

The training of the non-specialist music teacher in Zimbabwe: a case study

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Background and rationale for the study

Music education is one of the eleven subjects taught in Zimbabwean primary schools. However, unlike subjects such as Mathematics, Shona, Ndebele, English and Science, Music is regarded as a 'non-examinable' subject. This means that the pupils do not write a music examination when they complete their seven year primary education course. The teaching of general music education in Zimbabwean primary schools is furthermore the responsibility of general school teachers. General school teachers are teachers who were trained to teach several subjects, and music was merely one of many subjects studied during their initial training as teachers. One can thus assume that in general, music education in Zimbabwean primary schools is being taught by teachers who are not specialists in music.

According to the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* (CDU, 1989:1, 2) music should be taught in its socio-political and cultural context in order to achieve the goal of producing musically literate citizens who understand and appreciate their culture and society. To realise this goal the syllabus aims at enabling children to enjoy music through participating in a variety of musical activities, which involve listening, performing, analysing and creating music. Thus the objectives for teaching music hinge around development of musical literacy and acquisition of musical skills, such as singing, making and playing simple instruments, dancing, creating, and responding to music.

However, in order to ensure that the above-mentioned desired educational goals, aims and objectives of music education are achieved, it is imperative that the music syllabus be implemented effectively. During a small-scale research project conducted in 2002, certain music teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans were studied in order to determine whether they were aligned with the goals, aims and objectives of the music syllabus (Mufute, 2002:3). The results of this investigation revealed that the implementation of the music curriculum was initiated in a manner that would most likely not achieve the desired educational goals, aims and objectives as stated in the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*. Although there may be many reasons for this

unsatisfactory state of affairs, there was reason to suspect that the teachers did not have the required competences to realise the envisaged goals, aims and objectives of the music syllabus because they had not acquired these during their training as teachers.

Training non-specialist music teachers in Zimbabwe

The focus of this study thus was to establish if the training of teachers at a particular teachers' training college in Zimbabwe is equipping students as future teachers with the required competences to realise the aims and objectives of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*. This study follows on the above-mentioned initial small-scale investigation conducted in 2002, which revealed that teachers lacked the required competences to implement this particular syllabus effectively (Mufute, 2002:16) The following shortcomings with regard to music competences were then identified:

- *Notation:* The teachers were not able to teach staff notation adequately. Teaching of staff notation was confined to basic note values at the expense of other aspects, such as dotted notes, simple time signature, clefs, and letter names of staff lines. In addition, the teaching of tonic solfa notation was a neglected area.
- *Listening:* Learners almost never listened to, or analysed music.
- *Improvisation:* Activities to stimulate learners' creativity with regard to music were non-existent.
- *Playing of instruments:* Activities which involved the playing of instruments such as recorders, drums, rattles and tambourines were not meaningfully taken care of. The teachers did not appear to be equipped to play these music instruments themselves. Percussion band activities were virtually ignored. Learners also did not make simple percussion instruments.
- *Singing:* There was no balanced exposure to different types of songs. The teachers did not define or determine the purpose of the songs selected for singing. On the aspect of songs representing cultures outside Zimbabwe, children were only exposed to songs of Western cultural background. Essentially, music education was equated with singing. Hence, the main thrust in music lessons was to enable learners to sing songs just for the sake of singing them.

Although the research on which these findings were based was a small-scale project, there is reason to believe that these findings reflect a general state of affairs with regard

to teacher preparedness in most Zimbabwean schools. It is my contention that a teacher, who has not been equipped with the required competences to implement the curriculum, can be regarded as not capable of teaching music to learners. In this regard, Ndawi (1997:122) argues that teacher education institutions should be held accountable for what happens in the main stream education system in Zimbabwe, since these institutions have a mandate to prepare the personnel which services that sector. Ndawi (1997:124) furthermore believes that some teacher education institutions stray out of their goal of preparing competent teachers by emphasizing the further development of students' depth of content in specific subjects at the expense of those aspects that will form the basis of the teachers' work experiences. Ndawi (1997:125) accordingly raises his concern about the mismatch between higher education and the real needs of societies. According to Ndawi and Peresuh (2005:214), a contributory factor for this discrepancy is the absence of an efficiently co-ordinated link between the policy planners and curriculum developers for basic education.

These researchers' views are supported by Palmberg (2004: 42), who notes the absence of music education priorities in the Zimbabwean school curriculum. Palmberg accordingly identifies the absence of a consistent cultural policy in Zimbabwe as a significant shortcoming, which has a detrimental effect on the state of music education in schools. In view of the concerns raised by Ndawi (1997), Ndawi and Peresuh (2005), and Palmberg (2004) chances are that teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe will produce insufficiently trained teachers who lack the needed competences to teach music.

Statement of the research problem

In this study, I investigated the nature of initial teacher training in Zimbabwe with regard to general music education in the primary school. This study was confined to only one teachers training college in Zimbabwe. The research question that guided the project has been formulated as follows: *Does the music training at this particular teachers training college equip students (as future teachers) with the necessary competences to implement the Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus and realise the desired goals, aims and objectives of the syllabus?* From this research question, the following sub-questions emerged:

- What are the desired goals, aims and objectives of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music*

Syllabus (1989)?

- What are the competences (skills and knowledge) required of teachers to implement this syllabus, thereby realising the desired goals, aims and objectives of the syllabus?
- What is the nature of teacher training at this particular college with regard to music education?
- Are the students, as future teachers, equipped with the required competences to implement the stated syllabus and realise the desired goals, aims and objectives of the syllabus?

The study thus endeavoured to address the above-stated main question and sub-questions. The researcher's curiosity to have these questions addressed was motivated by a desire for music to be effectively taught by competent teachers and an awareness of the value of music and the important role it plays to the individual and society. Music in the form of lullabies induces children to sleep. Through wedding and other cultural songs, it advances the celebratory spirit of occasions. Work songs make activities to be easy and enjoyable. Music in the form of religious choruses and hymnals facilitates the spirit of worship. Hunting songs have enchanting effects. Furthermore, music is used to help memory retain knowledge, for example when learning alphabet rhymes and alphabet (Lesoro, 1994: 28 -29). Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson (1999:133) point out that music enables children who sing every day to boost their chances of doing better in other subjects, such as mathematics and science. It also helps to create a favourable learning environment and can be used to heighten suspense, sadness or joy. As argued by Dunbar-Hall (2005:34) music contributes to the development of individual identity and aesthetic awareness. It also acts as a form of socialization and as such can promote multiculturalism. In essence, music strengthens the richness and breadth of pupils' heritage, helps to improve health and provides a good way of using leisure time, while at the same time, raises the spirit of learners and school as a whole (Collins, 1999:61-62).

It is my contention that people cannot live without music and without people music cannot exist. The two need each other. As such, the training of music teachers in Zimbabwe and elsewhere should ensure that teachers are equipped with essential musical and professional skills to teach the subject effectively.

Concept clarification

The following terms will be used throughout the article and now require clarification:

- **Competence/competency**

For the purposes of this study, the term 'competence' or 'competency' will be used to refer to " ...the ability to do something well or effectively" (*Essential Collins English Dictionary*, 2004:150). The adjective, 'competent' is used to describe something that is "... suitable or sufficient for the purpose". A 'competent' teacher will thus refer to a teacher who has "...sufficient skill or knowledge (*Essential Collins English Dictionary*, 2004:150).

- **Curriculum**

The meaning of the term curriculum in this study is derived from the schools of thought put forward in Posner (1995:5-7), and is regarded as an incorporation of content to be taught or learnt, objectives for teaching or learning the content and the instructional strategies to be used in the teaching or learning of the content

- **Content**

Leithwood (1981: 32) sees content as specific facts, concepts or generalisations, as well as thought systems that are included in a curriculum. Content is considered by many people as the heart of any curriculum and can be viewed as curriculum topics presented as propositions to be taught or learnt (objectives) or as subject matter (concepts) to guide teaching or learning (Posner, 1995:85, 90). In the context of this study, the word 'content' is used to refer to the topics and concepts to be taught or learnt as specified in the music curriculum documents of the college, as well as the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* (1989).

- **Implementation**

Fullan describes implementation as a process of putting into practice an idea, programme or activities that will generate change (1991:65). In the context of this study, the term 'implementation' is used to refer to putting into practice the ideas outlined in the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* (1989), as well as in the music education syllabus of the particular teachers training college.

- **Desired goals, aims and objectives**

In this study, these terms are used in terms of statements that express overall educational intentions and purposes. *Goals* are seen as general and broad educational intentions and purposes. Goals are achievable in the long term. *Aims*, on the other hand, are similar to goals, but attainable in a shorter period than goals. *Objectives* are fairly specific statements of educational intentions and purposes and are realisable in the short term (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 1996:57).

- **General music education**

General music education is taught by teachers who are general classroom practitioners and not necessarily music specialist teachers. This type of music education is designed to suit the needs of all pupils in general, irrespective of their levels of talent or aptitude.

- **Knowledge**

Knowledge can be defined as "... (1) the facts or experiences known by a person or a group of people; (2) the state of knowing; (3) specific information about a subject" (*Essential Collins English Dictionary*, 2004:418). For the purposes of this study, all three clarifications apply. The term 'knowledge' thus refers to required knowledge about music for effective teaching from Grade One to Grade Seven.

- **Music syllabus**

A syllabus is a document that spells out aspects such as the rationale for the course of study, the topics and content to be covered, resources to be used, learning objectives, as well as learning activities (Posner, 1995:7). There is no significant difference between a 'syllabus' and 'curriculum'. A syllabus spells out the curriculum, in other words, skills and knowledge to be acquired by the learners. Apart from highlighting the skills and knowledge to be acquired, the syllabus may include other aspects like the rationale for the course of study and assessment issues. For the purposes of this study, a music syllabus is considered as a document that articulates some of the features suggested above by Posner (1995:7) in order to guide the process of teaching and learning music.

- **Non-specialist or 'general' music teacher**

In this study, the term 'music teacher' is used to refer to a teacher who does not have specialised music teacher training, but who was trained as a general classroom teacher, as opposed to a 'music specialist', who received specialized training in music and holds qualifications in music.

- **Skill**

According to the *Essential Collins English Dictionary* (2004), the term skill refers to "... (1) the special ability or expertise enabling one to perform an activity very well, or (2) something, such as a trade, requiring special training or expertise" (2004:730). Effective music teachers require specific skills that will enable them to teach music successfully.

Teacher training

A central factor that should be given due respect and consideration in any training programme is the notion of relevance. According to Ndawi (1997), educationists in general, and teacher educators in particular, are challenged to take the responsibility of ensuring that their professional business, namely education, measures up to the demands of quality, quantity and relevance to the needs of all learners. This implies that a training programme that does not respond to a specific need should be regarded as not relevant and thus not worthwhile. Such a situation, which is not desirable, resembles what Chanakira (1998:14-53) labels as "a waste of time". Chanakira warns that such an education is in fact an "effective way of spreading ignorance".

Teacher education colleges should thus strive to offer high quality programmes for the production of teachers well versed in *what to teach* and *how to teach*. They should without fail strive to produce competent teachers. In this regard, Chanakira identifies the following subject and professional knowledge and skills required of competent teachers:

- The ability to prepare schemes of work, lesson plans and records of work.
- The ability to interpret the syllabus and teach the concepts embedded in the curriculum.
- The ability to implement the various classroom and co-curricular teaching situations the teachers experience in their careers (Chanakira, 1998:14-17).

It is therefore wastage of time and resources for teacher education colleges to produce and send into the education system music teachers who are not able to prepare

schemes, lesson plans and other records and are not able to interpret and teach the various concepts embedded in the music syllabus.

Turner and Bash (1999:97) view a competent teacher as one who is professionally committed to promoting the education and well-being of all children. In this regard, they believe that a competent teacher will be well conversed in the subject or curriculum area to be taught and will be skilled to teach key ideas and content related to the subject or curriculum area. A competent teacher will also be a good manager who can work amicably with children and other people. These requirements are also relevant for general music education teachers. For them to be considered 'competent', they should be determined to promote music education, be able to teach the music curriculum, and be able to manage learners in a friendly manner. Cohen *et al.* (1996:23) thus hold that newly qualified teachers should be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the purposes, scope and balance of the curriculum as a whole. They should also have proper knowledge and understanding of the subjects at a level that supports effective teaching. They should furthermore be able to apply the knowledge gained to plan and teach proper lessons, and assess learners' progress. In this regard, it therefore implies that teacher education institutions should not relegate their responsibility of training high quality teachers.

The 'competent' music teacher

Flolu (2004:177) believes that teacher training programmes in the field of music education should focus on the acquisition of basic music knowledge, as well the attainment of skills and competencies relevant to the special demands of the profession and needs of the learners and schools. In this regard, he argues that a music teacher needs to be able to sing and use his or her voice during music teaching. A music teacher should also be able to demonstrate theoretical and practical aptitude on selected instruments, such as recorders, drums, rattles and keyboard. Flolu (2004: 178) then raises another important aspect, arguing that music teachers, especially those teaching in Africa, need to exhibit knowledge and skills in the teaching of indigenous music and dance. This philosophy is supported by Rideout (2005:40-41), who believes that music educators should help learners to understand the expression of their own musical heritage by selecting music that leads to a broader understanding of their cultural expressions in music. Flolu and Rideout's sentiments correspond with Dunbar-Hall's

(2005:33-34) view of music education as cultural studies, which connect students with everyday life and culture.

Flolu's views are supported by those of Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie, Woods and York (2001:114), who argue that music teacher training programmes should involve extensive experience of those music elements the teacher will be expected to deal with in his or her teaching of music to learners. By the time of completion of his or her teacher education course, the student, as future music teacher, should not only have acquired adequate *theoretical* knowledge, but should also have acquired *practical* competences in musical activities such as singing, listening, analysing and creating. Campbell, *et al.* (1999:135) share similar views, arguing that, essentially, music teachers should be teachers who appreciate music and the role it plays in human lives. These authors identify a wide range of music skills required of a competent teacher, such as the ability to conduct, perform (sing and play an instrument), create and dance to music. Music teachers should also be able to analyse, discuss and evaluate music. Campbell *et al.* (1999: 135) furthermore believe that music teachers should be familiar with music vocabulary and should be able to read and write music.

In addition, Blackburn (2000:2, 3) believes that a good music teacher is a person who manages to involve learners at all stages of the learning process. This is achieved through creating opportunities for demonstration, exploration and hands-on practice. A good music teacher is a person who is able to facilitate learning experiences and develop concepts in an incremental approach that begins at the beginning and logically leads from one level to another. Blackburn also sees a good music teacher as somebody with the ability to stimulate learners' imagination and creativity. Collins (1999:101) is of the opinion that a music teacher should furthermore have the ability to detect errors in musical performance. With regard to managing learner responses, Collins stresses the importance of maintaining a good rapport with learners. A music teacher should be able to handle learners in a firm but fair manner, while at the same time arouse enjoyment, interest and participation (1999:101). Lesoro's views (1994: 30) are of particular interest to this study. This author is of the opinion that a person does not have to be particularly gifted to teach music. What is needed, however, is self-motivation and commitment to cultivate the love of music in learners by presenting lessons that offer sufficient opportunities for participation.

Elliot (1995:262) on the other hand, argues that musicianship and the ability to teach music competently are interdependent. This implies that a competent music teacher will inevitably possess some qualities of musicianship. Elliot (1995:69-71) sees musicianship as a demonstration of musical understanding in a *practical* way. This can be demonstrated by means of performance, improvisation, composing, arranging and conducting. Elliot also argues that musicianship can be demonstrated at five levels, which he identifies as the novice level, the advanced beginner level, the competency level, the proficiency level, and the expert level.

- A person operating at *novice* level may have some formal knowledge, but strives to learn at trial and error capacity and has local, but not global focus. This person will be pre-occupied with reducing immediate problems. This situation renders him or her unable to make music in a reliable and reflective way.
- A person operating at the *advanced beginner* level has small degrees of musical knowledge. This provides small amounts of surplus attention, which will enable the person to move back and forth between local and global levels of musical thinking-in-action. However, Elliot believes that this person is not yet able to think reliably and fluently.
- A person operating at the *competency* level, on the other hand, is able to demonstrate practical and theoretical musical aptitude. This person is able to reflect-in-action by monitoring what he or she is doing in relation to the standard of musical practice. As such, this person is able to solve many musical problems.
- A person operating at the *proficiency* level makes automatic music actions, characterized by fluent thinking and reflecting-in-action.
- Finally, a person operating at *expert* level demonstrates a deep situational understanding of music, distinguished by full development and integration of musical knowledge. This person deliberately searches for and finds pleasure in subtle opportunities for artistic expression (Elliot, 1995: 69 - 71).

Elliot (1995: 72, 74) accordingly claims that music education should primarily be concerned with teaching and learning *musicianship*. During this process, teachers and learners should engage in finding, solving and meeting genuine musical challenges. The music educator's role will essentially be one of monitoring, coaching and modelling. With regard to Elliot's view, which links the music teacher's ability to teaching the subject with his or her level of musicianship, it thus means that teacher trainers should strive to

produce music teachers who ideally operate at a level of musicianship that is higher than the novice and advanced beginner levels.

It is my contention that the views Flolu (2004), Rideout (2005), Dunbar-Hall (2005), Choksy *et al.* (2001), Campbell *et al.* (1999), Blackburn (2002), Collins (1999), Lesoro (1994), and Elliot (1995) should be noted by trainers of music teachers, also in Zimbabwe. If music teacher trainers do not attend to the aspects mentioned by these renowned music educationists, they might fail in their endeavours to train competent music teachers. Thus, the focus of teacher training in the area of music should be on acquisition of relevant basic music knowledge and skills, so that by the time the students become qualified teachers, they are able to facilitate and stimulate learning, manage learners, develop concepts logically and incrementally, and teach all aspects of the music curriculum, including the teaching of indigenous music and dance. This implies that before the student teachers begin their teaching career, they should have acquired the needed competences to teach music. These skills include the ability to sing, analyse, create, conduct, dance, arrange, improvise, and read and write music.

It is also my contention that teachers training colleges should prepare students, as future teachers, to implement the relevant school curriculum of that particular country as effectively as possible to ensure that the desired goals, aims and objectives of the curriculum are being met. It is important for colleges of education to ensure that their music education programmes are relevant, focussed and clear enough to enable students to effectively understand the underlying principles and philosophies or belief systems of the music curriculum that they will implement in the classroom upon completion of their teacher training course of study. The student teachers need to be familiarised and assisted to understand the goals, aims, objectives, content and structure of the music curriculum, as well as the basic methodological strategies that may be adopted by teachers. Above all, the student teachers also need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to realise the goals and objectives of the music curriculum.

Within the context of this study, which focuses on Zimbabwean student teachers' preparedness to implement the national curriculum for music education, I will now provide a brief overview of the current music syllabus used in Zimbabwean primary

schools.

The Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus

The *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* was designed and published by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) in 1989. CDU is an arm of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture. This unit is responsible for designing the syllabuses and learning materials for all the official subjects taught in the primary and secondary schools. The syllabus will thus be described under the following headings: goals, aims and objectives, content, and methods and approaches.

- **Goals, aims and objectives**

Although not openly specific, the preamble section of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* (CDU, 1989:1) sheds some light concerning the goals and the underlying philosophies, which form the basis of the design, structure and nature of the syllabus. Essentially, music is regarded as a vehicle for socio-political and cultural promotion. From the above-presented philosophy, three primary *goals* are then identified, namely,

- ◆ facilitating children's understanding and appreciation of their culture and society by placing music in its socio-political and cultural context,
- ◆ making music enjoyable through participating in such musical activities as listening, performing, analysing and creating, and
- ◆ empowering children to become beneficiaries of music through becoming musically literate (CDU, 1989: 1,2).

These goals clearly suggest that learners should be actively involved during their training, not only as participators or music-makers, but also as analytic music listeners. It also implies that learners should be equipped with some skills that will enable them to read and write music symbols.

The *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* subsequently outlines fourteen *aims*, which need to be achieved. In essence, the syllabus aims to facilitate learners':

- ◆ enjoyment of music through participating in a variety of musical activities,
- ◆ understanding and appreciation of Zimbabwean music and that of other people, as well as ultimate understanding and appreciation of music as part of daily life and culture,
- ◆ development of musical knowledge and skills, critical listening and artistic

expression,

- ◆ development of well balanced, leadership and interpersonal qualities, as well as
- ◆ development of pride in cultural heritage, socialist values, and respect for other people's culture.

In addition to the goals and aims, the syllabus outlines twelve *objectives*, which need to be achieved by the end of seven years of primary education. The objectives of this syllabus can be condensed to incorporate the ability to:

- ◆ read, interpret and write staff notation with the aid of tonic solfa notation,
- ◆ follow and respond to a conductor or leader,
- ◆ listen, compose, discuss, describe, analyse, create and evaluate dance, vocal and instrumental music,
- ◆ sing and dance to a variety of Zimbabwean music, melodies from other countries, and songs related to other subject areas,
- ◆ make and play simple unpitched and pitched instruments, and
- ◆ co-operate with others and show self-discipline (CDU, 1989: 2).

● **Content**

With regard to the content of the syllabus, one needs to note that the curriculum is compartmentalised into three sub-areas, namely, theory of music, practical work and musical appreciation (CDU, 1989: 6 - 12). Outlined below are the skeletal details regarding the topics or concepts that should be taught in each sub-area:

- ◆ *Theory of music*: Learners should be familiar with the basic note values, simple time signatures, simple musical terms and other aspects of staff notation, such as the stave, treble clef and pitch names. They should also be able to do transcriptions.
- ◆ *Practical work*: Learners should be able to sing simple one-part, two-part and three-part melodies. These songs should include rounds, patriotic songs, descants and songs across the curriculum. Learners should also participate in music activities such as percussion band, and should be able to make and play percussion and pitched instruments. They should furthermore participate in activities which involve music and movement, such as traditional dances, simple formal dances, as well as music and drama or miming.

- ◆ *Musical appreciation:* In this regard, the syllabus states that learners should be able to appreciate instrumental performances. Songs to be sung should also cover a wide repertoire, which includes work songs, patriotic songs, religious songs, lullabies, folk songs, popular songs, and hunting songs.

A further analysis of the curriculum content also reveals that the curriculum structure proceeds from simple to complex and is sequenced along the spiral model. Simple concepts are introduced at the lower level (Grades One and Two) and then taught again at a deeper level in Middle Grades (Grades Three to Five), while new and more challenging concepts are introduced at the same time. Finally, in the Upper Grades (Grades Six and Seven), the concepts are re-visited and the most challenging concepts are then introduced.

- **Methods and approaches**

Apart from describing the goals, aims, objectives and content of music education in primary schools, the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* also suggests possible methods and approaches to be used in the teaching and learning of the various music concepts (CDU, 1989: 3-5). These include demonstration, illustration, explanation, discussion, group work, rote method, and the use of games, records tapes and films.

Although the music syllabus, as described above, articulate the skills and knowledge in which the *learners* will be expected to demonstrate mastery or competency, they also indicate by implication the various aspects in which the *music teachers* need to demonstrate competency. One can assume that a teacher will find it difficult, if not impossible, to impart musical knowledge and develop musical skills on aspects in which the teacher him/herself lacks competencies. It goes without saying that a teacher who does not have the skills to read, interpret and write musical notation will be unable to teach learners this particular skill. The same applies to the teaching of songs, playing of instruments and the execution of various musical activities highlighted in the objectives of the syllabus. Normally, in such circumstances, teachers tend to avoid teaching those aspects they regard themselves as incompetent to do. In essence, the teacher has to be musically and professionally competent to teach the various components as described in the syllabus. Without these critical competences, the teacher will not be able to implement the curriculum in such a way that its desired goals, aims and objectives are

achieved.

The implication thus is that teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe need to ensure that student teachers have acquired the required musical and professional competences to implement the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* in schools. The aim of this project was to determine whether this is indeed the case, by investigating the nature of the current training of music teachers at a particular teachers training college in Zimbabwe.

Research design and methodology

This research was thus done in order to determine how student teachers, as potential future implementers of the Zimbabwean music syllabus, are prepared during their teacher training programme. The research was done at one particular teachers' training college and can thus be regarded as a case study.

Anderson (1990: 112) sees a case study as research concerned with what happens to an individual or individual setting. Case studies may involve methodologies such as observation, discussion, interviewing, visits to different sites, and the study of records and documents (Wellington, 2004:95), and may combine for example elements of programme evaluation and description of situations (Anderson, 1990:112). Another relevant and complementary definition to that of Anderson is put forward by Bigdan and Biklen (1982, cited in Wellington, 2004:90), who see a case study as "...a detailed examination of one setting or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event". According to Stake (1994, also cited in Wellington, 2004:92), case studies can be classified as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. *Intrinsic* case studies are undertaken to gain a better understanding of a particular case, "... not for its uniqueness, but because it is of interest in itself". *Instrumental* case studies seek to develop understanding and knowledge and to provide insight and clarification of a particular issue or hypothesis. *Collective* case studies examine a number of different cases, which are chosen for the generation of theories about a larger collection of cases (Wellington, 2004:92-93).

This study can be regarded as an *instrumental* case study, which attempted to make a fairly detailed examination of what happens at one individual or single setting, namely a particular teachers' training college in Zimbabwe. The decision to carry out the study in

this form was *inter alia* motivated by the advantages surrounding its use and the lessons which can be learnt from undertaking case studies (Anderson, 1990, cited in Wellington, 2004:96). In this specific case study, illuminating information and insight capable of exuding a strong sense of reality and satisfaction was gained. Answers were discovered to the concern that teacher training colleges are suspected of having a share of responsibility in the creation of teacher competence shortfalls that have been observed in the implementation of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*.

Although the thrust of this study was to understand and gain knowledge of the nature of music education in the pre-service teacher education programmes of this specific college, the results of this particular case study have a potential of being an acceptable representation of the situation in the Zimbabwean primary teachers' colleges. A contributory factor is that colleges regularly exchange external examiners, a situation which stimulates cross-pollination of ideas. Another causative factor is that curricula for the teachers training colleges are basically similar, as colleges regularly share and exchange ideas when designing their syllabus drafts which are finally all approved by one national body, namely the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Zimbabwe.

In order to address the first two sub-questions, namely to determine the desired goals and objectives of music education as well as the subsequent implied competences (knowledge and skills) required of teachers, a document analysis of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus* was done. This was supported by a review of literature pertaining to the outcomes of music education. Various authors' views on the kind of competences required of music teachers were also referred to. Subsequently, another document analysis of the music education syllabus and schemes of work of music lecturers at this particular college was done. The intention was to determine the specific music competences (knowledge and skills) developed by this particular teachers training institution and to make a comparative analysis to establish how the music education syllabus and the music lecturers' schemes of work relate to the expectations and competences required of teachers to implement and realise the goals and objectives of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*. To facilitate the systematic gathering of information, checklist instruments were designed, incorporating ideas suggested in literature sources consulted on research methodologies.

Over and above the document analyses, more information which led to addressing the sub-questions on the nature of teacher training at this particular college and the equipping of students with the required music competences have been gathered through interviews and questionnaires. The three music lecturers involved in the training of students were interviewed individually. An instrument with structured questions to guide the discussion during the interview was used. The interviewees were asked to supply information on the nature of music education and teacher training at their college, and to give an overall opinion of the quality of their products *vis a vis* their potential to implement the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*.

Finally, twenty final year students were requested to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. Students were encouraged to evaluate the perceived relevance of their training in comparison with the competences required of teachers to implement the music curriculum and realize the goals, aims and objectives of the national music syllabus. The students were selected through the simple random sampling procedure. Koul (1997:115) describes simple random sampling as a procedure which allows each member of a population an equal and independent opportunity to be selected for participation. The use of lottery tickets or the use of a table of random numbers are suggested as ideal devices of creating free and carefully controlled conditions that deny the researcher the privilege of bias in the selection process. In this study, I made use of the lottery approach to draw the twenty participants. Cards to match all the students on a one to one basis were made. Twenty of the cards were numbered from one to twenty and the rest were left blank. All the cards were placed in a box and thoroughly mixed after which the students were asked to pick a card each. Those who picked the numbered cards automatically became the participants.

Three data-gathering methods have thus been used in an attempt to answer the central research question, namely *Does the music training at this particular teachers training college equip students (as future teachers) with the necessary competences to implement the Zimbabwean primary music curriculum and realise the desired goals, aims and objectives of the syllabus?* These methods were document analysis, interviews and questionnaires and covered both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Results of the investigation

The findings will subsequently be *presented, interpreted* and then *discussed* according to the methods used. These methods were document analysis and the use of questionnaire and interview approaches.

- **Document analysis**

Three documents were analysed, namely the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*, the music education syllabus of the particular college, and the music education schemes of work used by the lecturers in this college. The primary intention was to ascertain the implied knowledge and skills expected of teachers to effectively implement the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*, and also to ascertain if student teachers were being adequately empowered to teach primary school music in Zimbabwe.

- ♦ **Analysis of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus***

The analysis of the syllabus will be presented according to its underlying philosophical base, that is, the goals, aims and objectives; content areas, and the suggested methods and approaches for teaching the subject.

With regard to its *philosophical grounding*, it is clear that the syllabus seeks to place music in its socio-political context for better understanding of culture and society. Music is viewed as a vehicle for the promotion of culture and society. An analysis of the *goals, aims* and *objectives* of the syllabus reveals that the syllabus strives to ensure enjoyment of music through participating in performing, listening, analysing and creating music, thereby producing musically literate Zimbabwean citizens. Notable in this regard is the fact that singing of songs and song-related activities occupy a significant place towards the fulfilment of the stated objectives.

From the analysis, it is also clear that the *Zimbabwe Primary School Syllabus* has three major *content* areas. These are theory work, practical work and musical appreciation. In theory work the pupils learn basic note values, dotted note values, the staff, treble clef, and simple time and key signatures. They also learn to sing and play intervals and musical pieces from notation. In practical work the pupils sing short pieces, longer pieces, rounds, descants, and two part and three part songs They are also exposed to

music and movement activities such as rhythmic response to music and sound, action songs, work songs, and dances, as well as the playing of musical instruments such as the recorder, marimba, flute and percussion instruments like drums and rattles. Other musical activities performed are the making of simple musical instruments and the performing of music and miming or drama activities. In the area of musical appreciation the learners learn Zimbabwean work songs, hunting songs, war songs, and folktale songs, as well as religious or church songs. Also included is the appreciation of popular music such as rock, soul and reggae, the appreciation of Western and African musical instruments and those of other cultures.

With regard to *methods* and *approaches* implied in the syllabus, teachers are recommended to apply such methods and approaches as demonstration, illustration, explanation, discussion, rote method, creativity, improvisation, group work, games, simulations, and to use project work, records, tapes, films, resource persons, peer teaching, integrated teaching, concerts, and tours. The analysis of the above-mentioned document thus suggests that, in order to implement the curriculum successfully, music teachers need to possess and accordingly apply essential competences, which not only relate to music competences as such, but also require teachers to be competent with regard to syllabus interpretation, teaching skills and the ability to manage and facilitate teaching and learning situations. In order for the syllabus to be implemented successfully, the teacher needs to understand the purpose, components, key ideas and content of the syllabus. The teacher also needs to identify the ideal strategies to employ in the teaching of concepts embedded in the syllabus. Implicit is furthermore the teacher's ability to prepare schemes of work and lesson plans, prepare and maintain records of work and prepare relevant teaching and learning aids. In order to facilitate the teaching and learning situation, the music teachers should be able to attend to the wellbeing of learners and work amicably with children, apply musical knowledge and skills gained to teach lessons, as well as assess learners' progress.

It is essential for music teachers to acquire the above competences since the ability to interpret the syllabus, and the ability to prepare for teaching, coupled with the ability to manage teaching and learning situations are critical tools for a teacher. It is also crucial that music teachers acquire adequate understanding of the topics and concepts reflected above, as well as sound practical and professional skills to teach the topics and

concepts.

◆ **Analysis of the music education syllabus of the college**

An analysis of this particular document revealed the absence of a detectable underlying *philosophy* on which it is grounded. This is a concern, since the philosophical standpoint of a syllabus influences its nature and structure. According to the syllabus document, the *goal* of music education at this college is to equip students with competences to teach music at primary school level (in Zimbabwe). This goal is associated with that of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*. The *aims* also appear to be sufficiently aligned to the primary school syllabus, as it aims to expose students to Zimbabwean music and music of other cultures, to develop literacy in staff and tonic solfa notations, to equip students with knowledge and skills to teach music, and to develop a positive attitude towards music education. The syllabus articulates ten *objectives* altogether. In brief terms the objectives of the syllabus seek to enable students to carry out procedures done by music teachers, such as scheming, lesson planning and lesson delivery, to enable students to demonstrate understanding of staff and tonic solfa notation, and to enable students to collect, grade, and classify Zimbabwean traditional and other songs and instruments. Where as musical literacy and professional development of students are well represented, two important aspects, namely singing and the playing of instruments are not emphasised and appeared to be overlooked. The syllabus only emphasises the playing of percussion instruments and yet the school syllabus which the students are going to use upon graduation expects them to teach for instance pitched instruments like the recorder. This is a concern, since the students will be expected to demonstrate practical competency as music teachers in schools. On the other hand, it is commendable to note that the theory aspects expected to be taught at primary school level are well taken care of in this syllabus and students are actually exposed to more challenging work than they will be expected to teach in schools.

The syllabus recognizes the importance of appreciation of Zimbabwean popular music and that of foreign artists. Yet, it is silent about the appreciation of Zimbabwean traditional songs, such as work songs, hunting songs, and folktale songs. Appreciation of western instruments and those of other cultures is also not taken care of. The list of methods and approaches highlighted in this syllabus comprises rote method notation approaches, the Orff and Dalcroze methods, and the use of demonstration, audio and

video recordings. Reference to the Kodály method could not be found, although elements of this method seem to have been significantly infused into the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*, particularly the bias towards singing as a major activity.

The syllabus clearly spells out the intention to facilitate the students' acquisition of the ability to demonstrate understanding of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*, and the ability to competently prepare for teaching of the subject. However, in the area of preparation to teach, the aspect of preparation and maintenance of records is left unattended. The area of management of teaching and learning situations also appears neglected. The syllabus is silent about the development of student teachers' abilities to look after the welfare of the children, work amicably with children, and assess learning progress.

From the above it seems that, although certain aspects of correlation with the school syllabus could be detected, the syllabus does not thoroughly align itself with some key aspects of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*.

◆ **Analysis of work schemes of music lecturers**

The set of schemes of work that were analysed can be categorised into three subsets. The first subset comprised the schemes of work that the lecturers used during the initial residential phase. The initial residential phase is the period that falls in the first two terms of teacher training. During this phase the lectures that were presented strived to equip students with knowledge on such topics as the value of music education, syllabus interpretation, methods and approaches for teaching music, and staff notation. The students were also equipped with skills to sight read, sing rounds, play percussion instruments, and prepare schemes of work and lesson plans.

The second subset of music lecturers' work schemes comprises the schemes of work that were used during the distance education phase that follows the initial residential phase. During this phase, which covers a period of five terms, the students were busy with teaching practice in schools. In this specific phase the students were given assignment tasks designed to enrich their understanding of note values, rote method, phrase method and whole song method. They were also exposed to activities that broadened their skills to read music, sing songs, play percussion instruments, teach

percussion bands, perform and teach traditional dances, and use music to teach concepts in other subjects.

The third and last subset of music lecturers' work schemes comprised the schemes of work that were used in the final residential phase of two terms duration. In this specific phase the students were exposed to learning programmes that sought to equip them with skills to teach music effectively, read and write music, sing songs, play instruments, and interpret the syllabus.

The three sets of schemes of work that were analysed reflected that adequate weight is being placed on the development of competences (knowledge and skills) relating to the interpretation of the primary school syllabus. Competences relating to the development of skills to prepare for music teaching also received adequate attention, except for the aspect on preparation and maintenance of records. The schemes of work showed no evidence of intention to develop skills on the keeping of records. Some aspects of competences on the management of teaching and learning situations were also left unattended, such as the development of the ability to look after the wellbeing of learners, the ability to work amicably with children, and the ability to assess learning progress.

The situation regarding the area of content was moderate. Competences relating to theory were given notable prominence in the schemes of work, while certain aspects of practical work were given little or no prominence at all. More prominence could have been given to the various singing activities highlighted in the primary music syllabus. The schemes of work are silent about the making of simple instruments such as rattles, jingles and drums. The schemes of work also make no reference to the playing of pitched instruments like the recorder, flute and marimba and yet the school music syllabus expects teachers to have some competences on the teaching of pitched instruments.

◆ **Analysis of documents: Conclusion**

Analysis of the above documents revealed that strong emphasis is being placed on the development of some of the competences crucial for the effective implementation of the primary music syllabus while at the same time little or no emphasis at all is being placed on others.

- **Questionnaires**

A total number of twenty final year students completed the questionnaires and responded to questions referring to their ability to interpret the music syllabus, their perception of their own preparedness to teach music at primary school level, their ability to manage teaching and learning situations, as well as their ability to understand and teach basic music concepts. Their responses can be summarised as follows:

- ◆ **Syllabus interpretation**

Respondents were asked to respond to the following question: *To what extent has training to teach music equipped you with the ability to understand the following aspects?* Their responses were as follows:

ASPECT	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
The purpose and components of the primary music syllabus	6	6	4	3	1
The key ideas and content of the primary music syllabus	4	7	6	2	1
The ideal strategies to employ when teaching music concepts	1	8	4	7	0

From the above, it appears that the majority of students responded positively. More than 80% of the respondents acknowledged having been well equipped with the ability to understand the purpose and components as well as key ideas and content of the primary music syllabus. An improvement is needed on the aspect of empowerment of students to employ ideal strategies for teaching music concepts so as to avoid the emerging of a situation whereby the knowledge gained during the period of training is wasted. A document analysis of the college's music education syllabus and schemes of work of music lecturers has revealed that satisfactory weight is being placed on syllabus interpretation issues. This may have contributed in creating the healthy situation noted above.

- ◆ **Preparation to teach**

Respondents were also requested to describe the level at which training to teach music has empowered them to carry out tasks such as preparing work schemes, music lesson plans, records of work and teaching and learning materials. They responded as follows:

ASPECT	Very Adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Very Inadequate
Preparation of music schemes of work	7	11	2	0
Preparation of music lesson plans	5	13	2	0
Preparation of records of work in music	6	6	7	1
Preparation of teaching/learning materials	5	12	2	1

It appears that the student teachers are being adequately equipped with the essential skills to prepare music schemes of work, lesson plans, and teaching/learning materials. On average, more than 85% of the respondents regarded themselves as being adequately empowered to prepare music schemes, lesson plans and teaching/learning materials. The schemes of work of the music lecturers also displayed evidence of emphasis on these aspects. However, the aspect regarding the development of skills to prepare music records seems to be requiring attention. Almost half of the respondents (40%) have conceded their inadequacy in as far as the preparation of records is concerned. The problem may be related to the lack of emphasis that was noted in the document analysis of the music lecturers' schemes of work. No evidence of intention to develop this aspect was evident in the music lecturers' schemes of work.

◆ Management of teaching and learning situations

Respondents were furthermore requested to indicate the degree to which training has equipped them with the capacity to manage teaching and learning situations with regard to music education. Their responses appear in the table below:

ASPECT	Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low
Taking full control of music education at a school	7	1	11	1	0
Looking after the well-being of children	3	7	9	1	0
Working amicably with children	3	9	8	0	0
Applying knowledge and skills to teach music	5	7	6	2	0
Using a variety of approaches to teach music	4	9	5	1	1

The students are overallly contented with the degree to which training has equipped them with the capacity to manage music teaching and learning situations. The credit for the success scored on this area is jointly shared by the music education personnel and the personnel in the section responsible for the general professional development of students.

◆ **Curriculum content to be taught**

The respondents' perceptions regarding their ability to understand basic music theory, due to their training, were also required. With regard to the question, *Have you been adequately empowered to understand and/or teach these aspects?*, the respondents answered as follows:

ASPECT	Yes	No	Not Sure
Basic note values	20	0	0
Dotted notes and rests	15	1	4
Simple time signature	18	1	1
Singing or playing intervals	14	5	1
The staff, treble clef, key signature	17	3	0
Tonic solfa notation	16	2	2
Simple sight reading activities	14	3	3
Simple transcriptions	13	4	3

The results show overall effective empowerment of students for teaching of theoretical aspects. Both the music education syllabus and schemes of work of the music lecturers gave identifiable prominence to most of the above theory aspects. However, it appears that the situation in three of the above areas calls for more monitoring or emphasis. These aspects are singing and playing of intervals, sight reading, and transcription activities. This is evidenced by the fact that the statistics shown above reveal that 30% of the respondents admitted that training has not equipped them to understand and/or teach intervals, while 30% and 35% respectively admitted to being not adequately empowered to understand and/or teach sight-reading and transcription concepts.

◆ **Practical work**

In order to find out whether training had empowered the students to teach the various practical work activities as expected in the syllabus, the respondents were asked to give "Yes" or "No" or "Not sure" responses on each of the various practical aspects indicated below.

ASPECT	Yes	No	Not sure
Singing short and longer simple songs	17	3	0
Singing rounds	12	3	5
Singing songs with descants	18	1	1
Singing two or three part songs	16	4	0
Singing songs related to other areas of the curriculum	17	3	0
Making drums, jingles, rattles, reed-pipes, etc.	18	1	1
Playing percussion instruments	18	1	1
Responding to sound or music	19	1	0
Singing action songs	20	0	0
Effecting formal dance routines	15	3	2

Performing traditional dances	17	3	0
Playing the recorder	10	8	2
Aural training activities	11	6	3

Whereas the situation regarding the empowerment of students in the area of practical work in general seems to be well taken care of, certain grey areas emerged. Activities such as the singing of rounds, playing of recorder, and aural training appeared to be neglected. According to information gathered from the music lecturers, the playing of the recorder and other pitched instruments is not included in the general teacher education music course. This therefore makes the authenticity of the ten students who conceded that training has empowered them to play the recorder to be considered questionable.

◆ Music appreciation

The impact of training *vis a vis* the teaching of music appreciation aspects reflected below was also assessed. The outcome of the responses was as follows:

ASPECT	Yes	No	Not sure
Singing work songs	20	0	0
Singing hunting songs	18	2	0
Singing patriotic songs	20	0	0
Singing war songs	19	1	0
Singing religious and church songs	17	2	1
Listening and analysing a variety of songs	17	1	2
Performing music and miming or dancing	20	0	0
Teaching popular music, well-known composers and their compositions	16	3	1

From the students' responses, one can assume that with regard to music appreciation, the training does indeed include various music appreciation activities. The responses in all the above music appreciation activities reflect that 80% or more of the respondents conceded that they were effectively empowered on the various music appreciation activities, but the "yes" answers on the aspects of listening and analyzing music and on music and miming or dancing seem to be a contradiction since the music education syllabus and the schemes of work exclude these aspects.

◆ Methods and approaches of teaching music

The respondents were also requested to give their assessment regarding the equipping of students with the skills to apply the methods and approaches suggested in the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*. Outlined below is the outcome of the responses.

ASPECT	Yes	No	Not sure
Use of group work, games and simulations	20	0	0
Use of improvisation and creative activities approaches	17	3	0
Use of records, tapes, etc.	10	10	0
Use of the project approach	15	4	1
Demonstrations and illustrations	18	2	0
Discussions and explanations	20	0	0
Rote methods	18	2	0
Use of resource persons	19	1	0

The responses on aspects relating to the empowerment of students on methodologies and approaches to teach music were largely positive, except for the aspect on the use of records and tapes. The respondents' rate of admittance of empowerment on the use of records and tapes stands at 50%, and at 75% in the case of the use of the project approach, while in the rest of the other areas the rate stands at 85% or more. This therefore dictates the need for the music education programmes to place more emphasis on the use of these and other products of technological advancement.

◆ **Evaluation remarks on quality and relevance of music teacher training**

When students were asked whether they regarded their training as enabling them to implement the music syllabus and realise the goals and objectives of the primary music syllabus, fifteen students (75%) responded positively, while five students (25%) felt that the training was inadequate. Of the fifteen students who responded positively, three students rated the training as *very high* with regard to quality and relevance while eight students rated it merely as *high*. Three of the fifteen positive students saw their training as of *average* level with regard to quality and relevance, while one of the students, albeit still positive, rated the standard of the training as *fairly low*. The ratings in the average, fairly low, and low ranges basically translate into admittance of inadequacy of training. Therefore the four students whose ratings fall in that category and the five who openly admitted to having received inadequate training to teach primary music education indicate that 45% of the students did not receive adequate training to implement the music syllabus and realise the goals and objectives of the primary music syllabus.

◆ **Students' perceptions on their own areas of strength**

In the final segment of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to comment on their areas of strength and on areas that need improvement. Presented below is a

diagram reflecting the aspects that emerged as the students' perceptions of their areas of strength. The numbers represent the number of students who acknowledged being strong in the respective areas:

Area of strength	Number of students
Singing	6
Understanding of the music syllabus	4
Playing of instruments	3
Staff notation	7
Teaching approaches	3
Flair for teaching infant grades (grade 1 and 2)	1
Provision of teaching/learning aids	1

The most popular area of strength, which commands 35% of the students, is staff notation. The popularity might stem from the fact that the college music education and the schemes of work of the music lecturers clearly emphasise this area of music education. Of the six students who claimed to be good at singing, two indicated being good at singing in tonic solfa notation, another two claimed to be good at singing generally, while one student in each aspect claimed to be good at singing rounds and work songs. The six students represent 30% of the respondents. Three students (15%) claimed to have a strong aptitude at the playing of instruments and the application of teaching approaches. In the area of playing of instruments, two students claimed to be good at playing percussion instruments, while one student claimed to have a strong overall aptitude at playing instruments.

◆ Students' perceptions of areas where they require improvement

The diagram below reflects the aspects that emerged as the students' areas of need for improvement. The numbers represent the number of students who acknowledged the need for improvement.

Areas requiring improvement	Number of students
Singing	6
Understanding of the syllabus	1
Playing of instruments	7
Staff notation	12
Teaching approaches	1
Music appreciation	1

Although staff notation emerged as the most popular area of students' strength it also emerged as the area most students admitted a need for improvement. Almost two-thirds (60%) of the students admitted having shortfalls in this area. The second and third

highest areas of need for improvement are the playing of musical instruments (35%) and singing (30%). The specific singing aspects cited as the areas of need for improvement were singing in tonic solfa notation and pitch and rhythm issues, while the playing of instruments was cited as an overall inability. This therefore implies and points to the need for the uplifting of standards in the following three major and critical areas of music education, namely staff notation, playing of musical instruments, and singing.

◆ **Questionnaires: Conclusion**

From the students' responses to the questions asked in the questionnaires, it appears that, in general, the students were contented with the music education programmes that they were exposed to. Their responses on the various aspects that the questionnaire touched on seemed to paint a good impression of the music education programme of study that would enable them to fulfil their aspiration to acquire a diploma in education. Yet, the students also admitted being inadequately trained to teach certain aspects of music. With this scenario emerging one can thus conclude that, according to the students' perceptions, they were not being adequately equipped with all the key competences that they would require as music teachers in schools in order to implement and realise the goals and objectives of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*.

● **Interviews**

As mentioned before, structured interviews were also conducted individually with the three lecturers responsible for music education at this particular college. This was done in order to, firstly, determine the nature of music education and teacher training at this college, and, secondly, to establish the views of these music lecturers in terms of the preparedness of the graduates of this college *vis a vis* their abilities to implement the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*. The following seven questions were asked to each individual music lecturer:

- *What academic qualifications do the students have when they enrol for teacher training?*
- *What music background do the students have when they enrol for teacher training?*
- *How are the general teacher education programmes structured?*
- *How are the music education programmes structured?*
- *In your opinion, do you think the music education programmes at your college are adequately preparing student teachers for effective music teaching in Zimbabwean*

primary schools? If “yes”, justify your opinion; and if “no”, what are the contributory factors?

- *Are there any aspects which you think the general teacher training process needs to address for the improvement of training of general music teachers?*
- *Are there any aspects which you think the music education programmes need to address for the improvement of training of general music teachers?*

With regard to the entry levels of the students, all three lecturers reported that of the five ‘O’ level subjects required, music was not a prerequisite. A few students have ‘A’ level qualifications. The second question related to the first, as it required information on the music background of students who enrol for teacher training. All three lecturers agreed that the students had very little or no music background. One lecturer mentioned that most students perceived music education to consist only of singing, while another colleague was of the opinion that, although one or two students may have a good music background, the majority seem to have very little interest in this subject.

With regard to the structure of the general training programme at this particular college, it appeared that, in addition to having lectures on Theory of Education, and Teaching Practice, students were also taught all eleven subjects which constituted the primary school syllabus. Students were expected to pass at least seven of these subjects in order to graduate.

With regard to the structure of the music education programmes, all three lecturers reported that the students were divided into five groups, with each group having one lecture per week on a specific day. During these lectures, students did theory of music, practical work, music history, music appreciation, as well as method of music education. The playing of instruments was confined to percussion instruments, and the playing of pitched instruments thus not done in this general music education course. Only the few students (about thirty at that point in time) who took music as a main subject were taught to play and teach pitched instruments. Two lecturers concluded that, because of time and manpower limitations, the students were just taught the basics in terms of subject content.

All three music lecturers interviewed furthermore concurred that the music education

programmes at this college were not adequately preparing student teachers for effective music teaching in the Zimbabwean primary schools. In this regard, all three lecturers identified the following aspects as main impediments:

- The 2-5-2 teacher training model allowed insufficient lecturer-student contact time.
- The allocated lecturing time of one period of ninety minutes per week was not adequate.
- Due to the time limitations the music education programmes could only focus on the basic aspects.
- The students had inadequate music background.
- One lecturer also concluded that, because of these impediments, “half baked and ill-groomed” teachers were being “churned into” the school system, which in turn gave rise to a continuation of the vicious cycle.

These three lecturers were also requested to identify areas for improvement, and in this regard, all three were of the opinion that the 2-5-2 teacher training model should be phased out. One lecturer proposed that students should be encouraged to specialise, so that well-equipped teachers could be injected into the schooling system. Two lecturers were of the opinion that students should be screened during the recruitment process. Another lecturer strongly felt that the fact that students only needed to pass seven of the eleven subjects in order to graduate, resulted in teachers often teaching school subjects which they themselves had failed during their training. This particular lecturer also felt that more time should be set aside for music education, proposing that less critical subjects like National and Strategic Studies be scrapped in order to allow more time for music education. From the interviews, it seems that all three lecturers were contented with their syllabus, although they were frustrated by the lack of adequate allocated time.

Based on the information gathered during the interviews with the three music lecturers, one can conclude that the music education programmes at this particular teachers training college did not adequately prepare student teachers for effective implementation of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*.

Conclusion and recommendations

The focus of this study has been to determine whether the training of non-specialist primary school teachers at a particular teachers training college in Zimbabwe was being

initiated in a manner that equipped them with the needed **competences** to realise the goals and objectives of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*. By implication, the study has revealed a need for music teachers to acquire the following competences:

- The ability to interpret the music syllabus.
- The ability to prepare for teaching of the topics and concepts embedded in the music syllabus.
- The ability to manage pupils and the teaching and learning of the music topics and concepts.

Although the music education programmes of this particular college are quite commendable, a need for the college's music education syllabus and the music schemes of work to have a more tight alignment with the primary music syllabus was noted. Certain crucial aspects that play a pivotal role in the implementation of the primary syllabus are marginalized or completely left out. It is very important for the music education programmes of teacher training colleges to have a very tight alignment with the specific school syllabus that their graduates will use in schools upon completion of their course. Situations whereby some key aspects are given a watered down treatment or are totally left unattended to, are not ideal, as they create gaps that negatively impact on the realization of the goals, aims, and objectives of the primary music syllabus. This therefore means that the noted alignment shortfalls automatically dilute the capacity of the college's music education programmes to effectively equip student teachers with the essential competences that they will need to implement and realise the goals, aims, and objectives of the *Zimbabwe Primary Music Syllabus*.

The college's music education syllabus lacks detectable statement(s) underpinning the philosophy on which the music education programmes are built. It is therefore suggested that a detectable underlying philosophy be enshrined in the college's music education syllabus. Furthermore, as has been already recommended above, the philosophy needs to be aligned with the underlying philosophy on which the school syllabus is built. Spelling out in a clear manner the underpinning philosophies of a syllabus is advantageous. Yet, it enables those whose task it is to implement or to supervise the implementation of syllabuses to have a clearer vision and perspective of the rationale for teaching the subject. It also helps them to have a clearer understanding of the goals, aims, and objectives of the particular syllabus.

The music lecturers' schemes of work also lacked evidence of intention to develop some of the crucial competences needed by teachers for effective realisation of the goals, aims, and objectives of the school music syllabus. It is important for the music lecturers to ensure that they place balanced weight on the development of competences crucial for effective implementation of the school music syllabus. They need to guard against marginalising and/or neglecting aspects that are crucial for the development of competences needed for the realisation of the goals of the school syllabus. Marginalising and ignoring important and critical aspects is in itself a recipe for "churning out ill-prepared" or "half-baked" music teachers who lack the needed competences.

As supported by other scholars like Chanakira (1998), Ndawi (1997), and Ndawi and Peresu (2005), teacher education colleges responsible for the training of music teachers are reminded of the need for adequate preparation of teachers who are properly equipped with the key competences that they will need as music teachers in schools for the realisation of the goals, aims, and objectives of the school syllabus. Some of the things that they need to do as measures to ensure effective preparation of music teachers have been raised above in respect of their music education syllabuses and music schemes of work.

Those responsible for the recruitment of students who will teach music in schools upon graduation need to include processes that determine the music backgrounds of candidates such as writing entrance tests in music and conducting interviews. This would improve the quality of students who enrol for teacher training. Since the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe is characterised by the fact that music is generally not being effectively taught in the primary schools and not taught at all as a properly time-tabled classroom subject in many secondary schools, music deserves to be considered as a disadvantaged subject worth needing some special consideration during recruitment of students for teacher training. Another way of overcoming the problem associated with the recruitment of students with little or no background in music would be through conducting bridging courses in music and any other subject that would have been deemed as disadvantaged.

Authorities in teacher training colleges may also consider facilitating the narrowing of the

knowledge and skills gap by allowing more contact time on the time table to disadvantaged applied education subjects like music. The existing situation whereby all the eleven applied education subjects are allocated the same time poses some treatment imbalance that are likely to negatively impact on the achievement of goals, aims and objectives for the programmes for the disadvantaged subjects.

The policy regarding the passing and failing of students is yet another area that calls for revisiting. Currently for a student to pass his/her teacher training course he or she has to pass seven of the eleven applied education subjects. The implication for this policy is that the teaching of certain subjects in the school system finds itself being entrusted to teachers who proved to be failures and not useful ambassadors of the subject.

Finally, it appears as if Zimbabwe no longer needs the 2-5-2 model of training its primary teachers. The model is very useful and much needed when there is a teacher shortage crisis in the school system. Zimbabwe is not at the moment in a crisis. Hence, the justification for its continuation appears questionable. Disbanding this model appears more appropriate and advantageous in that more contact time would be automatically created by reverting to the conventional model which offers less teaching practice time and increases students' time on residence at the college.

As final conclusion, it needs to be noted that some of the music education problems noted in this study are not unique to Zimbabwe. Yet, in order to provide learners with the opportunity to engage with music in a proper way, thereby benefiting from all the advantages music can offer, it is imperative that students, as future teachers, are trained in such a way that they can realise the idealistic goals, aims and objectives of the national school music syllabus.

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