

## **A One-Day Training Workshop has the Ability to Motivate Teachers and Bring about Real Change in Teaching Practice: A Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

*In this article the researcher sought to find out if a single, short continuing professional development music workshop could cause any change in the classroom and what effect it would have on the professional and personal development of the attendees. The article focused on a case study that described the emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual impact that a training workshop for black musically untrained pre-school teachers had on a pre-school teacher from an Informal Settlement in Germiston, East Rand of Johannesburg. Observation at her pre-school site and an in-depth interview revealed the meaning, importance and function the music training had for her. The findings showed that the music training provided this teacher with ways of understanding, developed her music skills and developed her self-esteem. The study highlights how the methodology that was used to expose a pre-school teacher who have never been exposed to Western classical music before changed her attitude towards this specific music style, developed her creativity and motivated her to such an extent that she felt competent and confident to teach Western classical music. The results of the evaluation suggest that a short-duration, well-structured music education workshop based on practical and interactive teaching ideas, presented to teachers with no previous experience of Western classical music can impact their learning positively in the long run. The research found that short induction sessions by experienced presenters, can change teachers' attitudes towards Western classical music and motivate them in a positive way and also uplift their personal development in the process.*

### **Introduction**

Adey (2004, p. 161) found a universal condemnation in the research literature that reveals that a one-shot In-Servive Training (INSET) day does not prove to be an effective method of bringing about any real change in teaching practice during Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers. This view is probably compounded by the shallow nature of the evaluation of most short, once-off CPD events. Potgieter (1997, p. 90), Associate Professor in Music Education at the University of North West in South Africa who has been involved with INSET since 1991 feels more positive about the effectiveness of short training periods. According to her, the biggest advantage of INSET is that the presenter can act as a role model and give participants the opportunity to actively practice and demonstrate new skills. With the researcher's own experience in the presentation of INSET workshops for more than 20 years for ECD teachers of all races in South Africa, she was well prepared and confident that she would be able to act as a role model at the presentation of these workshops and be able to motivate the attendees to such an extent that it would lead to change in their classrooms.

Franklin *et al.* (1997, p. 1) state that adult learners are usually goal-oriented and insistent upon relevant, practical instruction. These learners are frequently more interested in a concrete outcome, such as the acquisition of a specific skill or a certain competency level in a given area of study. Potgieter (1997, p. 77) believes that best results can be obtained if participants can be practically involved in the training. She suggests that teachers should be encouraged to "try, evaluate, modify and try again". The practical workshops

which the researcher presented gave participants the opportunity to practically experience the methodology with fellow ECD (Early Childhood Development) practitioners. The aim was that after the short induction workshop, the participants would try out the resource material at their different sites. During this period the attendees were supposed to implement and evaluate the music programme, make modifications and if necessary, try the lessons out again.

Although the researcher was worried that the contact time spent with the attendees at the workshops would not be enough for them to grasp the methodology, she was comforted by Potgieter (1997, p. 77) who believes that the contact time during a half or full day workshop may seem very short, but will give participants enough time to socialize, encourage and support each other.

### **Background to the Research**

It is quite a challenge to find ways in South Africa to 'motivate' teachers to continue learning, training and growing when it comes to Western classical music. These are the challenges that the researcher, who regularly presents music workshops for pre- and primary school teachers on the integration of the arts in South Africa, is faced with when she trains teachers in South Africa. The reason for this phenomenon is that the majority of these teachers have no background knowledge of Western classical music. The negative behaviour, attitudes and limits these teachers initially revealed toward Western classical music before the training workshops, can commonly be traced back to their experiences as children where they were never introduced to Western classical music, apart from the few that maybe confronted by it through a choral repertoire at school. It therefore proved to be quite difficult to make these teachers truly interested in the learning process and to establish the urge amongst them to develop themselves further through the training.

### **Motivation**

The biggest challenge the researcher faced was to 'motivate' the teachers to train and learn in the process – and hopefully grow and develop personally and professionally through the experience. It seemed to be quite a daunting task for these teachers to see themselves outside of received or conditioned roles and limits. They were reluctant to imagine that their own limits could be lifted, or that their purpose and direction could be changed. Motivation, therefore, had to be connected with something that they could personally relate to and had experienced before. The researcher had to find a way that these teachers could relate to Western classical music and enjoy it. This methodology had to be based on something that pre- and primary school teachers loved and were good at, rather than being bombarded and disillusioned by a method that held no meaning for them. It is common knowledge that people of all ages are eager and prepared to learn about the things that they are naturally good at, and which they love and enjoy.

Although the Classical music that the researcher used during her training workshop was initially considered by the teachers as something that they could not relate to, they loved the concept used to expose them to it. The concept was based on an interactive performance experience that incorporated storytelling, dramatization, creative dance

movements, costumes and instrumental play. This active way of interpreting this musical style taps into the interactive performance principles of African music – a style that was particularly very familiar to African teachers. Nzewi (2003, p. 14) explains that, in the African sense, learning is an “interactive performance experience, while performance is a never-ending learning experience”.

According to Mans *et al.* (2003, p. 209), play (dramatization) in the African context is seen as a fundamental way of learning which involves the integration of several art forms, e.g. storytelling, song, structured movement or dance, musical instruments, and theatrical elements such as characterization and costumes. Addo *et al.* (2003, p. 239) add that Africans are not inhibited in their physical response to music. Facial expressions, gestures, mime, dress-up and dance come naturally for them and add dramatic elements to a theatrical “performance” of a story. It was by making use of exactly these well-known characteristics of African music that enabled the researcher to motivate the teachers to participate with passion and joy in a workshop, acting out Western classical music. They had to apply their well-known African skills to interpret the new music genre in the same fun way. By motivating the teachers through the familiar characteristics of African music, the researcher was able to carefully build onto other aspects of their development. These were aspects that the teachers were initially not aware of and which were not so important in their minds.

### **Personal Development**

With each workshop the researcher presented to teachers from underprivileged areas in South Africa, she always had to consider ways of effectively developing the teachers personally and professionally. From previous workshop experience for teachers, the researcher knew that pre-school teachers had lots of potential. However, bad conditions in informal settlements (squatter camps) and schools in rural areas had hid or suppressed their natural abilities to be creative, outgoing and make lessons fun for their learners.

The researcher has learnt that for training and evaluation to be truly effective, the training and development itself must be appropriate for teachers in a specific situation. She also learnt through the many practical workshops that she presented that a friendly, caring, positive teacher, trainer, mentor, coach or manager - or friend - can open up the world for these teachers, motivate them and give them new hope for the future.

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

It is important that feedback should be given to workshop/course attendees to enable them know how they have progressed, and to give them confidence. According to Chapman (1995, p. 1) the effect that evaluation has on a person that is being evaluated is a very important aspect of any sort of evaluation. The teacher’s commitment to try their newly learnt music skills and resource material when they get back to their schools and pre-school sites relies heavily on the confidence and motivation they have acquired during the workshop. The researcher had to make them believe through the practical sessions that the methodology is easy and that they will be able to implement the lessons successfully.

Chapman (1995, p. 1) sees the way that assessment is designed and managed, and results presented back to the teachers as a very important part of their learning and development process. The possibility is always there that the teachers can be switched off by the whole idea of learning and development if they know that they are not going to be evaluated on their efforts in the classroom. It became clear from the research that effective evaluation was vital for the teachers who attended the workshop. The researcher has a full-time job as a travelling music teacher and is only free on a Friday. Because of the lack of available time during school hours, she decided to visit three pre-school sites, randomly chosen, from the 30 pre-school teachers she trained on three consecutive Fridays. All 30 of the workshop attendees had to be prepared for a visit to their school three months after the initial workshop took place. This seemed to be a proper and fair evaluation as much as the situation and circumstances allowed.

Of the three schools the researcher visited, the personal development of Elizabeth Nkoane, the owner of the English Literacy Pre-School in the Rose-Acres Informal Settlement made the biggest impression on her. The visit to Elizabeth's school and her personal development is described below.

### **The Rose-Acres Informal Settlement**

The fact that there is no electricity in the Rose Acres Informal settlement where Elizabeth Nkoane's pre-school was did not prevent her from trying out the four sample lessons she received at the workshop on a cassette. She used a car radio tape from which bundles of wires were hanging, in her classroom to play the cassette. Some of the wires were connected to a huge 12 volt car battery which was kept on the floor under the table. From the onset of the observation, it was obvious that Elizabeth was a born teacher with passion, determination, willpower and drive to make a success of her teaching, regardless of her circumstances and the limited resources she had to her disposal.

Another obstacle that Elizabeth had to deal with was a pole that kept the roof upright in the middle of the tiny shack. Although this pole limited the available space (there was not much in any case), it was interesting to see how she managed to plan the dramatization of the stories around this obstacle – as if it was not even there at all. She divided the characters into four smaller groups of five children each who represented trees, bees, buck and hunters in the story. The hunters each received a gun, which the children had cut out of cardboards themselves. They stood on one side of the tin shack and the buck stood on the opposite side, facing the hunters. The trees were placed in a line to the middle of the small open space and the bees were standing behind the trees. It was striking to observe how Elizabeth made the group say the name of the piece and the composer every time before she switched the music on; exactly the way that the researcher suggested it should be done during the workshop.

The boys and girls in Elizabeth's class were acting out the role of the hunters and were holding the cardboard guns in front of them, fully immersed in the story. The far-away look on their faces reflected how intensely and with full concentration they were listening to the music. The way the children were anticipating the phrases and reacting to the different themes in the music showed that these small children knew every single note in each of the four pieces. Elizabeth made no gender differentiation in the grouping of the

characters. She managed to mix the boys and girls very effectively for the different character roles.

The success that Elizabeth achieved at her school can be attributed to her willingness to role play all the stories with her learners (five year olds). When the children were acting out the story which the researcher narrated for *The Syncopated Clock* by Leroy Anderson 1945, Elizabeth was “licking milk” from an imaginary saucer with the ginger cats. It was heartening to observe that she was more concerned in promoting maximum learning through play amongst her learners than she was worried about the possibility of making a fool of herself by sticking her tongue far out to lick milk from the saucer with the cats.

Elizabeth cleverly made use of different coloured plastic bags for the dressing up of the characters. It was fascinating to observe how she used the same bags to depict different characters in the stories. Even old pieces of lace curtains were cleverly used to act out the roles of fairies in *Rondo Alla Turca* by Mozart. Magic wands were made out of thick twisted wire for the handles with a piece of cloth glued to the tip. The fairies used these magic wands to chase the giants off to a far-away country. The learners, who played the role of the giants, knew exactly when they had to walk into the bush, giving big steps on each accent in the music which represented the footsteps of the giant.

She managed to implement her newly gained music skills with admirable results. All four sample lessons on which she received training at the workshop were acted out effectively by the learners according to the given story. The musical elements that appeared in each of these pieces of Western classical music, as well as the changes in the different themes could be observed through dramatization.

### **Interview with Elizabeth Nkoane**

The researcher had a short informal interview with her to gain more information on her feelings about the effectiveness of the method to train pre-school teachers how to expose their learners in a fun way to Western classical music and what the experience meant to her personally. A live presentation of this interview and examples of her lessons in action can be viewed online at: <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-07312007-081226/>.

It was interesting to hear from Elizabeth in this interview that she thought it was very worthwhile to expose young African children to Western classical music, because it really motivates them and according to her, brings them to a new world, other than Pop and African Music. Elizabeth’s statement that “They learn African Music at home from the day they are born” is confirmed by Laurie Levine (2005), from *The Drum Café* in Johannesburg, in her book on traditional music of South Africa where she argues that:

Children (Black) are exposed to musical activities from the moment they enter the world. As they learn language they learn to sing; as they learn to walk they learn to dance. Singing, playing instruments and feeling rhythm become as natural as the ability to speak or walk. From everyday activities to sacred ceremonies, from morning to night, through winter and summer, music forms the pivotal core around which a community is structured (p. 19).

According to Elizabeth, the presentation of classical music through dramatization and the active involvement of the children in the lesson gave her a chance to teach them something different and important that they were not exposed to at home. She strongly believed that children should be exposed to African as well as Classical music. She saw it as a personal achievement to be able to expose her learners successfully to Western classical music – a musical style that she did not know and had never listened to before the workshop.

Elizabeth made a special attempt to expand the training she received at the workshop by sharing her newly gained music skills and knowledge collaboratively with her colleagues back at her school. Soon they were all able to teach the method with her – even the cook was involved in Elizabeth’s coaching. Bryan (2011, p. 137) sees an effort like this to share knowledge with colleagues as an important aspect of professional development.

One of the most interesting things that Elizabeth revealed in the interview was the fact that she experienced very few absentees at her school since she started to implement the music programme. This was a remarkable change that she managed to bring to the classroom. She admitted that the children’s new encounter with music, storytelling, drama, dance and the visual arts brought a new fun-filled dimension into the classroom and the children’s lives which they had not experienced before and did not want to miss.

### **Giving credit to Elizabeth Nkoana**

With all the good work that Elizabeth had done to implement her newly learned music education skills successfully in very poor conditions, the researcher felt that she had to do something in return that could make Elizabeth feel that her hard work was appreciated. She knew intuitively that this woman was a role-model from whom other teachers could learn a lot; not only from her work in the classroom, but also from her determination and motivation to make a success of teaching in general. The following guests from abroad, as well as reporters were taken to the Informal Settlement for observation between July and September 2005:

1. Dr. Jesse McCarroll from New York: 22 July 2005
2. Sally Chappell from England: 29 July 2005
3. Jenny Hughes from England: 19 August 2005
4. Dr. Luca de Francesco from Italy: 23 September 2005.

A well-appreciated copy of a video recording that was made of Elizabeth’s lessons at her school was presented to each of these guests as a “keepsake” of their visit to the English Literacy Pre-School.

Articles on Elizabeth’s success appeared in the following newspapers and magazines:

1. Classicfeel Magazine. *Crossing barriers with music* (Erasmus, 2005, p. 30-31)
2. Germiston City News. *Music for the Mind* (Senior, 2005, p. 12)
3. The Teacher/Mail & Guardian. *Maestros in the making* (Mohlala, 2005, p. 11).

### **Follow-up Workshop on 22 September 2005**

A follow-up workshop was held on 22 September 2005. Elizabeth Nkoana was also in the group. She arrived a few minutes late and quietly took a seat in the back row when she entered the room. The researcher noted the following in her diary (Nel Diary Notes, 2005, September 28):

I must confess that I did not recognize Elizabeth immediately at the workshop, because she looked different. There was just something about her that puzzled me. During all my visits to her school, she always used to wear either a black and white striped jersey and a denim skirt, or a red golf T-shirt with a jean. Her hair was never done and she never had any make-up on. This was how I also remembered her from the first workshop she attended on 8 July 2004.

Just before the tea-break the researcher shared highlights of her observation visits to the schools with the attendees. She accentuated Elizabeth's achievements with the music programme and the fact that articles appeared in newspapers on her success. After this short speech, Elizabeth stood up unexpectedly, and walked over to the researcher. It was obvious that she also had something to say to the audience.

As Elizabeth was walking up to me, where I was standing in front of the semi-circle of attendees, it flashed through my mind that she had suddenly changed. I could not stop staring at this beautiful, confident woman that was walking towards me. This was not the old Elizabeth that I met in July 2004, because she looked different. She was wearing a colourful green and white tracksuit. She had a hairpiece on with soft curls around her face. I also noticed that she had make-up on and small earrings. This was a "new" Elizabeth. She stood next to me, took my hand and addressed the audience calmly and confidently. She said a few words only, but what she said came straight from her heart. There was not a single person in the audience that was not moved by the way she expressed her thankfulness and gratitude for being introduced to the music programme, especially when she mentioned what a big impact it had on her life and how it changed her as a person (Nel Diary Notes, 2005, September 28).

Atmore (2001) stresses the fact that presenters of training courses and workshops should always try their utmost to enhance both the professional and personal development of attendees. This confident "new" Elizabeth is living proof of how the training she received at the music workshop developed her professionally and personally. Because of all the exposure that Elizabeth received in the newspapers in 2005 after her achievement at the English Literacy Pre-School at her home-based site in the Rose-Acres Informal Settlement, she was offered a job in January 2006 as a Grade 1 teacher at a primary school near Empangeni in Kwa-Zulu Natal, earning a decent salary. Three months later she was promoted to Lushushani High School, close to the Swaziland border in Mpumalanga to teach English for Grade 11 and Arts and Culture for Grades 8 and 9.

### **Conclusion**

It came to light during the many workshops that the researcher has presented over the years that although the one day workshops were short once-off induction sessions it provided new knowledge, ideas and skills relevant to the needs of the teachers to enable

them introduce their learners in a fun way to Western classical music. All these workshops were delivered in a manner appropriate to the content, by a skilled practitioner. The workshops were collaborative and sustainable, and provided teachers with ample opportunities for discussion and exploration with colleagues. It involved interactive socialization and reflection, away from the pressures of the classroom. The simple methodology, based on the characteristics of African music, makes it user-friendly for black teachers in South Africa who usually do not have a lot of knowledge about Western classical music.

The case study of Elizabeth Nokoana that was briefly discussed in this research, highlights the fact that a short INSET once off one day workshop can motivate a teacher to such an extent that it can change his/her personality and personal development successfully. The effect that the initial evaluation of the music programme had on her at her humble pre-school in the Rose Acres Informal Settlement was with no doubt remarkable. This model teacher who was still earning about R500 per month when she was teaching in the informal settlement, managed to uplift herself from her bleak circumstances and change her life for the better. May her words "I can do it" be an inspiration to many teachers, not only in South Africa, but also in the rest of the world.

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