measure in 2020 that has evolved and continued since. We felt a strong need to examine our teaching practices in the initiative. LaBoskey (2004) reminds teacher-educators of the generational repercussions of their practice: 'We have pedagogical imperatives, responsibilities to our current student teachers, as well as their students' (819). This self-study focuses on a specific aspect of our practice (Berry 2004) and we align with Samaras's (2010) aim to make our practice explicit to ourselves and to others. Our University supported the methodology of collaborative self-study to directly inform our future teaching practice via a small grant. The study involves reflection on our individual and collective teaching practice. Colleagues at other universities may find the findings useful to support the music skills and confidence of generalist primary and EC pre-service teachers despite time constraints,

particularly as there is limited research into the use of ukuleles in ITE both in Australia and internationally.

Self-study requires that we adopt a critical lens towards our practice. We seek to ‘provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle’ (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001, 20). Multiple viewpoints generated through critical friend dialogue (Samaras 2010) supported us to minimise justifications about our usual teaching practices (Loughan 2007). Potential justifications of practices included an assumed validity of the initiative because it continues.

Participants

The collaborative self-study comprised four music teacher educators who each taught in the subjects that included the initiative for student-owned ukuleles between 2020 and 2022. Each participant has teaching experience in delivering music in core arts subjects in teacher education at various universities and at the university in which the research was situated. Jennifer additionally shared ukulele teaching practices at an Early Learning Centre (ELC) where she worked. A small internal University grant for our project enabled a fifth critical friend, Jenni H. – a colleague from our discipline yet external to our team – to participate in the early phase of the study. Jenni H. offered alternate perspectives, critical questioning and supportive feedback (Samaras 2010) in the shaping of the literature review and in contribution to the data analysis.

Data collection and analysis

Our collaborative self-study research design featured multiple methods of data collection to generate comprehensive data (LaBoskey 2004). Our methods were qualitative, comprising focus group interviews (Gulliksen and Hjardemaal 2016), individual narratives (LaBoskey 2004) and document analysis (Bowen 2009), complemented by reflective discussions. Typical of self-study methodology, our research was non-linear (Samaras 2010) and methods were augmented during research processes (Loughan 2007). In early October 2022, the four teacher educators met online for a one-hour focus group guided by semi-structured prompts (Samaras 2010) developed from the themes of the literature review.

Our study had grown organically from earlier reflective discussion, and we recognised these as instances of shared ‘underlying norms, preferences and values’ (Gulliksen and Hjardemaal 2016, 6), and as such we resonated with the description of focus group interviews by these authors:

The format of focus-group interviews is similar to the way that teacher teams meet and plan academic terms. Therefore, our interviews could be interpreted as compressed instances of everyday activities with the exception that there is no academic year to plan. (6)

The interview recording was transcribed, and we engaged in member checking of the transcript. An early thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) resulted in five initial themes. Self-study calls for public presentation of the data (LaBoskey 2004; Loughan 2007; Samaras 2010) to seek feedback from the field. These early findings were presented at an international music education research conference in 2022 which generated positive feedback and critical collegial discussion with several other researchers.

The next phase of data collection involved each teacher educator writing an individual narrative (LaBoskey 2004). Whilst narrative is often a feature of self-study, it is essential that researchers move beyond the ‘telling’ of stories to critical analyse and interpret the stories to seek improvements in practice (LaBoskey 2004). We conducted a second thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) involving both data sets. We collectively agreed that the resulting themes were overly descriptive, perhaps indicative of the ‘complex and messy terrain’ (Berry 2004, 1318) of self-study journeys. With further dialogue, we identified three emergent themes: Building connection and community,

supporting confident and unselfconscious singing and pedagogical considerations. We identified an area for improvement in our practice: how we approached teaching how to tune the ukulele. A content analysis (Bowen 2009) of the initiative learning materials from 2020 to 2022 found ‘convergence and corroboration’ (28) of the three themes.

Findings

In this section, we present the three themes. Quotations from the focus group and individual narrative contributions (in italics) and are provided to illustrate each theme.

Theme 1: building community and connection

Using the ukulele with EC and primary generalist pre-service teachers is not new for us or other music teacher educators. However, we noticed that engagement was qualitatively different when students had their own ukuleles. This emerged as powerful for building a sense of community and connection. ‘The first thing they do is turn on the Zoom and show us the ukulele – I think that really helped build the community of each class – everyone in class has the ukulele in common’ (Sue). During lockdown, the arrival by post of a ukulele ‘did a lot for their attitude towards music generally and music education’ (Sue). The initiative for student-owned ukuleles fostered community and connection in the online iterations of music workshops in 2020 and 2021. During these times, ukuleles that students purchased or borrowed were delivered to their door. ‘If you’re an international student and you’re trapped in an apartment by yourself, to receive a ukulele at your home and to know you’re going to connect with people online in music classes, even that in itself was magic’ (Jennifer).

We didn’t know how important it [the initiative] would be in terms of students feeling connected, especially for our international students living in Melbourne, we couldn’t anticipate that what we did for educational reasons, went so far beyond that. And to know that music was the connector. Hopefully they take that away into their life, that music is something that connects people. (Jennifer)

The experience of community and connection continued in the on-campus music workshops.

In the few minutes before class the pre-service teachers are settling into our music studio with their ukuleles. Several tuners are being passed around and everyone is busily chatting to one another. As I roam to help with tuning, I hear snippets of stories. The conversation is about the ukulele. There are tales of ukulele demonstrations for family members, teaching 4-year-old cousins to play C, strumming chords on the ukulele late at night and having a go at YouTube play-a-longs. The student experience of the ukulele is personal and individual yet at the same time it connects students in a social way, both in their everyday lives and here in class. (Fiona)

Jennifer described the way ukulele-led singing helped children at the ELC to connect with community: ‘Through collective singing, children have developed a language to connect with their communities and, through offering a new (musical) way of engaging in a shared idea, have inspired further dialogue and communion’. Additionally, Jennifer described the community and connection fostered by ukulele playing that brought generalist teachers at the ELC together as learners. The ELC teachers initiated a *WhatsApp* group to exchange songs to play on the ukulele to sing with children.

Theme 2: supporting confident and unselfconscious singing

The reason I was really supportive of continuing the initiative was because singing is the basis of what we do in music education. In the early childhood and primary classes we start with singing. We start by saying, “there are no solos here, we do this all together ... there’s no right and wrong. We build confidence through everybody singing together at the same time”. With Zoom, the risk was that students would be sitting at home by themselves and we would be asking them to sing. They would either feel really exposed, just being by themselves at home, or there might be other people in their home and they may have felt uncomfortable being asked to sing by themselves – this was a real issue. (Sue)

The ukulele was an ever-present accompaniment to singing because strumming chords on the ukulele along with singing removed the perceived shyness of singing alone. Sue reflected:

Having the ukulele in their hand, it gave them a prop, and having a prop often makes a really big difference as to how they engage with singing.

Similarly, Emily noticed:

With the ukulele they actually just sing because there's something physical to hang on to in their hands ... something tangible. They forget they're singing because they're concentrating on playing the ukulele and then their singing is less self-conscious.

Singing confidence was also supported by the ease in which pre-service teachers could learn to play a chord on the ukulele to provide an accompaniment. Learning a C-chord in the first class provided:

Instant feedback that it sounded good ... and by just staying with one chord to start with, they could be successful. Those early wins seemed to be really helpful for building confidence. (Sue)

Colour-coded stickers on the ukulele fretboard sped up the process of finding chord positions, 'because even with adults, we have found that it's just so much quicker to get them playing' (Emily).

We encouraged the characteristic playfulness associated with the ukulele to support unself-conscious singing. 'There's something about the ukulele though, isn't there?' Jennifer proposed, 'if we gave the student another instrument, they would have been terrified, but there's something about the ukulele that in itself is so much fun ... it's not threatening'. We agreed that this perceived character 'has been an advantage of the ukulele, it's fun, even the concept of the ukulele is fun, and that has inspired a sense of play' (Sue). The playfulness contributed to a safe environment for learning the ukulele, with a mindset to just have a go – 'because it can't be too wrong, whatever happens it's going to be okay' (Jennifer).

Theme 3: pedagogical considerations

Several pedagogical approaches were embedded in our teaching practices to promote the skills and confidence of pre-service teachers in music.

Participatory music making:

The nature of the ukulele being accessible, personal, portable and available means that right from the start the students are involved in an experiential and embodied exploration of singing and playing the ukulele and through that, they experience the elements of music; concepts are experienced first, and then unpacked and revisited afterwards. (Sue)

Indigenous perspectives:

This year (2022), we've got a First Nations in Education subject that's compulsory in first semester for the first time ever, and it seems to have made a difference. The students are more committed to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges through music. To centre Indigenous perspectives, one approach we've been using each class is to begin by singing an Indigenous song following a spoken Acknowledgement to Country, often with a ukulele. (Emily)

Participatory music making and co-composition with 4-year-olds:

I grab my ukulele, as I always do at mealtimes, and sit down with the children who are gathered around picnic tables on the classroom deck. I begin to play and sing our favourite song. Then it strikes me. I stop and ask the children, "What do you think this song is about?" I receive a wave of responses connected to caring for each other and the world. I smile. Exactly.

"The Wattle children would like to share their understanding of Harmony Day through the art of music," I announce to the assembled children and teachers. I play two C chords on the ukulele, indicating the pitch and tempo. It's all they need. The children launch in with gusto:

We've got the whole world in our hands (x 4)
 We've got the people in our hands (x 4)
 We've got love in our hands (x 4) (Jennifer)

Repetition and scaffolding were embedded in the initiative to promote the skills and confidence of pre-service teachers in music, such as 'making sure we have a ritual to start every session where we actually sing through what we sang last week or the week before and we just keep building on that and using repetition' (Sue).

Tuning the ukulele

Tuning was sometimes a challenge for the students. During lockdown we provided 'multiple options for how to tune and where to find support to tune' (Sue) and 'we made videos to take students through tuning step by step' (Emily), yet we reported a 'reality check' (Emily) in the return to campus in 2021 that 'it was evident that some students had not learnt to tune during the Zoom classes'. Whilst tuning up in on-campus classes in 2022 was aided by peers and ourselves in-person, Fiona reported that for some students, self-tuning their ukulele was a persistent issue. Jennifer reported tuning ukuleles for other ELC staff members and suggested, 'there could be a barrier there – when they don't have that person to grab the ukulele and help them tune it'. Clearly, challenges with tuning the ukulele may prevent generalist teachers from playing the ukulele to accompany singing in their classrooms.

Discussion and implications

Emergent themes from our collaborative self-study suggested that the initiative for student-owned ukuleles was valuable particularly in the areas of promoting singing confidence, building community and connection, alongside pedagogical considerations such as participatory music making, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. There were also challenges, particularly related to independently tuning ukuleles. We now situate our findings in the literature with a view to improving our teaching and sharing insights that other teacher educators in similar circumstances may find valuable.

Singing songs accompanied by the ukulele was a focus of our program, aligning with often-used ukulele teaching approaches reported by Davis, Singletary, and VanWeelden (2019), Giebelhausen (2016) and Perlmutter (2013). Pre-service teachers encountered elements of music and concepts such as chord symbols and chord charts in a sound before sign, experiential learning approach. 'We learn to sing the melody of a song and then add ukulele accompaniment as examples of melody and harmony' (Sue). Similarly, Yilmaz et al.'s (2023) study incorporated a range of music concepts as part of the learning experience for students alongside their practical ukulele skills.

Confidence in singing and unselfconscious singing may have been influenced by the playful character of the ukulele, Davis, Singletary, and VanWeelden (2019) also report that the ukulele is enjoyable and accessible which motivates learners of all ages. The sense of fun contributes to a positive learning environment for generalist teachers to learn about music, resonating with Joseph's (2019) study about music education experiences in teacher education who found that providing a joyful, supportive, and psychologically safe space supported a shift in pre-service teacher's confidence and competence. The notion of the ukulele as a prop to counter singing anxiety or self-consciousness seems not to have been reported elsewhere in the literature. However, the impact of negative prior experiences on generalist teachers singing confidence is widely reported in the literature and is one of the perennial problems of music education (Smith and Secoy 2019).

A classroom community was developed through whole-class ukulele playing and singing, providing social connections for students, particularly in online classes during lockdown. This aligns with the difficulties faced by tertiary students during lockdown reported by the *Tertiary Education*

Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2020) who found that the lack of student-to-student interaction resulted in feelings of isolation and not enjoying online learning.

Social connection is considered an important factor in online learning experiences to ensure a positive mindset towards learning (Merrick 2020). In our online and on-campus workshops, aligning with Doebler's (2021) research, we found that whole-class ukulele playing supported a sense of classroom community. The connection between ukulele playing and building community is well-documented in community settings, these provide a shared space for people to connect with one another, socially and musically (Giebelhausen 2016; Kruse 2018; Thibeault and Evoy 2011)

Our pedagogical focus was participatory music making, the active engagement of people in musical interactions in a social context (Turino 2009). Students played the ukulele and sang as a whole class, an approach that aligns with Thibeault and Evoy's (2011) finding that the ukulele supports collaborative learning as an ensemble. Our students' participation in music making was encouraged through a repertoire-driven learning approach with the ukulele as an accompaniment to singing, supporting the research of Giebelhausen (2016) and (Thibeault and Evoy 2011). Learning a chord straight away is a well-reported first step in learning the ukulele (Davis, Singletary, and VanWeelden 2019; Giebelhausen 2016; Perlmutter 2013) providing an instantaneous experience of playing the instrument (Davis, Singletary, and VanWeelden 2019). Pre-service teachers in online workshops also learnt to play a C chord on the first day although the ensemble experience occurred visually in Zoom rather than aurally.

Other pedagogical approaches underpinned our teaching. Our showcasing of Indigenous knowledges (Hogarth 2024) through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories and songs, supports culturally responsive teaching (McKoy and Lind 2022) and has been used locally by researchers such as Solomon-Dent et al. (2021). Mentoring and teacher modelling, an element of Jennifer's stories of practice, aligns with Barrett et al.'s (2020) study in an early childhood environment about the development of music skills of generalist teachers. Scaffolding and repetition were embedded in the initiative to support student progression as a feature of quality music education offerings, aligning with the Quality Music Education Framework (Victorian State Government 2018).

The findings lead us to consider our expectations for students in self-tuning the ukulele or using the many available online resources to support them. Echoing the need for accurate tuning, Giebelhausen (2016) explains that the ukulele requires precise tuning because it is small, relatively high pitch and pitch inaccuracies are audible. New ukuleles in particular need frequent tuning and the tuning of the ukulele strings takes time to settle (Giebelhausen 2016). As such, tuning poses challenges for online learners when it is not obvious to the leader or facilitator echoing findings by Thibeault and Evoy (2011). In retrospect, we realise that for our online learners in particular, tuning would have been challenging and that despite appearances and our best intentions, having an untuned ukulele is unlikely to motivate students to use it in their future teaching practice. In response to this finding, we explicitly focus on building students' independence with tuning to support their skills and confidence towards a growing 'self-concept of musicality' (Carroll and Harris 2023, 15), ultimately to increase the likelihood of including music in their future classrooms.

Collaborative self-study methodology was immensely useful to challenge us to move beyond reflective stories of our experiences of the initiative into critical analysis and interpretation (LaBoskey 2004) of our individual and combined teaching practices. We were able to articulate our practice (Berry 2004) in the initiative, particularly the ways we promote the skills and confidence of pre-service teachers in music. In the process, we strengthened our communication and identity (LaBoskey 2004) and identified areas for improvement in our teaching practice (LaBoskey 2004; Samaras 2010). Our findings, a preliminary step towards an evaluation of the initiative, point to the need for us to engage in further research, in particular to incorporate student perspectives of their experience of owning and playing the ukulele to further their music skills and confidence. In addition, exploring the experience of graduate teachers using the ukulele (or not) once they move into early

childhood settings and primary schools is an obvious next step. Our study captured some of the personal and team experiences of the emergency switch to online teaching during lockdown. We recognise that ‘documenting the experiences and insights that come from radical educational change’ (Berry and Kitchen 2020, 123) would require further elaboration yet would be a worthy endeavour to support our ongoing evaluation and refinement of the initiative and our work as teacher educators (Berry 2004; Samaras 2010).

Conclusion

This collaborative self-study suggests that the initiative for student-owned ukuleles supports the skills and confidence of pre-service primary and EC generalist teachers to take music into their future classrooms through increasing their singing confidence, building a sense of community and connection and drawing on pedagogical approaches including participatory music making and showcasing Indigenous knowledges through music. The study aimed to explore the teaching experiences of four music education lecturers as we delivered an innovative approach. The initiative, which began as an emergency response to online learning during COVID pandemic lockdowns of 2020, and continued beyond it, helped to establish a positive mindset towards music as an integral part of teaching and learning in core arts subjects for EC and primary generalist pre-service teachers. An area for improvement in our teaching practice is building our students independence in tuning the ukulele. The multiple perspectives of the four lecturers who have all taught in the program added diversity and criticality to our collective viewpoints. Our study has relevance to lockdown scholarship in music education, but ultimately, contributes a research-informed approach to pre-service teacher education to mitigate the constantly diminishing hours for music in ITE.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Notes on contributors

Fiona King is Lecturer in teacher education in the arts, specialising in music education, at the Faculty of Education at The University of Melbourne. Fiona lectures in music education for Primary and Early Childhood pre-service teachers, and lectures in popular music for undergraduate students. She has taught and coordinated subjects at major universities in Victoria in teacher education in the arts, music, humanities and in research methodology. Fiona has taught in early childhood, primary and secondary school settings. Fiona is a seasoned professional musician with over 15 years industry experience in popular music performance. Her PhD explored teaching for creativity and creative processes for music educators in primary schools in Victoria. Fiona’s current research interests include music activities delivered by generalist teachers, and the ways primary school generalist teachers support children to be creative in music.

Emily Wilson is Head of music education and Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne. She lectures in music education for Early childhood, Primary and Secondary pre-service teachers. She has over 20 years’ experience as music educator. Her research interests include student engagement, engaging teacher practices as well as formal and informal learning in music education which she has published in journal articles and presented at national and international conferences.

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