

# Sharing ownership in multicultural music: A hands-on approach in teacher education in South Africa

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## Abstract

South Africa prides itself in a rich and colorful array of the Arts where music plays a significant role in social regeneration, unity and reconciliation. Little research has been undertaken in teacher education courses in South Africa regarding the inclusion of African music within multicultural music practice. Using the theoretical frameworks of understanding multiculturalism, I report on the teaching and learning of multicultural music at Pretoria University. My narrative highlights what I had learned and reports on the interview data with the tertiary music educator in October 2010. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, two themes are discussed: the need for multicultural music and the inclusion of students as indigenous culture bearers. Lessons learnt at Pretoria University can be replicated elsewhere in Australia where the sharing of ownership in multicultural music as a hands-on approach is viewed positively, promoting understanding and respect in a shared space and place.

**Key words:** South African education, music education, multiculturalism, African music, teacher education

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## Introduction and background context

Africa boasts 54 countries with over 3000 ethnic groups speaking over 2000 languages (Zijlma, 2011). The rich diversity of its people and language contributes to the wide spectrum of music and culture. This article focuses on South Africa, a population of 50.5 million people, 11 official languages and a variety of cultures and religious beliefs (Stats SA, 2012) and situates itself within a music teacher education course. According to Gumede (2010), "South Africa is a melting pot of people with their roots in Africa, the East and also the West". The rich linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity allows people to have a unique South African identity where difference and compromise allows for acceptance

so that a shared South African-ness can exist. Prior to democracy the history of South Africa is best understood in relation to colonialism and apartheid. Since 1994 citizens have lived within the democratic values set out within the SA constitution where respect, empathy and human dignity are key factors. As much has been written on this diverse society and the links made between apartheid and multiculturalism (see McKinney & Soudien 2010), I situate my study within the Bachelor of Education (BEEd) primary teacher course at Pretoria University where multicultural music and in particular African music has currency in the process of change in music teacher education despite racial policies inherited before democracy.

## Theoretical perspectives

McKinney and Soudien (2010) have outlined the difficulty in multicultural education in SA to be inclusive of those that have been marginalized and also to be “just and equitable, in respect of what kinds of cultural capital enjoy respect and recognition” (p. 17). I have argued elsewhere (Joseph, 2006) that the provision of multicultural arts education within the curriculum has the potential to help achieve a national reconciliation if we recognize and value difference, rather than monopolise social differences. Soudien, Carrim and Sayed (2004, p. 28), argue that “in efforts to accommodate ‘difference’, educational inclusion has taken the form of multicultural education or education for pluralism”. This is “fast becoming the norm” according to Lee and Dallman (2008, p. 36) where multiculturalism and diversity are often used interchangeably. In the mid 1990s Banks and Banks (1995) firmly believed that a multicultural education prepares students to “function effectively in a pluralistic democracy society” (p. xi). Writing nine years later in South Africa after democracy Vandeyar (2003) was of the opinion that “an ideal form of multicultural education is one that not only recognizes and acknowledges diversity, practices tolerance and respect of human rights, but works to liberate cultures that have been subjugated” (p. 193). Prior to democracy, the South African music curriculum at educational settings focused on ‘western music’. Apartheid established a value system where European cultural manifestations were not only regarded as the most valuable but also as the only accepted” (Thorsén, 1997). Local cultures and music were not often included into the mainstream curriculum however such “musical practices were successfully carried on in informal musical life” (Thorsén, 1997, p. 9). According to Schippers (2010) by providing inclusive programs in schools that address multicultural music we make cross-cultural connections moving from a monocultural [like that of western music] to a transcultural

exchange of approaches and ideas where many musics “are featured on equal footing” (p. 31). Although Banks (2004) writes particularly about multiculturalism curriculum, his contention holds true for music education that students “view concepts, issues, events and themes from the perspective of various ethnic and cultural groups” (p. 15). In post apartheid South Africa, music has become a uniting platform to achieve nation building. In school settings there has been a conscious and mandated shift in curriculum documents to include the Arts and Culture of all South Africans. This inclusion embraces western music paradigms of teaching and also gives way to embrace other musics and their cultures (Addo, 2000; Campbell, 2004).

Banks (2004) stated that a curriculum that only includes knowledge of mainstream groups and cultures further marginalizes minority groups and their cultures. Woodward (2008) a former South African working in the United States asserts that we should provide “children with connections to their cultural heritage and instill in them an appreciation for one another’s cultures and respect for diversity” (p. 33). Writing closer to home soil Dos Santos (2005) upholds that “it is impossible to speak of culture in South Africa as if it was a unitary, stable all-embracing umbrella term”. Rather students have understanding of their “own culture and a general knowledge of the musics of other cultures” (Volk, 2004, p. 190) hence “culture is not restricted to ethnicity” (Mixon, 2009, p. 66) values, traditions or beliefs.

In music, you not only are “producing notes and melodies” (Lortat-Jacob, 2006, p. 91) rather you are learning of people’s lives, their history and culture. By including multicultural music it is hoped that students will value the wide spectrum of cultures and celebrate the diverse music. Although Henricks (2011) argues, “multiculturalism has made a positive contribution in broadening narrow horizons exposing people to the wide range of cultural heritage” it still challenges us on the issue of “how

to address cultural difference without promoting cultural chauvinism and its counterpart, xenophobia". This major issue is not the focus of the article, rather my research investigates how multicultural music practice is shared in tertiary teacher education programs in South Africa as a way forward to address cultural difference and promote diversity.

In October 2010, I re-visited South Africa as part of my on-going research into the teaching and learning of African Music. My visit was timely, shortly after the July 2010 FIFA World Cup. Given the breath of diversity of people and language, it is no surprise that the rich variety of cultures influences and impacts on the music making and sharing in Africa. I revisited Pretoria University to undertake both observation and to be a participant in the teaching and learning of multicultural music within the BEd course.

## **Setting the scene: University of Pretoria**

The University of Pretoria is one of the premium 'Arts' Universities in South Africa located north of Johannesburg with departments of Dance, Music and Visual Arts. From informal discussions with staff and students when visiting the university in October 2010, it was evident that the Arts continue to be a platform to build bridges and a melting pot where local and international students can unite on campus. My visit took place at the Groenkloof Campus of the University where a four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree, in the Faculty of Humanities and Education is offered. Within this degree students can opt to undertake music specialization. They meet twice weekly for two 50-minute classes. These classes take place on campus (workshops and lectures) and off campus (teaching at a primary school) over a fourteen-week semester.

Within the four-year degree students are introduced to a variety of music styles, genres and cultures through reading, listening, singing,

performing, improvising, composing and playing of instruments both. The off-campus visits to the schools allow students to make the link between theory and praxis as they undertake micro lessons and prepare school children for stage productions. Through the preparation of these stage productions, students learn more about interdisciplinary arts curriculum, conducting and stage management. University classes normally have 30-45 students per class; during the semester student's work in groups of 4-5 preparing micro music lessons and a stage production in consultation with the music lecturer. My visit to the university took place during the second last week of the semester in October 2010, which accounts for the types of activities I experienced and later highlight in my discussion.

## **Research methodology**

In 2010 ethics clearance was obtained to undertake research at Pretoria University in South Africa. The research study focused on the teaching and learning of multicultural music within the BEd. As the research design was qualitative, I used narrative enquiry and collected my data through observation and journaling. I also conducted a semi structured interview with the music educator the end of October 2010. Loughran, Mulhall and Berry (2004) conclude from their analysis of literature on expert pedagogy that "teachers' professional knowledge is difficult to categorize and therefore exceptionally difficult to articulate and document" (p. 370). As part of my narrative enquiry I kept a journal of my daily events and activities. According to Loughran (1996, p. 8), the use of journaling "can be a powerful tool for reflection".

I interviewed the music lecturer at the end of my week's visit which took the form of a semi-structured exploratory interview (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The interview allowed me to probe and shape questions on issues of culture,

diversity, music education and teacher education, which led to a richer form of data collection than a questionnaire. I taped the interview with the permission of the lecturer. The transcript allowed me to analyze and codify her data into themes using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA focuses on the exploration of participant's experiences, understandings and views (Shaw, 2001; Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005; Smith, 2004; Eatough & Smith, 2006).

## Findings and discussion

In the first section I use the term 'researcher's lens' to present my findings in relation to my observations gathered from my journal data, looking at students work and the music program. Themes discussed are: what did I see and learn visit, teaching and learning in at schools and the choir. The second section highlights the importance of sharing ownership in multiculturalism, drawn from interview data with the music educator. The two main themes gathered from the interview are discussed as follows: the need for multicultural music and the importance to include students as indigenous culture bearers as a rich resource of multicultural music.

### *Researcher's lens*

*My week at Pretoria University: What did I see and learn?*

When I completed my PhD at Pretoria University in 1999, the students were predominantly white Afrikaner. Now the campus is filled with a sea of both black and white faces representing the rainbow nation: a term coined by the Nobel Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The campus is multilingual, multiracial, multicultural, and is a multi-faith site of learning. This visual evidence is also manifested in the music teaching content and pedagogy. As a music educator teaching at Deakin University in Australia, it is always enriching for me to share and undertake

professional development in the area of African music as I continue to share and teach about it within my teacher education courses. As a tertiary student in South Africa during days of apartheid, African music was not promoted when I studied music education in the early 1980s. Today the face of universities and the music education content is more representative of the diversity that exists in that society. My discussion below focuses less on the teaching and learning on campus and more on the onsite schools visits as well as the university choir rehearsal. As my time was rather short at this university, I observed music workshops on campus watched students prepare and discuss their end of year portfolios, discuss their micro lessons pedagogy and learnt more of the different cultural context of the songs and movement they were going to teach at the school. I also watched and listened to students prepare for their practical music examinations which is part of their music education unit for music specialist. During the music workshops on campus students worked in pairs and in groups discussing and planning their micro lessons in consultation with the lecturer as they were being assessed for which I acted as an external examiner. They talked about content and the different pedagogy that underpinned their teaching and what they had read and learnt about from their lecturer.

### *Teaching and learning at schools*

The university over the years has developed strong links with local schools in the local area. At the time of my visit, both music specialist and non music specialist pre-service teachers were working in schools with the lecturer preparing for end of term concerts as well as giving onsite music micro lessons as part of their unit assessment. All three schools that I visited presented different cohorts: only black children in a township school with all white teachers, white children in city school with mainly white teachers,

and a mixture of races at a school with a few nonwhite teachers.

The first school I visited was reached via a university mini bus drive to an African township called Mamelodi. On the bus ride both to and from the school (approximately 45minutes from the university) students eagerly chatted about their teaching and what they wanted the children to learn, they revised their songs and conferred with each other about who was doing what as they team taught or taught in groups. At this school I was intrigued to see that the staff was all white and students all black. The university students both music specialist and non-music specialist primary prepared groups of children to perform (sing, move, dance, dramatize, use body percussion) for an end of year concert for parents, staff and the local community. Non-music students were mentored by music specialists' students along with the lecturer, they go weekly during the semester to teach and prepare school children for the concert, which takes place at the end of the school term. The theme of the concert was the world cup as South Africa hosted the event in July 2010.

This onsite school visit takes place for students from their first year of study to their fourth. This allows students to become part of the community of the teaching practice and the chance to develop confidence and skills in a supervised group context. They taught music to children in pairs and in small groups. Such a partnership with schools strengthens teacher education courses and becomes a resource for schools where there is no specialist music teacher. It also challenges students to plan, organise and manage school students in a short space of time as they are only at the school for approximately two hours twice a week and what the students achieved was highly commendable in terms of teaching and learning onsite. The lecturer and mentor (music specialist student) works with the students, here the students taught African songs and also had sound recordings of music from the world cup

which the children acted out and moved to using the flags from all the participating countries.

I also visited two nearby schools from the university (approximately 15min from the university), one school had a mixture of students (black and white) and the other was still predominantly white. At these schools, I peer-assessed group lessons being taught by both generalist and specialist music teachers. I was most impressed at the very high standard and great enthusiasm towards teaching at these schools. These partnerships are not part of the school placement (professional school experience) rather an emersion into onsite teaching proved effective as feedback was readily provide onsite and students were able to make the connection between theory and praxis as they worked onsite with real children. As classes are multicultural, the music and themes chosen were reflective of the eleven official languages in South Africa. This was challenging initially for the students as they had to research and talk to people in the community and fellow students of another language and culture about their songs. In addition they had to teach the elements of music and make instruments and teach it to their group of children at the school. Although the students were mainly white, they taught African, English and Afrikaans songs. From informal conversations with them, students felt they were all part of South Africa and recognized the rich cultural mixture that should be reflected in their repertoire. They learnt from each other and researched how to teach some songs especially the pronunciation of African songs for example or the movements for the Afrikaans and African dances they taught.

### *Choir rehearsal*

During my one week visit I was invited by the music lecturer to attend and provide critical feedback to Pretoria University's choir. During this rehearsal I experienced an interaction of mixed races, the choir sang from a range of

styles and languages including English, African and Afrikaans. I observed students teaching their local African songs and movement to the choir. Members of the choir shared their cultural heritage, skills and practice. I also saw students conduct the choir and teach indigenous songs and movement. Such an exchange of teaching and learning is not often seen at choir rehearsals at tertiary level where there is shared ownership. This sharing of multicultural practice created a unity and a crossing of borders and boundaries through song and movement. From this one rehearsal and anecdotal communication with members of the choir it was evident that students built friendships across their cultures, languages and ethnicities through music making and sharing.

### **Interview with music lecturer**

#### *Sharing ownership in multicultural music*

The music lecturer holds a senior lectureship at the university. She is an experienced music educator (school and tertiary level), conductor, performer and composer. When preparing her BEd teachers for the profession she is faced with a range of: challenges, demands for relevance, practicality, competence, knowledge, skills and understanding as she prepares her students for multiethnic classrooms and schools. From the interview data gathered at the end of October 2010, two themes are reported on: The need for multicultural music and the inclusion of students as indigenous culture bearers.

#### *The need for multicultural music*

Since democracy, the interviewee strongly felt that the student cohort was changing and there was a strong need to be inclusive of multicultural music. Although the inclusion of more languages, music skills and culture to name a few were part of the major changes at the university, that was predominantly monoculture and monolingual, the interviewee states:

*I don't find it challenging. I find it enriching regarding the diversity of students, there is a wonderful atmosphere and good will and people respect each other and the students appreciate each other's culture and are receptive of the culture and music of others.*

This comment led me to not just believe there exists such a sharing, but also I experienced it during classes and with the choir. The diversity on the campus and in the community generates inclusive multicultural music within the curriculum. As we conversed we both recognized that we had both a predominantly western paradigm of tertiary music education. When asked if there was a need to have a multicultural curriculum and multicultural music, the interviewee strongly believed:

*It goes without saying I don't think why you should have to justify it. As tertiary educators when we trained at university we missed out on a lot of stuff – as we were mainly western taught. I am lucky that I did not have an official course that I went through regarding multicultural music it is something that I learnt through my own community and with my own students and also with the choirs that I am involved with.*

As schools have become increasingly multicultural and multilingual the music chosen will therefore be inclusive of the local community. The interviewee recognizes the need to incorporate both African and western music and she says, "over the years the student cohort is changing". She further comments:

*We are very very [stressing in voice the second 'very'] fortunate as we have a lot of Xhosa, Zulu and Pedi students on our campus; they are a rich source of material, right at hand. I wonder if we appreciate it enough we don't need to look for it, the students can sing it, model it do the movements of it and the pedagogy of how it is to be taught - by rote and they don't have necessarily notation – I like to learn the various voice parts by notation – the students just teaching it like that. (Here the interviewee makes two click sounds with her fingers to demonstrate how easy and quick it is to learn from her students.)*

Her students are a rich ongoing source of onsite professional development for her as well as for fellow students as they are authentic indigenous culture bearers of the music and the pedagogy.

### *Students as indigenous culture bearers*

It was evident that the teaching and learning of music and culture became a shared teaching and learning experience for both lecturer and students. According to the interviewee she has learnt a lot from her students over the years and claims “that is a very rich experience that is something I personally feel is far richer than studying it from a book or doing a course”. The hands on approach to teaching and learning is very evident in her teaching and resonates with the Orff approach to ‘hear’, ‘do’ and ‘see’ in music making. The interviewee recognizes the wealth of music in the country and confirms “we are really spoilt here in South Africa, as it is not difficult to get someone that can for example do drumming, or do sessions with the students, the students themselves have such a lot to offer”.

The sharing and celebrating of culture and music through song and movement was very evident in lessons when the pre-service teachers taught children at school and at the choir rehearsal. I asked whether there was any tension between the students when they sang different songs, the interviewee remarked “we sing English, Afrikaans and African songs and there is no tension – not that I am aware of”. She referred to the ‘Children of Note’ project in Mamelodi where “students choose the song, they taught it to the class, now such teaching has escalated and now we have a stage production for the school and the students had to conduct that, there was really good interaction between the students and the learners (mixture of races)”. Here she points out that the students chose their own multicultural songs “the Grade three African children sang the Afrikaans song perfectly, I was amazed that the students choose two Afrikaans songs and choose songs that people think might be outdated and

old fashioned and the kids still enjoy it and it was well taught”. The white university students choose songs in the African language which their fellow black students taught them.

Singing in different languages no longer had political or racial connotations rather it was seen as a positive way to celebrate diversity and not seen as a form of identity. The interviewee firmly pointed out when planning her own curriculum for teacher education that she was inclusive of the rich cultures and music in South Africa. In regards to choosing repertoire for her choir when she started the choir she comments:

*They sang African songs and Afrikaans folk music and some of the students made suggestions and they said can we please sing this song I love this song and they taught us and together we have built up a wonderful repertoire new songs. We have some composed and taught songs so I learn with them and from them. Our program reflects diversity and a wonderful mixture of culture from our country*

As part of the sharing of music members of the choir are encouraged to teach and conduct. The interviewee remarked, “a black student conducted an Afrikaans song here on our campus at the university choir and that really touched the hearts of everyone”. She further added, “when I teach the Afrikaans folk songs with the dances some of the black students volunteer and they want to do the dances. That is so great it says a lot about building bridges and people wanting to accept each other’s cultures”. There no longer exists issues of race and marginalization in the classroom, “we sing lots of other songs – one of the songs you heard was from Kenya... we also have a Uganda honors student who joined the choir brings his African harp along and shares his music and culture”. South Africa is known for its choral tradition and singing. The interviewee contends:

*Singing in the choir makes them aware of the value of the different music we have- because a student of mine told me that some of the students don’t want to sing their African music they want*

*to rather sing English or the Afrikaans students sometimes want to also like my Black students want to sing American music – once they are part of the choir and they see the reaction of the audience and they become appreciative of singing about local music and in their language which is very unique to us and in that way the choir plays an important role in transmitting and sharing the diversity of music language and culture.*

The interviewee was firm that by including African, Afrikaans and English songs in a hands on fashion and sharing ownership is not a way to just “promote multicultural music” rather she identified that multicultural music within South Africa “creates an awareness of your own identity and your own pride in where you come from and what you can offer”.

## Conclusion

The sharing of music and culture is one that continues to pervade South Africa such unity was evident in the recent FIFA 2010 World Cup. The teaching and learning of music and culture in a post-apartheid South Africa has strengthened nation building. This article highlights my own observation of what I saw and learnt regarding ways to enhance pre-service teacher courses through the where authentic teaching and learning can be facilitated hands-on. It also highlights interview data of the music lecturer of at Pretoria University regarding multicultural music education. It was evident through my observation of school visits and the interviewees involvement with the university choir that a shared sense of ownership between culture bearer, community and teacher creates a pathway for both African and western music to be celebrated as a form of multicultural practice given the diverse population. The community music partnerships is a valuable aspect to change in nation building and in teacher education. The visits to both city and township schools with students gives rise to cultural hybrids whereby

music is deeply connected to identity. It is within such an understanding that music and culture is then viewed as pluralistic and the inclusion of multicultural music practice valued.

By involving students as indigenous culture bearers as effective knowledgeable practitioners, it is hoped that lessons can be learnt and replicated in other educational settings. The learning of African or Afrikaans music for example requires an understanding of the cultural system, the creative principles of the music and the method by which that music is transferred from one person to another. Kwami (2001) a prolific writer of African music upholds that teacher and student should be “confident and knowledgeable about the music concerned” (p. 151). The ‘teacher as learner’ gives multicultural music making the opportunity to preserve, promote and protect indigenous knowledge systems and may be seen as a way forward in comparison with merely dabbling with indigenous music. The music lecturer firmly believed that as tertiary educators we cannot provide our future teachers all the knowledge and skills in multicultural music as she rightly says “the sky is the limit”. She points out:

*We do try to supply enough ideas and materials for our students however I feel that there are not enough resources for teachers in schools for practice. We have an obligation to share it outside what we do here, what we create here should be in some form like a book or a DVD that we can share with the outside world.*

It can be argued that through this shared ownership and a hands-on approach in music making, students build friendships, strengthen their networks and contribute towards ongoing nation building. The university prides itself in promoting tolerance of diversity, providing graduates with international exposure and competencies (University of Pretoria, Internationalization at UP, 2010). Through an array of multicultural music students are not only exposed to a myriad of social and cultural arts practices, they actively engage, embrace and embark on a shared sense of purpose to promote

diversity. According to Nieto (2002), such learning can be a transformative and inclusive experience of the people and by the people. It is through such an exchange of multicultural practice that learning becomes a shared approach promoting understanding amongst diverse cultures where the musical and cultural experience could deepen students understandings “in ways that interest and motivate” them (Culture and Learning Consortium, 2008, p. 26).

Given South Africa's diverse population it is necessary to be able to have a good understanding of the music and its relation to the culture. Volk (2004) rightly points out “the greater the knowledge one has about the culture, and the expectations or rules of its music, the greater the understanding or perception of meaning, of that music will be” (p. 6). Although music in South Africa as a form of multicultural practice can establish home ground and challenge cultural and communal borderlines (Solbu, 2003), it must be noted that many more cultures are daily coming into contact with each other. Such interaction and change question whether such engagement may distance people or create a place of understanding or a place of conflict, this Kenny and Stige (2002) argues “depends on our ideas and feelings and attitudes about difference and change” (p. 2). This study provides a glimpse of how multicultural music like that of African, Afrikaans and English in South Africa can be preserved and promoted within teacher education courses. Lessons learnt at Pretoria University can be replicated in Australia where we to have a rich diversity of culture, languages and music. Within teacher education courses in Australia, I argue that richer pathways for stronger relationships be created between schools, community and universities. Through such avenues within our teacher education courses using a hands-on approach in music education where shared ownership exists with schools and the community, we may promote togetherness where understanding and respect is valued in a shared space and place.

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