

Teaching and Learning of the Music Component of the Creative Arts Subject:

A Case of Primary Schools in South Africa

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Abstract

South Africa became a democratic country after apartheid ended in 1994. Since then, important milestones in improving teaching and learning have been implemented, especially in basic education. The South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) prescribed policy documents to guide the teaching and learning of subjects in schools. In South African primary schools, music is packaged as one of four components (drama, dance, visual arts and music) of a broader subject called Creative Arts. Music is a compulsory subject taught in the Foundation Phase under the Department of Basic Education. This study aimed to examine the teaching and learning of the music component of the Creative Arts subject in primary schools of Morokweng in the North West Province. A qualitative research method was employed using a case study design and a review of relevant scholarly writings. Interviews were also conducted with various stakeholders at the selected schools. The findings of this study demonstrated that the music component is important in developing the learners' creative, cognitive, emotional, and social development skills. The study further revealed that the music component is not receiving the required support and is not placed on equal standing with other learning components and subjects. Whereas the syllabus and lesson plan established by the Department of Basic Education indicates that all the components of the Creative Arts subject must receive equal attention in both theory and practical, the music component is not receiving the attention it deserves. One of our recommendations is that the school's management should have musically inclined personnel for the music component and see to it that the component is treated fairly like all the other disciplines.

Keywords: Basic education; Creative arts subject; Music; Policy; Public schools

Introduction

There have been great gains made by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) over the years regarding revising and restructuring the education curriculum. In their article, Magagula,

Mugovhani and Yende (2022) highlight that the South African curriculum in the Department of Basic Education has undergone extensive revision and restructuring of the content of the curriculum. These scholars state that the curriculum has been revised three times in terms of its content. Firstly, it was known as the National Curriculum Statement in 1997. Thereafter, it was amended as a Revised National Curriculum Statement in 2002. Lastly, it was amended as the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in 2011, which was formalised in 2012. While there were these revisions, the four art components, namely music, visual arts, dance, and drama (theatre), were incorporated into one subject better known as the Creative Arts subject. The integration of music, visual arts, theatre, and dance meant that all art forms were to be taught and learned as one subject (Yende, 2023; Nompula, 2010).

The South African CAPS (2011) indicates that learners should explore and develop their artistic ideas based on personal experiences and use their senses, emotions, and observations. The learning focus should be on developing skills through enjoyable, experiential processes rather than working towards highly polished products each term. The Department of Basic Education introduced the subject as compulsory for Grades 4 to 9. The primary objective was to unite the diverse culture, ethnic groups, and languages in South Africa (Marx, 2017). The music component in the Creative Arts subject was implemented in the South African educational system to unite the various cultures in the country (Department of Basic Education, 2018). Introducing the Creative Arts subject also intends to improve skills essential for controlling and refining gross and fine motor skills. The Creative Arts subject aims to create a foundation for balanced creative, cognitive, emotional, and social development (Joseph, 1999).

The Creative Arts subject includes drama, dance, visual arts, and music is a government approved learning area for primary schools and is taught in Morokweng. Whereas the syllabus and lesson plan established by the Department of Basic Education indicates that all the components of the Creative Arts subject must receive equal attention in both theory and practical, the music component around schools in Morokweng is not receiving the attention it deserves. Van Vuuren (2010) states that very few teachers are fully trained and equipped to handle the four art forms as required.

De Moss and Morris (2002) further note that the time given to music within the Creative Arts subject does not offer learners sufficient time to become fully equipped with relevant basic skills in the music art form, primarily due to the paucity of hours and limited resources of the Creative Arts subject. Learners acquire little knowledge due to the little time allocated to the music art form. The music art form aims to help learners identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking (Smallberger, 2013). The teachers appointed to teach the music art form in South African schools lack proper training and do not have the skills to teach drama, dance, visual arts, and music. Moreover, some teachers

currently employed to teach the music art form do not have the knowledge to teach one or more of the four arts disciplines in the Creative Art subject. Moreover, the teachers employed in most of these schools cannot handle all the components of the Creative Arts with equal success, as they are not specialists in all the components except one or two. Very few teachers are fully trained and equipped to handle the four art forms as required. According to Pitts (2002), chances and choices is a rich and finely written text that achieves its aim of examining the lifelong effects of music education. Evidently, South African public schools, including Morokweng, face many challenges concerning the Creative Arts subject.

In the present scenario at Morokweng primary schools, learners in the drama component are taught how to characterise the roles given to each learner. In dance, they are taught some basic dance movement techniques. In visual arts, learners are taught how to draw and paint. In music, they have pre-Grade 1 music theory, which is the bare minimum they receive. Hence, the study contends that music at Morokweng primary schools does not receive the attention it deserves.

Research Questions and Aims

Considering these challenges, it is necessary to redress the issues affecting the Creative Arts subject in the primary schools of Morokweng in Vryburg. Therefore, in this article, the researchers focused on specific primary questions that sought answers that would clarify the ongoing crisis in the Creative Arts subject.

- a. What are the general challenges faced by the Creative Arts subject at Morokweng primary schools?
- b. What are the challenges faced by music learners at Morokweng primary schools?
- c. What are the challenges faced by music educators in Morokweng primary schools?
- d. Why is music education essential in Morokweng primary schools?

To answer the developed three sub-questions earlier, the researchers developed four sub-aims that were deemed significant:

- a. To explore the general challenges faced by the Creative Arts subject at Morokweng primary schools
- b. To examine the challenges faced by music learners at Morokweng primary schools

- c. To explore the challenges faced by music educators in Morokweng primary schools
- d. To review why music education is essential in Morokweng primary schools

Methodology

Research approach and design

This study used a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative research methodology encompassed an exploratory approach and a case study design. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:154) defines exploratory research as social research that explores phenomena to formulate more specific research questions relating to the phenomenon. Aspects of knowledge were researched, such as learners' music skills, planning and implementing assessments, facilitating music learning, learning environments, valuing diversity, collaboration, reflection, professional growth, and professional contribution (Patton, 2002; Leedy, 2010). A qualitative research methodology was a suitable and reliable guide throughout the research project. In this study, the researchers investigated issues that affect the teaching and learning of the music component of the Creative Arts subject in the selected schools.

This article adopted a case study design by selecting a specific number of schools to study. Rule and John (2013) assert that a case study might vary in size and shape. A study might include a single person, classroom, programme, or a particular group of people. This study employed a case study format by selecting three primary schools in and around Morokweng that offer creative learning and teaching.

The non-probability sampling helped us to avoid bias. Using qualitative methods assisted the researchers in obtaining solid data for this study from the selected participants about the teaching and learning of music in the Creative Arts subject at Morokweng primary schools. The location was chosen because the researchers are music education (pedagogy) graduates. The researchers made preliminary observations about the teaching and learning of music in some schools that offer the Creative Arts subject in the Morokweng area.

The population of this study was a group of people who participated in this study located around Morokweng in the North West Province of South Africa. A population can be of any size according to the researcher's desire. Face-to-face interviews (semi-structured and convergent) were conducted with the principals, educators, and selected learners from the three public schools. The individuals with substantial and relevant evidence about the music component of the Creative Arts subject were identified (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of participants of each kind selected in this project.

Participants	Number	Percentage (%)
Schools and principals	3	20
Heads of department	3	20
Education practitioners	3	20
Music teachers (pedagogues)	3	20
Learners	6	20
	18	100

In this sense, the demographics of these selected schools were multiracial and co-educational, and the learners come from various ethnic, cultural, and financial backgrounds. Diversity in the sampling gave me a wider perspective of the dynamics educators face in the class setting. This provided me with a wider view of the various perceptions and observations. The data collected from these participants was analysed, interpreted, and discussed.

Ethical approval

This study's ethical principles include protection from harm, informed consent, the right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues. Ethical approval was obtained for this project before embarking on it. The Tshwane University of Technology's Research Ethics Committee approved this project, and the following research number was provided: **REC/2020/12/006**. All information obtained from the interviews is strictly confidential. All the respondents participated voluntarily and remained anonymous. The North West Department of Education was approached to inquire about obtaining permission to access schools. The department duly granted such permission.

Results/ Findings of this study

The findings presented in this article are common themes that emerged from most research participants' perceptions. The themes that emerged were (1) principals' perceptions about the music component of the Creative Art subject, (2) heads of the music component responses, (3) responses and perceptions from the music educators, (4) learners' perceptions, and (5) perceptions of education practitioners about the music component. Literature reviews complemented these findings.

Principals' perceptions about the music component of the creative arts subject

Many principals believe that the music component of the Creative Arts subject is good for their curriculum as it accommodates all learners. The findings also revealed that inclusivity is

important since not all learners are academically gifted. Music is a discipline that helps showcase learners' skills and hidden capabilities. The principals believe the music component is fun and integrates with the other subjects.

As one of the principals reveals: The curriculum has catered for all the learners according to their individual differences in a way that others are able to do things practically to show their capabilities.

Another participating principal states that: The actual learning of the component is fun. Learners enjoy the content. The component interacts with several other subjects, such as Life Orientation, Life Skills, Tourism, and several others.

The participating principals of Morokweng primary schools are abreast with the syllabi of the music component of the Creative Arts subject. These principals reveal that the music component interacts with several other subjects and contend that it helps the learners to be creative. The Creative Arts subject is crucial in primary school as it helps learners to be creative (Nompula 2012; De Villiers 2017). Schmid (2005) points out that creativity is important in engaging creative arts occupations. Schmid (2005) believes that creativity can increase self-esteem, promote a sense of purpose and belonging, empower individuals, and foster autonomy and competence. Principals also highlighted that having qualified educators for the music discipline is important. Some of these principals agreed that they had qualified educators teaching the music component, whereas other principals revealed that they did not have qualified educators.

Another principal attested as follows: Yes, our educators are well equipped to teach the music component because most of them are from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and North West University (NWU) Potchefstroom. These individuals provide extensive music teaching to our learner

In general, most of the principals agree that they have qualified music educators and most of the appointed educators can teach the subject as they are professional music educators.

The participants' views suggest that the primary schools of Morokweng have been appointing qualified music educators to teach the music component. Indeed, schools must have knowledgeable educators to teach the Creative Arts subject and create an opportunity for learners to advance their talent (Nompula 2012; Chirwa 2014; De Villiers 2017).

Heads of the music component responses

The heads of the music component believe that learners become the best of themselves when attending the music component because the subject is joyful and fun. Educators and parents

consider that most learners are excited by learning through imagining and creating. However, the learners are unable to develop their own work without step-by-step instructions or stage-by-stage reassurance that they are heading in the right direction (Bresler, 2002).

The heads of the music component further stated that not all educators teaching the music component are equipped. Furthermore, most of the music component heads believe that there is a vast difference between educators trained for the music component and education practitioners whose knowledge of the music component was received from workshops and support from other forums (untrained music educators). It was confirmed or contended that university trained music educators teach the music component with much understanding and confidence, according to the heads of the music component.

Overall, these heads of the music component attest that some educators in their schools are not entirely fit to teach the music component as they are neither creative thinkers nor passionate about their work. According to Ekinci (2017), selecting candidates who love and prefer the teaching profession may be suggested as the first step for identifying qualified educators. However, as in other professions, individuals do not choose their professions based on their desire and abilities, which would naturally affect their attitude toward teaching in various ways.

Perceptions of music educators

Most participants agreed that their main challenge with teaching the music component is the lack of resources, facilities, support, and musical instruments. The participants would like to see the learners being comfortable, confident, and enjoying what they are taught in the classroom. When the learners are comfortable, they can excel in both the theoretical and practical parts of the music component. The educators support the notion that learners will take the subject seriously and respect it when they excel. Creativity has the power to increase self-esteem, promote a sense of purpose and belonging, empower individuals, and foster autonomy and competence (Schmid, 2005).

One of the music educators is quoted as saying: Since I am a music practitioner, it is easier for me to teach the music component. However, the time allocation given for the music component is not enough. Thus, the outcome of the music component is not well executed.

Other educators highlighted the following: The music component is important to the learners' lives because they are able to express themselves, and their moods are stimulated. They also learn to be open minded. Moreover, the component helps those who are intellectually challenged because not every learner is academic.

However, some educators are not pleased with how the music component is treated due to some outstanding issues. These issues are the lack of facilities (instruments and music books) and insufficient time allocated. Westraadt (2011) also reveals this challenge of inadequate time allocation for the Creative Arts subject in public schools.

Learners' perceptions

Learners think that the music component is fun and teaches them how to sing, read, and write music. They believe that the music component teaches them various things they did not think they could learn. In addition, the learners can be creative. However, they bemoan that they are at most taught only two: singing and dancing. Other learners criticised the small amount of time allocated for the component.

Learners enjoy the music component, although learners admitted that this component requires much time, attention, and focus, like mathematics and natural sciences. Learners regard the music component as crucial to improving their reading and writing skills, with no tests or classwork. In this article, it has been empirically established that learners appreciate the knowledge they receive from the component. The music component is considered a relief subject for them, and they wish to have the subject every day. Learners concluded by saying the subject help them mature their skills and be more creative. Arts have been marginalised and viewed as leisure or 'soft' subjects with little connection to the 'important' subjects, such as literacy, science, and mathematics, which prepare learners for the workplace (Rabkin, 2011).

Perceptions of education practitioners about the music component

It is prudent to state that in this article, unqualified music educators with passion to teach music component are referred to as education practitioners. These are individuals who possess teaching qualifications but not music education qualification. Education practitioners use their community choir singing experience when teaching learners the music component. Therefore, they are appointed music component educators simply because of a shortage of qualified educators.

The participants became music component educators because they enjoy music due to their background in community choirs, sports, and social activities. They are not qualified within the music discipline. However, they know some music basics. These participants also affirmed that issues faced by Morokweng primary schools are related to time allocation and lack of facilities to teach the subject. The lack of time and facilities was substantiated by De Villiers (2012), who contend that quality time allocation for creative arts in South African public schools is essential and requires serious attention.

Data was obtained according to the developed sub-questions using existing literature

General challenges faced by the Creative Arts subject at Morokweng primary schools: The Creative Arts subject faces many obstacles in South Africa such as a scarcity of creative arts practitioners and a shortage of qualified teachers with a basic understanding of the creative arts field's teaching, learning, and composition (Beukes 2016; Barnerjee 2010). Many of these educators and artists only possess rudimentary teaching credentials or performance expertise and lack a strong understanding of the fundamental concepts required by the Creative Arts curriculum. Obeng and Osei-Senyah (2018) claim that most primary school teachers have degrees in disciplines other than music and dance, which has an impact on their ability to teach music because they are not specialists. Major challenges teachers encounter when teaching music and dance include a lack of teaching implements and the negative attitude of teachers towards the subject. The curriculum aims to help learners identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking (Smallberger, 2013). Moreover, the literature review reveals that a creative curriculum offers learners plenty of opportunities for creative behaviour. The curriculum calls for original work, independent learning, self-initiated projects, and experimentation.

Challenges faced by music education graduates in South African basic education

Yende and Mugovhani (2021) are convinced that the challenges faced by music education graduates are closely related to the Department of Basic Education, which does not recognise music educators as professional educators. In their studies, Yende and Mugovhani (2021) state that Music education graduates who hold National Diplomas and Baccalaureus of Technology Degrees in Vocal Pedagogy are always persuaded to enrol for the bridging Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course offered by the University of South Africa and the University of Pretoria, among others. This additional course requires the graduates to complete an extra year. Students also must add Higher Diploma in Education (HDE) courses to graduate with a Bachelor of Music (BMus) in Education when graduating from comprehensive universities such as the University of Cape Town's College of Music. A BMus alone does not qualify a graduate to be recognised as a qualified teacher or educator in the Department of Basic Education system.

This has led music education graduates to unemployment as many of them cannot afford to pay or enrol for the additional programme. These are some of the constraints that add to the difficulties that South African music education graduates face regarding their employability. The lack of this additional qualification also could be the significant cause for Morokweng primary schools employing qualified educators who have not specialised in music education to teach in their schools. There is a need for the Department of Basic Education to recognise music education as a qualification that is equivalent to other teaching qualifications (Yende, 2023).

Music education is essential in Morokweng primary schools

Various scholars point out that music education is essential as it enhances cognitive development in learners. Music education helps develop critical thinking skills, as well as improve memory, concentration, and problem solving abilities (De Villiers, 2012). Learning music involves reading sheet music, understanding rhythm and melody, and interpreting musical notes, which promotes cognitive skills such as auditory processing, pattern recognition, and spatial-temporal skills (Nompula, 2012; De Villiers, 2012). Ntshole (2023) recognises that music education positively impacts academic achievement. Learning music can enhance mathematical skills through rhythm, patterns, and counting and can also improve language skills through lyrics, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Evidently, music education is essential and can boost creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving skills, which are transferable to other academic subjects to Morokweng primary schools.

Furthermore, music education encourages collaboration and teamwork, as learners often participate in group activities like choir, band, or ensemble performances (Ntshole, 2023). This is true, especially with the Morokweng primary schools. It promotes social skills such as communication, cooperation, empathy, and fosters a sense of community and belonging among students. Music also exposes learners to diverse cultures and styles, promoting cultural awareness and appreciation (Nompula, 2012; De Villiers, 2012).

Music education has been shown to improve language skills and help learners to learn other foreign languages (Kumar, 2022). Music requires active listening, as learners must distinguish between melodies, rhythms, and tones. This helps develop their listening skills, which are also crucial for language learning (Oellermann, 2020). By training their ears to pick up subtle differences in music, learners can also become more attuned to nuances in language, such as pronunciation, intonation, and accents.

Discussion

The current article sought to examine the teaching and learning of the music component of the Creative Arts subject in primary schools of North West Province in Morokweng. This article has highlighted that education practitioners appointed to teach the music art form in many public schools of North West Province in Morokweng are unqualified and do not have the necessary relevant background to teach the component properly. This was substantiated by Nilson (2010), who pointed out that the shortage of educators with the appropriate expertise to deliver arts programmes in schools is one of the trends in the current music education system. This article argued that the music and other art forms in South African basic education are not treated the same way as maths, science, and technology.

The findings of this article are consistent with studies from Scott et al. (2012), Magagula, Mugovhani & Yende (2022), and Nompula (2012) that have established that music educators do not receive much support from the school management, who do not provide enough

relevant instruments, props, and space. It has also highlighted that South African basic education does not employ professional music educators to teach music. This trajectory of not employing professional music educators is an essential consideration in South African basic education.

The findings are that education practitioners are not equipped to teach the component because they do not have the basics of the component. Therefore, education practitioners do not know how to teach the music art form well. Hence, the findings show a need for curriculum revision and alignment with the practical aspect of arts. Despite the mentioned challenges, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that a few primary schools in the North West Province of Morokweng recruit professional music educators. This has been evident given the increasing number of music graduates from the Tshwane University of Technology Vocal Arts and North-West University (NWU) Potchefstroom who teach music in the North West Province in Morokweng. The study also highlighted the lack of resources and support that contribute to the problems associated with teaching and learning the music art form. The music art form requires enough support and should be placed equally with other school components and subjects. Proper support resources for delivering and executing the component must be ready and accessible for the educator. It was also highlighted in this study's findings that the music component is important in developing the learners' emotional, social, and physical skills.

Recommendations

Based on the results and analysis of this article, the following recommendations are made: it is recommended that the principals hire qualified educators who are qualified musicians with a passion for teaching. They should not allow teachers with little knowledge about the component to teach the music component. These recommendations will improve the component, and the component will receive the attention required.

It is recommended that the heads of departments should outsource the component to relevant educators to maintain school integrity and dignity in music relations. In addition, the principals should ensure that the time given to the component is adjusted to its needs.

It is recommended that the music educators must strive to excel in what they do against all odds. The schools must endeavour to minimise the problems faced by the music educators and the problems that the learners encounter during the teaching and learning of the component.

It was also recommended that education practitioners should not teach the music component because they compromise what should be taught to the learners. They must first get training and adequate knowledge in the component because they only teach the component through passion and not academic knowledge.

Conclusion

This study found that schools appoint educators not qualified to teach the music art form. Therefore, the qualities of the music art form are compromised and do not positively affect the learners. In order to solve the problem of poor music training at Morokweng village primary schools, schools must appoint qualified music educators to teach the music component. The schools' principals should stop appointing education practitioners to teach the component as their teaching compromises the execution of the music component and contributes to the learners' lack of knowledge.

The music art form is established as an important art form in schools, which is why it is taught nationally in the school curriculum. Therefore, the music art form should be acknowledged by adding time for its effectiveness to the learners' schedule for delivering and presenting comprehensive content. In addition, there is a need for the music art form to be taught by qualified and well-trained music educators who are specialists. These educators will present their knowledge to learners, instilling music skills and planning and implementing assessments accordingly. In addition, these educators will facilitate music learning, learning environments, valuing diversity, collaboration, reflection, professional growth, and professional contributions. Adequately qualified music educators will minimise the problems associated with teaching and learning. In conclusion, the music component requires enough support and should be placed on equal standing with other school subjects of the curriculum.

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