

Music education in Zimbabwean schools: What teacher narratives reveal Prof Alette Delpont & Mr Dingane Dhlomo

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Abstract

Teachers are key role players in any education system. They are the principal implementers of a school curriculum. In this research project, we endeavoured to determine some of those factors which teachers identify as the main obstacles impeding adequate implementation of a music education syllabus. The focus of this research thus was on the *personal* experiences of the teachers responsible for the implementation of the grade seven music education syllabus in Zimbabwean schools. Since the capturing of respondents' personal perceptions and experiences is not always easy, the teachers were asked to narrativise their experiences. From the analysis of the respondents' narratives, three main themes could be identified, which will be discussed in this article.

Introduction: Background to the research

Although music education is a compulsory subject in Zimbabwean primary schools from Grade One to Grade Seven, there is reason to suspect that the curriculum is not implemented properly. We base this claim on three concerns. The **first** concern relates to the general approach to music and the other arts in Zimbabwe, which, according to research conducted by Palmberg in 2004, is unsatisfactory. Palmberg's research reveals the absence of a clear policy on cultural activities in Zimbabwe. She concludes that the Zimbabwean government

... has not had and does not have a consistent cultural policy to develop and stress Zimbabwean cultural activity. Music, just like art, is not given any priority in the school curriculum (2004, 42).

Despite the lack of clear policy, Palmberg's research also reveals an undeclared general censorship of public music by the Zimbabwean government. Musicians have to be subtle in their expressions and where they are overt in their criticism of prevailing conditions in the country, they are either denied airtime or sponsorship by government (2004, 30).

The **second** concern about the state of music education in Zimbabwean schools relates to the fact that the music syllabus in use dates back to 1989 and has not been revised since. This implies that philosophies, approaches and methods contained in the syllabus are founded in the Western tradition that dominated the field of music education more than twenty years ago. Several African scholars of music (Nzewi 2006; Onyeji 2006; Agawu 2003; Onyewuenyi 1999) have since come to the fore, arguing for an explicit Afro-centric approach to the musical arts, opposing the learning of "texts that are foreign in content and methodology because they derive from received, colonist curricula needs" (Nzewi 2006, 50). Nzewi's concern that

[t]he indigenous African fields of sonic resources, aesthetics and utility have been compromised or outrightly negated in the humanning vision and cultural content of classroom musical arts education in African countries

seems valid in the case of music education in Zimbabwe.

The **third**, and fundamental concern, however, relates to the fact that music education in Zimbabwean schools is the teaching responsibility of general teachers who, in the majority of cases, have not been trained as music specialists.

This study does not aim to address the problem regarding the absence of an official policy on cultural activities in Zimbabwe. Neither does it address the notion of the outdated curriculum. This study focuses on the practice of music education *in the classroom*, and more specifically, certain factors impeding the proper teaching of music in these settings. This study furthermore seeks to capture the experiences of the *general* teachers responsible for the teaching of music. It is our contention that, even with an outdated curriculum, the situation regarding music education can be improved significantly if Zimbabwean music teachers' apprehensions are to be identified and subsequently addressed.

However, capturing respondents' perceptions and experiences is not always easy, as researchers do not have "direct access to another's experience" (Riessman 1993, 8). Hence, in an attempt to "get closer to the heart of the matter", some Zimbabwean music teachers were requested to narrativise their experiences. This decision was based on Riessman's theory that respondents are willing to narrativise particular experiences in their lives, especially "where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society" (1993, 4). This study thus has an interpretive thrust, giving prominence to human agency and imagination (Riessmann 1993, 5).

The research question that guided the research was the following: *How do grade seven Zimbabwean teachers experience their teaching of music?* It is our contention that these teachers' experiences revealed impediments to proper implementation of the curriculum. Once these obstacles are addressed and subsequently removed, there is reason to believe that the quality of music education in Zimbabwean schools will improve.

Concept clarification

Since the following concepts will be used throughout this article, they need to be clarified:

- **Grade Seven**

In the context of this inquiry, Grade Seven refers to the eighth grade in the basic primary education system in Zimbabwe. This is the last stage after which the students would be deemed to have gone through primary education (Grade Zero to Grade Seven) before they proceed to Form One at secondary school level.

- **Experience**

According to the *Collins English Dictionary* (2004, 263) the term "experience" refers to "... (1) the direct personal participation or observation of something, (2) a particular incident, feeling etc. ... that a person has undergone, (3) accumulated knowledge, especially of practical matters". In this study, the second definition will apply, namely particular incidents, feelings, and so forth experienced by the teachers as they interact with the music curriculum.

- **Music**

According to Makore (2004, 47), music can be interpreted as "a process, a series of actions which arise from specific uses of sounds in the medium of social, institutional and subjective processes". This definition presupposes that music involves making use of specific sounds within either specified boundaries or otherwise. In this study, music is seen as series of sounds grouped together with the specific intention of conveying a message or messages which express opinions or feelings. Music can be vocal or instrumental, or both.

- **Curriculum**

In this study, the term "curriculum" will be used extensively. According to Posner and Rudnitsky (1997, 8), curricular matters "have to do with the nature and organisation of those things that we,

as course planners, want released in our courses”. Nelson (1994, 16) defines a curriculum as all the planned learning activities that take place at school to meet set educational goals. In this study, the focus will be on the Zimbabwean music curriculum and teachers’ experiences as they are expected to implement it.

- **Music syllabus**

The music syllabus is a curriculum policy document which details the music course content, objectives, teaching approaches and materials to be used in Zimbabwean schools from Grade One to Grade Seven. The document is in the form of a single book.

According to Delport and Mufute (2010, 6, 7), the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* (CDU 1989, 1, 2) emphasises that music should be taught in its socio-political and cultural context in order to achieve the goal of producing musically literate citizens who understand and appreciate their culture and society. To realise this goal, the syllabus aims at enabling learners to enjoy music through participating in a variety of musical activities, which involve listening, performing, analysing and creating music. Thus the objectives for teaching music facilitate the development of musical literacy and acquisition of musical skills, such as singing, making and playing simple instruments, dancing, creating music, and responding to music by listening to it.

The content of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* is compartmentalised into three sub-areas, namely theory of music, practical work and musical appreciation (Curriculum Development Unit 1989, 6-12). Outlined below are the skeletal details to be dealt with in each sub-area:

- ◆ *Theory of music*: Learners should be familiar with the basic note values, simple time signatures, simple musical terms and other aspects of staff notation, such as the stave, treble clef and pitch names. They should also be able to do transcriptions.
- ◆ *Practical work*: Learners should be able to sing simple one-part, two-part and three-part melodies. These songs should include rounds, patriotic songs, descants and songs across the curriculum. Learners should also participate in music activities such as percussion bands, and should be able to play percussion and pitched instruments, such as the recorder. They should furthermore participate in activities which involve music and movement, such as traditional dances, simple formal dances, as well as music and drama or miming.
- ◆ *Musical appreciation*: Learners should be able to appreciate instrumental performances. Songs to be sung should also cover a wide repertoire, which includes work songs, patriotic songs, religious songs, lullabies, folk songs, popular songs, and hunting songs.

The curriculum structure proceeds from simple to complex and is sequenced along the spiral model. Simple concepts are introduced at the lower level (Grades One and Two) and then taught again at a deeper level in the Middle Grades (Grades Three to Five), while new and more challenging concepts are introduced at the same time. Finally, in the Upper Grades (Grades Six and Seven), the concepts are re-visited and the most challenging concepts then introduced.

Apart from describing the goals, aims, objectives and content of music education in primary schools, the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* also suggests possible methods and approaches to be used in the teaching and learning of the various music concepts. These include demonstration, illustration, explanation, discussion, group work, rote method, as well as the use of games, records, tapes and films.

The importance of music education

Our concern about the current state of music education in Zimbabwean schools is based on our conviction that this specific subject area is of utmost importance in ensuring the holistic

development of all learners. For years, music educators have been engaged in endless struggles to justify the inclusion of music in school curricula. In 1964, Alan P. Merriam, renowned anthropologist, identified ten “functions” of music (cited in Campbell and Scott-Kassner 1995, 3, 4). These “functions” have been adopted by many protagonists of music education as significant justifications for the inclusion of this subject in the general school curriculum. Based on Merriam’s beliefs, Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995, 3, 4) summarise the value of music education with regard to learners’ involvement in music as follows:

- Music assists learners in releasing their emotions and expressing their feelings.
- Music provides aesthetic enjoyment.
- Music provides entertainment, recreation and amusement.
- Music is a communicative tool, as it conveys feelings and emotions that are understood by people within a particular culture.
- Music serves as symbolic representation of a particular culture.
- Music stimulates physical responses.
- Music facilitates conformity to social norms.
- Music validates social institutions and religious rituals.
- Music contributes to the continuity and stability of culture.
- Music contributes to the integration of society.

We are concerned, however, that, in their endeavours to justify the inclusion of music in the general school curriculum, music educationists often tend to draw on rationalisations. These may degrade the subject, since it emphasises the value of music education in instrumental terms, subordinating it to so-called “intellectual” subjects, such as mathematics and physical science. We will accordingly highlight two significant justifications for music education, which have been implied by Merriam (1964, cited in Campbell and Scott-Kassner 1995, 3, 4) and confirmed by Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995). By emphasising these aspects, we do not suggest that the other justifications are inadequate. We do believe, however, that, given the current Zimbabwean context, these two aspects deserve to be noted and briefly discussed in this article:

1. The (potential) role of music education in the emotional development of the child.
2. The (potential) contribution of music education in the establishment of a harmonious society.

- **Music and emotional development**

Delport (2010, 177) argues that, understood within a comprehensive framework of rationality, it is indisputably clear how important it is to conceive of music as part of mainstream education to the benefit not only of each individual, but also to society at large. Although a variety of strategies can and should be applied to foster learners’ emotional lives, the potential contributory role of music education is not always recognised. Dewey, for instance, regards music as “both the lowest and the highest of the arts” (1934, 238) and refers to the dramatic and intense impact of the sounds of music on any person:

Sounds come from outside the body, but sound itself is near, intimate; it is an excitation of the organism ... What is seen stirs emotion indirectly... but sounds have the power of direct emotional expression. A sound is itself threatening, whining, soothing, depressing, fierce, tender, soporific, in its own quality (1934, 237-238).

Nussbaum (2001, 249) also refers to music’s profound links to a person’s emotional life, arguing that music is a “means of communication between souls” (2001, 266). Nussbaum’s subsequent strong appraisal of the ability of music to cultivate learners’ emotional life is based on her claim that music has the ability to go beyond the inadequacies of language. When people communicate, they normally do this linguistically. Moreover, when they share their feelings, this is also done by

means of language. We need to remember that language is only one medium of expression. People frequently misunderstand one another, as a result of linguistic distortions. When we express the content of an emotion in words, we are already, in many cases, performing a translation of thoughts that did not originally take an explicitly verbal form (Nussbaum 2001, 264). Language simply cannot enter an emotion in its most subtle form, as certain forms of cognitive activity, which represent ideas of salience and urgency, are non-linguistic. Music, on the other hand, can relate to the inner world without being translatable into words. In this regard, Nussbaum claims that that music's access to the depth of emotions is much more direct than words.

Bennett Reimer, esteemed philosopher of music education, has a similar view, arguing that ordinary language alone cannot clarify or illuminate the true depth of our experiences, "the way life feels as it is lived" (2003, 85). This is not due to lack of sufficient descriptive vocabulary, but because "the nature of feeling is ineffable in essence" (Reimer 2003, 85, 86). Reimer's views are supported by Dunlop, who believes that in our endeavours to describe an experience, something will always be left out or subtly distorted. Dunlop thus appraises the significant value of music in this regard, arguing that "we only really know our feelings in finding an expressive medium for them (1984, 92, 93). Sheer accounts of emotion and feeling are always insufficient, because at the level of feeling-awareness, where the meanings of the world are directly borne in upon us, experience is qualitative and unrepeatable. Furthermore, feelings are often so profound, exceptional and unique that we struggle to find words for them. Music accomplishes what language cannot do. It names the feelings for us, albeit in sounds instead of words (Bernstein, cited in Reimer 2003, 85).

Given the above, the benefits of music education, not only for each individual learner, but also for society at large, are evident. Music can contribute to the emotional development of learners in Zimbabwean schools in a manner that other subjects simply cannot do.

- **Music as social agent**

Apart from its contribution to the holistic development of Zimbabwean learners, music can also play a significant role with regard to the unification of the Zimbabwean society. Solbu (cited in Herbst, Nzewi and Agawu 2003, ix) highlights the strong link between music and society, arguing that

... music creates and confirms identity, and challenges cultural and communal borderlines. Music establishes home ground, and builds roads to follow into the interior of unknown lands.

It is our contention that, in order for the Zimbabwean society to heal and flourish, learners – as future Zimbabwean citizens – not only need to be assisted in establishing their cultural identities, but should also be equipped to explore these "borderlines". They need ways to bond with fellow Zimbabwean citizens. We believe that music education has the potential to contribute to the fusion of society, not only because it has the ability to penetrate emotions, but also because it is universally shareable. Reimer thus proclaims music a "panhuman constant", since it is essentially trans-cultural and trans-personal (1993, 24). He points out that all humans through history and in every culture have had some sort of music:

It always uses sounds and the sounds are always organized in some way or other by human choices. This organization of sounds is always experienced as meaningful, significant, compelling, and important. The sounds always intensify human experience. They capture a sense of human knowing at a level including inner subjectivities; that is, musical sounds always engage human feelings. They also always engage the human

imagination, both in creating those sounds and in responding imaginatively to the musical sounds created by others (Reimer 1993, 24, 25).

For traditional African cultures in particular, music echoes and expresses their understanding of the world as portrayed to them by the distinctiveness of their past, their surroundings, their social order, habits, principles, ways of living, dying, marrying, and playing – all closely linked to the larger ecosystem of their environment on which they have to rely for physical survival and cultural identity. Their music is a manifestation of their inner lives. It is specific to the conditions of their lives, expressing that which they have uniquely experienced as they have lived in their unique environment (Hopton-Jones 1995, 26, 27). Although a specific culture gives a distinct character to its music, music will always surpass the constraints of that particular character because it also possesses collective, musically determined assets, independent of the particular culture. Studies done by ethnomusicologists indicate that all music, despite the various cultural origins, shares many universal aspects, such as clear beginnings and endings, repetition, contrast, balance, and rhythmic, textural and melodic elements (Reimer 2003, 185-189; McCarthy and Goble 2002, 2; Hopton-Jones 1995, 26; Goodkin 1994, 42). Harwood (cited in Reimer 2003, 187) also argues that music represents basic human cognitive and social processes at work in interpreting and adjusting to the real world. According to Nettl, ethnomusicologists have concluded that music is a “cultural universal of humans” (1994,139). Although not all human cultures would agree on the concept of “music”, Nettl holds that all societies “have something that sounds ... like music” (1994, 139). All people, no matter their location, race, gender, or age, respond to it, find meaning in it, and treasure music for its intrinsic power to enhance and intensify their lived experience.

Hence, due to its own internal constructive characteristics, music can be shared with all humans. This sharing goes beyond the cultural manifestations of these unique characteristics. In this regard, one can assume that music education has the potential not only to nurture the emotional development of Zimbabwean learners, but also to enhance harmonious social interaction between these learners. This means that music education can be one of the avenues through which a peaceful society can be achieved. Should schools thus recognise the importance of music education and utilise the opportunity responsibly, the vision of a united and harmonious Zimbabwean society does not have to remain a dream.

Research design

Teachers are key role players in any education system. They are the principal implementers of a school curriculum. One of the strategies to improve the situation with regard to the education of music in Zimbabwean schools, would be to identify those factors which teachers experience and identify as the main obstacles impeding adequate implementation. Accordingly, the focus of this research was on the *personal* experiences of the teachers responsible for the implementation of the music curriculum.

Riessman believes that, for the sociologically oriented researcher, narratology as a research methodology is particularly useful, “for what they reveal about social life – culture ‘speaks itself’ [original emphasis] through an individual’s story” (1993, 5). Realistic meanings are inferred when phenomena are experienced (Riessman 1993, 95). An individual’s identity can be understood through his or her told stories. In this regard, narratives are increasingly becoming popular within the qualitative research paradigm. The decision to use this method was furthermore based on the view of Borg and Gall (1971, 65), who assert that a narrative is a principal source of information with limited risks, since the respondents themselves serve as direct and primary providers of information. Thus, researchers do not have to rely on secondary sources.

Qualitative research also has an interpretative character (Silverman 2004, 17, 18; De Vos 2000, 240; Riessman 1993, 5). In order to construct a holistic picture of the respondent's views or experiences, the researcher is expected to analyse and interpret the words of informants. Qualitative studies normally focus on questions that begin with "how" or "what". These authors agree that qualitative research thus goes a step further in gaining insights or additional information that can be difficult to convey through quantitative methods. Since the aim of this research was to determine the (personal) *experiences* of music teachers, one open-ended question was posed to each of the respondents: *How do you experience **your** teaching of music to grade 7 learners?* It was assumed that this particular phrasing of the question would encourage respondents to identify and share core, personal and more profound aspects of their experiences.

The qualitative research design was thus chosen because it provided us, as the researchers, the opportunity to collect rich, descriptive and extensive data, obtained from a real-life, natural setting (Wellington 2004, 133). This approach also enabled us to interact with the music teachers and record their true views, as "spoken and written records of human experiences" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, 42).

Research method: narratology

A narrative can be regarded as an individual's reflection or representation of an experience or experiences. When a person goes through an experience, his or her reflections about it are likely to be realistic and meaningful. Tanya, Hugh and Jennifer (1999, 240) see narratives as stories being told. They believe that storytelling reflects own experiences that are reinforced by direct encounters during the incident or event. The storyteller has first-hand encounters and is thus in a position to share detailed experiences. These experiences may include feelings and past experiences. Riessman (1993, 5) also refers to a respondent's honesty when telling his/her stories, asserting that narrators

... speak in terms that seem natural. This is important because, to some extent, though there could be subjectivity in the stories by the respondents, there could be a strong element of honest talking. Respondents reveal their experiences in relatively honest ways.

Koch (1998, 1182) refers to another advantage of narratives, emphasising "the growing desire to secure authentic information about people and situations studied". "Authentic" in this context means "(1) of undisputed origin or authorship; genuine, (2) reliable or accurate" (Collins English Dictionary 2004, 43). The term thus implies that the information obtained through the narratives or stories told by people is genuine and can be relied upon. Koch's statement also implies that through storytelling, genuine feelings and perceptions of storytellers can be exposed. Koch thus refers to the remedial potential of narratives, arguing that, "listening to the voices of the clients may show us what to do to improve practice" (1998, 1183). The stories told by music teachers are expected to carry both highlights and challenges, as experienced during their teaching of music. The act of narrativising has additional therapeutic value for the narrator. This therapeutic value may be a result of the relief experienced, having shared one's experience with someone else. It can also be derived from sheer satisfaction that one has made a contribution to a particular situation or condition. Either of the possibilities can generate a hope that someone will read or listen to the story and acquire a solution (Koch 1998, 1183).

There are various ways in which researchers can get participants to share their stories. These include interviews and written responses. For the purposes of this research project, we have decided not to use interviews, as we were aware that our presence may intimidate or inhibit the respondents. By allowing the music teachers to provide their anonymous responses in written

format, it was hoped that they would be frank, sharing their true experiences. Riessman calls this form of response a “representation of experiences” (1993, 95).

Narratives, however, also have limitations. Riessman argues that many of these limitations are similar to those encountered in qualitative research (1993, 14). We need to remember that narratives are always subject to the subjective interpretation of the listener. Furthermore, the respondent’s memory and ability to recount specific incidents are important requirements for providing a good narrative, and some people may not be endowed with this attribute. However, one needs to remember that this does not necessarily mean they have no experience to share. In this regard, Tanya *et al.* (1992, 252) believe that narratives “recount something exceptional or a deviation from the ordinary and that it was only the exceptional (be it good or bad) that facilitated the telling of a story”. There could be many other incidents that may not necessarily be exceptional or defiant but worth telling. By focusing only on the exceptional, one could be committing a potentially costly omission. Riessman (1993, 10) furthermore believes that the act of reporting experiences requires skills in terms of putting the events logically and meaningfully. Not all respondents may have these skills. The individual’s beliefs, attitudes and inherent prejudices may influence the way in which a person tells his or her story. Some of these could be language deficiency or poor reporting skills. The stories or narratives are in real terms what the storyteller *chooses* to disclose and are already ordered in terms of selection and time series.

Riessman (1993, 14) also reminds researchers that the respondent’s final story does not necessarily reflect the original experience. In this regard, she identifies five levels of representing experiences: Firstly, a person *acquires* an experience by means of an encounter. Thereafter, the encounter is *told* to others. The third level occurs when the experience is *recorded in writing*. The fourth level of representation is when the experience is *analysed*. Finally, the experience is then *read* to other people. Riessman accordingly warns that, across these five levels, distortions may happen and very valuable details can get lost, as “[t]he start-stop style of oral stories of personal experiences gets pasted together into something different” (1993, 14). In this research, participants were requested to tell their stories, but in written format.

Koch (1998, 1187) warns against the potential prejudiced nature of narratives, arguing that these are often seen as “unscientific, full of bias and entirely personal”. Researchers need to remember that stories are not generalisable, but this does not suggest that nothing that can be learnt. Koch argues that if people seem to have some issues *common* in their stories it may be safe to make cautious generalisations about the observed phenomenon (1998, 1188).

In this particular study, we decided to record the narratives of the respondents by means of individual written responses, despite the potential impediments discussed above. Respondents were not requested to keep diaries but were asked to respond to a single open-ended question, as stated previously. They were requested to limit their responses to the space provided (three pages) on the questionnaire. We approached the respondents individually. They were free to express their own, personal views without being intimidated by the presence of the researchers or influenced by another person. In this study, we have decided to explore the use of this particular research methodology since we were of the opinion that it can potentially disclose experiences (*Collins English Dictionary* 2004, 263) of these music teachers that might not be revealed otherwise.

Ten Grade Seven teachers from five randomly selected urban schools in Bulawayo participated in this research. These teachers were all practising Grade Seven teachers, responsible for the

teaching of music. The teachers were requested to respond in writing to the following open-ended question:

*Reflect on your personal experiences as teacher responsible for the teaching of music to grade 7 learners in your school by answering the following question as honestly and as thoroughly as possible: **How do you experience your teaching of music to grade 7 learners?***

All participants were approached individually and informed of the purpose of the research. It was explained to them that their contributions would be valuable additions to the existing body of knowledge regarding teachers' experiences in music teaching. They were also reassured that their responses would be treated confidentially. Respondents thus had the opportunity to express themselves without contamination from external sources. Ethical measures were also adhered to and care was taken not to treat the respondents "simply as research objects" (Dison 1998, 21). As such, we adhered to Bassey's view (1995, 58) that researchers should have "respect for persons and respect for truth". Subsequently, these teachers were requested to provide written responses to the above-mentioned question. We gave them five days in which to write their "stories". The responses were collected personally to eliminate the risk of losing any responses (Ndawi and Peasuh 2005, 212).

Data analysis

Wellington (2004, 134) argues that data analysis starts from the premise that there is not one single correct way of doing it. Although there are many ways of analysing collected data, the process needs to follow specific principles and guidelines. In this regard, Poggenpoel (2000, 336) sees data analysis as a "reasoning strategy with the objective of taking a complex whole and resolving it into parts". In order to interpret and analyse collected data, it first needs to be broken down into manageable units. This is done by isolating specific variables and separating them by means of "coding" (Wellington 2004, 134). Wellington accordingly identifies three stages in the data analysis process. These are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Day (1993, cited in Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit 2004, 128) refers to the same process as "categorising", arguing that it implies "resolving it into its constituent components to reveal its characteristic elements and structure".

In this particular investigation, the teachers' narratives were studied, analysed and coded independently by the two researchers involved in this project, as well as an independent coder. This was done in order to ensure verification and triangulation (Poggenpoel 2000, 351). Emerging categories and overarching relationships among the categories were identified separately by the three coders. The three sets of interpretations were then compared and discussed, and consensus was reached on the final themes.

Research findings

From the analysis of the teachers' narratives it became apparent that **three** main themes could be identified with regard to these teachers' experiences of their teaching of music. These themes will now be discussed and supported by *verbatim* quotations from the narratives, as well as references to relevant literature.

Theme 1: Teachers do not implement the music curriculum properly because they have a *negative attitude* towards music education

In their responses, the majority of teachers revealed a negative attitude towards music education. Teachers generally felt that teaching the subject was unnecessary and that the time could be used

to teach other subjects in the curriculum. (*"I need time to cover the grade seven syllabus. The teaching of music is a waste of valuable time"; "I do not find it necessary to teach music when I have to concentrate on more important subjects than music"*).

These teachers' negative and indifferent responses (*"I have no interest in music education"*) reflect an apathetic attitude towards music education, which can *inter alia* be ascribed to their ignorance regarding the important value of this subject area. The fact that they are not music specialists, or did not receive previous specialised training in music, clearly contributed to their ignorance in this regard. One can also assume that their views about the value of music education merely echo the general approach towards music education prevalent in the particular school.

In general, the responses of the teachers reflected despondency about the amount of work (of which music is but one subject) they have to deal with on a daily basis (*"I need time to cover the Grade Seven syllabus"*). Some teachers indicated that the school timetable was already congested (*"There is very little time to teach music"*). They also indicated that this left them exhausted (*"By that time I am too tired to teach music"*). These teachers' responses confirm Kriteck's view (1976, 92, 93) that, when teachers are overworked, they experience stress and fatigue and that this hinders proper implementation of a curriculum. Kriteck also notes that, during curriculum implementation, teachers are often expected to learn and teach at the same time. School administrators are often not sensitive to the reality of teachers' physical and mental fatigue, caused by these pressures and strains. The teachers' experiences also support Fullan's belief (1998, 123, 124) that teacher stress or burnout has become common terms in the current professional and public media. Fullan thus warns that, for most teachers, teaching has become "a never-ending mixture of satisfying and stressful experiences" (1998, 123, 124). Huberman and Miles (1984, 216) also refer to stress caused by inadequate support, arguing that teachers' indifference, lack of commitment, or negative attitudes are often caused by frustrations due to inadequate support from administrators, which links directly with the next theme.

Should this aspect not be addressed, one can assume that the teaching of music in Zimbabwean schools will continue to be neglected, due to teachers' negative attitude towards the subject. Time allocated to music will be abused and used for other purposes. Above all, the teachers' negative disposition will influence learners' current and future attitudes towards music, instilling in learners an unwillingness to grow musically.

Theme 2: Teachers do not implement the music curriculum properly because they *do not get the required emotional and physical support*

The majority of teachers indicated that the school's leadership teams, and the school heads¹ in particular, did not support them in their teaching of music (*"My school head demands results in subjects other than music"*). One teacher remarked that some heads of schools do not take music seriously, because it is not an exam subject (*"It is not tested at the end of the year"*). Another teacher lamented the lack of resources and a proper syllabus (*"Musical instruments are not there in the school. We only have to improvise the instruments such as the drum and the shakers"*). Some teachers also bewailed the absence of music contests to stimulate interest in music. This lack of support from the school authorities in terms of providing support for music did not encourage the teachers to regard music in a serious light at all.

¹ In Zimbabwe, the term "head" or "school head" is commonly used to refer to the school principal.

These teachers' frustrations support Taylor's assertion (1988, 225) that a "favourable" environment implies the provision of adequate resource support, since a strong resource base will sustain the implementation process. The respondents' responses furthermore clearly reflect vulnerability on the part of the teachers, which is a major threat to effective curriculum implementation, as identified by Huberman and Miles (1984, 214-216). This lack of protection refers to a lack of all forms of support such as expertise, resources and administrative pressure.

Should this impediment not be addressed, there is reason to be very concerned about the future of music education in these schools. Teachers, and especially non-specialists, need supporting materials such as textbooks, song books and other resource books. Without facilities such as CD players or tape recorders, learners' exposure to music will be limited. Without classroom instruments, the music activities will be restricted, with potential over-emphasis on singing and music theory. Non-specialist teachers normally feel inadequate to teach a specialised subject (such as music) and are thus also requiring emotional support from their colleagues and, above all, their school head. Should they not experience school heads as stanchions who are truly interested in what they do and willing to support them in their endeavours to teach music properly, they will simply cease trying.

Theme 3: Teachers do not implement the music curriculum properly because they feel *incompetent*

From the biographical data gathered, it was evident that the majority of these teachers were not trained in music education, as they mentioned this aspect in their narratives ("*I did not train for music teaching*"). They also perceived music education as a difficult subject to teach ("*I have difficulty teaching music*"). One teacher bluntly stated that she is unable to teach music ("*I have to teach music but I don't know how*"). Another teacher said that she lacked confidence and feared that she would reveal her ignorance about music should she be forced to teach it ("*I am hesitant to admit that I have no basic skills for music*"). A teacher complained that she could not play a music instrument and that workshops were needed to enable teachers ("*We need to learn about music teaching*").

These teachers' views confirm Taylor's emphasis on the importance of appropriate skills, knowledge and attitude required for curriculum implementation (1988, 225). If these are absent on the part of the implementers, there is reason to assume that the implementation process will be hampered. Furthermore, the fact that this subject is presented by teachers who see themselves as "incompetent" to teach it, implies that music does not have enough status in Zimbabwean schools to justify the appointment of a specialist music teacher. Frustrations of these teachers about their ineptness and inability to implement the curriculum will subsequently lead to avoidance and resentment of the subject. This will inevitably result in poor teaching. Their antipathy may even be transferred to the learners, leading to a vicious cycle of decline in this subject area.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study focused on the experiences of a selection of music teachers in Zimbabwean primary schools. Curriculum implementation, however, is a multidimensional process. Involved in this process are aspects such as the availability of materials, the structure or grouping of course content, the philosophy or conception underpinning the curriculum, the beliefs of the implementers, and their teaching strategies (Fullan 1998, 65). Very often, only some dimensions are being attended to and Fullan cautions that the most critical dimensions are often neglected or ignored. In order to ensure maximum implementation, *all* forms of obstacles should be minimised and preferably removed.

The findings of this research suggest that music is not properly taught in Zimbabwean schools. In general, it appears that teachers do not have a positive attitude towards music and they invest minimum effort into the teaching of music. The majority of teachers do not regard themselves as sufficiently competent to teach music. They do not seem to get the required emotional or physical support from their administrators, who are perceived to be concerned only about those school subjects that are examinable and for which they can produce measurable results. Consequently, some teachers simply did not teach music and were not brought to book by their school heads.

If the quality of music education in these schools were to improve, it means that these impediments need to be addressed and subsequently removed. In this regard, we would like to make the following recommendations:

In order to fully realise the potential of music education in Zimbabwean schools, teachers need to have a positive attitude. They need to be excited and enthusiastic about what they do. This can be achieved by convincing teachers of the importance and value of music education. This message can be conveyed by the school head, but should also be transferred during departmental workshops on music education. Teachers' attitudes will also change once they experience tangible support from their leadership teams, especially with regard to the provision of resources and allocated time on the time table. This aspect links directly with the previous one, as many teachers' negative attitudes can be ascribed to their feelings of isolation and futile endeavours to implement a curriculum without tangible support from colleagues, and above all, their school heads. The situation with regard to music education in these schools will only improve once teachers experience the interest and backing of their school principals and heads of department, as well as fellow colleagues. The Zimbabwean Curriculum Development Unit should be requested to provide textbooks, syllabuses, and music instruments, as schools normally do not have sufficient funds to obtain these. School heads should be encouraged to have a separate budget for the enhancement of cultural activities at their schools, such as proper teaching of music. Resource centres can also be established in each school cluster for the purposes of procuring music teaching aids. These resource centres can be subsidised by the cluster schools.

The issue of the (in)competence of these teachers is probably the most difficult to address. We believe that the solution to this problem is two-fold: The first, short-term solution would be to develop and improve current teachers' competences (knowledge and skills) by means of regular workshops, presented by experts in the field of music education. Music academies can be established under the auspices of the Department of Education, Sports and Culture. These academies should present regular music education workshops in order to support and equip teachers on a regular basis. Follow-up monitoring, guidance and support will, however, be required. Music education specialists who can act as consultants for these teachers, should be appointed by the Department of Education, Sports and Culture and deployed in the various school districts. Music Teachers' Associations, where teachers can meet periodically and share ideas with regard to the implementation of the curriculum, should also be established.

However, although the situation may then improve, it is our contention that the true potential of music education, as discussed earlier in this article, will not and cannot be fully realised unless music education becomes the teaching responsibility of teachers who have specialised training in music education. Non-specialist teachers will always be restricted and crippled by their inadequate competences, mainly due to their lack of proper training. Chances are that learners will not make any progress in music and that concepts dealt with in the junior grades will simply be repeated throughout the subsequent grades with no substantial progression and development. Ideally, all schools should be allocated at least one post for a specialist music teacher. Until

enough specialists have been trained, specialists can be appointed per district. These teachers can commute between schools, thereby also ensuring consistency in standard amongst the various schools.

Another aspect is the notion of the outdated curriculum. This aspect was not addressed in this research and did not emerge directly as a finding of the study, but we believe that it requires the urgent attention of policy makers. Apart from the fact that the current syllabus was designed more than twenty years ago, it is clear that that this particular curriculum is still fundamentally rooted in a Western conception of music education. According to this conceptualisation, music education is regarded as an independent art discipline, with a strong emphasis on acquisition of (Western) music literacy skills, group singing and individual instrumental performance. This approach reflects a fundamental difference between the Western and African cultures. African people generally have a collective approach to music and music-making, since they are in essence people-centred², compared to the individualistic approach of the so-called “developed world”. The approach to music is holistic, seeing music as also encompassing the other arts (Oehrle and Emeka 2003, 38). Oehrle and Emeka express another concern, pertaining to another characteristic of African music, namely its emphasis on the spontaneity of music-making. They believe that the current norm in school music teaching in many African countries still is to stifle music making:

Notions and perspectives of music making from Africa have yet to receive consideration as the basis of arts education in many parts of Africa. It is common knowledge that philosophies and processes of music education ... in many African countries were imposed on African countries from Europe through the colonists and from the United States through the missionaries and teachers. It was from these beginnings that music literacy and singing assumed a place of primary importance in ... music education. This notion and others, such as a higher regard for Western music than for other musics, were transmitted to Africa (2003, 38).

Oehre and Emeka accordingly appeal to music educationists and curriculum designers to take cognisance of the differences between the educational systems of Africa and the West with regard to the musical arts when designing musical arts curricula. This implies that, when designing a new syllabus, Zimbabwean music educationists need to keep in mind that

[d]evelopment comes from within, and the people and their musics and ways of making their music need to be listened to, heard and utilised as a basis for arts education in Africa and perhaps beyond (Oehrle and Emeka 2003, 39).

Although there is at present ample reason to be gravely concerned about the current situation with regard to music education in Zimbabwean schools, it is our contention that the situation can be reversed, should the recommendations discussed above be implemented.

² This philosophy is rooted in the Ubuntu principal: A person is a person by virtue of other people.

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