



Music-based Pedagogies to Teach Conversational Skills to Early Childhood Care and Education's Learners: The Educators' Constraints and the Proposed Solutions

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ABSTRACT

The indispensable requisite for sustainable, and equitable early childhood education is innovative educators with developmentally appropriate strategies to communicate essential skills to young children. Holistic development of young infants, especially those under five years old lays the foundation of lifelong learning. Research revealed that songs and rhymes aid the development of fundamental abilities in children. However, most of the South African Early Childhood Development (ECD) educators are ill-equipped with expertise hence their constraints in using music-based pedagogy to aid in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) children's acquisition of conversational skills. Therefore, this case study explored the constraints and proposed solutions for rural ECD educators in employing music-based pedagogies to impart conversational skills to learners. Six ECCE educators were purposively sampled from centres in Kimberley, Northern Cape province, South Africa to participate in a semi-structured interview and reflective writing. The generated data was analyzed thematically. All the participants concurred that the teaching method centered on music was the best for the ECCE classroom, however, they were restricted by factors such as inadequate expertise in music education, a dearth of musical materials, and a lack of government funding to acquire musical resources and inadequate infrastructural facilities and human resources. They believed that a short musical intervention program would boost their effectiveness and their self-confidence in employing music-based pedagogy to impact children's language development. The study recommends that a resilient support system be implemented to support ECD educators with basic musical abilities. The results of this study will help curriculum creators and ECD/ECCE policymakers improve the developmental facilities available for teaching and learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2030 United Nations educational agenda for sustainable development highlights the relevance of employing multiple tactics to enhance children's resilience in all ramifications.¹ Zama and Mashiya

¹ Susan Narelle Chapman and Lyndal O'Gorman, "Transforming Learning Environments in Early Childhood Contexts through the Arts: Responding to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals," *International Journal of Early Childhood* 54, no. 1 (2022): 33–50.

writing on the uniqueness and peculiarity of ECCE demand that educators adopt age-appropriate strategies to promote the impact of essential skills, and conversational skills.² Communication which is the capability to efficiently encode and decode information is among the initial learning and development areas for kids under four years.³ The document further demands that the ECCE educators adopt age-appropriate strategies such as creative play, singing, dancing, music, painting, and dramatic play to teach the kids how to communicate.

Similarly, Cloete, and Delport as well as Scott et al. asserted that early exposition of communication skills to young children through pictures, singing and meditation, and dramatic play by skillful adults are determinant factors for future school favorable results.⁴ The ECCE children are peculiar and have unique attributes different from all the other levels of learners. Hence, some early childhood researchers suggested music which is one of the age-appropriate pedagogies to be employed in the ECCE classroom to facilitate the kid's linguistic development.⁵

The auspicious results of the usage of songs on the perceptual, social, and cognitive growth of early childhood have been asserted by much independent research.⁶ Additionally, using music as a teaching approach helps young children learn core skills like reading, writing, and listening.⁷ Across the board, music is used in South Africa to teach a variety of subjects, including life skills, technology, and mathematics. Music education is used in Grade R, secondary school, to teach listening skills, in art classes in primary schools, to teach life skills, and in pre-service teacher education.⁸

Employing various teaching strategies to assist young children in learning is imperative in the ECCE classroom.⁹ The choice of teaching strategy enhances or prevents effective teaching and learning. However, ECCE educators are faced with a range of challenges in using musical rhymes and songs as a teaching strategy underlined as important in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children from birth to four years. Thus, the focus of this qualitative case study is exploring the ECCE educators' constraints in using music-based pedagogies to teach communication skills to young children and the possible solution. The question underpinning this research is:

- What is the worrisome reality of the ECCE instructors in employing music-related teaching strategies to impact children with conversational skills

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is unpacked under the following subheadings: Conceptualizing music-based pedagogy; unique needs of ECCE learners that demand music-based pedagogy; Educators' insufficient teacher training; Inadequate musical resources and aids; Insufficient developmental facilities in the Rural ECD centers. These are explained subsequently.

² Cynthia Z Zama and Nontokozo Mashiyi, "Early Childhood Care and Education Teachers' Experiences of Integrating the Activities of the National Curriculum Framework into Themes," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 12, no. 1 (2022): 1089.

³ Department of Basic Education (DBE), *The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four* (Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2015).

⁴ Aletta Delport and Erna Cloete, "Music Education in the Grade R Classroom: How Three Teachers Learned in a Participatory Action Inquiry," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 5, no. 1 (September 4, 2015): 21, <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v5i1.351>.

⁵ I. Madjar et al., *Stumbling Blocks or Stepping Stones? Students' Experience of Transition from Low-Mid Decile School to University* (Auckland: The University of Auckland, 2010); Deborah A. Arasomwan and Nontokozo J. Mashiyi, "Early Childhood Care and Education Educators' Understanding of the Use of Music-Based Pedagogies to Teach Communication Skills," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 11, no. 1 (July 9, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v11i1.896>; Amanda Niland and Jill Holland, "Journeys towards Empowerment: Educators Sharing Their Musical Cultural Identities with Children," *International Journal of Music in Early Childhood* 14, no. 1 (June 1, 2019): 71–88, https://doi.org/10.1386/ijmec.14.1.71_1.

⁶ Cory D Dugar, "Music Advocacy: The Cognitive Development, Behavioral and Emotional Management, and Academic Success That Music Education Provides Students in Louisiana's Low Socioeconomic Elementary Schools," 2023.

⁷ Julianie Abella, Stephan Marie Barluado, and Jocyn Sepada, "Enhancing Children's Literacy through Music: Exploring the Impact and Strategies for Integration," *International Multi-Disciplinary Journal of Education (2994-9521)* 1, no. 2 (2023): 44–53.

⁸ Mignon Van Vreden, "Maestro for a Moment: A Conceptual Framework for Music Integration in Grade R," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 6, no. 1 (June 21, 2016): 10, <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v6i1.373>; R.J. Mouton, "Understanding the Challenges Teachers in the Western Cape Face Teaching the Music Component of Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase" (North-West University, South Africa, 2023); Sylvia Bruinders, "Transforming African Musics at a South African University," *British Journal of Music Education*, 2023, 1–14.

⁹ Vimala Judy Kamalodeen et al., "The Development of Teacher ICT Competence and Confidence in Using Web 2.0 Tools in a STEM Professional Development Initiative in Trinidad," *The Caribbean Teaching Scholar* 7, no. 1 (2017).

Conceptualizing Music-Based Pedagogy

The phrase "music-based pedagogy" refers to interdisciplinary pedagogy that uses all artistic mediums—music, poetry, theatre, dance, and visual art—to promote learning of subjects that are outside the arts.¹⁰ According to a study by Britto et al., it is utilizing developmentally appropriate implementation techniques in the ECCE classroom—like using songs and rhymes to ensure early sustainable childhood development.¹¹ Additionally, it includes the use of dance, pictures, videos, rhymes, and musical games in the early childhood classroom to support children in developing resilient and sustainable life skills.¹² It is also explained as the use of all practical and application-oriented potential of music as a transformative instrument for education and child development,¹³ and the intricate processes for creating, carrying out, and appreciating that come with creative learning and activity are included into a music-based inquiry as a teaching and learning strategy.¹⁴

In early childhood development classrooms, the use of songs as teaching strategies aims to improve the phonological, speech, listening, and reading development of young children. It has also been demonstrated that the application of music-based pedagogies improves learning and fosters a positive learning environment in the classroom.¹⁵ Numerous studies have also shown that teaching any skill with music facilitates quick comprehension, creates a positive learning environment in the classroom, and promotes social interaction in the classroom which supports the growth of young children.¹⁶ Apart from the abilities of reading, writing, and listening, music-based pedagogy supports children to explore, express, build knowledge, and strengthen their interactions with their surroundings through musical activity,¹⁷ supporting young children in creating harmony and a balanced lifestyle.¹⁸ Thus, the development of a harmonious sense of self while molding and enhancing learners' personalities may be achieved using music-based pedagogy.

Unique Characteristics of ECCE Learners that require Music-Based Pedagogy

ECCE children have special requirements for a variety of abilities such as early education and behavioral abilities, socioemotional development, and components of physical well-being which includes motor development, to flourish in the classroom are formed at this stage. Thus, there is a need for age-appropriate teaching strategies to facilitate the growth of these critical skills. According to research, three- and four-year-olds are highly active physically and have short attention spans.¹⁹ They have lively and spirited minds and acquire skills through playful activities; Children use signals, body language, laughing, gurgling, babbling, and speaking to convey their feelings.²⁰ Researchers such as Dong et al. believe that employing

¹⁰ Ziyu Wu, "A Review of Drama-Based and Music-Based Pedagogy in Early Childhood Language Learning and Development," in *2021 International Conference on Education, Language and Art (ICELA 2021)* (Atlantis Press, 2022), 702–6.

¹¹ Pia R Britto et al., "Nurturing Care: Promoting Early Childhood Development," *The Lancet* 389, no. 10064 (2017): 91–102.

¹² Arasomwan and Mashiy, "Early Childhood Care and Education Educators' Understanding of the Use of Music-Based Pedagogies to Teach Communication Skills."

¹³ Tina Frühauf, *Experiencing Jewish Music in America: A Listener's Companion* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

¹⁴ Mignon van Vreden, "Creating a Musical for Pre-Schoolers in South Africa as Pedagogical Praxis for a Tertiary Music Education Module," *British Journal of Music Education* 40, no. 1 (2023): 109–23.

¹⁵ Päivi-Sisko Eerola and Tuomas Eerola, "Extended Music Education Enhances the Quality of School Life," *Music Education Research* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 88–104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2013.829428>.

¹⁶ F. Ba'th and M.P. Mychailyszyn, "The Power of Musical Learning: A Pilot Study of Whether Private Music Lessons Can Decrease Parental Stress and Disruptive Behaviour in Children," *Mental Health Family Medicine* 14, no. 1 (2017): 642–51; Andrew Knight and Paige Rabon, "Music for Speech and Language Development in Early Childhood Populations," *Music Therapy Perspectives* 35, no. 2 (November 13, 2017): 124–30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mtp/mix014>; Eurika N. Jansen van Vuuren, "Arts across the Curriculum as a Pedagogic Ally for Primary School Teachers," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 8, no. 1 (March 28, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v8i1.477>; Stan Hawkins, *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B. Scott* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2012).

¹⁷ V. Varga, "How Do Early Childhood Educators' Preprofessional Music Experiences Shape Their Practices with Young Children: An Interpretive Phenomenology Study" (2022).

¹⁸ Judit Váradi, "A Review of the Literature on the Relationship of Music Education to the Development of Socio-Emotional Learning," *Sage Open* 12, no. 1 (2022): 21582440211068500.

¹⁹ Arasomwan and Mashiy, "Early Childhood Care and Education Educators' Understanding of the Use of Music-Based Pedagogies to Teach Communication Skills."

²⁰ Department of Basic Education, *The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four* (Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2015).

music activities to educate is the greatest way to relax young children and promote their learning since they have a predisposition towards social inhibition and neurotic behavior.²¹

Additionally, research shows that music-based pedagogy makes the classroom more participatory and fun. This satisfying emotional experience encourages intrinsic motivation and helps learners form a favorable opinion of developing communication skills.²² Teachers can use music-based activities to draw learners in, hold their interest, and encourage active engagement in the learning process by incorporating them into the ECCE classroom. Songs, due to their repetitious nature fit the characteristics and traits of ECCE children, which helps them learn how to communicate.

Early Childhood Educators' Teacher Training

To ensure that young children receive the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual stimulation they require during their formative years, educators must possess the necessary qualifications.²³ Sadly, far too many of the professionals working in ECD centres lack the expertise needed to instruct these young children, especially in using music activities. A significant obstacle to the successful use of music as an implementation strategy was the lack of adequate inclusion in the pre-service teacher training curricula. The degree to which an educator can effectively use music activities as an implementing approach in the classroom depends on their background in education, training in music, and musical experiences. Many practitioners, according to Bawani, and Mphahlele and Arasomwan and Mashiy have either no professional training at all or very little training.²⁴ Some Non-governmental ECD/ECCE owners hire professionals with less training experience and qualifications to maximize their profit.

The ECCE curriculum describes a broad range of six Early Learning and Development Areas (ELDAs) that should be addressed. Child welfare, identity and belonging, communication, mathematical exploration, creativity, knowledge, and global understanding are among these ELDAs. A recent qualitative study by Sollerhed revealed that most ECCE educators are predominantly generalists and not a specialist in all the specified Learning and Development Areas, hence they focused on sedentary subjects and topics.²⁵ A superb instructor is required at the ECD level of education, but some ECD centres enable males with basic literacy abilities and females with basic schooling who are at least 18 years old to become ECD teachers.²⁶ Due to their inadequate training, they were unable to effectively interpret and apply the national curriculum to assist ECCE learners in acquiring foundational information.²⁷ Terronez lists several qualities that make a qualified ECCE teacher, including but not limited to being a good listener, having a passion for teaching, smiling, giving, and receiving, being humble, compassionate, understanding, risk-taking, being calm and not overwhelmed, being a cheerleader, cracking jokes, being playful, creative, and innovative, among others.²⁸ Despite not having the requisite training, most ECCE teachers work there because it provides for their families.

²¹ Yinghan Dong et al., "Neuroticism and Aggressive Behavior among Left-behind Children: The Mediating Roles of Interpersonal Sensitivity and Bullying Victimization," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 17 (2022): 11072.

²² John Michael Sasan and Joselito C Baritua, "Distance Learning as a Learning Modality for Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Science and Education* 3, no. 8 (2022): 35–44.

²³ Arasomwan and Mashiy, "Early Childhood Care and Education Educators' Understanding of the Use of Music-Based Pedagogies to Teach Communication Skills"; Pam P Zulu, Adebunmi Y Aina, and Keshni Bipath, "Education and Training Experiences of Early Childhood Care and Education Practitioners in Rural and Urban Settings of Durban, South Africa," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 12, no. 1 (2022): 1167.

²⁴ Elisa L Bawani and Ramashego S S Mphahlele, "Investigating the Role of Teacher Training of Reception Teachers in Implementing the Pre-Primary Curriculum in Francistown, Botswana," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–14.

²⁵ Ann-Christin Sollerhed, "Perceived Insufficient Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Teaching Movement and Physical Activity. Experiences from an Action-Oriented Study among Educators in Early Childhood Education and Care," *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 4 (2023): 1050311.

²⁶ Elizabeth Ngumbi, "Challenges Facing Early Childhood Teachers and Possible Solutions," *Education & Child Development* 1, no. 1 (2022).

²⁷ L Ang et al., "The Role of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) in Supporting Learning and Well-Being in Rural Early Childhood and Primary Schools in South Africa," *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 2023, 1–18.

²⁸ Terronez. A, "Teaching Is Learning: Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching (Abridged)," 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=rOTI4svjPO0>.

Early Childhood Education curriculum designers have also made it more challenging for educators to use music as teaching strategies in the ECCE classroom.²⁹ Creativity is stated as an important aspect area for young children through which they can express themselves creatively through performing arts, including acting, singing, dancing, and exploring movement.³⁰ The document further attested that music enhances children's memory, fosters interpersonal connections, and increases self-assurance and self-control. Thus, babies, toddlers, and early children gain movement, and motor skills, through music. However, the document does not delineate a musical empowerment program for educators and caregivers to effectively implement this intended curriculum for the children.

Musical Resources and Aids to Accompany the Songs

Some early childhood educators have expressed challenges in obtaining resources for music education, which is crucial for the early development of children, in addition to a deficiency of training. Playing musical instruments is a great approach to encourage physical development. For example, drumming with an open hand can help develop gross motor skills, while learning to hold a drumstick or tap each finger on a piano strengthens fine motor skills.³¹ It also stated that playing the piano or drums continuously engages your children's hand-eye coordination skills.³² Making music together can provide a secure environment for people to practice imitation and mimesis, which can foster a sense of community and the development of prosocial abilities.³³ Sutcliffe, Du, and Ruffman also discovered that young children who played instruments showed improvements in the areas of their brains related to language development, speech perception, sound processing, and reading comprehension.³⁴ Additionally, according to a recent study by Hooper teachers who encourage young children to move, clap, sway, and listen to marching music can help them develop syllable and fine motor skills that will support later writing.³⁵

ECCE educators, however, are not able to use these tools due to the unavailability of them in most of the centres. According to Mohangi et al., South African schools located in remote settings typically have inadequate resources and lack essential infrastructure, including electricity, roads, sanitation, ICTs, and instructional materials.³⁶ Furthermore, most ECCE teachers, particularly those working in rural areas, lack experience with a variety of implementation techniques, which undermines their confidence and efficacy when it comes to teaching children the necessary skills.³⁷ The lack of modern and age-appropriate musical equipment at some of the ECCE centres hinders educators from effectively adopting music-based pedagogy to support young children's learning skills.

Developmental facilities in the Rural ECD centers

The ECD policy guidelines and papers in South Africa state that the primary factors influencing the quality of ECCE are the existence of structural and procedural quality inputs such as the curriculum, number of washbasins and bathrooms, teacher-to-student ratio, physical infrastructure, governance and financial management, availability of developmentally appropriate educational tools, materials, and resources, and

²⁹ Arasomwan and Mashiy, "Early Childhood Care and Education Educators' Understanding of the Use of Music-Based Pedagogies to Teach Communication Skills"; G. La Rocca, "Facing the Music: An Investigation of the Factors That Influence Early Career Teachers' Music Practices in Early Childhood Education Settings in Australia" (Macquarie University, 2022).

³⁰ Department of Basic Education (DBE), *The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four*.

³¹ İpek Gürbüzel, Tilbe Göksun, and Aykut Coşkun, "Eliciting Parents' Insights into Products for Supporting and Tracking Children's Fine Motor Development," in *Proceedings of the 21st Annual ACM Interaction Design and Children Conference, 2022*, 544–50; Ajeng Ninda Uminar, "The Use of Percussion Instruments to Improve Musical Intelligence of Young Children," *Journal of Childhood Development* 3, no. 1 (2023): 30–38.

³² Katie Zhukov, "Learning to Play an Instrument," in *Routledge International Handbook of Music Psychology in Education and the Community* (Routledge, 2021), 185–200.

³³ Tal-Chen Rabinowitch and Andrew N Meltzoff, "Synchronized Movement Experience Enhances Peer Cooperation in Preschool Children," *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 160 (2017): 21–32.

³⁴ Ryan Sutcliffe, Kangning Du, and Ted Ruffman, "Music Making and Neuropsychological Aging: A Review," *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* 113 (2020): 479–91.

³⁵ Timothy R Hooper, "Evaluating the Level of Need for Educational Psychology Services in England" (University of Manchester, 2023).

³⁶ Kesh Mohangi et al., "Contextual Challenges in Early Literacy Teaching and Learning in Grade R Rural Schools in South Africa," *Per Linguam: A Journal of Language Learning = Per Linguam: Tydskrif Vir Taalaanleer* 32, no. 1 (2016): 71–87.

³⁷ Mohammad Saber Khaghaninejad, Hossein Saadabadi Motlagh, and Ramin Chamacham, "How Does Mozart's Music Affect the Reading Comprehension of Iranian EFL Learners of Both Genders?," *Internafional Journal of Humanifies and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)*, 2016.

so on .³⁸ When the learning environment is conducive and safe for children, the ECD educators will effectively impact them with the essential skills. Aina and Bipath disclose that infrastructure at ECD centres is a problem in South Africa because many of them are underdeveloped.³⁹ Mbarathi, Mthembu, and Diga added that, in the rural setting, educators have a scarcity of instructional materials and deal with packed classes (teachers to students).⁴⁰ Furthermore, the ECD/ECCE in remote areas is marked by crammed classrooms and unfavorable learning environments, which result in learners as young as four and five in the same classroom and hinder teachers from implementing musical pedagogies successfully.⁴¹ There is also a lack of space, light, and ventilation as well as clearly defined areas for various activities and purposes. Besides, the national audit on ECD centers discovered that "a large percentage of physical defects in the walls and roof of ECD centres, as well as preventable safety hazards like sharp, dangerous fixtures and obstacles obstructing passageways," are present in the facilities limiting the educators in engaging the learners in musical activities that promote the development of conversational skills in children.⁴²

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The sociocultural theory (SCT) of Vygotsky served as the foundation for this exploration study.⁴³ Three fundamental features of Vygotsky's SCT are the more knowledgeable other (MKO), social interaction, and the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky's principal contention was that toddlers grow cognitively through social interaction with adults who possess more skill sets because they are ingrained in diverse sociocultural settings.⁴⁴ That is children learn when an adult offers excitement and reinforcement, such as a parent, caretaker, or educator. Effective language and communication skill acquisition is ingrained in the positive interactions between educators and learners. According to Vygotsky, a child surrounded by experienced people greatly influences their development, hence all the systems in their immediate environment must support a child's growth to the fullest.⁴⁵ The MKO of Vygotsky's SCT, along with Bronfenbrenner and Piaget, refers to an individual who has more skills or expertise than the learner with a task, process, or concept.⁴⁶ Learners gradually acquire new knowledge and skills (communication skills) when the MKO scaffolds their expertise by supporting their repeated involvement in multiple musical activities.⁴⁷ Thus, the need for enhancement of teacher's capacity to effectively carry out their roles of MKO to learners, and the academic developers must provide support to ECCE educators through capacity building to enhance their teaching training.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative research Six ECCE educators participated in semi-structured interviews and reflecting writing, and observation was adopted to elicit information about their constraints in using music-related strategies to impact the learners with conversational skills. The selection of participants was done via a purposive sampling strategy, considering their backgrounds, experiences in the ECCE context, and willingness to take part in the research. This happened after visiting the study centers to get to know the

³⁸ Eric Atmore, "Challenges Facing the Early Childhood Development Sector in South Africa," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 2, no. 1 (July 1, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v2i1.25>.

³⁹ Adebunmi Y Aina and Keshni Bipath, "Availability and Use of Infrastructural Resources in Promoting Quality Early Childhood Care and Education in Registered Early Childhood Development Centres," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 12, no. 1 (2022): 980.

⁴⁰ Nduta Mbarathi, Mbali Emerald Mthembu, and Kathleen Diga, *Early Childhood Development and South Africa: A Literature Review*. (SARChI Technical Paper #6, University of KwaZulu-Natal., 2016), <http://hdl.handle.net/10413/13338>.

⁴¹ Avosuahi Deborah Arasomwan and Glynnis Daries, "Rural Early Childhood Educators' Perception of Music-Based Pedagogy in Teaching Communication Skills to Children," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 4, no. 12 (2023): 254–68, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202341222>.

⁴² RSA (Republic of South Africa), "Audit of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres: National Report," Department of Social Development, July 31, 2014.

⁴³ Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of LS Vygotsky: Problems of the Theory and History of Psychology*, vol. 3 (Springer Science & Business Media, 1987).

⁴⁴ Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of LS Vygotsky: Problems of the Theory and History of Psychology*.

⁴⁵ Karim Shabani, "Implications of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory for Second Language (L2) Assessment," *Cogent Education* 3, no. 1 (December 31, 2016): 1242459, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1242459>.

⁴⁶ Saul McLeod, "Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development," *Simply Psychology* 3 (2018); Shabani, "Implications of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory for Second Language (L2) Assessment."

⁴⁷ Manuel Fernández et al., "Re-Conceptualizing" Scaffolding" and the Zone of Proximal Development in the Context of Symmetrical Collaborative Learning," *The Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 2001, 40–54.

educators and build a friendly rapport. To respond to the main research questions, it is therefore necessary to choose the educators who possess the necessary information. This sampling strategy is consistent with Denieffe's and Thomas's argument regarding the purposive sampling method in research, which holds that decisions are made based on individuals, groups of individuals, or educational institutions that possess extensive knowledge about the topic being studied.⁴⁸

The participants could openly discuss their worrisome experiences in the classroom with music-based pedagogy because they ranged in age from 17 to 55 and had experience spanning two, five, six, fifteen, seventeen, and eighteen years. The two rural ECD/ECCE contexts that comprised the setting were managed by non-governmental organizations and government agencies. Both have some basic amenities, including beds and mattresses for kids ages 0 to 4, tap water, electricity, and a well-equipped playground. However, there were insufficient classrooms and educators as both centres mixed children aged five and four in the same classroom. They gave the kids instructions from CAPS and NCF documents. According to Hall, Gaved, and Sargent, "Participatory approaches emphasize the importance of building rapport and trust between researchers and participants, as well as actively including participants in the design, execution, and assessment of a study topic."⁴⁹ The participants were therefore encouraged to write, draw, and use photovoice to tell their tales about the difficulties they had in implementing music-related teaching methods in an ECD/ECCE setting.

Following their reflective activity, each participant participated in a semi-structured individual interview during which they discussed the topics covered in their writings in more detail. Miles and Huberman's deductive and inductive data analysis strategy was employed in analyzing the data thematically.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics, according to Bertram and Hughes, are standards of behavior that delineate what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior in research.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Harriss, Jones, and MacSween added that ethical guidelines are fundamental precepts that uphold the safety, well-being, and dignity of all actual and prospective research participants.⁵¹ Hence, several precautions and considerations were made to guarantee that all requirements for this qualitative participatory case study were appropriately fulfilled. Thus, consent to act as gatekeepers was acquired from each research study's school head. Before starting to collect data, the researcher also visited the research setting to build friendly relationships and inform them of the goal of the study.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Six ECCE Educators from two rural ECD/ECCE centres were purposively selected to participate in this study. Through individual semi-structured interviews, reflective exercises, and observation, data was generated on the ECCE/ECD educators' constraints in using music to impart communication skills to ECCE learners. Except for two individuals with prior expertise in similar sectors, most participants in this study encountered various barriers to the effective use of music-based pedagogy in the ECCE/ECD classrooms. The results are shown and examined under the following themes: Conceptualizing music-based pedagogy; unique needs of ECCE learners that demand music-based pedagogy; Educators' insufficient teacher training; Inadequate musical resources and aids; Insufficient developmental facilities in the Rural ECD centers.

⁴⁸ Suzanne Denieffe, "Commentary: Purposive Sampling: Complex or Simple? Research Case Examples," *Journal of Research in Nursing* 25, no. 8 (2020): 662–63.

⁴⁹ Johanna Hall, Mark Gaved, and Julia Sargent, "Participatory Research Approaches in Times of Covid-19: A Narrative Literature Review," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (January 1, 2021): 1609406921101000, <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211010087>.

⁵⁰ I. Bertrand and P. Hughes, *Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁵¹ D J Harriss, C Jones, and Alasdair MacSween, "Ethical Standards in Sport and Exercise Science Research: 2022 Update," *International Journal of Sports Medicine* 43, no. 13 (2022): 1065–70.

Theme 1: Conceptualizing music-based pedagogy

To start, the researchers asked the individuals to elaborate on what they understood of music-related teaching method pedagogy and its application in the ECCE/ECD classroom. They responded based on their educational experiences and years of practicing in the ECD/ECCE. Their responses show that they have ideas of employing musical activities in the classroom such as rhymes, and dramatic play accompanied by music. Two of the participants with average musical training have a sound understanding of music-based pedagogy and varieties of songs to aid the learners in learning conversational skills.

I think I understand music-based pedagogy, as I said earlier, I did receive music training during my NQF level 5 program and we are taught that the best teaching method for an ECD classroom is the use of various music, rhymes to teach the children. I have been using different music to teach alphabet letters. I also use "Hokey Pokey" songs to teach the children ages four body parts (Female ECD/ECCE educator with 17years of experience and 49 years old)

The same question was thrown to the next participant who has taught for 15 years in one of the centres and is 40 years old. Below is her response:

Yes, I know using music activities in the ECD classroom, is just that I'm still struggling and will want to learn more. It is stated in the NCF document that we should employ performing arts such as dancing and singing to support the children's learning skills. I use music to teach them numbers, body parts, and virtually everything, but I'm not as perfect as I ought to be.

The response of the next participant:

I'm still new in this school, although the principal put me through some training. I do sing for the children to reduce their noise, yes, I sing for the children, (A female ECCE educator with 2 months of teaching experience and is 28 years old)

According to this theme, the study found that only three participants understood music-based pedagogy quite well. These received some exposure and training on what music-based pedagogy is. The other three were novices, and the centers' coordinators arranged a few workshops where they some teaching strategies suitable for children. However, they do not fully comprehend music-based activities.

Theme 2: Unique characteristics of ECD/ECCE learners that demand music-based pedagogy.

This sub-theme demonstrated the participants' understanding of children's distinct qualities and nature, which set them apart from adults and necessitates that any approach to teaching them a skill differ from that of teaching learners at other developmental stages. Every responder agreed that using music helps kids learn. According to Participant 1, a dynamic teaching approach is necessary due to the energetic character of young children.

Given their age, I believe that more music should be used in the classroom to improve student learning. Using songs to teach the kids was stressed more than any other strategy throughout my NQF level 5 training. Because educating with standard techniques will be monotonous, students find learning and teaching with music engaging. Since the kids are energetic and restless and the instructor must provide activities that fit their personality, music is another tool that helps and expedites learning. (Interview with a 49-year-old female ECD/ECCE educator who has 17 years of experience)

Participant Two provided similar justifications for why music is used in ECCE classrooms, noting that kids are enthusiastic, lively, funning and playful:

I have been teaching in ECD for so long and the reason I think music is a superior medium for teaching kids is that kids are still very young, antsy, energetic, and playful. If you limit your teaching methods to the conventional ones, the children will become disinterested, bored, and noisy. Additionally, children learn more effectively when you employ music and rhymes since they find it difficult to forget what they are taught via recitation and repetition. The kids will start applauding, dancing, moving, and appearing pleased when you play music. Since play is in their

nature at this point, everything you teach them will remain with them. (Interview with a 40-year-old female ECD/ECCE educator who has 15 years of experience)

The next participant has this to say about the characteristics of ECCE learners that demand the use of music and songs to support their learning.

I have grandchildren who are hyperactive and restless, when I sing for them, they become calm. And here in the centres, some children throw tantrums often, they are very emotional, with songs I have been able to put them under control and teach them whatever they are expected to learn. ((Interview with a 55-year-old female ECD/ECCE educator who has 6 years of experience)

For this participant, though she has no formal education in music, experiences with ECD helped her to understand children's nature. She said:

Not having official music training, however, unit standard 24485 covers some basic music activity creation along with handling children. In addition, I naturally see musical concepts that may aid kids in learning any topic. Since three and four-year-olds are in the speech and language development period, music is the ideal tool to help them with this process. Children learn more effectively when they are exposed to music in the classroom. This is because children who are taught songs at home by their parents can communicate better with their peers at school. (An interview with a female educator with 7 years of teaching experience and is 32 years old).

The nature and traits of ECCE children, as well as the developmental stages of ECD/ECCE children that need the use of music in the classroom, were somewhat understood by the participants. They all concurred that music-related activities were appropriate for helping kids develop any necessary abilities, including communication.

Theme 3: Educators' insufficient teacher training

As beneficial as music is in helping kids acquire the necessary skills, the participants said that their lack of training presents a challenge. The educators expressed dissatisfaction about their little exposure to music pedagogy throughout their teacher preparation program. Some said it had only happened during the proprietors' workshop. According to the findings, just two of the participants had received NQF level five training and minor musical training at ECD level four from Edu specialists. The remaining people learned about music from their coworkers, the internet, and their church.

As a result, they claimed that their background in the use of music as a teaching tool was inadequate. Participant Three bemoaned her lack of musical training and hoped for assistance.

As I have earlier said, I do not have university experience to effectively use music-based activities but for the principal and listening to music from the internet. I think if I receive musical training, I will do better because virtually all the activities are taught using music. And I'm struggling with the implementation of some of the topics effectively. I hope you will organize some program to teach us the rudiment of music (Interview with a 28-year-old female ECCE instructor who has just been teaching for two months).

The following participant has no professional background in music, but because of her experiences with ECD and her biological children and grandchildren, she can use music to teach the kids. However, she has challenges in composing suitable songs that match some of the topics.

No, I don't attend school to study music; nevertheless, I have been a teacher for the last six years. In addition, I attend church, where we study a variety of songs. As a mother and grandma, I sing for my kids because I understand how kids learn. In the classroom, music might be beneficial. I play simple music for the kids. I cannot instruct using intricate music. (An interview with a female ECCE educator having 6 years of experience and is 55 years old)

This is Participant Four, she stopped her education in grade 11, and only received some training from the principal. Below was her view:

As we utilize songs and rhymes to teach almost every topic, I'm still learning and ready to learn more about music because I know I do not have the recommended qualifications to teach. Although I received some training including music from my principal when I was newly recruited. I require further instruction in music. I want to give it my all since I adore children. (A 28-year-old female educator who has taught for one year in one of the centres).

Most participants do not possess formal music training, as indicated by their comments. Out of them, only two have partial formal ECD training including music. To give the learners their best, they all asked for musical empowerment.

Theme 4: Lack of government support in the provision of musical instruments

The topic of participants' lack of access to musical materials is covered in this sub-theme. They said that to use music as an instructional tool, at least basic percussion instruments must be present to accompany the songs, particularly when teaching the kids linguistic skills like phonics, pitch, stress, and sound. They did, however, protest that the ECCE centers lacked adequate resources.

The main issue facing this school is not just that the educators lack musical training, but also that there aren't nearly enough musical instruments. Teachers must put in a great deal of work to teach the kids the fundamentals of language acquisition and communication. Children struggle most with reading comprehension, as I mentioned previously. Music helps, but we need musical instruments. It would be very appreciated if the Department of Education could assist us by providing the school with musical instruments. (An interview with a 49-year-old female ECD/ECCE educator who has 17 years of experience)

Another participant voiced this:

As I mentioned before, kids are open to music, and it fits with their personalities. Some of us who lack sufficient musical expertise use the Internet to download various pieces of music to teach them, but we are unable to obtain musical instruments. To help kids acquire communication skills, simple musical instruments are needed, whether premade or made up on the spot, but we don't have any of them (An interview with a 55-year-old female ECCE educator having 6 years of experience).

For this new educator, she requested some basic training on the improvisation of musical instruments:

As I told you I'm new and don't have sound musical training. We have a shortage of musical instruments but if we can be taught how to improvise some simple musical instruments, we will appreciate it (interview with a female ECCE educator with 2 months of teaching experience and is 28 years old).

One of the issues preventing the participants from properly using music to teach the ECCE learners is the absence of musical materials. All of them agreed that ECCE classrooms require musical accompaniment in the form of simple percussion instruments such as improvised drums, tambourines, woodblocks, gongs, and maracas.

Theme 5: Insufficient developmental facilities and human resources

Another major issue discovered was inadequate facilities. In these two research centres the educators were not only undertrained but were also not enough. The children aged four and five were made to share a single classroom in the centres.

On this point below are the views of some of the educators:

As you can see, we need more structure to accommodate the children and make movement easier for the teacher and the children in the classroom. There is some music we cannot play because we lack space. We have written to some organizations to source for funds, hoping for more facilities (A female ECD/ECCE educator with 17 years of experience and 49 years old).

Another educator stated that:

We worked till 4 pm every day because there was a shortage of teachers. As you can see in this class, I'm combining children aged four and five together and I'm supposed to use different curricula for them. I'm just using my experience to juggle things together to ensure that the children learn. I believe when we have more hands, I will use more music activities in the class. (A female ECCE educator with 6 years of experience and is 55 years old).

To the claim above the principal of one of the centres attested to it that the educators in the centres felt unsatisfied with the payment, hence they are not performing according to expectation. The responses of the participants show that they have restrictions and constraints in their effort to employ music-based pedagogy to support ECD/ECCE learners in acquiring communication skills.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings showed that ECD/ECCE teachers are familiar with using music-based learning activities because of their training in NQF level 5, Unit standard 24485, the internet, their experiences parenting their children and grandchildren, and their participation in religious activities. Nevertheless, there were limitations, such as inadequate education, as none of the six research participants had a degree in early childhood development from a university. Their responses showed that their inadequate training is restricting their effectiveness in the use of music activities to support the children to acquire basic skills including communication. Inadequate developmental facilities and musical instruments to go with the songs in the classroom are further limitations.

Theme 1: Conceptualizing music-based pedagogy

ECCE learners have requirements, particular pedagogies must be used to facilitate the learning of their fundamental skills. Virtually all the six participants attested that they understood what music-based pedagogy is. However, only three of them have a good understanding of the effective implementation of it in the classroom to help learners acquire skills. The other three view music-based activities as merely singing for ECD/ECCE children in the classroom to stop them from disturbing but do not understand that the purpose is to support the learners in acquiring essential skills. They do not have the idea of selecting songs that suit the learners' language proficiency level, are age-appropriate, reflect their culture, and still learn the expected skills. This finding was confirmed by Mphahlele, and Jikpamu, that the participants of their research lack the appropriate pedagogical strategies for the Early childhood classroom.⁵² Boyd et al., as well as Martínez-Bello et al. affirmed that educators with poor pedagogical approaches will lead to poor outcomes and development for young children, thus educators need pedagogical knowledge to effectively support learners to acquire skills.⁵³

The first participant stated that she was exposed to a variety of suitable teaching strategies for the ECCE/ECD classroom including songs and rhymes when she obtained her NQF level 5 training, thus, she understood what music-based activities are and how to use them in the classroom. This finding is reinforced by Vygotsky's theory that teachers must become MKOs to assist students in learning as well as Shulman's theory that teachers must have a solid understanding of the subject matter they plan to teach the students. The research in two ECCE/ ECD contexts has revealed that some of the educators have a good understanding of music-based pedagogy and have adopted it to impact the children with knowledge of numbers, body parts, alphabet, two-letter words, sounds, and pitch.

Theme 2: Unique characteristics of ECD/ECCE learners that demand music-based pedagogy.

Due to the distinct nature, traits, and learning styles of kids that differ from adults, ECCE/ECD learners have special demands. The results of this study demonstrated that the participants helped in three main

⁵² Ramashego Mphahlele and Bethia Tanneh Jikpamu, "Re-Imagining Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education Pre-Service Curriculum in the Face of the COVID 19 Pandemic," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education* 10, no. 1 (2021): 118–38.

⁵³ Wendy Boyd et al., "The Design of Early Childhood Teacher Education Programs: Australian Employer Perspectives with International Program Comparisons," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)* 47, no. 6 (2022): 69–84; Vladimir E Martínez-Bello et al., "Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Movement Opportunities in Toddler Education: Perceptions of Early Childhood Educators and Student Teachers," *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 2023, 1–14.

ways to improve their comprehension and competency in using music-based instruction to educate ECCE learners. First off, through their ECD training, three of the participants learned more about the most effective child-centered teaching techniques through child development training. Consequently, their selection of music-based activities was inspired by their understanding of children's developmental milestones and distinct personalities.

Secondly, as most participants are parents, they asserted that they had a better understanding of the traits and nature of children and that using music accelerated and improved their learning. Despite lacking any musical training, one participant said that she understood children's development from her experiences as a mother and from working as a children's educator at the church. She thus said that music-related activities are the ideal way to teach kids. Finally, the other participants said that the principal of one of the newly recruited centres hosted a session during which they learned about children and the best ways to assist them in learning. She said that since music gets kids excited and enthusiastic, it's the finest thing for helping them learn. These participants' opinions align with those of Blasco-Magraner, Bernabe-Valero, Marín-Liébana, and Moret-Tatay, who found that youngsters are quickly bored and feel strong emotions; as a result, music may be employed as an emotional stimulant.⁵⁴

Theme 3: Educators' insufficient teacher training

According to the findings under this subject, the participants understood music to be the most effective instructional medium for ECCE classrooms. Nevertheless, some limitations made it difficult for them to employ music effectively.

The findings of this study revealed that none of the six rural ECD educators interviewed and observed obtained a university degree. Only two had NQF level 5 training and ECD level 4 with Edu experts. These two might use music as an effective teaching tool in the classroom. The researcher's observations in the classroom attested to these two's expertise. Most participants relied exclusively on their own experiences as mothers, the Internet, and informal music education from the church. Some of them were unaware of basic children's musical instruments, such as percussion instruments (such as the triangle, cylinder, tambourine, bell, and others).

The findings were in congruence with Tayoni and Abocejo, who stated that Many educators in rural regions lack the necessary training and are not familiar with the most recent methods and approaches to teaching.⁵⁵ Eighty percent of participants in Almutairi and Shukri's study on educators' perceptions of using songs to teach children conversational skills admitted to finding it challenging to come up with rhymes and songs that were acceptable for all the suggested topics.⁵⁶ Additionally, the results align with the research conducted by Adams-Ojugbele and Moletsane, who discovered that the training and expertise of educators influence their output and efficiency while collaborating with learners and teaching them new skills.⁵⁷

Similarly, Siskind et al. added that competent and well-trained ECD teachers are efficient in imparting learners with desirable skills and have fewer feelings of work burnout.⁵⁸ Vygotsky supported the claims and stated that the key to teaching skills to students effectively is for educators to adopt the role of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) and use a variety of instructional techniques to scaffold students in their zone of proximal development (ZPD).

⁵⁴ José Salvador Blasco-Magraner et al., "Effects of the Educational Use of Music on 3-to 12-Year-Old Children's Emotional Development: A Systematic Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 7 (2021): 3668.

⁵⁵ A.C. Tayoni and F.T. Abocejo, "The Multigrade Education Program: A Policy Evaluation," *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research (IJAPR)* 7, no. 1–6 (2023), www.ijeais.org/ijapr.

⁵⁶ Maryam Almutairi and Nadia Shukri, "Using Songs in Teaching Oral Skills to Young Learners: Teachers' Views and Attitudes," *International Journal of Linguistics* 8, no. 6 (December 16, 2016): 133, <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v8i6.10464>.

⁵⁷ Rasheedah O. Adams-Ojugbele and Relebohile Moletsane, "Towards Quality Early Childhood Development for Refugee Children: An Exploratory Study of a Grade R Class in a Durban Child Care Centre," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 9, no. 1 (July 10, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v9i1.616>.

⁵⁸ Demi G Siskind et al., "Who's Teaching the Teachers? An Exploration of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Program Faculty's Cultural Competence, Work Burnout, and Teaching Efficacy," *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 44, no. 3 (2023): 425–44.

Theme 4: Lack of government support in the provision of musical instruments

Apart from inadequate inclusion in the diverse pre-service teacher training programs, the researchers found that musical resources were deficient for the educators involved. They stated that for them to apply music-based pedagogies more successfully, the educational authorities needed to take concrete action and provide the instruments they needed. All of them concurred that basic percussion instruments including homemade drums, tambourines, woodblocks, gongs, xylophones, and rattles and maracas are necessary for providing musical accompaniment in early childhood education classes. The program designed for ECCE is not adequately resourced. These help with hand-eye coordination, the development of fine and gross motor abilities, and the teaching of language sounds and pitch. As with other resources, parents and school administration are responsible for providing these musical instruments, therefore the number of resources provided is insufficient to meet the needs.

This finding was congruent with Shaw, and Mayo, findings that the government's provision of resources for ECD centers was inadequate and that ECCE centres were required to provide their resources unassisted.⁵⁹ Thus, Nkambule and Amsterdam according to their findings urge curriculum designers and school administrators to assist schools by giving them enough resources.⁶⁰

Theme 5: Insufficient developmental facilities and human resources

According to UNICEF, providing high-quality ECCE boosts school system effectiveness and lowers juvenile delinquency, particularly among marginalized youth.⁶¹ As a result, efforts, plans, and commitments have been made globally to guarantee that every kid has equitable access to sustainable education.⁶² However, findings under this theme show that there were inadequate infrastructural facilities and human resources in the two ECCE/ECD research centres. The participants pointed this out as another curtailment to their implementation of music-based activities in the ECD/ECCE classroom. The two centres are practicing multigrade teaching for children ages four and five in a singular classroom because there were not enough teachers and classrooms. This is not convenient for the learners and the educator because children ages four and five differ in ability, levels, and maturity. These two grades also have different learning developmental areas. This finding was congruent with Jakachira, and Muchabaiwa's findings that the teachers in multi-grade classes only teach the curriculum content for the higher grades due to a lack of preparation and support for teaching multiple grades, and the learners in the lower grades suffer from learning content backlogs that hinder their conceptual mastery.

The second issue limiting the teachers from using music-based activities is the lack of spacious classrooms. Children's songs such as 'Bingo' to teach letter awareness and kinesthetic movement, songs for body part identification, and songs for gross motor development all demand that the children move around and be happy while learning. This exercise will be unattainable in these centres because of the lack of space. This finding was supported by Aina and Bipath who stated that there was inadequate provision of infrastructural resources to promote smooth learning in the ECD/ECCE centres.⁶³

This study established that ECCE educators have some understanding of music-based pedagogy and agreed that it is the best teaching strategy for ECD/ECCE learners because of their unique nature. However, the educators' partial musical training, the lack of sufficient musical resources and instruments, and inadequate infrastructural facilities and human resources were barriers to the ECCE educators being able to effectively teach standardized musical activities and programs in the ECCE classroom.

⁵⁹ Ryan D Shaw and Whitney Mayo, "Music Education and Distance Learning during COVID-19: A Survey," *Arts Education Policy Review* 123, no. 3 (2022): 143–52.

⁶⁰ Gugulethu Nkambule and Christina Amsterdam, "The Realities of Educator Support in a South African School District," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 1 (2018).

⁶¹ UNICEF, *Early Childhood Development a Statistical Snapshot* (UNICEF - Kosovo Programme, 2014), https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/191/file/ECD_General_Population_ENG.pdf.

⁶² Linda Darling-Hammond et al., *Empowered Educators: How High-Performing Systems Shape Teaching Quality around the World* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017).

⁶³ Aina and Bipath, "Availability and Use of Infrastructural Resources in Promoting Quality Early Childhood Care and Education in Registered Early Childhood Development Centres."

Proposed Strategies to Empower the ECD Educators to Employ Music-based Pedagogy

This paper's second objective is to offer methods for improving the use of music-based pedagogy in early childhood settings and fortifying instructors' preparation. Most people concur that well-trained educators are the determinant factor of effective and quality education. The findings of this study revealed Educators' insufficient teacher training, a lack of musical resources; a lack of government support for the provision of musical resources; and Inadequate infrastructural facilities and human resources as worrisome experiences for Early childhood educators. The participants attested that music-based activities are best for the unique nature of the children but for the constraints. The objective of providing all children from conception until they join formal schooling or turn seven with universal access to high-quality ECCE will thus remain a pipe dream, and the cycle of poverty and inequality will only deepen and intensify because of these results if nothing is done. The ECCE policymakers, teacher training institutions, school administrators in early childhood education settings, and professional development providers may be impacted by these results. Hence, we present the recommendations below.

Firstly, the policy must address the qualifications of ECCE teachers and ensure that they are equipped with the academic credentials required to teach in this phase, capable of utilizing a range of pedagogies, and, most of all, ready to include music in the classroom. Policymakers need to ensure that the centers are outfitted with the right tools and developmentally appropriate educational resources, such as a variety of musical instruments and learning aids that facilitate the acquisition of communicative skills.⁶⁴ To satisfy the educational demands of the kids, the ECCE policymakers should also specify precisely how the programs should be carried out. When creating educational policy, the needs of the kids should come first. Evaluation and monitoring are also essential. Extensive monitoring and oversight are necessary to guarantee that the centers are adhering to the NCF policy document accordingly.

The study showed that the major reason why some of the ECCE educators could not effectively employ music to teach their learners was the insufficient training received during their teacher training programs. Thus, it would be important for teacher training institutions and colleges to establish partnerships with ECCE centers. According to this study, professional development programs in music may be arranged for in-service instructors who were initially undertrained. Practical musical activities like teaching musical notation and developing improvisational abilities as well as playing age-appropriate instruments in ECCE classes should be a part of this empowerment program. The workshop or seminar may be offered in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format.⁶⁵

Another proposed strategy is helping new and undertrained teachers adjust to the teaching profession by the school leaders—principal, vice-principal, and senior teachers by ensuring that the right empowerment programs are in place to support and nurture them. To progressively scaffold the development of their music-specific pedagogical abilities, it is important to ensure that inexperienced and novice instructors have the time and opportunity to participate in formal and informal peer observation and mentorship activities.⁶⁶ It would be very beneficial for both novice and seasoned educators to discuss issues related to music education (such as creative activities, pedagogies tailored to certain genres of music, understanding children's responses, and issues with instruction).

The study therefore recommends that because this is a qualitative case study, the results were derived from a sample of just six ECD/ECCE educators from two rural locations. Therefore, more study on additional remote ECD/ECCE centres is necessary. Additionally, research is required to equip rural ECD/ECCE teachers with musical abilities that are developmentally appropriate to facilitate their successful implementation of music-based teaching.

⁶⁴ Alfredo Bautista et al., "Music in Early Childhood Teacher Education: Raising Awareness of a Worrisome Reality and Proposing Strategies to Move Forward," *Arts Education Policy Review* 125, no. 3 (July 2, 2024): 139–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2022.2043969>.

⁶⁵ Franziska Egert, Ruben G. Fukkink, and Andrea G. Eckhardt, "Impact of In-Service Professional Development Programs for Early Childhood Teachers on Quality Ratings and Child Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 88, no. 3 (June 5, 2018): 401–33, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654317751918>.

⁶⁶ Lisa Feldman Barrett et al., "Emotional Expressions Reconsidered: Challenges to Inferring Emotion From Human Facial Movements," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 20, no. 1 (July 17, 2019): 1–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100619832930>.

CONCLUSION

In South Africa, it is now essential to act quickly to help children with their communication abilities. Due to their unique nature and characteristics, this study has shown that music-based pedagogy is the most effective way to help children develop communication skills, particularly those who are vulnerable and come from deep rural settings. This study has helped close the information gap about the experiences of ECD/ECCE teachers using music-based pedagogy to assist the kids' conversational skill development. It has unpacked the constraints of the educators and proposed solutions that will enable effective employment of music-based learning activities that help children develop their conversational abilities.

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Glynnis Daries (Ph.D.) is a senior lecturer in the Foundation Phase of Teaching at Sol Plaatje University. She is the acting Head of the Department of Education Studies. In a career that spans over 14 years, she has played the role of a teacher, facilitator, manager, academic, researcher, mentor, and advocate for the early years. She completed her Ph.D. in early childhood care and education in January 2017 at the University of the Free State. Her Ph.D. focused on the 'funds of knowledge' of practitioners and young children at community and privately owned early years centers. The study contributed to a deeper understanding of the sources of knowledge and the daily practice of practitioners with very young children. She contributed to new thinking about the professionalism of early childhood practitioners. She is currently part of two inter-university research projects that focus on Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The first project focuses on how teachers, principals, parents, university lecturers, and Department of Education subject advisors work successfully as a Community of Practice (CoP) to stimulate change for Foundation Phase learners and parents. The Family Math project incorporates the use of mother tongue instruction and the manipulation of concrete Teaching and Learning aids to develop mathematical knowledge and skills in the Foundation Phase. Parental involvement, homework support, and the use of concrete manipulatives is emphasized. The second research project in ECCE centres is designed around a Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) approach to family and community involvement. Different community stakeholders and participants come together and use hands-on activities to promote the perceptual development and emergent numeracy skills of young children in early childhood centres. The aim is to work with participants in ways that will sustain contextually relevant and age-appropriate early education among practitioners, children, and parents.