This is the published version:


Available from Deakin Research Online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30005931

Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that permission has been obtained for items included in Deakin Research Online. If you believe that your rights have been infringed by this repository, please contact drosupport@deakin.edu.au

Copyright : 2006, International Society for Music Education
AN AFRICAN MUSIC ODYSSEY: INTRODUCING A CROSS-CULTURAL MUSIC CURRICULUM TO AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

by
DAWN JOSEPH
Deakin University, Melbourne, AUSTRALIA
Email: djoseph@deakin.edu.au

SUMMARY
This article describes a music curriculum innovation that incorporated European and African repertoire and pedagogy to teach Australian teacher education students about rhythm. The aims of the project were to promote a closer relationship between theory and practice and to teach rhythm more effectively through cross-cultural engagement. Using African music in the Australian context was seen as a step towards internationalising the curriculum at tertiary level, with implications for primary and secondary teaching.

Despite the influence of an overtly multicultural society and the rhetoric of recent national and state arts education statements, there is often comparatively little evidence of cultural diversity in Australian school music and teacher education curricula. This article describes a research project that I undertook with final year generalist primary teacher education students in which the principal focus was to investigate the effectiveness of teaching the basic elements of rhythm (beat, accent, metre and duration) through African music. The impetus for this investigation grew out of my earlier observations of students’ interest and participation in the use of African music in an undergraduate non-specialist music education subject at Deakin University’s Melbourne Campus during 2001. Motivation for the present study (undertaken during 2002) came from my own interest in African music as well as a desire to introduce it as a new genre to my students. The purpose was to encourage them to teach music as non-specialists as well as to increase their confidence and competence in teaching rhythm. My decision to introduce African music within an Australian context was based on the contention that engaging students with an unfamiliar but attractive musical genre – such as African music – may enhance their understanding of selected elements of rhythm. The focus of this innovation was not to rely solely on Western music teaching methods and repertoire but to incorporate African music. The basis for this contention is that the use of a non-Western musical genre may provide:

1. A ‘level playing field’ for all students, regardless of their musical backgrounds, to learn more about rhythm;
2. Personal and professional mastery which increases students’ self-esteem and their motivation for learning;
An African music odyssey: Introducing a cross-cultural music curriculum to Australian primary teacher education students

3. A model for teaching practical activities and cross-cultural understandings as part of internationalising the curriculum;

4. An impetus for understanding of other cultures and their music.

In reporting this research I speak as a South African of Indian descent now working with students of predominantly Anglo-Celtic background within the context of a music subject. The students in my study were in their fourth year of a pre-service primary teacher education course and undertook the subject across an entire semester in 2002. Previously, the subject focussed only on the pedagogies of Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze through the teaching of recorder and classroom instruments but the curriculum innovation involved the use of African music.

The statement that most teacher educator programmes operate within constraints of limited time, resources and staffing is now taken for granted. Despite these challenges, teacher educators still have a responsibility to prepare students to teach effectively and confidently in schools as non-specialist music teachers. Temmerman (1997) raises the issue of the adequacy of current curriculum content to prepare effective teachers of music, and the necessity to identify curriculum content deemed to be both essential and achievable. This challenge is reinforced by Russell-Bowie (1997; 2003) who asserts that teacher educators need to rectify the low self-esteem and negative attitudes often experienced by non-specialist music teachers in relation to their musical abilities by providing them with positive and successful learning experiences in music.

Underlying the project was my overall objective that, by facilitating the sharing of musical experiences through the Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze and African pedagogies (the oral traditional of teaching, passed down from generation to generation, and the transmission indigenous knowledge systems), students from different backgrounds would become involved in reciprocal learning and mutual responsiveness. Brophy (1986) advocates that it is essential that educators should view themselves as active socializing agents capable of stimulating students’ motivation to learn. As will be demonstrated, the high level of motivation within this subject may be attributed to the fact that every week students had to link pedagogical theory with teaching practice through a number of varied task activities. From my observations, defining tasks in terms of specific short-term goals assisted students to associate effort with success in an unfamiliar genre. I also saw my role in teaching African music to Australian students as a cultural experience falling within a broader curriculum context that promotes the internationalisation of the curriculum. The overall objective of the subject was to support self-confidence in the learning of rhythm and to foster a curiosity and appreciation of ‘the other’ – that is, African music.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Internationalisation of the curriculum is currently on the agenda of educational institutions worldwide. According to Rizvi and Walsh (1998), Australian universities are well placed to be leaders in internationalising the curriculum because of Australia’s multicultural
population and range of international students. They further state that internationalisation may be interpreted as studying the history and culture of another country or region. Teaching African music in an Australian context may therefore be seen as a legitimate way of internationalising the curriculum rather than being mere tokenism. This is supported by Thorsén (2002b) who points out that music may be seen as an arena for the dynamics of ‘international togetherness’.

Sadiki (2002) asserts that internationalising the curriculum should not be viewed as a mere ‘window of opportunity’; rather it should be seen as a multidimensional form of enrichment. Thus, incorporation of a new musical genre should be viewed as “a process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into teaching” (Knight & de Wit, 1995, p. 17). In most instances, internationalising the curriculum focuses primarily on promoting “an understanding of international perspectives and competence in a global environment” (Deakin University, 2002, p. 1). As part of its institutional vision, Deakin University (2002) has adopted the policy that the curriculum should prepare students to “perform capably, ethically and sensitively in international and multicultural professional and social contexts” (p. 1). It further supports the integration and infusion of international and intercultural dimensions and content into teaching, research and service through a wide range of activities and strategies as the means of achieving an internationalised curriculum. My decision to use African music in the music subject was based on Carver and Tracey’s (2001) notion to ‘empower students’ in order for my students to overcome the often commonly-held perception that they are unable to assimilate new skills and knowledge, which in turn reduces their confidence and competence – for example, – ‘I can’t dance’; ‘I can’t sing’ and ‘I can’t play’. As I found, their confidence levels were initially low but improved over the semester.

BROADENING UNDERSTANDINGS OF AFRICAN CULTURE

One of the subsidiary aims in teaching this subject was to familiarise students with the broader role of music in a culture other than Australia. A useful definition of culture is provided by Du Preez (1997) who states that “culture embodies the knowledge, values, norms, beliefs, language, perceptions and adaptations to the environment of a certain group of people” (p. 4). As Nketa (1988) points out, many expatriate music educators – such as myself – have selected music from our own countries (in my case, South Africa) as the starting point for curriculum development. According to Thorsén (2002a), music education is not just about content and method, rather it should develop attitudes and understanding of the role of music education in society – in this instance, African society. In African societies, music – both song and dance – is the medium through which children and young people receive instruction about traditional customs and practices, obligations and responsibilities. They learn about members of their families, about important people, places and events of their community, their tribe and their country (Warren, 1970). African children are educated, grow up and assume a place in the adult community through music. Blacking (1983) sees music and dance as an inevitable ingredient in the socialisation process when these art forms are prominent.
An African music odyssey: Introducing a cross-cultural music curriculum to Australian primary teacher education students

Unlike Western systems, the basis of music education for Africans is an oral tradition, which includes the performance of vocal and instrumental music interwoven with dance (Amoaku, 1982; Okafor, 1988, 1989). Oral tradition plays a significant role in African pedagogy; according to Amoaku (1982), it is just as reliable as a written tradition and is “essentially derived from an inter-relationship with the universe, which a traditional society regards as factual and constant” (p. 116). Adding to this contention, African songs include all of the possible applications of folk music such as lullabies, work songs, youth songs and, in recent South African history, protest songs. Through learning African songs, my students gained an understanding of both the nature and role of music specifically within the Sotho, Zulu and Xhosa tribal contexts. The songs from these tribes served as the means for teaching rhythms which was one of the principal aims of the African music curriculum.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISONS

Oehrle (1991) argues that, by exposing students to other cultures and specifically to their music, we also explore cross-cultural possibilities more fully, richly and critically than previously when focussing only on Western music. She further states that a growing awareness of other cultures is not only more possible but also necessary as we live in a multicultural and diverse society. All of the students were from Australia but from a range of cultural backgrounds. By incorporating African music, students gained a richer understanding of content and cross-cultural understandings.

I use the term ‘cross-cultural’ in this context as a tool for understanding the many dimensions of culture. In this instance, ‘cross-cultural’ encapsulates the fusion of music and dance/movement within the African music context as well as the combination of African music pedagogy with the methodologies of Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze which, each in their own right, stem from different European countries. Amoaku (1982) asserts that, of all the contemporary trends in music education, Orff Schulwerk is perhaps the closest to traditional ways Africans learn about music. He further states that the essentials of Schulwerk – which include speech, rhythm and movement – comes rather close to the traditional African concept of music making.

Through a variety of Western and specifically South African repertoire, students were able to gain an understanding of the richness, similarities and differences across music, culture and pedagogy. Such experiences enabled students to understand how differences were offset by similarities through cross-cultural engagement. According to Nketia (1998), what appears to be different cross-culturally may operate in similar contexts, hence the discovery of common principles, usages and behavioural patterns. He further points out that it is not just the music we hear, but also a knowledge of the culture of music makers – their lives, what they do, and the occasions when they make music – that puts us in a frame of mind to explore their music. It is through such understandings that I grounded my African music curriculum innovation.

RHYTHM IN AFRICAN CULTURE

Rhythm is central to African music and is exemplified by drumming which plays a foundational role in African customs and traditions (Vulliamy & Lee, 1982). It is used to
Dawn Joseph

communicate messages and to accompany traditional ceremonies – for example, to welcome
a new-born child, to mourn the dead, to stave off famine, or to celebrate a good harvest.
In traditional African music, there is no need for notation since the skills of drumming
and a knowledge of the traditional drumming patterns are passed on from generation to
generation (Vulliamy & Lee, 1982). However, in order to accommodate the demands of
the European musical tradition, my students were also taught to read staff notation as
well as other pedagogical representations of pitch including sol-fa and hand-sign notation.
It is my contention that learning through an unfamiliar genre like African music gives
greater prominence to the concepts being taught and learning is made more meaningful
as will be discussed later.

‘UMOJA’: TEACHING RHYTHM TO AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

I use the African word ‘Umoja’ as an umbrella term to encapsulate the function that rhythm
has in African music. Orff, like Dalcroze, found rhythm to be the strongest of all the
elements in music and a logical starting point for any music making (Choksy, Abramson,
Gillespie & Woods, 1986). The African repertoire used involved singing, sol-fa, instrumen-
tal playing, moving and improvising, all of which resonate with the principles of the
Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze methods. The process adopted for teaching rhythm was firstly
that students were introduced to the philosophies and teaching methods of the three
methodologies and secondly the application of these approaches was related to both
Western and African repertoire. The general aim was to teach the concept of rhythm and
its sub-elements (accent, beat, metre and duration) in conjunction with the prescribed
book for this subject (Johnstone & Nye 1979) as well as through South African children’s
songs.

Listening examples (played on piano and compact disc) were also used to introduce and
teach the concept of beat, and students were encouraged to use body percussion to illustrate
the beat. In most instances they found this an easy task. The use of body percussion is a
characteristic of African music and is inseparable from song. Students enjoyed sitting in a
circle and passing the stick to the beat (a typical African activity) and listening for 2 and 3
beat patterns. They experienced fast and slow beats through movement exercises (walk,
run, skip, waltz). Movement is fundamental to the entire Orff process; it is the basis on
which all other learning takes place (Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie & Woods, 1986).
Dalcroze uses movement in place and space as part of eurhythmics teaching. I used body
movements to highlight beat and to introduce movements so that students could recognise
that music is inseparable from movement.

African rhythm uses a regular pulse and metre but the accents typically fall on pulses other
than the first beat of the bar (Oehrle, 1987) – for example, a typical metrical pattern in
Western music may be 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, whereas in African music the accent may fall on
different beats of the bar – for example 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, etc. Once students mastered
simple patterns, groups of 6, 8 and 12 beat patterns were introduced and tempo markings
increased as their confidence and motivation levels increased. Students performed in groups
and analysed what they had heard and performed. The students began to realise that African
music has special characteristics; they became aware that African music is made up of cross-rhythms and the simplest forms introduced were 2 against 3 and 3 against 2. Dalcroze found that children unconsciously perform poly-rhythms between the upper and lower parts of the body – for example, bouncing a ball and walking as a means of realising 2 against 3 (Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie & Woods, 1986). This was initially hard for my students to perform but they coped by using body percussion only. Later students were introduced to the concepts of ostinato and bourdon, and created their own patterns using non-melodic Orff instruments. The teaching of ostinato and bourdon was based on the principles of Orff who stressed first, learning through imitation and then, learning through improvisation (Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie & Woods, 1986). This pedagogy is also characteristic of how African rhythms and songs are taught.

Duration was taught mainly through Kodály’s adaptation of the French name system. Rhythm in a Kodály approach is taught by patterns, which is very similar to the process in African music. Most African rhythms are short repeated patterns that start at different points and are held for different lengths of time. French time names were introduced as a useful means of ensuring correct rhythmic performance. Students were also introduced to the movable doh system of sol-fa for singing melodies. The use of hand signs is not characteristic of traditional African music but this system was introduced to my class to aid tonal memory for unaccompanied songs. Students were also made aware that in many African schools, songs are sung from sol-fa notation and thus solmisation forms part of the African culture of teaching and learning music. Stevens (2001) points out that, prior to and during the apartheid era, the method of music teaching and musical literacy used by Africans was based on the Tonic Sol-fa system introduced during the nineteenth century.

Students were shown examples of sol-fa and staff notation and had the opportunity to sing from both forms of notation.

CHOICE OF SONGS

The action songs introduced to students were chosen specifically because of their relationship to the Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze principles. The notion of action (movement) in the realisation of a song has parallels with aspects of the three methodologies. As earlier stated, movement is inseparable from song for Africans. It represents a useful parallel to Dalcroze’s teaching about movement, which formed the basic mode of instruction to teach rhythm. In the latter, the body becomes a musical instrument and students respond through movement to what they hear – the musical concept of rhythm and its sub-concepts are thereby internalised. Campbell & Scott-Kassner (1995) support this with the comment that “movement and music are both concerned with time so the concepts of pulse, duration, accent and tempo are most obvious through movement”.

In the Kodály approach students became aware of the relationship between ‘mother tongue’ repertoire and the use of African songs. By using folk songs of a particular culture, Kodály asserts that it is possible to teach specific musical elements that reflect students’ language and culture and therefore have immediate relevance which aids learning. In this instance, only a few songs were taught and through this new repertoire, students also learnt about the culture and language of the different peoples of South Africa. The Kodály teaching
strategy, referred to as ‘the 3 Ps’ by Howell (2000), was used to model song teaching. This strategy involved, firstly, students being prepared for the element of rhythm through a repertoire of song and games; secondly, being presented with a song which isolated the concept and its sub-concepts by identifying, naming and isolating it; and thirdly, practising the song and revising the new element. Students also incorporated hand signs and sang the songs in both sol-fa and in the African language in line with the “mother tongue” principle as the mean of consolidating their learning.

Studio 49 instruments, a distinctive feature of the Orff approach, were also incorporated into the lessons to reduce students’ feelings of self-consciousness with singing. Students accompanied the songs through body percussion and instruments; they improvised as well as played ostinato patterns. By using the Orff approach, students’ awareness of ‘call and response’ as being fundamental to the teaching of rhythm became apparent. Campbell & Scott-Kassner (1995) point out that “spoken language is the natural gateway to musical rhythm”. They further suggest that words and word phrases provide students with every component of rhythm – from the basic pulse to the multi-layered complexity of polyrhythms. This is in line with Landis & Cader (1972) who point out that “practice in speaking, chanting and clapping word rhythms prepares the child for the experience of combining rhythms to melody”. From the students’ perspective, it was interesting for them to realise that the Orff tuned percussion instruments were originally based on African traditional instruments (Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie & Woods, 1986).

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

In second semester 2002, thirty-one students enrolled for the subject and were invited to participate in the study. The subject ran for three hours per week over seven teaching weeks. Data was obtained from an anonymous questionnaire and interviews with self-selecting members of the student cohort at the end of the seven-week period. The objectives of this research-based teaching program were intended to identify attitudinal changes, levels of motivation, confidence and competence in the students studying music as well as internationalising the curriculum. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies elicited a rich set of data, only some of which is presented for this article.

Of the thirty-one students enrolled, 29 students responded to the survey. The anonymous questionnaire employed both open and closed questions and students were also asked to identify their preferences in relation to several issues using Likert-scale responses (ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’). The questionnaire was intended as a snapshot of the class regarding their experiences of the workshops, their attitudes and understandings regarding cross-cultural engagement, and the levels of motivation and enjoyment they experienced. It is recognised that this small sample is not statistically significant. Therefore only inferences rather than statistically-validated conclusions are drawn.

The second source of data was taped interviews with individual students, all students were invited to participate in the interviews at the end of the semester. However, only one third of the class volunteered. The interview served as an extension of questions raised in the
survey. An analysis of the interview data was undertaken on the basis of the contentions and of emerging themes and issues relevant to the investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were eight males and 21 females in my class, whose ages ranged from 20 to 35. It was most rewarding for myself as the researcher embarking on a new project to note that the majority of students (25 of the 29 questionnaire respondents) stated that the use of an unfamiliar genre like African music motivated them to participate in the workshops and, as well, generated an interest in and understanding of a ‘new culture’. The comments made by some interviewees below sum up the general feeling of what students experienced in terms of motivation, interest and confidence. Common words used to describe the inclusion of African music as a motivating factor were ‘new’, ‘different’, ‘fun’, ‘exciting’, ‘stimulating’ and ‘interesting’. It was apparent that students learnt more when they were having fun and when they were engaged with a practical “hands-on” approach. The inclusion of African music in this subject seemed to be a very worthwhile experience. As one interviewee remarked:

I really enjoyed the drums and beat and rhythms and things, so I really got into a lot more than may be someone who did not enjoy it. It was fun, fun to move to, fun to get up and dance and swing and move your arms around. That’s what teaching should be about, having fun and learning comes from fun.

Another student commented: “Yeah. It’s because there wasn’t such a lot of just talk about the principles, though it was in the main theory based, well minimal theory based or application, all hands on, all doing, all learning through doing”.

During the interviews, a common theme emerged as many students commented that this subject was ‘different’ and therefore more engaging than other subjects undertaken in their degree. The use of the words ‘different’ and ‘new’ was consistently used in both the questionnaire responses and the interviews regarding the African music. Some of the common words used to describe ‘difference’ related specifically to rhythm and beat, and particularly to African rhythmic characteristics such as the displacement of the accents and poly-rhythms. One student found these aspects to be exciting and pointed out:

I found the way they used rhythm very exciting, the fact that they would have 5 or 6 rhythmic instruments all going at the same time and they have a different rhythm on each. There’d be a beat of 2 and 1 or may be one drum and a beat of 3 or 5 on another drum and also the way they kind of bounced of one another added to that. In Western music the drums aren’t really the focus of the song, it’s the saxophone or guitar or a singer whereas in the African music [drum rhythm] it is the main focus.

As a class activity, the teaching of simple poly-rhythms was most enjoyable; students were able to improvise and they were able to move from simple to complex patterns whilst concentrating on developing their own ostinato patterns. As one student commented:
Dawn Joseph

I think the hardest thing was trying to concentrate on my part and not get distracted. But once you got into the rhythm of it and understood my own pattern and my group pattern, I think it looked really good and, if you concentrate on your part [pattern] but still enjoying what they were doing and how it works, the piece worked together. Sounded really good and looked really good.

Another student commented that having an enthusiastic lecturer of South African origin enriched the experience even more. “Because you [the lecturer] were always so excited about it and it sort of made us excited to learn and see what was so exciting. It was really good. It was good fun. It actually motivated me to want to go to Africa”.

The primary focus of the curriculum innovation was to enhance students’ learning about rhythmic concepts through an African music repertoire of songs and dance rather than relying solely on Western music teaching methods and repertoire. Twenty-four of the 29 students stated that they had no prior knowledge of the Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze methodologies. However, 26 students indicated that their sol-fa reading improved especially with the African songs and that they were able to recognise simple rhythmic repeated patterns, which aided their reading of sol-fa notation and staff notation. According to one student:

...we’re also on a level playing field, ‘cause all of us had different backgrounds in music but, when it came to something like African very few of us, in fact none of us have had the opportunity to actually play it and be a part of it and move to that type of music.

Twenty-two students stated that their level of competence increased by using French time names as a form of rhythmic notation. “It made it easier to recognise the notes and their [later] placement on the stave” as remarked one informant. Others commented that the Orff concept of using speech patterns and improvisation in association with the African repertoire was an important factor in their understanding of rhythm; this was clearly demonstrated through their African drumming exercises and improvisation.

Twenty-four students stated that they felt confident to utilise the Dalcroze principles of movement to the element of rhythm and its sub-elements. Students saw the strong relationship between music and movement particularly through the African repertoire. They commented that, having experienced the African song and dance culture, they understood how movement is inseparable from song. As one student pointed out in the interview: “Being able to see it on the board is one thing but having the opportunity to be part of it and sort of contribute your body in different ways was another”.

The learning of rhythm through movement was most enjoyable for all students. They found it interesting and challenging to sing the words in a foreign language as well as move and play. By including both Western and African music in the curriculum, students had the opportunity to work from the known to the unfamiliar in terms of African words and rhythms. Several interviewees reported that the African repertoire had enabled them to make connections about the learning and teaching of rhythm through the three methodologies. In summarising the overall response to the concept of rhythm, one interviewee observed:
An African music odyssey: Introducing a cross-cultural music curriculum to Australian primary teacher education students

Yeah. With the way it was done you didn’t have any other choice but to go along with the knowledge that you were building up on and learning from that and moving on from that. Whereas, with just the book and not the African music, it would be terribly boring.

Table 1 below represents the students’ responses to the question “to what extent do you agree that your levels of knowledge, understanding and skills have increased regarding the elements of rhythm?”. This table indicates that students’ understanding of rhythm and its components improved over the semester.

**TABLE 1: Students’ Understanding of Rhythmic Elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Rhythm</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Partially agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metre</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several cross-cultural understandings emerged through the use of both Western and African musical repertoire and pedagogies. It is through the variety of and comparisons made between repertoire that students gained a fuller understanding of the African music and the wider African culture. This was aptly summarised by one student who said:

Yeah. When you saw that English translation [of the words of the song]; however bad it was, you could still see why they would have sung it and it was good ‘cause we don’t really have these kinds of songs in English in Australia. You don’t see the road worker starting to sing songs. It was good to get another culture, another feel for the culture.

Another interviewee’s understanding of African song and culture further highlights the point that, through a new cultural genre, students learnt not only about the music but also about the culture:

Yeah. ‘Cause I didn’t have any idea really that they did anything like that. The closest idea I had to that was may be I thought they would sing for rain. I think that’s the biggest idea but I didn’t have an idea they sung about other things. They sung when they work, they sung like you said when I injured my foot they’d sing about that, healing and things. I guess they [were] so involved in singing and movement about their whole life style, its all included in that and we would never do anything like that.
CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the inclusion of African music in this subject was successful. Although students felt that the subject was short in duration (only seven weeks), the breadth and depth of their experience was intense or, as they expressed it, ‘full-on’. They felt challenged to learn through African music and felt that, although the language was often difficult, it was not a stumbling block; rather it became another idiom, adding to their understanding of the music and as Thorsén (2002a) suggests develops attitudes and understandings of the wider role of music education in society. Students were highly motivated and challenged as they engaged in several activities to learn about rhythm through the three methodologies in combination with the African repertoire. It may be argued that the inclusion of African music as an unfamiliar genre proved to be an effective means of teaching rhythm. The data also revealed that students benefitted from the ‘new’ experience in terms of a greater understanding and appreciation of an unfamiliar genre and culture. They also came to an appreciation of what Nketa (1998) identifies as the discovery of common principles, usages and behavioural patterns that synthesised their cross-cultural understandings. Moreover, students gained confidence and expressed the view that their levels of competence increased. As one student remarked:

My confidence and knowledge has grown immensely. Its more … I feel a lot more comfortable with teaching something like this and actually participating in something like this rather than before I would never have done anything like it so yeah absolutely, confidence has grown immensely.

It appeared that my experience as a South African helped students learn more about the music and culture of the African people. It also helped them establish greater musical and cultural connections that subsequently synthesized their learning, understanding and interest in African music as a cross-cultural engagement. One interviewee succinctly commented:

‘Cause you brought your personal knowledge and personal experience to it as well, it wasn’t something that you just read about, that you weren’t being related to us, it was something that you had experienced and been part of and could share with us and you obviously had a great passion for it as well because it shows through.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEACHING

The data revealed that students’ skills, competence and confidence improved as they reaped the benefits of a cross-cultural experience and engaged in ‘hands-on’ learning. Students felt positive about their abilities as non-specialist music teachers – they were confident that they could teach children about rhythm and its sub-elements. Students who could not play an instrument found that it was possible to teach using non-melodic instruments, body percussion and recorded music. They were looking forward to trying out their recent learning and to sharing of ideas in ‘real’ school environments where there is likely to be a greater cultural mix.
Notwithstanding the positive results of this study, further research needs to be undertaken to investigate whether this type of curriculum innovation could produce similar results in a school environment. My experience as both teacher and researcher in this study demonstrated that having a background of ‘cultural knowledge’ enriches the meaning of the songs and musical context. Judging from the results at tertiary level, the introduction of African music in primary and secondary schools is likely to be equally beneficial. As such the use of unfamiliar genres can certainly enhance students’ learning. Parallel studies involving music of other cultures may further support the contentions made in this study and provide a basis for further research which makes provision for the curriculum to be more inclusive at all levels of education.

REFERENCES


Dawn Joseph


**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*Dr Dawn Joseph* is a lecturer in music and education studies at Deakin University, Melbourne. Her current research focuses on African music in schools and teacher education.

Dr Joseph is Co-ordinator of the Australian “Musical Arts Education Action Team” cell for the Pan-African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE).
SUMMARIES

EINE ODYSEE AFRIKANISCHER MUSIK.
ZUR EINFÜHRUNG EINES INTERKULTURELLEN MUSIK-CURRICULUMS IN DIE
GRUNDSCHULLEHRERAUSBILDUNG IN AUSTRALIEN


UNA ODISEA MUSICAL AFRICANA:
LA INTRODUCCIÓN DE UN CURRÍCULO DE MÚSICA TRANSCULTURAL A ESTUDIANTES DE MAGISTERIO PARA EL NIVEL PRIMARIO AUSTRALIANO

Este artículo describe una innovación curricular en música consistente en la incorporación de repertorio y pedagogía europea y africana para la enseñanza de ritmos a estudiantes australianos de magisterio. El propósito del proyecto fue promover una relación estrecha entre teoría y práctica, y enseñar el ritmo de manera más efectiva a través de un compromiso transcultural. El hecho de usar música africana en el contexto australiano fue visto como un paso hacia la internacionalización del currículo en el nivel terciario, con implicaciones para la enseñanza primaria y secundaria.