UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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Subject Music in rural South African schools: challenges and solutions within a comparative context

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DMus

In the Department of Music at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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November 2010

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof Caroline van Niekerk for her unwavering support, guidance and endless patience. My husband Gerhard gave me his quiet support and endured many lonely hours. Thank you to my daughter Leandra for her support and assistance with deliveries between Vryheid and Pretoria and the artwork in my educators' notes. I am grateful to my colleagues and friends for their support and encouragement. A big word of thank you goes to all the educators and music friends who assisted me with information.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother with her beautiful singing voice who always encouraged me to do music.

Abstract

Music in the learning area Arts and Culture and the subject Music fight for survival in rural South Africa. Neither more experienced educators nor new generalist teachers were trained to teach the four art forms of Arts and Culture. Courses for Arts and Culture as learning area at universities are scarce and the courses that do exist mostly cater for students who already have a background in music. Other courses again only cover two or three art forms and do not follow the actual school curriculum for Arts and Culture. This then leaves the educator unprepared to deal with the realities of the learning area. Many principals and educators regard Arts and Culture as a filler subject for educators who do not have enough lessons on their timetables. The lack of knowledge amongst educators, a curriculum with no logical progression and scarcity of resources have resulted in learners who are inadequately prepared for and not interested to continue with Music as subject in grade 10 to 12 which in turn leads to fewer music students at universities and fewer music educators.

This thesis aimed to pinpoint some of the challenges in Music and suggest possible solutions to start a remedial process to get Music back into schools. Educators, principals and subject advisors were consulted regarding the challenges they are experiencing in music and suggestions and possible solutions were sought from literature and experts in the field of music. The finding has been that similar challenges are experienced throughout South Africa and these challenges are amplified in rural areas.

The present situation where untrained educators have to teach a specialist area like music as part of Arts and Culture can only be improved with an ongoing process of intensive workshops and mentoring programmes for in-service educators by subject advisors who are qualified in music and music experts who have an in-depth knowledge of the school curriculum. It will also be advisable for the Department of Basic Education to appoint more subject advisors and also appoint them according to their specialization area/s so that they are capable of assisting educators effectively.

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