

## Valorising the voice of the marginalised: exploring the value of African music in education

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*I explore the role and value of African music in education, by drawing from a study of Grade 5 learners at a school in the Eastern Cape, which was designed to answer the question: Could Xhosa children in South Africa sing Xhosa indigenous songs significantly better than European folk songs? The experimental group received instruction in Xhosa indigenous songs accompanied by indigenous instruments. Instruction included traditional dancing, antiphonal singing technique and improvisation. The control group received instruction in European folk song singing accompanied by Orff instruments. The results of the study suggest that the Xhosa children sang the Xhosa repertoire expressively and significantly better than the European songs. Based on the findings, I argue for the inclusion of African music in education. The purpose of the research was to determine whether there is any significant development in the cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills of learners when taught African music as opposed to western European music. The aim was also to assist educators with meaningful pedagogical approaches and alternative methodologies to enhance an inclusive learning and cultural experience in music education.*

**Keywords:** culture; education; eurocentrism; ethnocentrism; indigenous African music

### Introduction

It has long been of major concern among ethnomusicologists, sociologists and educators in South Africa that indigenous music has not received the same attention as mainstream music in education. In post-apartheid South Africa, there has been a growing awareness of “Africanness”. South African music educators have come to realise that indigenous music is as valuable as western music, which is still dominant in South African music curricula. A concern has been expressed that indigenous African children’s songs in particular are disappearing and could be lost.

Post-1994 the Department of Education introduced Arts and Culture as one of the learning areas for the foundation, intermediate and senior phases (National Curriculum Statement (NCS), 2005). According to the NCS, Arts and Culture was introduced to “build awareness, celebrate diversity, and acknowledge cultures and music that has been marginalised for decades” (NCS, 2005:1). Some of the fundamental stated outcomes of Arts and Culture include creating awareness on “issues of social justice, human rights, a healthy environment and inclusivity” (NCS, 2005:1). The aim is also to expose students to a rich diversity, which includes religion, music and culture. Music is one of the art forms in Arts and Culture education. As an Arts and Culture lecturer, I have observed that there is very little or no availability of African music material in the curriculum. In music and arts education, there are still strong voices that

stereotype indigenous knowledge as backward and proletarian. Western music is still dominantly taught in the music section of the Arts and Culture curriculum. In the curriculum of a democratic South Africa that aims to redress the imbalances of the past, it is inappropriate that African music is still kept on the periphery.

The primary purpose of the research was to determine whether there is any significant development in the cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills of learners when taught African indigenous music as opposed to western European music. To further this endeavour, I measured selected variables in the learning of Xhosa children's songs against the learning of European folk songs, using experimental and control groups. The research aimed to assist educators with meaningful pedagogical approaches and alternative methodologies to enhance an inclusive learning and cultural experience in music pedagogy. The paper briefly sets out the methodology used, a review of relevant literature, discussion and presentation of the data. The statistical analyses and the attitude survey results are presented in Tables 1–5.

### **Methodology**

Before the study was conducted, appropriate ethical measures were observed as an attempt to protect and respect the individual participants' rights and dignity. Negotiations were made with the principal of the school selected for the study. Consent was obtained from the gatekeepers and from the participants' parents.

The participants in the study were from the Xhosa-speaking community. Their socio-economic status was predominantly middle class. The participants were mother-tongue Xhosa-speaking South African Grade 5 students from a model C school in South Africa ( $N = 40$ ). The two music classes were randomly assigned as either Xhosa ( $n = 20$ ) or European ( $n = 20$ ). Grade 5 class was chosen in particular because learners were acquainted with European folk songs by this level. The study used the experimental method based on the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on the measures of ensemble singing performance, ensemble pitch accuracy, ensemble rhythm accuracy, ensemble diction accuracy, ensemble interpretation and ensemble overall performance. The experimental group (Xhosa) received instruction in Xhosa children's songs accompanied by original instruments (Nompula, 1988). Instruction included traditional dancing, antiphonal singing technique and improvisation. Values of indigenous songs in society were also explored. The control group received instruction in European folk song singing. Simple Orff percussion instruments and body movement accompanied the songs.

The duration of the study was four months, spread from mid-February to mid-June 2000. It was not possible to meet with classes each week due to school timetable conflicts and school holidays. For the most part, each group met twice each week for 40-minute sessions. The actual contact time for all subjects was 18 periods of 40 minutes per session (12 hours). Each group received 18 days of instruction spread over the four months.

A concert was organised and parents were invited together with four judges to assess the groups. Singing data from the two groups were collected and analysed. In addition, recordings were made of both groups singing songs learned during the study. The children in the Xhosa song group were asked to complete a short survey on their attitudes towards singing Xhosa songs. The results of the data analyses are given below; they comprise descriptive statistics, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

### **Related literature**

In pre-democratic South Africa, indigenous African music and culture were thought of as pro-

letarian, evil and unacceptable for worship. Consequently they were excluded from school curricula. Instead, European music and instruments were introduced and promoted through churches and missionary schools. Thus, from the time of nineteenth-century colonialism, European music dominated the educational system in the “black” schools. Through the exclusive focus on western European music, learners came to believe that there is only one music system in the world, i.e. European music. African students were denied the opportunity to learn more about their own indigenous music and to recognise the values of their own culture.

The South Africa Music Education Society (SAMÉS) was formed in 1985 to effect change in the music curriculum. SAMÉS saw a great need to preserve and transmit culture and values from generation to generation. The society encouraged educators “to begin discussing and debating the principles and processes of forming a new music curriculum in South Africa” (Oehrle, 1994:2).

According to Oehrle (1986), music education must develop a conceptual approach that leads to the adoption of a broader view of music. Seeking to sensitise music educators in South Africa, she appealed to them to strive to enable children to learn about the diverse and interesting musical heritage of different people around them, arguing that “the present situation in South African music education is that western music is taught almost exclusively, especially in the schools and the concepts like pitch and intonation are learned from exclusively a western point of view” (1986:7). Blacking (1967) agrees with Oehrle by contending that each culture has its own pitch and sounds that are accepted as music. This means a slight deviation from pitch in indigenous tunes may sound off-pitch to a western ear and sound good to an African ear. Oehrle (1994:14) believes that “Music education in South Africa must shed its exclusively Eurocentric basis”. Researchers define Eurocentrism as a dominant discourse that needs to be interrogated for the emancipation of the disadvantaged.

The Department of Education introduced Arts and Culture to the revised curriculum in an attempt to expose students to the rich South African diversity, including religion, music and culture (NCS, 2005). A number of studies have addressed the need for the inclusion of African indigenous music which has been left on the periphery of South African school curriculum for decades. They highlight the significance of African indigenous music education. For example, Ofei (1974:136) argues:

There are songs about historical events and people. There are songs that deal with various aspects of tradition, as well as songs that make references to the environment. Therefore the music education program can form a part of a properly integrated school curriculum remembering that music in the past was not only a means of entertainment but also a means of education.

The authors on the importance and value of African indigenous music in education (Campbell, 1991; Floyd, 1995; Sloboda, 1985) believe that African indigenous music develops children’s creative ability, particularly during the improvisation process. According to Oehrle (1994), the creativity that is involved in improvisation is evidence that an African child is capable of composing.

In the process of making indigenous music and dance, children are exposed to different African rhythms. The children are afforded the opportunity to learn these rhythms and how to internalise them. Exposure to cross-rhythms and syncopated rhythms helps develop children’s creative skills. Through participation in group-clapping, drumming, and music interpretation through dancing, the children’s interpretative skills are developed. As the children are afforded an opportunity to express their musical feelings through dance, they learn rhythmic patterns

by rote, memorise and internalise them. Campbell (1991), an American music educator, believes that the spontaneous use of melodies and rhythms in the process is evidence that the child has learned and retained music vocabulary. The children's repertoire of rhythms acquired, serves as the basis for improvisation and composition.

Improvisation can be vocal or instrumental. In African indigenous music there are pre-composed songs, and improvisation happens spontaneously during the "heat of performance." Certain boundaries are based on (1) the style, (2) social systems of the music, and (3) the technique of playing. The standard pattern is introduced, and then development occurs within the set parameters. During performance the leader improvises while the choir maintains the chorus. Usually the leader is a good singer or has a pleasant voice; the voice should be strong and heavy. A leader should have an ability to improvise, that is, spontaneously create a tune to fit the words during performance. He or she should not be shy and must be able to inspire both performers and the audience.

Children are encouraged to participate in such performances, not only to develop their confidence and self-esteem but also to improve their creative skills. Spontaneity that prevails in the improvisation process builds children's self-confidence, and develops children's composition and co-operative skills. Through the process of improvisation, imagery, aural acuity, memory and cognitive skills are improved (Campbell, 1991). The voiceless are afforded an opportunity to express their originality. The children are not only given an opportunity to enjoy the music product but also to participate and explore the process of music-making.

According to Nketia (1974), all sub-Saharan traditions emphasise singing, because song is regarded as language and is used as an avenue of communication. As many African languages are "tone languages" in which pitch level determines meaning, the melodies and texts rhythms of songs generally follow the intonation contour and rhythms of the song. Melodies are usually organised within a scale of four, five, six, or seven tones. In group singing some societies habitually sing in unison or in parallel octaves. Through song the children's language and vocabulary are developed. Children learn the names of events and rituals that are important in their lives through participating in these song performances. Indigenous songs include names of events and rituals significant in children's lives and in their education. The repertoire of songs include phrases, expressions and idioms of the language for the children to learn (Wright, 1979).

The researchers also agree that songs teach children manners and correct social behaviour. Through indigenous music and games, children not only learn the language but also how to behave (Weinberg, 1984). Nketia (1974) also believes it is the call and response mode of performance which promotes a co-operative spirit in working with leaders in the society, and maintains order in society. In call and response, the leader first states the theme and the group responds in a chorus, repeating the theme. The group has to listen, respond and maintain the chorus part while the leader has the freedom to improvise. The leader occasionally returns to the theme of the music and the musical structure becomes antiphonal. Some songs are organised so that the leader and chorus overlap. The leader introduces the thematic idea (antecedent phrase), and this idea is often confirmed by way of repetition by the chorus (consequent phrase) (Stewart, 1998). Children are encouraged to participate in such performances since they learn to listen, respect and co-operate with the leader, which in turn develops respect for and a co-operative spirit in working with the leaders in society.

Indigenous music is an oral tradition that aims to transmit culture, values, beliefs and history from generation to generation. Children should know that indigenous music is trans-

mited from person to person, and that this does not make it inferior. According to Sloboda (1985), music of oral tradition is not inferior to that which is written — it is just different.

Some scholars try to notate African music for purposes of dissemination. Sloboda (1985) argues that notation encourages the separation of the content of an utterance from its context. Movement and dance, and the communication between and within the performers cannot possibly be notated — the holistic ritual meaning, togetherness and humanity that is involved in generating the musical performance would be lost (Will, 1999 )

In some traditions learning by listening is the principal and sometimes only way music is learned. Campbell (1991) argues that through oral learning, aural skills are improved. Children learn to listen, and their listening and memory skills are improved. Learning a repertoire by rote helps students to learn to internalise rhythms, melody and form. The capacity to hear and to remember a pitch or melody is the result of good listening. In the process the whole brain of the learner is engaged.

## Presentation of data

### Analytical procedures

The two main research questions were analysed by one-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) using the Wilks' Lambda Criterion. Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used as follow-up tests to the multivariate analyses. The independent variable for the two one-way multivariate analyses was group (Xhosa or European). Dependent variables considered simultaneously in the MANOVA analyses were pitch accuracy, rhythm accuracy, diction accuracy, interpretation, and overall performance. Pearson's product moment correlation was used to determine inter-judge reliability for ensemble and individual performances (Nompula, 2000). Only the participants in the Xhosa group were asked to complete the survey regarding attitudes toward Xhosa indigenous music. Responses to the attitude survey were presented in simple percentages (see Table 5).

### Descriptive statistics

Means and standard deviations for ensemble and individual singing performances on pitch accuracy, rhythm accuracy, diction accuracy, interpretation and overall performance are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 shows that group means for Xhosa ensemble performance on all dependent measures are higher than the group means of the European folk song group. Likewise, Table 2 shows that group means for Xhosa individual performance measures are higher than those of the European folk song subjects.

A ten-point scale was used for judging both ensemble and individual singing performances. The scale was composed of five levels of accomplishment, each successive level worth an additional two points. The range of the scale was from "very low" (2 points) to "very high" (10 points). All four judges rated both the Xhosa and the European folk song groups. The range of reported scores for Xhosa individual ratings was from 4 to 10, and for ensemble from 6 to 10. For the European folk song group the scores ranged from 4 to 10 for individual ratings, and 4 to 8 for ensemble (Nompula, 2000).

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were computed to determine the inter-judge reliability of the four judges. The inter-judge reliabilities of the individual performance scores were found to be satisfactory for both groups (Xhosa,  $r = 0.744$ ; European,  $r = 0.794$ ). However, the inter-judge reliabilities of ensemble performances for both groups were very low,

**Table 1** Group means and standard deviations for ensemble scores

Source	Pitch		Rhythm		Diction		Interpretation		Overall	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Xhosa	9.200	0.836	8.800	0.836	9.400	0.894	8.800	0.836	9.400	0.894
European	7.000	1.000	7.200	0.836	7.000	1.000	6.400	1.140	6.400	1.341

**Table 2** Group means and standard deviations for individual scores

Source	Pitch		Rhythm		Diction		Interpretation		Overall	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Xhosa	7.250	1.141	7.300	1.516	8.100	0.981	7.800	1.116	8.275	1.175
European	6.400	1.149	6.562	1.617	6.950	1.212	6.575	1.398	7.275	1.069

probably due to judges' inconsistency in scoring and/or variability caused by the use of five songs in the summated rating. Therefore, the highest correlations among the four judges were determined, and only the scores of these judges by pairs were used in the final analyses for ensemble (Xhosa,  $r = 0.489$ ; European,  $r = 0.619$ ). The second set of correlations were more positive, but not robust (Campbell *et al.*, 1963).

### Main effects for ensemble performance

The main effects for ensemble performance comprise two main problems and five sub-problems each. The analyses are outlined in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 3** MANOVA results for ensemble scores using the Wilks' lambda criterion

Source	df	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Songs/Judges	5/4	0.137	5.036*	0.071

**Null hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on combined measures of ensemble singing performance.

One-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to investigate significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on ensemble performance. The following dependent variables were considered simultaneously: pitch accuracy, rhythm accuracy, diction accuracy, interpretation, and overall performance. The MANOVA was computed using the Wilks' Lambda Criterion. The results presented in Table 3 reveal a significant difference ( $p < 0.07$ ) in favour of the Xhosa group. While this level of probability is slightly greater than 0.05, it is less than the probability level of 0.10 which was set for all analyses to establish a statistical difference (Nompula, 2000).

Also, all the means for the Xhosa ensemble are higher than those of the European group (see Table 1). For the overall performance indicator, the Xhosa singers are a full three points higher. Therefore, null hypothesis 1 is rejected. The Xhosa group appears to score significantly

higher than the European group on ensemble performance.

Follow-up ANOVA univariate tests were used to analyse each of the five performance measures. These analyses were used to test null hypotheses 1a through 1e.

**Table 4** ANOVA follow-up results for ensemble scores by dependent variables

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Dependent variable: Pitch					
Group	1	12.100	12.100	14.24*	0.005
Error	8	6.800	0.850		
Total	9	18.900			
Dependent variable: Rhythm					
Group	1	6.400	6.400	9.14*	0.016
Error	8	5.600	0.700		
Total	9	12.100			
Dependent variable: Diction					
Group	1	14.400	14.400	16.00*	0.003
Error	8	7.200	0.900		
Total	9	14.725			
Dependent variable: Interpretation					
Group	1	14.100	14.400	14.40*	0.005
Error	8	8.000	1.000		
Total	9	22.400			
Dependent variable: Overall					
Group	1	22.500	22.500	17.31*	0.003
Error	8	10.400	1.300		
Total	9	32.900			

**Null hypothesis 1a:** There is no significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on the measure of ensemble pitch accuracy.

The results for ensemble pitch accuracy are presented in Table 4. A significant difference between group means is shown in favour of the Xhosa group ( $p < 0.005$ ). The Xhosa group mean is significantly higher than the European group mean (see Table 1). Therefore null hypothesis 1a is rejected.

**Null hypothesis 1b:** There is no significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on the measure of ensemble rhythm accuracy.

The results presented in Table 4 show a significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble rhythm accuracy in favour of the Xhosa group ( $p < 0.016$ ). The Xhosa

mean is higher on ensemble rhythm accuracy than the European mean. Based on these results, null hypothesis 1b is rejected.

**Null hypothesis 1c:** There is no significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on the measure of ensemble diction accuracy.

A significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble diction accuracy is shown in Table 4. Significance is shown in favour of the Xhosa group at  $p < 0.003$ . Hence, null hypothesis 1c is rejected.

**Null hypothesis 1d:** There is no significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on the measure of ensemble interpretation.

The results in Table 4 for ensemble interpretation yield a significant difference in favour of the Xhosa group at  $p < 0.005$ . The Xhosa group mean is significantly higher than the European group in ensemble interpretation (see Table 1). Therefore null hypothesis 1d is rejected.

**Null hypothesis 1e:** There is no significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on the measure of ensemble overall performance.

The results in Table 4 show a significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble overall performance at  $p < 0.003$ . An inspection of the means in Table 1 shows the mean for the Xhosa group to be higher. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### Xhosa attitude survey

The attitude survey results of the Xhosa group to the singing of Xhosa songs is presented in Table 5. The scores on the pre-test were predominantly positive, and ranged from 60% to 80%, with an average of 53% for the “Yes” response. On the post-test the scores were even more positive, and ranged from 85% to 100% with an average of 94% for the “Yes” category. It appears that the Xhosa children very much enjoyed their instruction in Xhosa singing.

**Table 5** Results of attitude survey for Xhosa group by percentages

Question	Pre-test			Post-test		
	Yes	No	?	Yes	No	?
#1 Do you like to listen to Xhosa music?	65%	25%	10%	100%	0%	0%
#2 Do you like to participate in singing Xhosa songs in school?	55%	25%	20%	95%	5%	0%
#3 Would you like to learn more Xhosa songs?	60%	10%	30%	85%	0%	15%
#4 Do you like Xhosa songs?	75%	10%	15%	95%	0%	5%
#5 Do you think Xhosa songs are interesting?	80%	0%	20%	90%	0%	10%
#6 Do you think it is important to know about African music?	80%	0%	20%	100%	0%	0%



Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions are presented:

1. There was a significant difference between group means (Xhosa and European) on ensemble singing performance in favour of the Xhosa-song group.
- 1a. There was a significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble pitch accuracy in favour of the Xhosa-song group.
- 1b. There was a significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble rhythm accuracy in favour of the Xhosa-song group.
- 1c. There was a significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble diction accuracy.
- 1d. There was a significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble interpretation in favour of the Xhosa-song group.
- 1e. There was a significant difference between group means on the measure of ensemble overall performance in favour of the Xhosa-song group.

### **Analyses of data**

I found that learners begin music instruction by learning European tunes and translated folk songs. The translated folk songs rather than original songs are still labelled as “African” songs. Learners are not only confused by the wrong English translation, but also by the wrong language and musical accentuation resulting from translation. Uncertainty about what they are playing and singing about results in a lack of confidence, self-esteem and pride. The European tunes are applied to games that are not associated with the African cultural values and everyday experiences. The children are thus manipulated into a different world of musical involvement, and these learners are subject to a variety of disadvantages.

The Xhosa song group was able to learn and remember songs faster than the European song group. Since the Xhosa children were familiar with Xhosa language and culture, they had no difficulty understanding the meaning of the songs and cultural context in which the songs were performed. Xhosa songs also related to the socio-cultural conditions of the Xhosa children.

The learners singing Xhosa songs found improvisation challenging but exciting. During the first few weeks of Xhosa indigenous instruction, I discovered that the learners had temporarily lost the spontaneous song skills they had acquired during their musical development in early childhood. They were rather reluctant to sing out and improvise spontaneously during the instruction time. However, after a few singing sessions they began to open up and became comfortable improvising through leading songs and dances.

The skills that children develop through improvisation help them to develop a greater vocabulary of rhythmic and melodic patterns. This, in turn, leads to creative expression. As the development of creativity is an important objective of music education, the use of indigenous music would seem to be an effective way of fostering creative expression. Whether or not Xhosa songs can be performed by children of other cultures is a topic which needs to be explored. European folk song tradition does not include improvisation as an element, and learners in this group were not exposed to improvisation.

The Xhosa group scored significantly higher in interpretation than the European folk song group; the Xhosa dances seemed to be more exciting to the Xhosa children than the European dance movements. Both groups sang expressively, but the Xhosa children sang the Xhosa songs with greater interpretation and excitement. While the Xhosa mean was higher, it appears that both groups performed with good rhythmic execution. Children found it comparatively

easy to learn the rhythms of European folk songs because the rhythms are simpler. This may be one of the reasons why rhythm accuracy was not found to be significantly different between the two groups.

Significant differences exist between the group means on ensemble pitch accuracy, in favour of the Xhosa group. Indigenous songs are based on acoustical pitch, while European songs are based on tempered pitch. A slight deviation from pitch in indigenous tunes may sound off-pitch to a western ear and sound good to an African ear. According to Blacking (1967), each culture has its own pitch and sounds that are accepted as music. The Xhosa children came from a distinct culture with different musical tuning to what they learned in school. Therefore, it may have been difficult for them to maintain given pitch relationships when singing European folk songs. If extra time had been given, they might have scored better.

The Xhosa group means were significantly higher on ensemble diction and individual diction accuracy than in the European song group. Since English is a second language to Xhosa children, they sometimes could not produce the correct pronunciation of certain words in the European folk songs, and this affected their diction accuracy. Even though Xhosa music has not been taught in schools, the pre-test survey (Xhosa group) revealed overall positive responses toward Xhosa songs. Following the singing instruction, students' affective responses toward Xhosa songs were even more positive.

The concert served as a strong motivating force for students to sing their best. Both groups performed well. Some students in the Xhosa song group expressed appreciation for the study, because it gave them exposure to their own music and culture. In addition, some of the children mentioned with appreciation that the study gave them an opportunity to learn some Xhosa traditional dances that they had not previously learned.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study provide evidence that young people find singing indigenous music to be an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. The learners performed indigenous songs more accurately and expressively than the European songs that are presently dominant in the Arts and Culture curriculum. According to Saurman and Stallsmith (2010), most of our education today focuses on a narrow segment of the brain located in the left portion of the cerebral cortex. Conversely, the right side of the brain, which is responsible for our ability to unify concepts and to be creative, is neglected. Kerry (2002:1) also believes that "Left-brain dominant people are most successful in our current educational system, which limits creativity, and relies mostly upon words and numbers". As can be seen from the results of this study, through African music learners are afforded an opportunity to learn and internalise different rhythms. Exposure to cross- and syncopated rhythms assists in the development of learners' creative skills. Through indigenous song the children's language and vocabulary are also developed, since the repertoire of songs includes phrases, expressions and idioms of the language.

The South African government today places emphasis on the music and culture of the people (African National Congress, 1995). African music and culture are inseparable. Through indigenous song, learners are given an opportunity to be exposed to and to explore richly and critically their own culture. Inclusion of an indigenous song repertoire will assist the previously marginalised cultures to learn about their own heritage.

By participating in these songs, not only could the children's self-confidence and self-esteem be developed, but also their composition, creativity and cooperative skills. Including African indigenous music in the school curriculum is an attempt to redress the imbalances of

the past, which is a major aim of the current educational policy and Constitution of South Africa. A music curriculum that does not provide for all of the cultures that it serves is incomplete. It is the belief of SAMES that music education in South Africa must cater to the interests, abilities and needs of the society for which it is designed.

The inclusion of African song in the Arts and Culture curriculum will contribute to the empowering of the marginalised to overcome the often commonly held belief that they cannot achieve, which reduces their confidence, self-esteem and competence (Carver *et al.*, 2001). Creating awareness on issues of social justice, human rights, a healthy environment and inclusivity are some of the fundamental stated outcomes of Arts and Culture (NCS, 2005).

If we are really interested in critical education and believe in educating for social justice, we need to “decolonize our thoughts, our methodologies, and our pedagogies” (Bradley, 2006: 2). Meaningful pedagogical approaches that accommodate and engage all types of learners are needed. Alternative teaching methodologies that involve whole-brain learning are also needed.

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