

Music Education is Languishing in Rural South African Schools as Revealed Through Education Students

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Abstract : When visiting Foundation Phase (FP) students during their Teaching Practice at schools in rural Mpumalanga, the lack of music education is evident through the absence of musical sounds, with the exception of a limited repertoire of songs that are sung by all classes everywhere you go. The absence of music teaching resources such as posters and music instruments add to the perception that generalist teachers in the FP are not teaching music. Pre-service students also acknowledge that they have never seen a music class being taught during their teaching practice visits at schools. This lack of music mentoring impacts the quality of teachers who are about to enter the workforce and ultimately results in the perpetuation of no music education in many rural schools. The situation in more affluent schools present a contrasting picture with music education being given a high priority and generalist teachers often being supported by music specialists, paid for by the parents. When student teachers start their music course, they have limited knowledge to use as a foundation for their studies. The aim of the study was to ascertain the music knowledge that students gained throughout their school careers so that the curriculum could be adapted to suit their needs. By knowing exactly what pre-service teachers know about music, the limited tuition time at tertiary level can be used in the most suitable manner and concentrate on filling the knowledge gaps. Many scholars write about the decline of music education in South African schools and mention reasons, but the exact music knowledge void amongst students does not feature in the studies. Knowing the parameters of students' music knowledge will empower lecturers to restructure their curricula to meet the needs of pre-service students. The research question asks, "what is the extent of the music void amongst rural pre-service teachers in a B.Ed. FP course at an African university?" This action research was done using a pragmatic paradigm and mixed methodology. First year students in the cohort studying for a B.Ed. in FP were requested to complete an online baseline assessment to determine the status quo. This assessment was compiled using the CAPS music content for Grade R to 9. The data was sorted using the elements of music as a framework. Findings indicate that students do not have a suitable foundation in music education despite supposedly having had music tuition from grade R to grade 9. Knowing the content required to fill the lack of knowledge provides academics with valuable information to amend their curricula and to ensure that future teachers will be able to provide rural learners with the same foundations in music as those received by learners in more affluent schools. It is only then that the rich music culture of the African continent will thrive.

Keywords : generalist educators, music education, music curriculum, pre-service teachers

Conference Title : ICE 2023 : International Conference on Education

Conference Location : Helsinki, Finland

Conference Dates : July 06-07, 2023