

Music Arts Education: The Role of In-Service Courses for Serving Teachers

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Abstract

Music in-service courses for serving teachers in both primary and secondary schools are significant elements in the development of appropriate links between theory and practice in the provision of relevant twenty first century music arts education. Pre-service teacher programmes hardly satisfy the needs of trainees to effectively teach music by the time they complete their courses within three years of generalist education. Given other compounding factors like non examination status of music at the end of the primary education course, inadequate funding, limited facilities and funding, and insensitive school authorities, music education for all school going children does not receive the attention it deserves. The focus by schools on choral, percussion and traditional dance competitions is dysfunctional and a negation of the need for inclusive musical arts education as an element of a comprehensive education. Regular in-service courses can make teachers aware of trends and relevant other developments in child development theories, philosophy, and teaching methods that can assist in nurturing best practices which expose learner perceptions, concepts and skills from an early age. This article reports the experiences resulting from field work conducted in Norton where observations were made on primary teachers at music in-service workshops. The study takes a qualitative dimension where researchers used guided interview to learn about participants' experiences in schools as they taught music.

Key words: music, music arts education, traditional dance, percussion band, musical instruments, music educator, in-service

Introduction

Primary education in Zimbabwe comprises twelve subjects that include the languages, natural and social sciences and the arts or the so called practical subjects. The nature of aims and content of the curriculum and the factors that have engendered current practice are fairly discussed in this section. In the early years of the inception of general education, the proliferation of mission stations meant that each mission was responsible for the training of its own teachers. These stations included Bondolfi (Roman Catholic), Dadaya (Lutheran), Daramombe and Nyadire (Methodist), Emphaneni and Inyathi (Adventist), and Morgenster (Dutch Reformed Church). A large corpus of historical documents covering a substantial time span that include acts of parliament, commissions and research reports can be examined when investigating the general educational history and area studies too. The role of missionaries has been investigated (Zvobgo, 1996), philosophy and teacher education (Peresuh and Nhundu, 1999) music and music education issues. Appreciation, theory of music and practical form the major components of the primary music programme. A one hour session per week is policy prescription for both the infant and junior levels.

Music is therefore a fully recognised subject to which learners need to be exposed from the early years of formal education.

A growing awareness among teachers to engage in meaningful music making at the class level where all the children can be exposed to its concepts and skills is evident. However, problems of content extraction or relevant syllabus interpretation, appropriate teaching methods to sustain weekly endeavours are widely experienced. Insufficient training and policy deficiency might be sighted among some reasons. Practical subjects or expressive arts are non examinable at the end of the seven year primary course although the syllabus has statements or articles on this crucial educational aspect. There are no major studies that have been carried out to specifically look into state of classroom music in the country. To mitigate negative views and perceptions towards the subject, the provision of in-service courses by training colleges is a crucial component to the development of staff at the grassroots level.

Traditionally, Education Directors, Sports Conveners and school heads focussed on workshops that aimed at the development of choral singing, percussion band and traditional

dance annual competitions. Not all children are afforded the opportunity to musical knowledge, an important aspect of intellectual development. Competitions, in spite of their existence even in ancient Greece, exert a lot of pressure on not only the children but also the conductors or choir masters, school heads and parents as poor results attract ridicule from stakeholders. If not managed properly managed within healthy limits, competitions can be damaging. Expertise between schools can be shared, harnessed to foster cooperation and creativity among teachers. School-based in-service staff development programmes can be initiated with recent college graduates sharing the latest information and teaching methods that are compatible with twenty first teaching methodologies and other principles of learning. This is a report on efforts by the researchers working closely with schools in a programme that can be informative to future practice in music teacher education in the country and possibly internationally.

Experience and observation of working as lecturers of music education in teacher education colleges for a period spanning more than two decades have provided an opportunity to test approaches to the teaching of classroom music in the primary schools. Given the historical nature of educational development in the country, primary school teachers are generalists. Pre-service candidates enrolling into the teachers' colleges spend three years in training. Initiation takes the first two terms equivalent to six months. The music education programme introduces topics dealing with philosophy or foundation of music education, pedagogy and the wider aspects of general music knowledge. In so far as the capacity to expose trainees to these principles is concerned, both human and material resources are determinants in the end product. References to philosophy include (Campbell, 1991; Swanwick & Taylor, 1982), on teaching methods (Campbell, 1991; Choksy, 1989) among some. The mode of teaching is such that students will take down notes as they are dictated by tutors. The depth of the material covered might very much hinge on the amount of research that lecturers put into the preparation of the lectures. Often colleges have limitations in the acquisition of reading material that serve as reference for additional resource material for students. The development of vocal skills is a significant element of the course

necessary for effective practice. All children, unless otherwise physically challenged will have brought their voices, an important instrument for active music making. Seventy percent of the country's primary schools are in the rural areas and are unlikely to afford instruments. In urban areas, equipment might be found in the formally segregated schools while township establishments are very much like their rural counterparts.

Qualitative data in form of teachers' records, students' schemes of work and lesson plans, heads' lesson observation reports and general interviews and conversations with mentors and field notes were compiled during general teaching practice visits by authors. The experience would in part provide opportunity to carry out advocacy work in music education hence the consummation of the idea of in-service workshop.

Theoretical Framework

Multiple Intelligences

This study was informed by Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory. Gardner's view of intelligence affects the way we perceive intelligence. He challenges our ideas of what intelligent behaviour is, particularly the emphasis in schools on the development of verbal and mathematical abilities to the exclusion of a broader range of intelligent behaviour. Gardner identifies seven intelligences which he claims each individual possesses as opposed to the traditional schooling which favoured the verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. Thus, Gardner suggests a more balanced curriculum which incorporates the arts, self-awareness, communication, and physical education. Gardner(1995:208) contends that the theory of multiple intelligences has been embraced by the education community as a wonderful and meaningful way to account for the knowledge that: "we are not all the same, we do not have the same kinds of minds, and education works most effectively for most individuals if human differences are taken seriously. Gardner suggests that there are at least seven ways that people have of perceiving and understanding the world. In other words, a set of skills permitting individuals to find and resolve genuine problems they face within certain cultural settings. The seven intelligences that he initially formulated are: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical

intelligence, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, spatial intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence and musical intelligence. Music and music education fall squarely under Gardner's musical intelligence hence the theory is considered appropriate in this regard. Music educators and other stakeholders have cause for concern because music has often been marginalised in the public school curriculum (Mills, 2001: 1).

In-service as a conceptual framework

The teaching profession is one that constantly changes such that theories and approaches that today appear sound and plausible can quickly be discarded in light of new developments. To meet the challenges, in-servicing, a form of training offered either to extend or expand already acquired knowledge is one process that can be adopted. Bagwadeen & Louw (1993) cited in Klopper (2000:52) make this postulation on the definition of the concept:

The goal of INSET is to develop mastery even brilliance, in the performance of instructional and educational responsibilities. At the same time INSET helps teachers to self evaluate their performance, assess growth needs and plan their own learning programmes based upon their needs. INSET will provide teachers with opportunities for reflection and preparation for various forms career development.

The need to prevent stagnation from the above definition is an important responsibility of the individual teachers to realise in order to explore the parameters of a profession. It is a further contention of the cited authors that the function of in-service is to assist educators to grow, to learn to improve and enjoy while being actively involved in continuing education. Specifically about music education, Hugo & Hauptfleisch (1993:4) make the following observation:

Continued education and in-service education of teachers involved with music education will play a significant role in providing in-service teachers with the relevant knowledge and skills to deal with expanded, more relevant teaching content. In-service education is especially important since a large number proportion of teachers currently providing class music tuition seem to be unqualified or under qualified. Unfortunately, continued in-service education mechanisms to constantly upgrade music knowledge and skills do not seem to be sufficiently in place.

While it is true for other countries, these observations can be said to apply to the Zimbabwean situation. Underlying the challenges and demands of effective practice is a platform around which teachers in the field can develop and extend existing knowledge or familiarise with absolutely new staff through training mounted by more skilled and specialised music educators. It is hoped such exposure might generate the much needed self confidence and inspiration for meaningful music education.

Role of music educators in in-service programmes

It is critical to briefly examine who or what constitutes a music educator. Due the nature of music as social cultural construct, an adequate definition of such persons takes into account the meanings expressed within the vast universe of underlying social structures of the world's musical traditions. Each human social group is known to have a unique music with its complete sets of governing principles, social contexts, instruments, performance practices and teaching methods (Lundquist & SZego, 1998). The propagation of music as a sound system, a way of knowing, a conception of the world of lived realities reflects upon the underlying cultural contexts. Like all

other human behaviour, it is learned. One peculiar feature established by research is that at birth, we are all endowed with an innate capacity to acquire musical knowledge which unfortunately might begin to disappear at some point unless nurturing has been undertaken. Many aspects of knowledge systems acquired informally by either observation or imitation, can be refined through formal learning or education to unlock the latent talents. Pupils often might experience difficulties in the realisation of their full potential, Therefore, guidance and help of a music educator is an important link in the self actualisation process. Whether the learning process is the responsibility of a particular individual, group or community are elements around which we might form the concept of or understand a music educator. Campbell (1991) reports on vast array of transmission modes from a wide selection of world musical traditions. Both traditional and modern perspectives, literate or non literate societies' approaches to music teaching and learning receive attention. As a profession of modern day life, Fields (1995:175) makes an illusion of the music educator as one with special skills and personality traits, endowed with knowledge of many facets of music, a desire to continue learning, studying and researching, and an ability to communicate ideas to others who include students, serving teachers and community groups. A music educator's role is therefore to highlight to a broad spectrum of persons that comprise government policy makers, boards of education and parents, the value of music to individual learners, communities and the rest of humanity. Personal and physical involvement in the creation of music will allow role modelling. Some requisite characteristics of the music educator are identified by Nel(1990:12-29) as,

- Tolerance and love of children (other persons)
- A cooperative personality, dedication and willingness to get involved
- Friendly and pleasant personality
- Enthusiasm and great interest in music education
- An intelligent approach
- Sufficient knowledge of the field
- Willingness to research

Given the challenges of generalist primary teaching, regular interaction in form of in-service

courses between the serving teachers and music educators can promote self confidence in the delivery of meaningful music education to all learners. Workshops, seminars performance displays and public campaigns for the importance of music and music education should be part of an on-going exercise of music educator's itinerary. In-service and continuing education run by the colleges have tended to focus on either special education or upgrading of general teacher qualifications. Though commendable in the updating of teacher knowledge of child development theories and effective teaching techniques, in terms of teacher needs for the development of the arts particularly classroom music that directly benefit all children, a lot still needs to be done. Conducting in-service workshops might be one alternative upon which practitioners continuously update theory and practice.

Specific Objectives of Norton Circuit Music Workshop

- To share with serving teachers the latest knowledge about classroom music teaching with emphasis on integrative multicultural approaches
- To promote inclusive musical arts education through active participation
- To promote a more sensitive appreciative attitude towards well planned music activities for primary school children.

Once the need for a partnership between schools and the training colleges was identified, an undertaking to conduct a staff development in-service course was made. A working programme was drawn. I was assumed that primary school teachers in the circuit had challenges regarding the provision of classroom music to primary school children. Participants in the Norton circuit it was assumed were trained primary school teachers and therefore attended compulsory applied music education courses at their respective training colleges. Some might have even taken music as an academic study which would mean greater exposure and acquired knowledge but not very much getting refined due to limited regular application. Knowledge is not like wine which gets better with storage; instead it needs practice for its refinement. Classroom music in Zimbabwe primary schools is still to enjoy the attention it

deserves. The attitudes that the recent college graduates find in their working environments whether positive or negative the ones that will quickly take root. It is imperative to revise known concepts and theories through in-service at the same time gains can be made by specialists in recent developments in their fields (Klopper, 2000:54). To keep record of aspects that could hold implications for future workshops and music teacher education, participants were asked to make written evaluations.

Results of participants' evaluation and discussion

How do you value in-service courses?

As presenters making use of Shona songs and a traditional instrument as content material in multicultural music arts education approaches at this forum, the authors noted appreciative comments from the participants about how they valued practical in-service courses where they are directly involved especially based on what they had experienced during the workshop. According to Nel(2007), a practical in-service programme enables educators to develop positive self images. Workshop participants reported greater awareness and confidence of the indigenous materials they could appeal to for their day to day music teaching. One of the major goals of modern music education is the development of music literacy (Choksy, 1987; Mills, 1991). This position must not be overemphasised as many of the world's musical traditions are still transmitted through oral means. It was noted from the evaluation by the participants that teachers were concerned about staff notation skills. A sizeable number of the participants had functional mastery of tonic sol-fa notation given the historical background of music education starting off as the singing syllabus. Among the participants were skilled choir directors not only at their schools but also at the churches and communities.

Workshop as an eye-opener

It was evident from the participants' responses that the musical intelligence can be educated or developed through schooling and learning and that they acknowledged that, as teachers, they had a role to play in the realisation of that goal. Participants revealed that knowledge about music and how to deliver it to learners through their

active involvement are aspects that demand attention. Sound knowledge about music elements and concepts on the teacher's part allows for the development of the much needed self confidence to provide classroom teaching that benefits all children. Studies about what music means to children have been reported elsewhere (Campbell, 2000). Reiner (1989:4) succinctly expressed the individual teacher's need for embracing a philosophy saying, "Individuals who have a clear notion of their aims as professionals and {who} are convinced of the importance of those aims are a strong link in the chain of people who are a profession." If capable teachers develop concepts and skills during class activities then, they will not labour on basics but rather concentrate their energies on peculiar complexities found in competition pieces.

Teachers can broaden their vision through reflection and participation in staff development programmes. Music skills, which in essence are the activities through which we seek to understand its concepts and elements, should be well understood by the educators for them to be effective in their approaches. Potter (1997:3) holds the view that the nurturing and development that takes place in musical learning is autonomous and on par with the processes that takes place in studying languages, mathematics and the sciences. "To prevent intellectual fossilisation, we need to be constantly learning and keeping our minds open to new ideas, not only in music but more broadly in education"(Jorgensen 1990:2).

How often do you teach music in your class?

All the participants were unanimous in response to this question. It can be light that policy prescription was that music was allocated one hour per week for both infants and junior classes. This is in stark contrast to the value placed on music by the musical intelligence theory which states that all curriculum subjects should be treated equally. The participants also lamented the influence of environmental factors as impinging upon the development of music arts education in schools thus trivialising the importance of the subject. The participants said that it was not uncommon to find that not a single class has had music lessons for a whole month. This is because music is not treated the same as other subjects. Another reason was the non examinable status of music at the end of the seven year course. It also

came to light that school heads are generally insensitive to the subject, only when it is time for choral competitions is pressure exerted on the choir master(s) to produce splendid results. The same would happen to traditional dance and percussion band competitions which when over, everything about music is dead and buried. The issue of lack of assessment in music and music growth in learners results in complete stagnation of musical development. According to Gardner & Hatch (1995:149), the conditions for music learning would require a musical context in which musical growth can be engendered, where creativity blossoms. In order to achieve all these, learners must be creative but, however, creativity requires conditions and skills that enable learners to produce creative works (Webster, 1987). Webster (ibid) further points out these conditions include environmental and motivational in addition to conditions internal to persons such as subconscious imagery and personality. The participants spoke about the negativity of environments that are not supportive of music learning and development, at least at school levels.

Competence in teaching music

Except for those teachers who took music as academic study during training, many participants reported that they lacked the skills and confidence in conducting classroom music sessions. Participants indicated that they sometimes threw in some song in a lesson just to break monotony and they also revealed that it was not easy to integrate music with other subjects. Kathy Kasell, a researcher of music expressed concern that music is used in teaching to link memorising academic content with rhythms or simple songs thus suggesting that music is simply a tool for enhancing memory. Gardner (1995b) expressed concern about the use of music to drill learners, calling such activities a lack of genuine or performance understandings, and makes the use music essentially trivial. The use of music as activities, instead of the content of musical problems in schools is worrisome. From the participating teachers' own accounts, teachers are yet to embrace the issue of the importance of the content of music in developing musical intelligence. The majority of participants indicated that they had benefited from what they had learnt during the workshop and promised to use

knowledge gained in teaching music at their schools.

Attitudes towards music teaching

The success or failure of any teaching programme depends on the attitudes of those who will implement the programme. From the workshop, it emerged that music and music education is not taken seriously in schools. One participant said, "I have lots of work to do in class, I must complete the syllabus on time for public exams, teaching music is a luxury." Yet another participant said, "School heads are under pressure to produce good academic results and, as a result they in turn put pressure on teachers to produce good results for the school. In that respect all non examinable subjects are 'suspended' in pursuit of 'the' subjects." These notions are reflective of the attitudes about music as a subject in primary schools. Without change in policy pronouncement, music and music education development will remain a mirage in Zimbabwean primary schools. It would appear that, judging from results of the in-service workshop, the holding of such workshops would go a long way towards reawakening teachers about the importance of music in life and what music means to children as another way of solving human problems.

Availability of musical instruments

Participants said that in their schools there were no musical instruments a situation which they described as unfortunate. Even the simplest instruments were not available. Simple instruments were only bought for use during competitions after which they are locked away or left in the open until they just disappeared. This flies in the face of an education system that claims to be all encompassing. Conditions supportive to musical learning must be provided and supported by teachers, administrators and parents if students are to grow and develop musically (Mills, 2001). Instruments, songbooks, stereo equipment, recording instruments need to be available in all classrooms for optimum use. Mills contends that, in order for teachers to create a context for musical learning, proper equipment is essential.

The place of in-service courses for serving teachers

For participants to suggest the need for workshops is a plausible notion in the link between work done in the schools and that carried out by teacher education colleges. Trainers will in the long run have information on the challenges faced by teachers. In a way, this experience might be useful on reflecting on the effectiveness of pre-service training strategies. A definite need to continue engaging teachers was noted by the researchers during the workshop held in Norton. Circumstances that raise questions and stimulate debate and a search for best practices and solutions are important in the development of the field. While the utilitarian purposes of music are reasonably clear to most teachers, the need to continuously engage in thinking about music's key role and that of music arts education in the lives of children, adults and communities must form part of meaningful practice. Teachers, although they had received training in music at colleges, the need for training those teachers emphasising music activities and assessments is needed in order to strengthen their musical skills, and their confidence in music.

Implications of the study

Results from the study showed that by the time most teachers complete initial induction courses, they are still ill-equipped to adequately handle and deliver worthwhile classroom music lessons and other ritualistic singing. There are other important skills and concepts to be learned in the subject. Bringing children into contact with the fundamental activities of the musicians like composition, dance and movement, listening, notation and playing of instruments are elements of comprehensive music education (Mills, 1991). Greater emphasis on the knowledge and understanding of its component parts must be made during training. It may be suggested that difficulties experienced by teachers in handling music education reflect shortcomings in their knowledge base.

Attitudes about music and music education are sometimes formed on the basis of unclear personal philosophies, so by critically thinking about music and its instruction, teachers might play a prominent role in exposing learners to its concepts, skills and perspectives. A positive attitude towards a discipline goes a long way in improving the manner in which the subject matter may be delivered. Stereotypes usually result from

uninformed thought processes. Leading learners beyond the surface of music should be the teacher's concern and there are compelling reasons for its inclusion as a curriculum subject. As principal proponents in the curriculum implementation process, music educators are challenged to take an active interest in reading not only music literature but other subjects like anthropology, psychology, sociology and philosophy to raise critical issues and search for solutions (Jorgensen, 1990). Providing every learner with opportunities to know music for its artistic merit, calls for vigilant self assessment.

Conclusion

The need for cultural transmission among humans means that music and music education will continue to play a key role in the process. As pointed out by Haack(1996:574), "When all of us have been made aware of the tremendous influence of music on human behaviour and its influential role as uniquely human knowledge system, music will be accurately acknowledged for the significant role it plays in human society. Hungarian born and renowned educator and ethnomusicologist summed it saying, "Music is an indispensable part of universal human knowledge. He who lacks it has a faulty knowledge. A man without music is incomplete. So it is obvious that music should be a school subject. It is essential." Kodaly cited in Itzes (2004:135).

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