

**THE IMPACT OF VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL APPROACH TO THE TEACHING
OF MUSIC EDUCATION THE CASE OF URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
MASVINGO, ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the impact of Vocational Technical approach on the teaching of music education in Masvingo urban secondary schools. The major recommendations of the Nziramasanga Presidential Commission of 1999 and analysis of the commission's impact on music education was the major focus of the study. In carrying out the research, a qualitative approach was used. The study used questionnaires, interviews and documentary analysis to solicit data from all urban secondary schools that offer Music as a subject in Masvingo. The population was made up of twenty school administrators, twenty Music teachers and hundred Music students from the five schools observed. Population sample, which was used included two school administrators, one Music teacher and twenty-five Music students per school. The research established that Music as a subject is now examined at "O" level. Of the schools under study, only Mucheke High and Kyle College do not offer the subject. It was also found that all the schools do not have proper music structures such as music labs, which are properly furnished with relevant, music material. It was therefore, concluded that implementation of Vocational Technical approach in Masvingo urban schools offering Music as a subject is still at infancy. It was also noted that the Zimbabwean economic situation at the moment is fragile and not supportive to technical and practical subjects due to the colonial legacy. The major recommendations of this study are as follows: School administrators are advised to implement equity in the distribution of resources. Music teachers need in-service training, workshops and seminars to enhance their music skills. Curriculum setters are encouraged to collaborate with music industry so that they come up with a curriculum that bridges the gap between the industry and the education sector.

KEYWORDS: Nziramasanga Commission, Music Education, Vocational Technical Approach, Teaching of Music, Voc tech.

Background to the Study

Music education in Zimbabwe has been neglected for a longtime. This is due to a number of reasons, which date back to the colonial era. The colonial era was characterized by

policies of racial discrimination in the education system and the society (Mupondi and Munyaradzi, 2013). Following the attainment of independence in 1980 the new government embarked on a reform programme aimed at eliminating the imbalances and inequalities that existed during the colonial era in education and training. Therefore, one can say education was democratized because there was great expansion and extensive provision and access to general education (Zvobgo, 1980).

Furthermore, there was great expansion in the number of pupils enrolled by schools and also the number of schools greatly increased. Before independence Masvingo urban had two secondary schools, namely Victoria High for white children and Mucheke High School for the blacks. After independence in the 1980s two more secondary schools were built which were Masvingo Christian and Ndarama High Schools. However, it should be noted that more primary schools were also built in the 1980s, included Rujeko, Vurombo, Runyararo, Dikwindi, Don Bosco, Chikato and Shakashe to mention but a few. The impact of this great expansion was felt in the few secondary schools which were in existence and this put pressure on both human and instructional resources as well as infrastructure. Therefore, this had a negative bearing on curriculum implementation as secondary schools that offered Music struggled to accommodate all students who graduated from primary schools.

The government of Zimbabwe tried to address the situation through a memorandum by the cabinet in 1985. The memorandum was aimed at trying to reform educational policy by trying to ensure that every child who passed secondary school did at least two practical subjects. This was mainly done to ensure that children were equipped with practical skills that would make them employable. Unfortunately this was not implemented and as a result a commission was set up by the President in 1998 in order to review the problems in education and training needs in Zimbabwe. The commission was led by renowned educationist and scholar Dr. Nziramasanga. The commission recommended that steps be taken to ensure that infrastructure was developed to get rid of “hot sitting” (Nziramasanga, 1999). The commission also recommended that the curriculum shift from being exam driven to one that stressed practical learning and developed desirable characteristics and competences in line with developmental goals. After so many years since the Nziramasanga report has been published, little has been done as far as the commission’s recommendation of Vocational Technical education approach is concerned. This is because of the economic slump that characterized the Zimbabwean economy since the early 1990s to the present day. The government is not fully supporting the educational reform initiatives of the Nziramasanga

Commission. This has made the researcher to carry out a study on the impact of Vocational Technical approach on the teaching of music education in Masvingo urban.

Conceptual Framework

According to the (UNESCO Report of 1998) Vocational Technical approach aims at promoting skills that are relevant to global and local economic growth. Vocational Technical approach is a very essential tool for national and regional development. Its prowess rests on the development of skills in young people. Presently, Vocational Technical approach has gained popularity in most East Asian and South American economies (Mupondi and Munyaradzi, 2013). In most Third World countries, young people make up half of the unemployed population. According to Middleton et al (1998), lack of skills training both inside and outside schools, leads to unemployment in most developing countries. Therefore, Vocational Technical approach is an important vehicle for developing skills in young people in and outside schools. These skills are important for employment and natural economic growth.

Many developed nations have Vocational Technical education premeditated in accordance with their natural economic plans, that is, each country in the developed world has a different approach to Vocational Technical education. This entails that the curriculum is being driven by industry and commerce together with educationists. The private sector plays a significant role in education to ensure that skills taught in schools are in line with technical advanced and national manpower developmental needs in order to ensure national economic development.

Purpose of the study

The study intended to find out the impact of Vocational Technical approach on the teaching of music education in Masvingo urban secondary schools that teach Music as a subject following the Nziramasanga Report of 1999. The study looked at the implementation of the curriculum. This is mainly because for any curriculum to be effectively applied all stakeholders should be supportive.

Statement of the problem

In Zimbabwe the education system has been reformed since independence in 1980. This is mainly due to the colonial imbalances which were created by the colonial government. In 1980 the new Zimbabwean government declared education a human right (Zvobgo, 1987). This therefore, saw great expansion in both embodiment and number of primary and secondary schools. As a result, this had a lot of pressure on resources like infrastructure, teaching and learning material as well as finance. In this respect practical

subjects such as Music were neglected in favour of academic subjects (Mugochi, 1988). Again most of the post “O” level graduates could not be absorbed into industry because the curriculum was too academic and theoretical. As a result of the above problems, the Zimbabwean government set up The Nziramasanga Commission of Enquiry into education and training in 1998, which recommended that general education at secondary level should be modified. The education system should change after form two “Channelling applied education” (Nziramasanga, 1999). The recommendations made by the commission that included the vocationilization of practical and technical subjects has been partially implemented. The slow implementation has made the researcher to carry out this study.

Research objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To find out the impact of Vocational Technical approach on the teaching of Music in Masvingo urban secondary schools.
2. To ascertain the practicality of the Vocational Technical educational approach in Music education after the Nziramasanga Report of 1999.

Assumption of the study

The study made the following assumptions:

- Vocational Technical approach equips pupils with practical skills and competences which are vital to the world at large.
- Music educators are not yet ready to implement the Vocational Technical approach.
- Currently schools do not have adequate resources to support Vocational Technical programmes.
- Attitude of school administrators towards practical subjects is still very negative.

Research Methodology

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006: 70) a research design is defined, “... as the structure of research”. In this case, it is viewed as the “glue” that put together all relevant aspects of the research. The study used a qualitative approach as this gave the researcher an opportunity to look at various aspects of the study in their normal settings.

Population and sample

Denscombe (2010: 23) states that a population, “...refers to all the items in the category of things that are being researched”. On the other hand a sample is defined by Denscombe (2010) as a small and subgroup chosen for the study. The population for this study comprised

ten Music teachers, twenty administrators and hundred students. The sample of this study was made up of one Music teacher, two administrators and twenty five students from each school.

Sampling procedure

In this study the researcher used simple random sampling. The approach was used in an effort to select participants to fill in questionnaires as well as answer given interview questions.

Data collection refers to acquiring of data in order to verify gathered facts. Kombo and Tromp (2006: 99) aver that, "In research, the term data collection refers to gathering specific information aimed at proving or refuting some facts." In collecting data the researcher used the following instruments:

- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Document analysis

Questionnaires were used to collect information from teachers, administrators and students. Interviews were also used in order for the researcher to solicit data from participants who failed to fill in questionnaires. Lastly, music national syllabus, school syllabus, schemes of work and other important music education documents were analyzed.

Findings

The research had the following findings:

- Most secondary schools in Masvingo urban offer Music as a subject and the subject is examined at "O" level through the national examination board, ZIMSEC (Zimbabwe School Examination Council). Two schools, Mucheke High and Kyle College do not offer the subject. However, all the schools under study do not have proper music structures such as music labs which are properly furnished with relevant music material.
- It was noted that government run schools like Ndarama and Victoria High do not have adequate infrastructure for the Music subject.
- From pupils' questionnaires it was found that there were very few musical instruments available in the schools. In most schools the only available instruments were African musical instruments such as marimba and mbira. However, in private schools such as Kyle College there was an array of Western instruments because the school was Western and private, which means stakeholders are active players in the

provision of resources. It was also noted that Music students in private schools bought their own musical instruments.

- Another point from pupils' questionnaires is that, Western instruments found in government schools were not played and pupils who highlighted this did not give reasons why they were not played.
- Responses from teachers' interviews indicated that the syllabus was too wide and there was rampant shortage of text books. They also lamented that they could not teach all areas of music such as theory and practical since they were not trained in those areas. Teachers also revealed that they were interested in receiving further training in areas of music they were not competent. However, teachers had the opinion that there be specialization in the teaching of Music, for example, one teaches theory only and the other practical. It was noted that there were very few teachers who were comfortable with teaching both practical and theory of music.
- School administrators who were interviewed indicated that they fully supported practical subjects such as Music and they revealed that music played a pivotal role during assemblies and various gatherings as it provided the much needed entertainment. However, only a few respondents indicated that the subject was not relevant and preferred that funds intended for practical be channeled towards academic subjects.
- Information collected through documentary analysis revealed that there was a lot of written work done by both teachers and students. Also, it was found that the music syllabus in use was outdated and content coverage of theory work had more wait on Western music.

Discussion

The researcher is of the opinion that Vocational Technical education is important in the teaching of Music because it enables students acquire skills that they can use in the outside world and this can be achieved if pupils are taught in their own environments. This approach is relevant as it supports the, "Talent Education" recommended by the Suzuki Philosophy, that the child should learn to play musical instruments using the mother tongue and this tallies with the aspects of "Unhu" (humanism) morals mentioned in the Nziramasanga Report of 1999. However, the Vocational Technical approach in Masvingo urban secondary schools is not fully implemented because the implementation is whereby the school syllabus is actually put into use in schools. Information from teachers' interviews

shows that teachers are of the opinion that there be specialization in the teaching of Music whereby music teachers are allowed to specialize in areas of their strength. This approach is vital as it assures the successful implementation of Vocational Technical approach because Music teachers will be able to teach their areas of competence. Schools are also under-resourced because of the economic doldrums currently overshadowing the nation. Following the above-mentioned view, some schools are currently manned by one Music teacher who is expected to conduct school activities such as assemblies, choirs, music competitions and other duties assigned by the school authorities. Administrators indicated that they valued choir management by Music teachers instead of the actual teaching of music because Music as a subject is not relevant to them. This therefore, is a reflection of the administrators negative attitudes towards Music as a subject.

Conclusion

The research has revealed that implementation of Vocational Technical approach in Masvingo urban secondary schools offering Music as a subject is still at infant level. This is largely because of shortage of resources to support initiatives of this nature. Parallel to that, the Zimbabwean economic situation at the moment is fragile and not supportive to technical and practical subjects due to the colonial legacy. It was also noted that, school administrators prioritize other academic and theoretical subjects over Music. Therefore, Nziramasanga Report on Vocational Technical approach is failing to take off in Masvingo urban secondary schools offering Music.

Recommendations

- School administrators are advised to implement equity in the distribution of resources.
- School administrators are encouraged to have a positive view towards the teaching and learning of Music as a subject.
- Music teachers need in-service training, workshops and seminars to enhance their music skills.
- Teachers of Music are advised to provide a learning environment that is in line with the Vocational Technical approach and the Suzuki Philosophy of home environment.
- Curriculum setters are encouraged to collaborate with music industry so that they come up with a curriculum that bridges the industry and the education sector.

- The Zimbabwean government through its Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is encouraged to set a special fund for practical subjects, so that the principles of the Nziramasanga recommendations are realized in schools.

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