

Significance of Vocal Art Pedagogy Module Offered by the Tshwane University of Technology

Sakhiseni Joseph Yende¹ and Mhlabuhlangene Buthelezi²

¹South African College of Music, Faculty of Humanities
University of Cape Town, South Africa
Email: sakhiseniyende@gmail.com

²Department of Performing Arts, Faculty of Arts
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a close relationship between vocal art pedagogy and multicultural music education in South African rural schools. It is clear that the pedagogy module offered by Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), vocal art has positioned TUT vocal art graduates to succeed in the labour market. This article discusses and raises awareness about the significance of the vocal art pedagogy module offered by the TUT. A qualitative research technique was engaged, employing methods such as interviews with vocal art pedagogy practitioners and vocal art lecturers. Scholarly writings were reviewed to derive trustworthy findings. The preliminary finding demonstrates that the vocal art pedagogy module offered at TUT has equipped pedagogy graduates with the relevant teaching skills for the labour market. It has further proved that vocal art pedagogy does afford graduates with employment opportunities. In conclusion, this study argues that vocal art should promote the pedagogy module as the study finds the module to be relevant to industry requirements.

Keywords: Multicultural music education, Vocal art pedagogy, South African rural schools, Employment, TUT vocal art graduates.

Introduction

This article discusses and raises awareness about the significance of the vocal pedagogy course offered by the Tshwane University of Technology. It is prudent also to give a brief background about the vocal art (VA) course offered at the Tshwane University of Technology. VA is divided into three categories namely: vocal performance, choral conducting, and vocal pedagogy¹ that serves as a major subject for vocal art students. At an introductory level, vocal art students must pursue all the three courses that are being studied at vocal art (Yende, 2017). In their third year of study, students are eligible to choose any one of these three subjects as a major subject. Vocal pedagogy (VP) offered by the Tshwane University of Technology has a module known as multicultural music education.² Students, who pursue a VP career most of the time are eligible to perform, compose music, play instruments, and be vocal teaching (pedagogy). It is believed that a student who has majored in vocal pedagogy from the third year to the fourth year is equipped with teaching techniques for schools. Carlson (2016); Walders (2005) articulate that VP practitioners find it easy to bring their art from the university to the workplace. The vocal pedagogy course offered by the Tshwane University of Technology focuses primarily on equity pedagogy as a means to prepare vocal pedagogy practitioners for the labour market. The beautiful side of being a vocal pedagogy practitioner is that you are eligible to work in various places such as universities, private schools, public schools, and independent teachers as well as in theatres (Wolfgang, 2015).

The vital role of vocal pedagogy was emphasised further by Zilliacus, Holm and Sahlström (2017) who assert that vocal pedagogy is the progressive approach for transforming teaching and learning and that it plays a significant role in unearthing information about cultural heritage. In addition, Rautenbach (2013) summarises that multicultural music education plays a vital role in enabling vocal

¹ It is important to note that Vocal Pedagogy is the vocal music education within Vocal Pedagogy (Walders, 2005). Vocal Pedagogy is the study of the approaches and principles of music instruction.

² Kang (2016) and Teicher (1997) articulate that multicultural music education is the method of both teaching the music of various cultures and teaching learners from diverse cultural backgrounds.

pedagogy practitioners to understand the dynamics of various voices and cultural influences in South Africa and across the globe. Furthermore, it appears in the literature that Vocal Pedagogy is identified and recognised as a reliable philosophy for transforming teaching and learning in South Africa (Rautenbach, 2013; Spurgeon, 2004). As noticed earlier, the Tshwane University of Technology offers a comprehensive vocal pedagogy programme, which has a multicultural music education module within the vocal pedagogy course. Therefore, it is clear that the Tshwane University of Technology is equipping pedagogical practitioners to understand the cultural influences of vocal pedagogy and arts education. It is within this cusp that this study discusses and raises awareness about the significance of the vocal art pedagogy module offered by the Tshwane University of Technology.

General Issues in Multicultural Music Education

Even though many scholars have highlighted the benefits and importance of multicultural music education in South African and across the globe, there is clear evidence that issues are surrounding the provision of multicultural music education in schools (Costes-Onishi & Lum, 2015; Kigozi, 2003; Tosic, 2012). According to Weidknecht (2009), multicultural music education has been receiving less attention in most of the developing countries. Other factors that contribute to the issues surrounding multicultural music education in developing countries is the absence of practitioners (Mugovhani, 2012). In addition, statements criticising multicultural music education in public schools have been made (Joseph, 2012). If less attention is given to employing multicultural music education, vocal pedagogy may be endangered. Scholars such as (Coss, 2013; Kigozi, 2008) agree that neglecting multicultural music education can result in overlooking cultural diversity in the classroom. It could be ascertained that ignoring arts education can have a negative impact on cultural diversity in the classroom.

Transformation of Teaching and Learning through Vocal Pedagogy

In the South African context, transformation in education plays a crucial role that cannot be overlooked. Carlson (2016) claims that in

arts education pedagogy plays a crucial role in the transformation of teaching and learning. Drawing from the literature on transformative teaching and learning in arts education, vocal pedagogy remains as fundamental tool in the transformation of and promoting integrated learning of arts (Nompula, 2012). Vocal pedagogy supports its practitioners to procure the types of skills that are necessary for the twenty-first century in South Africa. Rautenbach (2013) notices that vocal pedagogy helps the learner to be able to teach vocal pedagogy in schools as well as helps learners to learn other languages. Teaching music education to children, by exposing them to learn songs and dances of other cultures positively transforms them and correlate with the positive attitudes towards teaching and learning (Mugovhani, 2012).

Multicultural Music Education for Vocal Pedagogy Practitioners

Several of the scholarly writings show that there is a close connection between multicultural music education and vocal pedagogy practitioners in the labour market (Carlson, 2016; Sun & Leung, 2014). Kigozi (2008) agrees that vocal pedagogy practitioners find it easier to bridge between the university and the workplace. Multicultural music education offers Vocal Pedagogy practitioners skills that are relevant to the needs of music education (Thorgersen, Johansen, & Juntunen, 2016). The effectiveness of multicultural music education in Vocal Pedagogy has afforded many pedagogy practitioners opportunities in the labour market (Burnard *et al*, 2008). Scholars such as (Anosike, 2013; Mugovhani, 2012), who advocate that one of the most prominent advantages of multicultural music education to the Vocal Pedagogy practitioner is that multicultural music education gives them the dual skills of teaching voice and of teaching cultural subjects. This places practitioners in a better position to be employable.

Based on the above literature it could be ascertained that ignoring arts education can have a negative impact on the cultural diversity in the classroom. Vocal Pedagogy plays a critical role in transformative teaching and learning and has a great effect on the Vocal Pedagogy students and graduates by equipping them with the necessary skills. It can be also ascertained from the literature that scholars mention multicultural music education as a robust tool

for the vocal pedagogy teacher and vocalist (Nethsinghe, 2012). Scholars believe that multicultural music education affords vocal pedagogy practitioners a solid background in the specific vocal repertoire and dynamics to teach in the classroom (Venesile, 2010).

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative method and an exploratory research design was employed to collect the data. The researcher developed interview questions for this study to obtain solid data. A purposeful, non-probability sampling approach was piloted whereby 15 full-time qualified Vocal Pedagogy practitioners (who graduated from TUT) and four lecturers (from TUT) were selected for this study. These individuals are well-versed in and proficient with the phenomenon (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The response rate from the 15 Vocal Pedagogy practitioners was 100%, and from the four lecturers interviewed also 100%. To further strengthen the findings of this paper, scholarly writings were reviewed. Standard ethical procedures were followed in this study by ensuring that the participants are all aware of the nature of the study. Ethical considerations such as privacy, anonymity, and the possibility of withdrawing from the study when they do not feel comfortable to continue, were impressed upon the participants.

Findings

The findings of this study demonstrated that many of the respondents agree that the module has made them more relevant to the needs of the labour market and that the module gave them relevant teaching skills in the classroom. This has contributed largely to the employment opportunities offered by Vocal Pedagogy graduates of the Tshwane University of Technology. Therefore, the findings of this study will be divided into two categories, which are Vocal Pedagogy practitioners and Vocal Pedagogy lecturers.

Vocal Art Practitioners

The preliminary findings demonstrate that Vocal Pedagogy offered at the Tshwane University of Technology has equipped pedagogy graduates with the relevant skills for the labour market. The findings proved that Vocal Pedagogy affords graduates employment

opportunities. The findings indicate that this course has aided graduates to be versatile when teaching at schools. According to Green (2017), vocal pedagogy in the classroom makes teachers more flexible in the classroom and children follow the teaching style easily. The resultant teacher flexibility has been deemed an important aspect that should be taught at the university level to graduates. Vocal Pedagogy has become a core module that enables graduates to have much-needed skills as teachers and be more employable (Mugovhani, 2012). Vocal Pedagogy course reflects the cultural diversity and introduces music to the classroom, resulting in an authentic musical experience for students. The study found that the Vocal Pedagogy students and graduates demonstrated a common sense of satisfaction with the course offered by Tshwane University of Technology Vocal Arts. A handful of students and graduates advocated that the module should be extended, from the first level to the fourth-year level of their study for them to obtain well-grounded skills needed in their specialty field. Respondent 2 expressed that:

I am happy with the module that is offered currently, but I would like to see this subject being extended from the first year to the fourth year so that it can give us an underpinning of a knowledge of working with learners and understanding their culture ...

Based on the above quotation it is clear, that students and graduates would like to see some extension to the course so that it can afford them marketable skills. Universities that offer music education should develop the quality of skills that create more opportunities for Vocal Pedagogy practitioners to be more employable (Bridgstock, 2009).

Vocal Pedagogy Lecturers

The following are the summarised findings from the Vocal Pedagogy lecturers. The findings of this study demonstrated that most lecturers were satisfied with the Vocal Pedagogy course offered in the Vocal Art programmes at the Tshwane University of Technology. The findings of this study show that some lecturers were not fully satisfied with the attention given to the present course. It is interesting to note that other Vocal Pedagogy lecturers shared a similar sentiment with those graduates who would like to see this

course to be offered separately from the first year to fourth-year level. Dissatisfied participants contended that:

Vocal art should focus on multicultural music education from students' first year to their BTech degree. This will optimise the students with the theory of multicultural music education and aid them with the acquisition of necessary teaching skills. I would suggest that much more attention be given to vocal pedagogy to equip the student with ample teaching techniques needed in the classroom.

The findings of this study revealed that if the vocal pedagogy (multicultural music education) subjects were cut shorter; it might compromise the ability of Vocal Pedagogy practitioners to find employment. Another participant stated that: "Vocal Pedagogy students should be offered an opportunity to work with local schools to develop their teaching skills and expose them to the teaching and learning environment." The foregoing quotation demonstrates that Vocal Pedagogy programme should be amended to prepare students with the necessary and key teaching skills required in the industry. A well-prepared Vocal Pedagogy practitioner with teaching skills has an impact on learners' lives. Vocal Pedagogy helps the teachers to deal with the daily challenges of managing a classroom (Stoll *et al*, 2016). Scholars such as (Elliott & Silverman, 2014; Mugovhani, 2012) have identified two crucial skills, which are believed key in teaching pedagogies. These include: (1) the ability to build strong relationships; (2) excellent communication skills.

A study conducted by Joseph (2012) on the benefit of vocal pedagogy in the education of South Africa shows that it affords practitioners with unique teaching skills as both teachers and artists. Carlson (2016) further ascertains that vocal pedagogy plays an important role in promoting culture, teaching, and learning. The findings also revealed that many lecturers contend that vocal pedagogy is vital to pedagogy students because it equips them with the necessary skills that a teacher needs to have. It is also interesting to note that other participants agreed that the Vocal Pedagogy course should be taught from the first year to the fourth year separately for students to be equipped with the necessary methods to teach in the classroom. Spurgeon (2004) agrees that multicultural music education is perceived to play a significant role in uniting diverse cultures. Music education also promotes equality and social justice

in the classroom. South African universities should embrace multicultural music education to assist teachers to understand musical practices and artifacts of all cultural varieties (Klopper, 2004; Mangiagalli, 2005).

Mitigating Challenges to Vocal Pedagogy Practitioners in South Africa

Although the scholars deemed vocal pedagogy as a significant tool in promoting teaching and learning in South African schools other mitigating factors were considered as a major threat and factor that could possibly contribute to the unemployment of Vocal Pedagogy practitioners. (Yende, 2017) notices that other mitigating circumstances that appear as a threat to the success of vocal pedagogy are that the Department of Basic Education does not recognise the vocal pedagogy graduates as qualified practitioners for teaching in schools. Vocal pedagogy graduate who holds National Diploma and Baccalaureus of Technology degrees in vocal pedagogy are always persuaded to enroll for a bridging course, which is known as Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) offered by amongst others the University of South Africa and University of Pretoria just to mention two. Unless they make other alternatives such as approaching schools where they matriculated to come and teach there, they may not readily get employment. Such challenges have a major impact on unemployment opportunities for Vocal Pedagogy.

Awareness Needs to be Considered

As the Tshwane University of Technology is geared-up to curriculum transformation, the Vocal Art section must restructure its curriculum to infuse the qualities that the Department of Basic Education needs from the qualified teacher. Africanisation (decolonisation) and transformation of curricula are critical for the Vocal Art section. Yende (2017) also emphasises the need for Vocal Art at Tshwane University of Technology to review its curriculum so that students acquire more of those skills that the industry is looking for. It is also important for Vocal Art at the Tshwane University of Technology to create an important set of competencies from Vocal Pedagogy students.

Analysis

Based on results obtained from the findings of this study it can be ascertained that the Vocal Pedagogy module offered at the TUT Vocal Art section is vital for the preparation of the vocal pedagogies major. The findings also attest that the Vocal Pedagogy module serves as a bridge for graduates to move from the academic environment to the workplace. The students asserted that the module has to be more in-depth and theoretically grounded. It is interesting to notice that scholars such as Weidknecht (2009) observe that multicultural music education serves as a pillar that strengthens the diversity of cultural music. Papageorgiou & Koutrouba (2015) agree with the school of thought held by Yende (2017) and Weidknecht (2009) who establish that multicultural music education plays multiple roles for learners. Multicultural music education helps learners to feel more accepted in the classroom and helps learners to increase intercultural communication and interaction (Papageorgiou & Koutrouba, 2015).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study argues that Vocal Art should promote the pedagogy module because it is relevant to the needs of the industry. Furthermore, Vocal Art needs to recognise the importance of Vocal Pedagogy in the country and its influence. Vocal Pedagogy practitioners should have pedagogical and methodological competence that will increase their employability. To this end, this study is very ambitious and undoubtedly, it is clear that Vocal Pedagogy equips Vocal Pedagogy practitioners with novel methodologies of teaching in the classroom. Despite the challenges noticed by Yende and Mugovhani (2019), the vocal art section does offer quality training to graduates.

The study demonstrates that the vocal pedagogy in arts education models a way of increasing music education in South Africa. Vocal Pedagogy contributes to creating a positive classroom atmosphere for music education. It also assists the teachers to process the learners learning techniques and improve their teaching. Vocal Pedagogy invites learners to learn more about the various cultural groups in South Africa. It was also found that multicultural music education has the dual nature of promoting a relationship between culture

and education. The module offered at Tshwane University of Technology Vocal Art programme plays a vital role in South African music education. This study recommends that Tshwane University of Technology Vocal Art programme should include Vocal Pedagogy modules targeted towards preparing students to become teachers. Tshwane University of Technology, Vocal Art section should expose Vocal Pedagogy students to teaching and learning environments to give students the needed insight and skills.

References

- Anosike, P. O. (2013). *Praxialism: A philosophical foundation of multicultural education in a democratic society*. Toledo: University of Toledo.
- Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research and Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360802444347>
- Burnard, P., Dillon, S., Rusinek, G., & Saether, E. (2008). Inclusive pedagogies in music education: A comparative study of music teachers' perspectives from four countries. *International Journal of Music Education*, 26(2), pp. 109-126.
- Carlson, R. P. (2016). Teaching sight-reading to undergraduate choral ensemble singers: Lessons from successful learners. In *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Coss, R. (2013). Multicultural perspectives through music & sustainability education. *Multicultural Education*, 21(1), pp. 20-25.
- Costes-Onishi, P., & Lum, C. H. (2015). Multicultural music education in Singapore primary schools: An analysis of the applications of a specialist professional development in practical music teaching. *Multicultural Education Review*, 7(4), pp. 213-229.
- Elliott, D. J., & Silverman, M. (2014). *Music matters: A philosophy of music education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), pp. 1-4.
- Green, L. (2017). *Music, informal learning and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- Joseph, D. (2012). Sharing ownership in multicultural music: A hands-on approach in teacher education in South Africa. *Australian Journal of Music Education*, 2, pp. 10-19.
- Kigozi, B. (2008). *An evaluation of music education on elementary schools in Buganda: A way forward*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

- Kigozi, B. (2003). Cultural influences on the development of a young child: An investigation into cultural socialisation and community music involvement amongst children in Uganda. *The 3rd International Research in Music Education Conference*, pp. 8-12.
- Klopper, C. J. (2004). *Variables impacting on the delivery of music in the learning area arts and culture in South Africa*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Mangiagalli, C. (2005). African music in the FET curriculum: An investigation into teaching strategies and the development of a technological resource. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.
- Mugovhani, N. G. (2012). *The Androgynic Pedagogic Approach in the Study and Teaching of Performing Arts in South Africa*. Sociology Study.
- Nethsinghe, R. N. (2012). A snapshot: Multicultural music teaching in schools in Victoria, Australia, portrayed by school teachers. *Australian Journal of Music Education*, 1, pp. 57-63.
- Nompula, Y. (2012). An investigation of strategies for integrated learning experiences and instruction in the teaching of creative art subjects. South Africa.
- Papageorgiou, P., & Koutrouba, K. (2015). Teaching multicultural music in elementary school: Issues about what, when, and how to teach. *Hellenic Journal of Music, Education and Culture*, 5, pp. 1-12.
- Rautenbach, D. (2013). *Vocal pedagogy: Goals, objectives, scope and sequencing for undergraduate students*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Spurgeon, D. (2004). Vocal pedagogy skills for the undergraduate choral conductor. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 13(2), pp. 28-33.
- Stoll, L., McKay, J., Kember, D., Cochrane-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (2016). *Teachers as learners*.
- Sun, Z., & Leung, B. W. (2014). A survey of rural primary school music education in Northeastern China. *International Journal of Music Education*, 32(4), pp. 437-461.
- Thorgersen, C. F., Johansen, G., & Juntunen, M. L. (2016). Music teacher educators' visions of music teacher preparation in Finland, Norway and Sweden. *International Journal of Music Education*, 34(1), pp. 49-63.
- Tosic, M. (2012). Multicultural education: Learners with diverse linguistic and cultural background: A case study of one primary school in Norway.
- Venesile, C. J. (2010). The acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge by vocal jazz educators. Case Western Reserve University.
- Walders, P. M. (2005). *Vocal pedagogy and applications for conductors not trained in singing*.
- Weidknecht, M. K. (2009). Multicultural music education, building an appreciative audience.

- Wolfgang, N. A. (2015). Adolescent female musical theater belt pedagogy: Preparation, approaches, and experiences of Ohio music educators. *Kent State University (Vol. 66, Issue 4)*. Kent State University.
- Yende, S. J. (2017). Employment opportunities and challenges experienced by Tshwane University of Technology vocal art graduates: A case study. Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa.
- Zilliacus, H., Holm, G. & Sahlstrom, F. (2017). Taking steps towards institutionalising multicultural education: The national curriculum of Finland. *Multicultural Education Review*, 9(4), pp. 231-248.