

Integrated Music Education in Primary School: A Position Paper

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ABSTRACT

Owing to a number of reasons, including COVID-19, the life skills subject in South African primary schools, which includes music education, has been sent backstage to make space to accommodate the 'more important' subjects such as literacy and numeracy. This was not advocated by the Department of Basic Education but rather a way for teachers to ensure that they cover all their important work in reduced time. An important manner to reduce time spent on teaching in silo's, is by using arts-integrated teaching, as with integrated teaching, various topics from different subjects can be covered simultaneously, albeit in a creative manner. This position paper is important as it can provide lecturers, teachers, and curriculum planners and implementers with a framework for the planning of integrated teaching. Integrated teaching in all its variances is known, yet very few teachers implement it owing to various reasons, including insufficient training. The author provides insight into the process of designing an integrated teaching programme. This study was executed using the appreciative inquiry model as a framework and provides feasible and interesting ideas for teachers for successfully using musical arts to enhance teaching and learning.

KEYWORDS

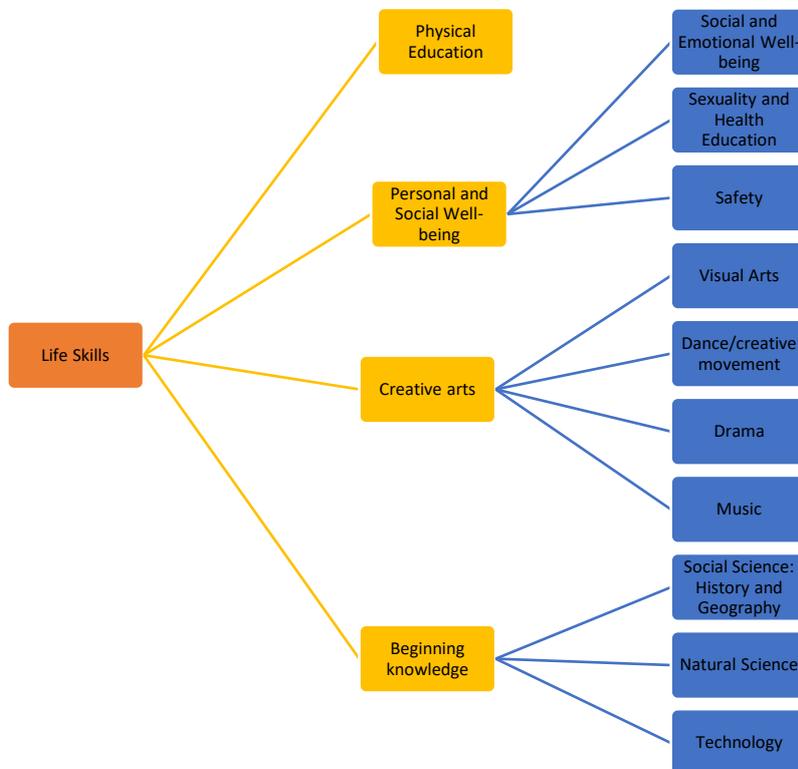
Integrated teaching; numeracy; literacy; music education; arts

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, ‘foundation phase’ (FP) refers to the first years of schooling, which include grades R, 1, 2 and 3. Children from the age of 6 attend grade R. It is in the FP where life skills as a subject have been neglected and contained in the wings owing to a multitude of reasons. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the neglect of life skills and sent the subject (which includes music education) backstage to make space to accommodate the ‘more important’ subjects such as literacy and numeracy. This was not suggested by the Department of Basic Education but rather a manner that teachers used to make sure they covered all the important work required of them in reduced time. This attitude amongst teachers emphasises the lesser regard of the life skills subject. The value and importance of life skills as a subject, especially music, is underestimated and not given its rightful place in the classroom. Many teachers do not realise the value of the life skills arts component in creating a positive learning space and adding to the learning of mathematics and languages.

The subject life skills, is a compounded subject with aspects that require specialist teachers, who are not usually found in the FP. In South African universities, FP teachers are trained as generalists and are required to teach all the subjects of the FP, i.e., the main language, English first additional language (EFAL), mathematics and life skills. While teaching life skills, generalist FP teachers have to educate learners on various themes, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Life skills composition



The above-mentioned facets of life skills require a vast amount of content knowledge along with diverse styles of teaching, especially for practical subjects. Many South African pre-service FP students who come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have not been exposed to all the facets of the subject and therefore must acquire content knowledge as well as didactical skills during their training. Personal and social well-being can mostly be taught with general knowledge. However, as far as beginning knowledge is concerned, special teaching methodology such as inquiry-based teaching and technological process, are required for success. Physical education requires specialised training to ensure safe and fruitful lessons that develop the fundamental movement skills required for learning. The biggest challenge, however, lies within the creative arts section, where most topics require specialised training that cannot easily be acquired in one or two semesters while pursuing a Bachelor of Education in the FP programme. Teacher education students, when they start their first year of teaching, take their limited knowledge of arts to schools where they often avoid teaching it altogether, letting their learners miss out on skills that are essential in this post-humanist era.

The author argues that music integration in the classroom is not getting the attention it deserves since pre-service teachers are not taught how to integrate their teaching. Music integration has the potential to support literacy and numeracy in numerous ways whilst addressing several other issues, e.g., the lack of time for teaching all the components of the curriculum, bringing a positive atmosphere into the classroom, developing creativity and social skills, and providing learners with diverse learning styles with better access to the content. Music-integrated teaching is a teaching tool that can put back the joy in the learning of mathematics and literacy where negativity often has a psychological bearing on learning.

This study is important as it assists lecturers, generalist teachers, and curriculum planners and implementers, with a framework for the planning of integrated teaching, even with having limited skills in music. It contributes to the existing body of knowledge, as integrated teaching in all its variances is known, yet very few teachers implement it owing to the above-mentioned reasons. In essence, the author provides a framework for the planning of integrated teaching, focussing on music, to assist in developing knowledge about integrated teaching. The literature review focussed on Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) skills that could be enhanced through music activities, types of integrated teaching, the value of integrated teaching, the value of music-integrated teaching and a design method for an integrated teaching approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Skills

When training educators it is important to plan their training that it will assist them to provide their learners with skills needed for the post-humanist era also referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution(4IR). Armstrong et al., (2018, p. 4) defined some of the skills required for optimal functioning in the 4IR as '[c]ommunication, critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, adaptability, initiative, leadership, social emotional learning, teamwork, self-

confidence, empathy, growth mindset, cultural awareness'. This belief was substantiated by Oke et al., (2020). These skills are easily obtained through the use of the arts – especially music – and are essential in FP classrooms. The acquisition of skills required for the 4IR rests largely on the shoulders of a teacher, and therefore, pre-service teachers must be prepared to learn these skills in an effective manner. When pre-service teachers receive sufficient training in creative arts, they gain the requisite knowledge and confidence to explore integrated teaching, which requires various skills. As integrated teaching techniques are not known to many teachers, this study hopes to provide a better understanding and a framework to assist teachers when planning an integrated curriculum.

Types of integrated teaching

When asking pre-service teacher education students to integrate arts (dance, drama, music, visual art) into their lesson planning, the outcome is often the addition of a random song or asking learners to draw what they have focused on during the lesson. This is a misunderstanding of true integrated teaching and allows arts to become an add-on for entertainment value, and its true potential in augmenting teaching and learning is not realised. Although there are different definitions of integrated teaching, the one that is the most congruous with this study is by Russell-Bowie (2009, p. 5), who named three models of arts-integrated teaching: the service connection model, symmetric correlation model, and the syntegegration model.

With the service connection model, a subject is taught, e.g., mathematics and then an activity from another subject, e.g., a life skills song, is used to assist with retention. An example of this method could be teaching about the history of water transport in the life skills class and then using the song 'Row, row, row your boat' as a fun activity to help learners remember what they learnt during the lesson. The learning about water transport could have taken 90% of the lesson and the song 10%. This sought of learning is focused on one subject, and the add-on subject is not important.

The symmetric correlation model places equal emphasis on both subjects. The same example can be used as before; however, in this instance, there is equal emphasis on learning about water transport in the past and about the song as music aspect. The song, in this case, receives the same emphasis as the water transport and might be taught as a round, and students learn how to sing it in round form and understand the song type whilst also learning about water transport.

Syntegegration happens when all the teachers in one grade decide to use one overarching theme across all subjects. Subjects thus remain in isolation, but they use the same theme; for example, if all the grade-2 teachers decide to use water transport (life skills) as a theme and integrate it into all the lessons they teach (languages, mathematics, etc.).

The author would like to suggest a fourth model for integrated teaching – the *synergy* model. According to Kariger and Fierro (2021, n.p.), 'synergy is the interaction of elements that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements,

contributions, etc'. In the case of FP teaching, synergy entails the integrated use of life skills, language, and mathematics in a ratio-friendly (unrestricted) format. The synergy model suggests the use of a wide array of subjects in even or uneven combinations to improve the quality of teaching. The main aim is to keep the integrity of each subject intact such that some subjects do not become mere add-ons and, at the same time, generate an outcome of better learning.

The value of using integrated teaching

There are a number of reasons for the use of integrated teaching. In South African context, integrated teaching is stipulated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in the Foundation Phase CAPS (DBE, 2011) as it is acknowledged as a good teaching practice. The DBE further implies the value of using life skills integration to strengthen teaching, saying 'Life Skills is a cross-cutting subject that should support and strengthen the teaching of the other core Foundation Phase subjects namely Languages (Home and First Additional) and Mathematics' (CAPS, 2011, p. 9).

The CAPS curriculum is known for being overcrowded (Du Plessis, 2020), and with the pandemic situation, where learners were kept away from school or spent only two or three days per week in the classroom, the content was too much to cover within a limited time. With integrated teaching, the problem of overcrowding could have been reduced (Ewing, 2011; Russell-Bowie, 2009) as it assists in accomplishing more than one task during a single lesson.

According to Dewey (1986) and Gardner (1993), using integrated teaching provides learners with multiple access points because it considers a range of learning styles and intelligences. Different subjects have different approaches, e.g., more practical, inquiry-based, and creative and therefore promote inclusion of different learning styles. When learners are taught using varied learning styles, the changes are good that their specific learning languages will be used which will provide them with 'multiple access points'. Eisner (2005, p. 342) defines language as 'the use of any form of representation in which meaning is conveyed or construed', meaning that a variety of teaching methods, becomes different teaching languages.

The value of music integrated teaching

Humans are rhythmical beings and even before birth experience the heartbeat of their mothers and their own. The influence of rhythm and music on the brain has been widely researched and can be summarised in the domains of influence mentioned by Shin (2017) as including the psychomotor, emotional, social, cognitive, and affective facets of being.

Many learners fear mathematics (Ashcraft & Moore, 2009), and this fear results in negativity when this subject is learnt. Szczygieł (2020) stated the relationship between the high incidence of stress and the learning outcomes. When learners fear a subject, they do not deliver optimum results. In contrast with the fear of mathematics is the enjoyment that learners associate with music, rhythm, and singing. Negativity can thus be alleviated through the use of something as pleasurable as singing, rapping, creative movement and rhythmical activities.

There are many points of intersection between mathematics and music. Pattern in mathematics is also observed in rhythm patterns. Furthermore, mathematics is learnt through language, and with the use of suitable songs, language can be acquired to understand mathematical concepts.

Interesting findings by Lawson-Adams, et al., (2022) indicate the difference between teaching vocabulary using picture card-only teaching, compared to singing or rhythmically speaking the words. The sung and rhythmically spoken words yielded significantly better results than the sole use of picture cards.

Improving reading can also be achieved through the use of music, e.g., where standard or any other forms of notation are used, the beat of the music must be maintained, and learners need to read the notation in advance to be able to maintain the rhythm, whether with an instrument or with body percussion. This assists in developing eye span, direction and rhythm when reading. Through song repetition, vocabulary is better remembered.

Design method for an integrated teaching approach

Kerry (2015, p. 170) presented some support points for the successful planning of cross-curricular (integrated) work. The points that the author focused on in this study is '[c]onsider having a lead subject (or two), which drive(s) the topic and provide(s) opportunities for in-depth study. Identify selected subject knowledge and transferable skills that will be the focus of particular attention for teaching and assessment. Use the statutory curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets to inform the planning but do not allow them to restrict the range of knowledge and skills.' In the context of this study, there are only three main subjects involved, so they will usually be easy to accommodate in each lesson; however, refrain from forcing integration where it is not obvious. Remain within the guidelines of the CAPS curriculum but do not become restricted by what is provided in the departmental workbooks, creative thinking is required for successful integrated teaching. If the school is using an Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) provided by the DBE, it becomes difficult to accomplish integration, unless teachers have the freedom to alter the order used in the plan.

When designing the arts-integrated teaching plan the researcher kept the appreciative enquiry (AI) model in mind. This model focuses on what is good and positive, to bring about change, which in this case is the use of the musical arts to enhance teaching and learning. The AI model has been extensively employed to improve quality of teaching and learning in school subjects (Carter et al., 2007). At the heart of this technique is the appreciative aspect, which in the present context is music. Carter et al., (2007, p. 196) averred that the AI consists of four steps, namely, 'Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny'. Shuayb et al., (2009, p. 3) presented three similar stages of AI, namely, 'Discovering, Dreaming, Designing,' and used Delivering, instead of Destiny. For the purpose of this study, the Shuayb et al., (2009) interpretation is preferred as the final phase of 'delivering' rather than 'destiny' is better aligned with the aim of providing a framework for planning integrated teaching.

For this paper, the stages of AI were interpreted as follows:

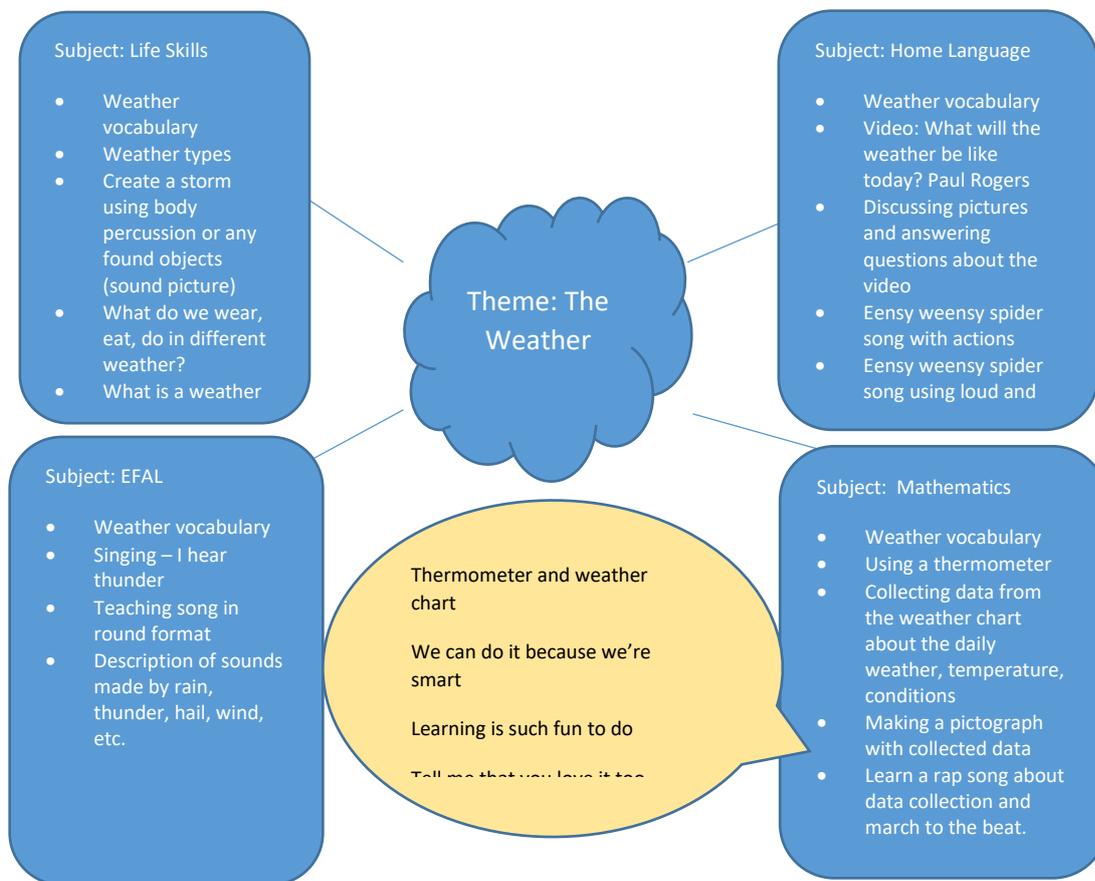
- *Discovering*: the globally successful use of music in integrated teaching, through a study of the literature.
- *Dreaming*: thinking of different ways for incorporating the existing CAPS music component into teaching to alleviate the scarcity of time in the school curriculum, whilst bringing the positive influence of music. The dreaming phase occurred mainly during the observation of pre-service education students and their fragmented teaching methods, mostly inspired by their mentoring teachers.
- *Designing*: developing a basic framework to guide even generalist teachers into integrating the musical arts into their lessons. The design was based on ideas obtained from the literature study and the researcher's personal teaching experience.
- *Delivering*: providing an example of a detailed music-integrated programme for teaching in the FP. The delivery phase was grounded in an analysis of the CAPS document. The different topics in the different teaching aspects of life skills were done in table format and moved around to find alignment between the curricula. As these ideas will in future be taught to pre-service students, the refinement of the music-integrated programme will be a recurring process where betterment shall always be sought.

The following section provides insight into the process of developing a program of music-integrated teaching for a grade-1 class.

The programme design process

When planning a music-integrated lesson programme for the week, the teacher needs to keep the following steps in mind.

- Step 1: Prepare a web diagram (see Figure 2) with slots for the subject and each topic you want to include in the week.
- Step 2: Visit the life skills CAPS document, decide on an overall theme and use the subtopics as a guide.
- Step 3: Go to the CAPS documents for each of the other subjects and choose the facet you want to teach.
- Step 4: Now, decide how you are going to incorporate the theme into every subject.
- Step 5: Remember that language should be an important aspect of each lesson in each subject.
- Step 6: Ensure that you have infused an array of practical activities from the other facets of the life skills document, e.g., music, drama, creative movement, and art.
- Step 7: Now that you have the framework, you can plan each lesson and plot it on your timetable.

Figure 2. Web diagram for integrated teaching

As there is a large overlap between the different subjects, it might be that the one lesson just flows naturally into the next lesson, albeit with a different focus subject, e.g., when a teacher is teaching mathematics after home language, it will be a continuation with a shift in focus. Using the synergy model, the overlapping theme is fully explored and covered in more depth than when it is taught in an isolated subject format.

Analysing the benefits of life skills integration in the FP curriculum

The benefits of life skills integrated teaching using the chosen topics indicated in figure 1, is provided below. Additionally, the use of music, sound pictures or rhythm is highlighted in its different forms in shaded lines. Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 explore life skills, home language, EFAL, and mathematics, respectively.

Table 1. Life Skills with integration

Life skills topics	Value added through integration
Weather vocabulary	Augmenting language learning
Weather types	Learning geography
What do we wear, eat, do in different weather?	Learning about personal and social-well-being
What is a weather chart?	Learning about geography and data collection in mathematics
What is a symbol?	Symbols are connected to visual literacy and mathematics

Table 2. Home Language with integration

Home language topics	Value added through integration
Weather vocabulary	Augmenting language learning
Video: What will the weather be like today? Paul Rogers.	Story read on video with pictures displayed. Helps with development of visual literacy.
Discussing pictures and answering questions about the video	Learners' comprehension is tested, and they are using the vocabulary learnt, to answer the questions.
Eensy weensy spider song with action	Singing a song about rain and sunshine assists with retention of vocabulary and provides a positive ambience in the class. The actions enforce the meaning of the words.
Eensy weensy spider song - singing it loudly and softly	Singing the song and using elements of music, provides integrity to the music component of life skills.

Table 3. English first additional language (EFAL)

EFAL topics	Value added through integration
Weather vocabulary	Augmenting language learning
Singing – ‘I hear thunder’	Using a song to mimic the theme and for enjoyment.
Teaching ‘I hear thunder’ in round format	Teaching a specific song type, the round, as required in life skills.
Description of sounds made by rain, thunder, hail, wind, etc.	Imaginative description of sounds, which is part of language development as well as musicking.
Create a storm using body percussion or any found objects (sound picture)	Creating sound pictures are part of musicking and creativity. The music element of dynamics is once again used as storms build up and die down, and that will include the use of dynamics.

Table 4. Mathematics

Mathematics topics	Integration
Weather vocabulary	Adding to language development and better understanding of mathematics.
Using a thermometer	Part of natural science and mathematics.
Collecting data from the weather chart about the daily weather, temperature, and conditions.	Slots in with life skills topic and data handling.
Making a pictograph with collected data	Integrating life skills arts.
What is rapping? It has a constant beat and uses the rhythm of the words.	Music knowledge is gained through learning about the structure of rapping.
Learn a rap song about data collection and march to the beat.	Mathematical language learning is enhanced through the lyrics, whilst the fun aspect of rapping provides positive emotions around the subject. Psychomotor development is also enhanced through rhythmical marching whilst having to cope with the lyrics.

CONCLUSION

This position paper explored the literature regarding the use of integration in the classroom by focussing on Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) skills, types of integrated teaching, the value of integrated teaching, the value of music-integrated teaching and a design method for an integrated teaching approach. Activities proposed for the integrated teaching approach in this paper, do not necessitate specialized teachers. However, more can be achieved when pre-service teachers are adequately trained in different subjects, such as the specialist subject contents of life skills. Well-trained generalist music teachers will ensure that the benefits of music will be available to all South Africa's children. Without additional in-service training and enhanced arts programmes, the integrated way of teaching will not become the reality that it is supposed to be. It is through integrated teaching, and specifically arts integration, that our learners will benefit and get a holistic education. The worth of music in the classroom has been proven over many years and if it can be infused appropriately, the learning of numeracy and literacy will no longer be the cause of anxiety, as music will take the negative edge off learning.

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