The Marginalization of Arts Education: Optimization of Teaching Time Limitation

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Abstract
This study focused on how the content matter of various art subjects could be integrated, a trend that has recently gained new impetus, reflecting the practices of contemporary social life. The aim of the research was to develop an implementation strategy for the effective teaching of arts education within the limited time generally allocated to arts education. The research was limited to South African schools and used the qualitative enquiry method based on grounded theory. The results showed that the limited teaching time of arts education may be optimized by integrating theoretical concepts with practical work and by combining different art subjects with common themes that link them.

Introduction
One common global practice in schools worldwide is the marginalization of arts education, reflected by the restricted teaching time allocated to the collective creative and performing arts. In some cases this is further aggravated by assigning arts education to untrained volunteer teachers, thereby diminishing the importance and long-term impact of arts education on future generations. This is the case in most South African public schools. Looking at Australian schools, Garvis (2010) also found that his student teachers were disillusioned when they found a general lack of support for the arts in schools and generalist teachers with little or no subject expertise teaching the arts. He contends that the use of generalist teachers for a specialized subject reduces the importance and educational impact learners receive, thereby neglecting one important component of their learning. Rabkin and Hedberg (2011) found that the decline in arts education in schools directly impacted on the deterioration of classical music and the arts industry in adulthood, resulting in poor concert and arts exhibition attendance and a decline in jobs in the arts and music industry.

Most education systems require an educator to also teach a second academic subject, which is usually considered more important, as reflected in the time allocation of arts education in schools. In South Africa, the 22 hours per week teaching time officially mandated in policy, the weighting for the various art subjects under Creative Arts in the General Education and Training (GET) phase (grades R-9) is collectively 1 ½ - 2 hours per week (CAPS, 2011: 4-5). The Committee who looked into problems experienced with the previous National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in South Africa, stated (Motshekga, 2009: 67):

All training, in all contexts, must be underpinned by the principle that teachers should be actively teaching for the minimum number of hours a day, every day, as specified in policy.

Teacher education programmes usually offer two major teaching subjects, instead of one specialized subject like art programmes offer under the humanities. While arts education comprises of a multitude of specialized individual art subjects to be collectively taught in more or less two hours per week, a non-arts academic subject would automatically consume more time in terms of time-table allocation, thereby diminishing the importance and adequate preparation of arts education. Upitis (2005: 6) aptly writes that it is a "perennial and universal lament among artists, artist-teachers, and teachers alike, that there is not enough time to plan arts encounters for students."

One possible solution to optimize the limited teaching time of arts education is to integrate art subjects, where possible. The concept of learning information from various points of view and through multiple subject areas is not new and has been popular since the mid-1980s (Bresler, 1995). For example, interdisciplinary teaching models have been widely adopted in schools across the United States (Drake, 1998). Gordon (1997) contends that an interdisciplinary approach allows a learner to assimilate concepts from several cognitive and experiential points of view, thereby consolidating discriminative and inferential modes of learning. Codenza (2005) is of the view that the expected outcome of an integrated approach is that the children learn to infer or generalize from information learned in one subject area to gain understanding of the other subject area.

Arts education should not only consider an interdisciplinary arts approach, but also the interests and diverse learning styles of the pupils. Hargreaves & Marshall (2003), Roulston (2006) and Cole (2009) all encourage the facilitation of motivational learning matter based on student interests and learning styles. Another approach to cater for student interest is the mentoring method where compatible high school art students are paired with elementary students, with the former developing teaching skills and the latter complex, artistic problem-solving skills (Smith, 1991). While schools may not cater for all learner interests in the various fields of the arts, teachers should offer some form of compromise to accommodate them.

In South Africa, the former NCS and its accompanying policy documents on education, have been repealed and replaced with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Instead of planning their own learning matter as was previously expected of teachers, CAPS: Creative Arts provides content prescriptions of each art subject and focuses on the practical nature of the arts. It may therefore be possible to focus on the integration of practical work of the various art subjects.

This study investigated how content matter of various art subjects could be integrated, the aim being to assist arts teachers in the effective teaching of arts education within the limited time generally allocated to arts education. The paper sets out the research methodology, the presentation of data, data analyses and conclusion.

Research Methodology
The qualitative study was based on grounded theory to develop emergent categories. Instruments used in the collection of data included documentary analyses, teacher interviews and learner group discussions based on semi-structured, open-ended questions.

The research was limited to South Africa, conducted in 20 former Model C schools in KwaZulu Natal, involving 36 Creative Arts teachers and 1052 learners, ranging from grades 7-9. The respondents were Zulu, Hindu and English mother-tongue speakers. Based on a random convenience sample, schools were selected on the basis of their vibrant arts and culture programme, supportive administration and teacher interest.

To protect the identity and independence of respondents, letters to conduct the research and informed consent forms were sent and received from the provincial Department of Education, school principals, Creative Arts teachers, learners and parents. Learners and teachers were given sample questions in advance to give them an idea of what to expect to be asked.

Group discussions with learners were conducted during their Creative Arts classes, producing data of 20 periods, each 40 minutes. Teacher interviews were conducted privately and were each 30 minutes long. All the sessions were audio-recorded with a Dictaphone, supplemented with note-taking. The field research was conducted over a period of one and half months, visiting 3-4 schools per week.

South African national policy documents and reports on education as well as research articles on arts education were analyzed for the selection and creation of the pre-determined category of integrated arts education.

Presentation of Data
The 36 teachers interviewed showed the following distribution of arts teachers in schools.

Table A: Distribution of Arts Teachers in Schools

Area of Teaching	No. of Teachers	% of Teachers
Fine Arts	14	39%
Music	12	33%
Speech & Drama	10	28%
Dance	0	0%
Total	36	100%

The themes that emerged from the binary data under the pre-selected code of Integrated Arts Education include Theoretical Work and Practical Work. The two sets of respondents, teachers and learners, differed in their approach to how the various art subjects could be effectively integrated to optimize the limited teaching time

Theoretical Work
The 36 teachers interviewed suggested the use of common themes for integrating the various art subjects, although some of them differed in the type of themes to be used:

- Art Elements e.g. Rhythm, Colour (45% of teachers)
- Historical Periods e.g. Baroque Era, Impressionism (33%)
- Life Orientation themes e.g. Human rights through the Arts (22%)

All the teachers did not practically apply their own suggestions and instead taught their own subjects separately. Contradicting their own suggestions, 61% music specialists admitted that Music Theory was difficult to integrate, 39% fine arts specialists said that it was difficult to integrate fine arts, 6% speech and drama specialists mentioned oral presentations, while 6% of their colleagues referred to poetry reading as units to be taught separately.

The other set of respondents, the learners as recipients of teachers' instruction, felt that theoretical work was difficult when taught on its own and made better sense when taught in the context of practical work. When probed about the type of creative art exposure their parents would not approve of, the responses were as follows: 238 (24%) said movies with an 'S' (sex) rating or any pornographic content, 182 (17%) said Hip Hop and Rap music because of the strong words in the lyrics, 171 (16%) said music videos in which singers drink alcohol, smoke or use drugs, 153 (15%) said their parents would disapprove dancing at disco clubs, 128 (12%) said movies which have lots of violence, 112 (11%) learners said that their parents prohibited them from visiting clubs and taverns, 42 (4%) said performing or seeing exotic dancing, 6 (1%) said rock music because it is noisy.

Practical Work
All 36 teachers interviewed admitted that their learners enjoyed practical work more and did not particularly like theoretical work. All teachers (100%) recommended the use of musicals and plays that integrate music, dance, drama and visual arts. They also suggested introducing extra-mural activities such as musical ensembles and visual arts and poetry societies to give learners free creative reign and opportunity to hone their artistic skills.

Confirming their preference for practical engagement, learners highlighted specific areas they were interested in, but were not given opportunities to acquire the skills:

- Drama: skills in acting and more plays to be staged (25%)
- How to play piano or other western instruments (17%)
- Dance: skills in choreography and not just imagine it (13%)
- Poetry: clear guidance on how to write and read poetry (12%)
- Painting: how to do shading (8%)
- How to play drums and other African instruments (7%)
- Skills in pencil drawing (6%)
- How to write plays (5%)
- Vocal technique to improve singing (4%)
- Photography: how to take good pictures (3%)

In an effort to determine whether learners continued their supposed love for arts engagement after school hours, they were asked if they received private tuition in any musical instrument or other art form. However, only 1% admitted to receiving formal piano lessons, others considering their singing in a church or school choir, playing in a sports team and their membership with poetry or drama societies as some form of arts training.

Data Analyses
The binary data was analyzed in terms of the commonalities and differences of their attributes.

One commonality between teachers and learners was their preference for practical work in arts education, a consideration which has been accommodated in the new South African CAPS: Creative Arts curriculum introduced in 2011. All learners felt practical work should focus on specific skills and techniques and not merely generalized abstract knowledge that they have to imagine or practically invent themselves. Learners felt that teachers did not give them enough guidance and clear instruction on practical skills.

While all teachers felt that the staging of musicals and selected plays integrate all four areas of the arts, 25% of learners felt that teachers did not provide enough opportunity for them to participate in musicals and plays. This is an indication that some teachers do not implement their own suggestions, perhaps due to the generalized nature of arts education or their own lack of skills in certain areas.

The one difference between teachers and learners is in the area of theoretical work in arts education. All learners felt that theoretical work should be integrated with practical work and not taught separately. All teachers advanced the use of themes such as historical periods, common elements among the arts or life orientation themes that integrate arts areas of learning with values, although they implied that they did not use these suggestions.

The data suggests that teachers had some theoretical knowledge of integration, but found it difficult to implement. Instead, one or the other art subject seemed to be compromised in favour of the art subjects in which art teachers specialize. In all cases, dance was the one art subject that was most neglected, ostensibly because very few higher education institutions offer professional programmes in dancing. Learners complained that teachers expected them to invent their own choreographies, but they wanted more guidance to develop their dancing skills and learn specific dance steps.

While teachers felt that there was little time to teach the various art subjects, learners felt that music, fine art and drama were too generalized to develop any skill or special value. Each art subject involves a process of skill acquisition which cannot be sufficiently developed within a short duration, hence teachers complained of time limitation. This shows that the scope of arts education has to be necessarily limited in order to do adequate justice to each learning area. While learners enjoyed arts classes because of the relaxed atmosphere conducive to creativity, there were art subjects such as fashion design, interior design, architecture and photography that they were interested in, but were never taught. Seemingly, the offering of design in creative art classes is a general omission in public schools (Smith, 1991).

The lack of offer of some art subjects may be due to a combination of time limitation and lack of teacher skills. Frick (2008) found that the actual interpretation and implementation of curricula differ from school to school as a result of teacher ability and aptitude, the access schools have to resources, and the academic background of learners. Despite the changes introduced in arts education in South Africa, there is still a long way to go before arts education can be effectively implemented in schools.

Conclusion

The research attested to the fact that both teachers and learners prefer a practical-oriented content syllabus focusing on plays and musicals that integrate drama, music, dance and visual arts. Any extra-curricula arts activities should be offered as optional choices available to learners to extend and hone their artistic skills through art and drama societies and music ensembles, since individual tuition is not be possible in general arts classes.

With the focus on practical work and integration, perhaps the teacher's suggestions of using themes to integrate theoretical work, could be used to stage annual school plays and musicals instead. Teachers may then use rehearsals of these stage works as an experiential method of teaching certain theoretical concepts peculiar to each art subject.

Guidelines to effectively implement an integrated arts programme, derived from the data, suggest the following:

- To optimize the limited teaching time, teachers should focus on practical learning and integrate theoretical concepts with practical work.
- Teachers may further integrate arts learning by using themes based on common elements, historical periods or life orientation, which unite the various art subjects, wherever this is possible.
- Invite arts professionals in the field as visiting artists to teach specific techniques and not merely generic or abstract knowledge as seemingly provided by teachers.
- Arts subject advisors should visit schools more often to help familiarize teachers with changes in education and effective implementation strategies.

Suggestion for Future Research

In the context of the study, it is suggested that future research focuses on the development of a learning programme that sequences and paces integrated learning matter as units of study within arts education.

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