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Teachers' Perceptions on Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into Creative Arts Teaching and Learning Methods in Selected South African Schools

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Abstract. This study was a preliminary phase of an ongoing PhD investigation focusing on incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into Creative Arts education in specific rural schools. The paper examined teachers' perceptions on the proposed initiative, aiming to identify obstacles to the indigenisation process and explore potential strategies to overcome these challenges. Despite the South African curriculum's emphasis on appreciating Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Creative Arts teachers often rely on Eurocentric textbook content and approaches. The study, based on Social Judgment Theory, involved nine purposefully chosen teachers from the intermediate and senior phase of these schools. The theory posits that people's tendency to accept or reject new information exists on a continuum. The study aimed at elucidating the various factors and processes influencing individuals' diverse perceptions and reactions to the same information or concerns. The research employed a qualitative method collecting data through semi-structured interviews supplemented by informal conversations. To analyse the gathered data, a thematic approach was applied, involving thorough reading and coding processes to identify and categorise themes. The findings revealed insufficiency of resources and infrastructure, incongruity between the content knowledge and the learners' contextual knowledge and inadequate skills and knowledge among indigenous teachers. The researcher advocates for the integration of the knowledge, skills, and participation of the school and community members, to collectively provide relevant information for the comprehensive growth of learners in their cultural understanding and identity.

Keywords: Creative Arts; teachers' perceptions; indigenisation; teaching and learning

1. Introduction

This paper serves as a preliminary investigation into the indigenisation of Creative Arts at the senior phase (Grades 7 – 9) of selected rural schools in the Alfred Nzo East District of the Eastern Cape Province. It is part of a continuing research endeavour aimed at obtaining a Doctoral degree, which is still in the process of development and refinement. The primary focus of this inquiry pertains to the perceptions of Creative Arts teachers in incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into their methods of instruction. Mupawose and Ojo (2023) argue that indigenisation is the process of recognising and accepting the importance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and promoting a more inclusive community and culturally cognisant approach to teaching by adopting and validating IKS. Additionally, the authors elaborate on Indigenous knowledge, which they refer to as:

Traditional or local knowledge, which encompasses the extensive knowledge and expertise that people within a specific community have acquired over time, independent of formal education. This knowledge is continually evolving and is rooted in practical experience, often validated through centuries of application. It is adapted to suit the local culture and environment and is characterised by its dynamic and adaptable nature. (Boven & Morohashi, 2002, p. 13)

However, as stated by Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019), the pre-existing Indigenous Knowledge was amplified and ultimately replaced by a new system of formal education implemented by colonisers of African countries, including South Africa in about 1652. As a result, this led to the separation of schools and the categorisation of the education system based on race (Mkhize, 2024). Furthermore, within the realm of education, the arts disciplines were mostly provided as assessable and extracurricular activities only in schools attended by white students. In contrast, Black schools had restricted access to arts education, offering only a limited range of activities such as choral singing and handicrafts for extracurricular reasons (Diamond, 2023).

After 1994, the democratic government introduced the new curriculum which aimed at equipping all South African learners with subject skills in which they were marginalised during the Apartheid era. The implementation of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in South Africa was the first major curriculum revision since 1994. It included the official integration of a new subject called Arts and Culture into all public schools, which encompasses music, dance, drama, and visual arts. Arts and Culture became a mandatory subject in South African public schools under the democratic rule, and it was included in the list of subjects that students were required to be examined on. Due to implications that emerged during the implementation of C2005, prompted by teachers' complaints (Mokgohloa (2018), it was determined that a transformation of the curriculum was necessary. Following multiple curricular changes prompted by the review team (Khethwa & Mabalane, 2022), the subject previously known as Arts and Culture was renamed Creative Arts.

The Creative Arts encompass four distinct art forms. However, schools were given the flexibility to choose and offer any two of these art forms based on their preferences and the expertise of their teachers. An

important result was the adoption of educational reforms aimed at incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into the existing school curriculum (Department of Basic Education. (DBE), 2011b, pp. 9-10)

Esau and Jones (2024), in their discussions about the marginalisation of South African contemporary dances like hip-hop, break dance and others, strongly assert that the classical ballet (a Eurocentric dance) is still perceived as the supreme professional dance physique. Their statement clearly alludes to the fact that the repercussions of apartheid were clearly apparent throughout the post-Apartheid period, especially with the implementation of democratic governance in 1994. Despite the objective of the democratic government since 1994 to rectify historical disparities in education by integrating Indigenous Knowledge systems (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011b), teachers tend to rely mostly on Eurocentric ideas and methodologies while instructing artistic disciplines since they were schooled in the Eurocentric worldview (Kigozi et al., (2021). The question is, are the teachers intentional, or could it be just ignorance or a lack of relevant background knowledge and information about IKS in their persistence to promote Eurocentric knowledge and methods? It is probable that Creative Arts subjects were exclusively available in White schools during the Apartheid era. Due to the prolonged tenure of White school teachers, they have exerted significant influence over the curriculum design of arts disciplines, resulting in a dominance of Eurocentric topics. The authors assert that if Eurocentric topics and teaching methods continue to dominate in South African schools, the goal of curriculum change remains unachieved. Therefore, it is necessary to indigenise the teaching and learning of Creative Arts to empower teachers and effectively include IKS in their classroom instruction, as intended by the current authors in their ongoing PhD project. Given that teachers serve as crucial facilitators in the educational process, responsible for establishing a framework for learning, providing opportunities for growth, and exemplifying effective learning methods through exploration and collaboration with their students, it is essential to examine their perceptions before involving them in the process of indigenising their teaching and learning methods (Johler et al., 2022).

The first phase of preparing for the PhD study involves conducting preliminary sessions, which enable more accessibility to investigate teachers' existing teaching methodologies which act as a foundation on which initiatives for change may be implemented (Bergmark, 2023). The teachers serve as effective liaison officers among the co-researchers, responsible for providing essential information on the teaching and learning of Creative Arts. These teachers also play a vital role in recognising the deficiencies that Indigenous Knowledge may address, thereby necessitating the study of their perceptions.

Tirado and Barriga (2016) contend that teachers and students are active participants in the curriculum. They suggest that both teachers and students have certain expectations and shared ideas about the curriculum projects they are involved in. However, they also draw attention to the wide disparity that frequently exists between their own experiences and the curriculum that experts

and authorities have created. Regarding this matter, the authors contend that teachers have a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of the curriculum. As part of the pedagogical implementation of a new curriculum, teachers explain the curriculum to the students in detail. Within this framework, both teachers and students may discern the pros and cons of the curriculum while transferring and assimilating the information shared between these two pivotal actors. The teachers have a significant influence since they oversee the educational environment, so their perceptions are crucial when considering any initiative that prospectively aims at improving (Katshuna & Shikalepo, 2023), developing, and empowering teachers with knowledge and skills on incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into Creative Arts. This research examines teachers' perceptions on their present practice, focusing on the strengths such as recognition of the value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and shortcomings like flooding the existing curriculum with more Eurocentric topics. Additionally, it examines teachers' views on the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) to address these stated shortcomings.

Consequently, the authors were motivated to first investigate the perceptions of teachers within the large group of selected collaborators in the PhD study as an initial step before commencing the iterative process of incorporating indigenous elements into the teaching and learning of Creative Arts in the schools they selected.

2. Literature Review

Numerous researchers have explored diverse aspects of teachers' perceptions, each focusing on distinct areas of interest. In Ngao, et al.'s (2022) investigation into the incorporation of ICT in teacher education programs, they found that comprehending teachers' attitudes and beliefs is essential for assessing the impact and efficacy of technology in the realm of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the attitudes and beliefs of individuals toward educational technology and pedagogy have a significant impact on how teachers incorporate technology into their teaching methods, as Ngao et al. (2022) affirm. These statements align with this research paper. However, they vary in context. On the other hand, in Maja's (2023) investigation on the incorporation of technology in teaching English as a First Additional Language in primary schools, teachers identified obstacles that may hinder the process. These include a lack of technological knowledge and skills among teachers, as well as limited resources to support the necessary changes. To address these challenges, the authors recommend in-service training for implementers of the changes.

Cronje et al. (2015) investigated the perceptions of teachers within the scientific sector, which aligns with the setting of the current research. Cronje et al. acknowledge that science teachers in South Africa and elsewhere have challenges when incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into their scientific lessons, which is a mandatory component of many science curricula. These academics sought to identify obstacles, and concentrated on one factor that was the barrier – teachers' perceptions on Indigenous Knowledge. Therefore, they found it valuable to examine teachers' perceptions on Indigenous Knowledge because teachers have a

deep understanding of the local context, including the community, school, and classroom dynamics. Their perceptions can shed light on the specific cultural and contextual factors that may influence the indigenisation process. In addition, the academics seek to include teachers' perceptions on Indigenous Knowledge to guide the establishment of professional development programs for scientific teachers, specifically focusing on the integration of Indigenous Knowledge into the science classroom. These researchers argue that incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into the science classroom may increase the relevance of science for students in culturally diverse classrooms. This is relevant to this research which pursues the incorporation of IK from a Creative Arts perspective. This incorporation will align with the diverse cultural backgrounds of the learners and improve their process of acquiring knowledge (Cronje et al., 2015).

In their study, Moodley and Dlamini (2021) investigated how the utilisation of online educational software featuring both Setswana and English interfaces influenced teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the integration of an Indigenous African language into ICT. Their findings indicated that the inclusion of Setswana in the program caused a change in participants' perceptions, highlighting Setswana's newfound importance as a language that promotes unity and inclusiveness. In a separate study, Naidoo and Vithal (2014) delved into how teachers integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into science teaching. Their focus was on analysing teachers' perceptions and comments regarding the implementation of IKS in the science curriculum (imagined practices) and their actual actions in the science classroom. Naidoo and Vithal (2014) suggested that without further research and guidance on what and how to teach, the incorporation of IKS into science education might not be effective. These scholars highlight that IK may be excluded altogether or included in ways that do not align with the goals of inclusion. However, they noted that when teachers could leverage their pedagogical creativity, reasoning, and actions in IKS-infused science classrooms, it holds the potential to contribute to theory, policy, research, and practice.

The assertions put forth by Naidoo and Vithal (2014) on the pedagogy of Indigenous Knowledge are consistent with the concerns raised by Hewson and Ogunniyi (2011) in their analysis of the advantages and challenges of using argumentation teaching approaches to integrate Indigenous Knowledge into science instruction. Hewson and Ogunniyi (2011) investigated the perceptions of teachers about the use of argumentation in the teaching of Indigenous knowledge. During their discussions, they emphasised that the new South African curriculum lacks a clear definition of cultural knowledge. Additionally, there is limited research on the development and evaluation of teaching strategies that effectively integrate Indigenous Knowledge (IK) with Western science. Although several studies have been conducted on incorporating IK into the curriculum, more research is needed in this area. Toulmin's theory (1958) is at the heart of the argumentation teaching method. It helps students make claims about the thing they are studying, show evidence to back up their claims, give reasons in the form of warrants, figure out what assumptions are at the heart of their arguments, and make counterarguments or rebuttals (Hewson and Ogunniyi, 2011).

Moreover, when used in the context of teaching, the argumentation frameworks proposed by Toulmin (1958) and Ogunniyi (2004) both include elements of interaction and discourse. They promote dialogue between teachers and learners, allowing them to articulate their perceptions and determine the relative influence of various concepts. Teaching using argumentation is fundamentally different from conventional teaching methodologies that are still prevalent in many South African schools, which prioritise the dissemination of scientific facts. Crucially, debate closely resembles the scientific method since it involves the presentation and refutation of ideas based on facts and the arguments put forward by others. (Hewson and Ogunniyi, 2011, p. 683)

After engaging with the perceptions of teachers studied by multiple scholars in various contexts, the authors anticipate that teachers' perceptions and views on the incorporation of indigenous elements into their teaching and learning of Creative Arts might significantly influence the progression of their proposed PhD study. The authors believe it is crucial to connect the perceptions of teachers across various contexts to the perspective of the Creative Arts. Hogarth (2022) agrees with the authors' concerns regarding the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge into teaching and learning. Hogarth conducted a study that aimed at having academics in initial teacher education (ITE) reflect on their current practice, knowledge, and understanding of how they engage with Indigenous Knowledge in their teaching. They believe that an urgent need for change exists, prompting non-Indigenous academics and initial teacher education providers to initiate critical discussions about the suppression of Indigenous Knowledge in their current practices and strategies for improvement. Hogarth argues that academics in the ITE should not only attempt to include Indigenous Knowledge (IK) into their usual teaching content or procedures. Instead, they should see IK as integral to their own disciplinary areas and as a crucial aspect of their position and responsibilities. Furthermore, it is crucial for education systems and institutions, including universities, to prioritise Indigenous Knowledge by incorporating it into their strategic and operational plans. This should involve training future classroom teachers to have a deep understanding of the content and the learners, rather than simply adhering to traditional teaching methods.

Nevertheless, the authors conducted this research at the primary levels of the school, and the curriculum of South African schools permits the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in the process of teaching and learning. However, the Creative Arts teachers persistently disregard the importance of IKS and instead choose to adopt a Eurocentric approach. In addition to the Eurocentric nature of the Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM), it is worth noting that even the topics related to African Indigenous Knowledge fail to accurately represent the local culture of the communities under study. Indigenous Knowledge refers to the knowledge, skills, and practices that are developed specifically by a particular locality and maintained by people, typically in rural areas, who have a long history of interaction with the natural environment (Onyacha, 2022). The ongoing PhD involves the research team in the process of implementing indigenisation through action research. The indigenisation

primarily centres on the classroom teaching of dance, drama, music, and visual arts, aiming to transform existing practices and align with indigenous teaching methodologies.

Although teachers acknowledge certain advantages and disadvantages based on their own observations and studies conducted by scholars, whether they are organisational or pedagogical, it is crucial to address changes in teacher perceptions before proposing improvements in teaching methods, thus facilitating the emergence of new advancements (Todd, 2020; Yates, 2007). The authors propose that reinforcement can alter perceptions and bring about a desired transformation. Therefore, it is crucial to fully understand individuals' perceptions to identify and plan for their improvement or alignment with the desired outcomes of an ongoing PhD study.

3. Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this study rests upon the Social Judgment Theory (SJT), a self-persuasion theory developed by Muzafar Sherif, Caroline Sherif & Carl Hovland in 1961 (Asemah et al., 2022). Utilising the principles of psychophysical judgment, SJT analyses social judgment phenomena, as noted by Nomwen et al. (2023). Schlosserová (2019) identifies anchor, alternatives, and ego-involvement as three factors influencing a person's position on an issue in SJT. Nomwen et al. (2023) further propose three distinct zones, namely the latitude of acceptance, the latitude of non-commitment, and the latitude of rejection, to categorise individuals based on their acceptance or rejection of new knowledge. The theory seeks to explain the diverse perceptions and responses to the same information or issues, making it apt for examining the individual and collective perceptions of Creative Arts teachers.

SJT, a communication theory, explains how people assess and interpret conversations based on their attitudes and beliefs, categorising information into assimilation, contrast, and accommodation. The theory focuses on the internal processes of an individual in relation to communicated messages. That is, the theory tends to examine how individual's process communicated messages in relation to attitude change. The theory postulates that individuals interpret messages based on their orientation towards the subject being discussed, and their attitudinal composition. In social judgment Theory (SJT), a message is accepted or rejected based on the cognitive map of the receiver and on the receiver's ego involvement, particularly if it falls within one's latitude of acceptance. (Abdulazeez et al., 2022, p. 259)

Applied to the study of Creative Arts teachers, SJT provides insights into how their perceptions are shaped, how they adopt innovative ideas consistent with their existing beliefs, and how they might resist approaches diverging from their established practices. Teachers could on a spectrum of acceptance or rejection, and understanding this spectrum is crucial for designing effective professional development programs. To effectively empower teachers, it is crucial to have a comprehensive grasp of the range of attitudes that teachers may have. For instance, if teachers fall within the spectrum of rejection, the planning for the research process should specifically address and account for these negative views.

However, the teachers participating in this study are not on the continuum of acceptance or rejection but, rather, in the realm of non-commitment. The study aimed to empower individuals in a manner that will inspire their dedication to appreciating Indigenous knowledge. The teachers should resist the continuous dominance of Eurocentric ideas and actively engage with Indigenous Knowledge in their daily lives, ensuring its transmission to future generations. Therefore, SJT emphasises the need to adopt communication strategies, considering teachers' existing views, ensuring a smoother integration of innovative teaching methods in the field of Creative Arts. In summary, the Social Judgment Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the complex landscape of teachers' perceptions and interactions in the realm of Creative Arts education.

4. Methodological Design

This research used an interpretive phenomenological qualitative approach to investigate the perceptions of Creative Arts teachers about their first-hand experiences in teaching and learning the subject. Individuals interpret and assign significance to their surroundings based on their own encounters, which may be intricate because of psychological, cultural, and social influences (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). Furthermore, the description and exploration of this process are characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity, according to their claims.

5. Research Paradigm

The use of an interpretive paradigm was deemed important to undertake this research inquiry. Matiso (2023) posits that interpretivism is founded upon universal characteristics such as the understanding and analysis of everyday occurrences and societal frameworks, as well as the subjective interpretations individuals assign to phenomena. Moreover, interpretivism places greater emphasis on comprehensive variables and factors associated with a particular context, recognising humans as distinct from physical phenomena, thereby adding layers of meaning. Consequently, qualitative methods are considered the most appropriate means for researchers to acquire profound insights within a specific context (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). The use of an interpretive paradigm in correlation with the qualitative approach enhanced the relationship between the researcher and the teachers by gathering data through detailed descriptions of happenings in the school context.

6. Research Approach and Research Design

The PhD study mentioned above was based on the Action Research approach, which involved collaborative action amongst school teachers, IK community experts, and the researcher, all working together as co-researchers in the context of the research project. Nevertheless, this preliminary investigation took on a qualitative narrative inquiry, adopting a phenomenological research design to investigate the first-hand experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the integration of Indigenous Knowledge in the Creative Arts. The use of the qualitative phenomenological approach was regarded as essential to carry out the investigation. According to Gehman et al. (2018), the defining characteristic of "qualitative research" is thorough engagement with several types of data that assist in uncovering the central phenomena. Alhazimi and Kaufmann (2022) argue

that, from a phenomenological perspective, the information obtained through research activities is a product of the interactions between the researcher and the participants with the topic under inquiry. Moreover, the phenomenological method is suitable for the study subject being investigated as it aims to comprehend the fundamental nature of social phenomena from the perceptions of individuals who have experienced them (Ataro, 2020). Prior to commencing the data collection stage of the PhD undertaking, the authors used a qualitative approach to get more profound insights into the teachers' perceptions on the teaching and learning of Creative Arts through semi-structured and informal conversations. The purpose was to identify any existing challenges in the context of Creative Arts instruction and devise viable strategies and approaches to overcome such challenges during the implementation of the change and onwards.

7. Selection of the Participants

The curriculum primarily focuses on Indigenous Knowledge Systems within the South African community, specifically in comparison to other African countries. However, this paper narrows down the focus to a selected community within the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The participants were chosen through the purposive sampling method from the three schools with Grades R-9. These schools were selected due to their proximity that allows researchers to work collaboratively in their PhD study. This approach enabled the authors to selectively pick individuals who are deemed most suitable based on their knowledge and capacity to respond to the study's inquiries (Alam, 2021). Moreover, Suen et al. (2014) assert that researchers employing this method meticulously select subjects in alignment with the objectives of the study, anticipating that each participant will contribute distinct and valuable information to the research. The authors designated the chosen schools in this project as Schools A, B, and C. At each school, the authors selected one teacher from the intermediate phase, one from the senior phase, and the head of the senior phase department. Based on their vast experience and expertise in teaching Creative Arts, the group comprised nine teachers, including three department heads, three senior phase (Grades 7-9) Creative Arts teachers, and three intermediate (Grades 4-6) life skills teachers. For the PhD study, the collaborative research team of teachers, community experts, and academics included only senior-phase teachers. But for this paper, the authors deemed it vital to involve teachers from the intermediate phase of the General Education and Training (GET) Band because they play a crucial role in fostering the acquisition of essential skills and information that enable learners to transition seamlessly to the senior phase. Therefore, combining these two stages could yield reliable results.

8. Data Collection

The data were gathered from the insights that arose from semi-structured interviews and informal conversations rooted in teachers' experiences in the teaching and learning of Creative Arts during a preliminary meeting of the PhD study in progress. Adams (2015) defines semi-structured interviews in qualitative research as a combination of structured and unstructured interviews, which are often supplemented with follow-up 'why' or 'how' questions that delve further into participants' perceptions and the issue being studied. According to Adams

(2015) and Adeoye-Olatunde et al. (2021), semi-structured interviews allow for a focused interview while still giving the investigator the freedom to explore relevant ideas that may arise during the interview. Furthermore, Adeoye-Olatunde et al. (2021) emphasise that the interview guide should not be read word for word in a fixed sequence for every interview. Instead, it is intended to give structure and direction to the natural conversation in each individual interview. This involves asking the main open-ended questions and using follow-up probe questions as reference points during the interview.

On the other hand, Swain, and Spire (2020) advocate that informal conversations can be used in diverse types of qualitative research that occur in natural daily settings and involve verbal communication. During their discussions, they highlight the use of informal conversations as an extra source of data to support or enrich the data obtained through more structured or formal methods. Consequently, there is no intention to capture the words verbatim or represent them as such. Instead, these conversations are regarded as representing something like what was said. In addition, the researcher is given the opportunity to include their views, feelings, insights, and interpretations as they go further into analysing the significance of the participants' behaviours (Swain & Spire, 2020). These data collection methods enabled the authors to better understand the perceptions of the teachers regarding the indigenisation of the teaching and learning of Creative Arts in grades 7–9.

9. Data Analysis

Ngao et al.'s (2022) explanation of the six primary stages of qualitative data analysis played a pivotal role in guiding the analysis of the data for this study. The suggested stages include familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, recognising themes, scrutinising themes, defining and labelling themes, culminating in the creation of the final report. The authors meticulously examined the data to establish initial codes, which, in turn, facilitated the identification of themes. Furthermore, they conducted a comprehensive analysis, assigning names to the topics as part of the presentation and analytical process. Consequently, a thematic approach served as the guide for this study analysis. The thematic analysis of open-ended responses from transcribed interviews examined the teaching and learning context in detail, providing flexibility and interpretation in data analysis. The authors applied the method with meticulous care and attention to ensure transparency and confidence in the findings, as suggested by Castleberry and Nolen (2018).

The authors read the responses from the participants to familiarise themselves with the data. Subsequently, they allocated labels to the research question, categorising it as the primary requirement and the ultimate result. The research question in this instance was, "What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in the teaching and learning of Creative Arts?" The authors categorised noteworthy statements from the participants' responses and assigned them to anchor codes that corresponded to the study topic. The authors collated and organised the original codes into a list, sorted them alphabetically, and then classified them according to their corresponding anchor

codes. The authors tabulated the codes based on their frequency and sought to identify correlations between the codes, the frequency of codes, and the underlying concepts through a combination of codes. The authors visualised the codes related to the research topic using a Microsoft Word cloud and subsequently developed themes. Ultimately, the analysis revealed the presence of several key themes: insufficiency of resources and infrastructure, incongruity between the curriculum and the learners' knowledge of the context, and inadequate skills and knowledge among indigenous teachers.

10. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a spectrum of perceptions among teachers, ranging from enthusiasm and recognition of the importance of integrating Indigenous Knowledge to challenges associated with its practical implementation. In line with the Social Judgment Theory (SJT) that forms the foundation of our investigation, which delves into how individuals shape opinions and evaluate communications based on their existing attitudes and beliefs, these findings shed light on how individuals form judgments regarding the efficacy, competence, and other attributes of teachers. Employing SJT in analysing teacher perception results allows for a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes underlying individuals' judgements and attitudes towards teachers. By leveraging this insight, researchers can develop strategies aimed at fostering improved teacher-student interactions and enhancing educational outcomes. Researchers ground the presentation of findings in recurrent patterns identified during data collection, carefully selecting each quotation to reflect the perspectives of individual participants. The following themes emerged from the findings:

Insufficiency of resources and infrastructure

The incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge poses a challenge for teachers because it contrasts with the prevailing dominance of Western teaching methods. Teaching about Indigenous Knowledge involves utilising the local resources that are present in our surroundings. For example, if the teacher is required to teach the creation of a claypot, they must source the clay from their local environment. Moreover, Arts disciplines thrive in environments conducive to classroom activities, bolstering the effectiveness of Creative Arts education. Learners benefit intrinsically from exposure to creative humanistic experiences (Farrington et al., 2019). These conducive settings include spacious halls for dramatic, dance, and musical presentations, as well as designated areas for visual arts and crafts. Despite Creative Arts being a mandated examinable subject in public schools by the democratic government (DBE, 2011b), the Department of Education has failed to provide adequate resource infrastructure. Schools that were previously disadvantaged continue to face marginalisation, whereas those established under Apartheid segregation laws for Whites only remain well-resourced, excelling in arts education. Creative Arts teachers in rural schools often resort to improvisation, utilising outdoor spaces and locally available materials to display their ingenuity. One of the participants had this to say:

Schools are not well-resourced in terms of infrastructure and arts materials; we have to take learners to the school playground for performance activities (Ms Ndlebe).

The lack of infrastructure and materials can demoralise both learners and teachers, diminishing their seriousness toward the subject. Consequently, school administrations often deprioritise Creative Arts compared to subjects like mathematics and science, even reducing their time allocation, especially during periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This shortage of infrastructure and materials also affects the acquisition of content knowledge by learners. For instance, teachers may hesitate to conduct outdoor activities due to weather conditions, resulting in Creative Arts becoming primarily theoretical. Another participant said:

It takes more time to use outdoor facilities, thus contributing to delays in organising learners for the outdoors and bringing them back to the classroom (Ms Dlamini).

According to Mokgwathi et al. (2023), inadequate resources lead to unsafe environments for teachers and learners. Moreover, this inadequacy restricts access to essential materials for creative expression and hinders the exploration of indigenous artistic forms and traditional techniques specific to various cultures. It can result in a curriculum primarily focused on mainstream or Western artistic practices, neglecting indigenous perspectives and cultural expressions. Insufficient infrastructure, such as outdated facilities or limited technology, can impede the development of artistic skills and hinder the indigenisation of Creative Arts. Successful indigenisation efforts require extensive research into local artistic traditions, histories, and cultural contexts. The lack of resources and infrastructure also hampers the dissemination and preservation of Indigenous Knowledge, perpetuating a cycle of disregard for traditional knowledge.

To address these challenges, there is a need for concerted efforts to allocate resources, invest in infrastructure, and promote policies prioritising the inclusion of indigenous content in Creative Arts education. This approach ensures a more comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and equitable learning experience for students.

Incongruity between the content knowledge and the learners' contextual knowledge

Individuals possess certain boundaries of acceptance within the framework of Social Judgment Theory (SJT), which encompass the range of beliefs they deem suitable, as well as boundaries of rejection, which encompass the range of opinions they consider unsuitable. The data analysis revealed a blunt lack of alignment between the subject matter and the contextual knowledge of learners. Participants pointed out that the Learner and Teaching Support material (LTSM) materials often clash with the cultural origins, values, and beliefs of the learners, leading to minimal practical relevance of the subject in their daily lives. The teachers believe that the textbooks are inundating cultural practices unfamiliar to the learners, resulting in a discrepancy and hindrance to engagement and

comprehension. The participants considered this misalignment as a potential waste of time. One of the participants observed that:

The textbook mostly discusses cultures that are not present in the school community, most topics in the textbook are typically irrelevant to the cultural context of the learners we are teaching (Mr Dyasi).

Another concern raised was the inadequacy of the standardised content knowledge, which relies on fixed workbook activities and fails to address the unique requirements of individual students. This was aptly captured by one of the participants thus:

The exercises in the workbooks mostly focus on European and/or other cultures that do not address the cultural concerns of the learners in our community (Mr Stone).

Furthermore, teaching methodologies were reported to be incongruent with the preferred learning styles of the learners. The divergence between the content taught and the methods used for assessment was attributed to the presentation of instructional materials. Additionally, some teachers lacked sufficient training in the subject area, impeding students' ability to connect the curriculum with their contextual knowledge. A participant had this to say:

Since we mostly improvise during learning and teaching, written assessment becomes problematic in terms of the language of instruction (Ms Deliwe).

This lack of alignment between the curriculum and learners' contextual knowledge can lead to disengagement, a perceived lack of relevance, and hinder critical thinking skills. Cultural dissonance may result in feelings of alienation and identity loss, while educational inequalities may persist (Steinman and Kovats Sánchez, 2023). To address these issues, it is imperative to design curricula that consider the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and contexts of learners, incorporating culturally-relevant content and real-world examples. This approach enhances engagement, fosters a sense of belonging, and promotes meaningful learning experiences, contributing to a more inclusive and effective educational environment.

Inadequate skills and knowledge among indigenous teachers

Social Judgment Theory (SJT) posits that individuals tend to incorporate information that aligns with their own beliefs and reject information that contradicts them. Data reflections have unveiled that teachers encounter challenges in seamlessly integrating preserved Indigenous Knowledge with contemporary education, primarily due to their limited connection to the community's culture and traditions. This disconnect often compels teachers to conform to prevailing educational norms, potentially jeopardising the preservation of Indigenous Knowledge. As a result, some teachers continue to view the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge as a challenging matter that may be exceedingly difficult to effectively apply. Prykhodko et al. (2024) emphasise that understanding learners' cultural context is paramount for preserving and transmitting Indigenous Education. However, the lack of formal education or training in pedagogy, curriculum development, and effective

teaching approaches hampers teachers from implementing Indigenous Education, hindering their comprehension of efficient pedagogical methods, and impeding their capacity to convey traditional knowledge. This was aptly captured by one of the participants thus:

Most of us do not know what to teach when incorporating Indigenous knowledge, especially visual arts and crafts (Ms Azupa).

Additionally, many learners fail to recognise the importance of Creative Arts, especially as they are not widely available throughout the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in most schools (West, 2023). The limited selection of arts subjects creates a significant disparity between the senior phase and higher education because most FET schools do not offer arts subjects. This restriction poses a challenge for teachers to effectively communicate the significance and applicability of traditional knowledge to learners in school, as learners in the General Education and Training (GET) Band may not proceed with arts subjects in the FET phase since they are not compulsory (West, 2023). Moreover, Creative Arts are part of the life skills subject in the foundation and intermediate phases, while in the senior phase, there is a choice of any two art forms: music, dance, drama, and/or visual arts. The two art forms chosen by each school serve as preparation for learners to select arts subjects in the FET (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011b). A participant voiced the following:

Since the arts subjects are not compulsory in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, learners do neglect Creative Arts as they believe they will not pursue arts subjects during their Further Education and Training (Mr Mqomo).

Consequently, the ongoing impact of colonisation significantly affects indigenous communities, leading to the erosion of traditional practices, displacement of indigenous populations, and marginalisation of their voices within broader societal structures (Datta and Kairy, 2024). Insufficient preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge could disrupt cultural continuity and result in gaps in intergenerational understanding of Indigenous Knowledge, exposing it to cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. This disconnection from its authentic cultural context may also jeopardise the close connection between traditional knowledge and indigenous languages, impacting learners' linguistic proficiency negatively (Makena and Matiso, 2023). This erosion or distortion of traditional knowledge can contribute to a weakened sense of identity among community members, impacting their self-perception and connection to cultural roots (Datta and Kairy, 2024).

In the realm of education, this affects the quality of education within indigenous communities, hindering the integration of traditional teachings into the curriculum and leading to a lack of reflection of cultural values and practices. To address these impacts, a concerted effort is needed, focusing on culturally-competent education, training, and support for teachers within indigenous communities. Empowering teachers to effectively preserve and transmit traditional knowledge is crucial for the sustained well-being and cultural vitality of indigenous communities. Additionally, collaboration with academic

institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and research centres can provide vital support for indigenous knowledge preservation efforts, including funding research projects, providing technical expertise, and facilitating knowledge exchange between indigenous communities and external stakeholders.

11. Conclusions

Teachers' perceptions of Creative Arts education highlight significant challenges, primarily stemming from inadequate resources and infrastructure, which hinder effective teaching. Insufficient facilities, materials, and support make it challenging for teachers to provide meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, the lack of alignment between the curriculum and students' existing knowledge complicates teaching and learning processes, impeding student engagement and comprehension. Integrating Indigenous Knowledge, while valuable, remains limited, widening the gap between classroom instruction and indigenous students' real-world experiences. To address these issues, there is a need to prioritise resolving resource imbalances, aligning the curriculum, and acknowledging Indigenous Knowledge. Enhancing infrastructure, providing teacher support, and integrating Indigenous Knowledge into the curriculum are crucial steps toward fostering a more inclusive and culturally relevant Creative Arts education. We can create a learning environment that fosters every student's creativity and cultural expression by prioritising these initiatives. We encourage efforts to establish centres to enhance Indigenous Knowledge and skills among teachers beyond schools. Additionally, equipping community members, including dropouts and scholars, with the skills to generate income contributes to socioeconomic empowerment. Understanding teachers' perceptions is pivotal for guiding ongoing research and shaping implementation plans for action research cycles. This integrated approach aims to empower both teachers and students, promoting a more inclusive and enriched educational experience.

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