

**Perceptions of African musical arts education in Foundation and Intermediate Phases in government schools as seen through the South African academy since 2011: an exploration through meta-ethnography**

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is twofold: first, to understand meta-ethnography as a tool of synthesis; second, to use this methodology to explore perceptions of African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases in government schools in South Africa after 2011. Meta-ethnography is a methodology used to synthesise qualitative material by means of seven distinct phases: getting started; deciding what is relevant to the initial interest; reading the studies; determining how they are related; translating the studies into one another; weaving them together into a synthesis; and expressing the synthesis. This study synthesises five articles discovered through a deep search of the literature. Through the process of synthesis, a narrative emerges that connects past prejudice in music education in South Africa to present day educational inequality, one that looks towards a future in which children's agency is harnessed in the multicultural world we live in to teach music in a relevant, contextual way. The synthesis extracts perceptions on colonialism and apartheid; educational access; post-apartheid curricula; music education pedagogies; informal music making; children's games and agency; into the classroom; and how to assess. These themes weave a clear perspective on African musical arts education, and a reciprocal synthesis of the views of the articles' authors. This study finds meta-ethnography to be a rigorous, understandable methodological tool for qualitative synthesis, one which serves the purpose of researchers, no matter the depth of their engagement with the synthesis.

Keywords: South Africa, Intermediate Phase, Foundation Phase, National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Creative Arts, African musical arts, African musical arts education, Indigenous knowledge, meta-ethnography, qualitative synthesis.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

### 1.1 Introduction

I live in the small town of Makhanda, which is in the heart of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The Eastern Cape encompasses the former Ciskei and Transkei homelands and is the ancestral home of the amaXhosa. My initial research interest in African musical arts education at schools was piqued by the fact that I have two young children of school-going age. They have Shona heritage through their father, who is Zimbabwean. His culture, spiritually, artistically, and musically, is of utmost importance to him, especially as he does not live in his home country. I am a classically trained musician who plays violin, so exposure to music and a sound music education for my children are very important to me. I am very grateful for having had the privilege of beginning violin lessons as a child and for having had lifelong access to music education. My older daughter has begun playing the piano, and both of my children receive music education at their school, a former Model C institution. Through these interactions, I have noted though that there is a distinct lack of exposure to African musical arts education for my children, and, because of where we live and their personal heritage, this has frustrated me. It is on the basis of these personal reasons that I decided to undertake this study exploring African musical arts education (as unpacked later in this chapter) in South African government schools.

When I initiated the research, I wanted to gain insight into the teaching of African musical arts at Foundation Phase level at government schools in Makhanda. Much of the music training available to children at school is taught using the Western art music system, which makes it the normative basis for their experience and understanding of music (McConnachie, 2016). This limits the possibilities for teaching other musical systems, such as African musical arts. Embodied learning through this form of musical arts has an inherent cultural importance. According to Rideout (2005, p. 40), ‘First and foremost, all music reveals aspects of a particular society and culture. The goal of music education should be to help students understand how music expresses cultural values’. This statement lies at the heart of my concern as a parent and has guided me throughout the research process.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I could no longer complete fieldwork such as

interviews and focus groups. This gave me the opportunity to explore other ways of looking at African musical arts teaching. I started to explore literature (Blacking, 1967; Tracey, 1974; Oehrle, 1991; Dargie, 1996; Nzewi, 1999; McConnachie, 2016) on how music has traditionally been taught in the past and is currently taught in informal settings outside the school system. I wanted to research teaching methods and the means of transmission of knowledge for instrumental engagement, dance, as well as the importance of music within cultures. In the course of my reading, I realised that my perceptions of African musical arts were outdated and narrow in the sense that I was seeking out traditional forms of music that may no longer be prevalent, or indeed relevant, nor any longer even part of the globalised 21<sup>st</sup> century world we live in.

Backtracking from my personal assumptions and completing an Introduction to Knowledge Syntheses course offered by the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) at Rhodes University in 2020 allowed me to reimagine this research in the form of a qualitative review. Thereafter, I stumbled upon meta-ethnography as a tool for qualitative synthesis. This struck me as a thorough method of exploration, and as a form of research I could employ within the COVID-19 restrictions of the time. I did not then realise that the method itself would come to form the bulk of this study; however, after working within this framework for two years, I have realised the importance of this type of rigorous review. One of the points made in the CHERTL course concerned the great number of individual research items that populate the academic realm, and the importance of syntheses to begin bringing these together in order to compare and collate research objectives and findings.

The South African educational landscape is complex and fractured, and the arts curriculum reflects this. Thus, the methodology I employ in this thesis is important as it provides an overarching view of literature in this area. In the next section, I map out a brief history of music education in South Africa as a way of providing an educational context for this study.

## **1.2 Educational context**

Herbst (2005) traces the beginning of music education in South Africa to pre-colonial days. Before 1994, the date of South Africa's first democratic election, African musical arts education was largely

ignored. Herbst describes the holistic nature of Indigenous sub-Saharan African musical arts performance and education, which requires full participation in singing, dancing, and the playing of instruments. Nzewi (2003) points out that learning Indigenous music systems involves a philosophy and teaching approach that differ from that encountered in Western training and, though they are no less deliberate or formal, were wholly excluded from colonial- and apartheid- era school curricula. McConnachie (2016) presents a useful outline of the history of music education in South Africa from 19<sup>th</sup> century mission schools through to the apartheid era (1948– 1993). During the latter period, access to music education was primarily reserved for white, privileged schools (and Indian and coloured schools), where students learned the music of Western classical traditions. Black scholars received no musical training other than choral training in the harmonic tradition of Western classical music. In 1991, Oehrle noted that the music education system in South Africa at the time was still primarily based on a Western approach. The devastation wrought by colonial and apartheid suppression of Indigenous music-making is expressed by Mngoma: ‘It stultifies the black student because it dispenses with the performance practices obtaining in his culture; it “de-musicates” him ... [and] reduces his capacity to enjoy music and be musically creative’ (1987, p. 203). Mngoma adds that this form of music education and the limited access to it upheld apartheid ideals and therefore perpetuated societal strife.

Since 1994, the government of democratic South Africa has made attempts to ‘address the past neglect of indigenous knowledge systems and the overbearing emphasis on written musical literacy’ (Herbst, 2005, p. 261). De Villiers (2015) and Herbst (2005) provide useful descriptions of the outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum and the later Revised National Curriculum Statement, which have led to the current curriculum, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which is the context in which this study is located. The CAPS curriculum (Department of Basic Education, 2011) places Creative Arts within Life Skills. Creative Arts exposes learners to four art forms, namely the performing arts of dance, drama, and music, and the visual arts. Both McConnachie (2016) and De Villiers (2015) highlight the challenges faced by schools in including African musical arts in Creative Arts teaching. These challenges include a lack of teacher training; little to no training in Indigenous music systems at the tertiary level; a lack of facilities, funding, and staff; and a lack of time and priority given to Creative Arts within the curriculum requirements. These challenges, amongst others, place the teaching and learning of the creative arts at risk of either being a minimal

educational focus, or being overlooked altogether in favour of other learning areas (Buthelezi, 2016; Klopper, 2008). The educational background set out above, shows that access to African musical arts in our school system is hinted at, but with little support or follow through, and that the music education available is still deeply embedded within the Western art music system. This context is fleshed out in Chapter 3 in relation to the five articles making up the meta-ethnographic synthesis.

### **1.3 Questions and goals**

Title: Perceptions of African musical arts education in Foundation and Intermediate Phases in government schools as seen through the South African academy since 2011: an exploration through meta-ethnography.

#### **1.3.1 Research questions**

Using a meta-ethnographic approach, I pose the following questions:

1. How has African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases in government schools been perceived (regarded, understood, and interpreted) in the South African academy since 2011?
2. What are the merits of meta-ethnography, as a means of knowledge synthesis, in synthesising qualitative studies relating to African musical arts education.

#### **1.3.2 Goals**

The goals of this research are as follows:

1. To extract the overarching perceptions expressed in research output, within specifically chosen meta-ethnographic parameters, relating to African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases in South Africa, including how African musical arts are approached within the Creative Arts learning area.
2. To reflect on the meta-ethnographic process as it pertains to my study.

## 1.4 Use of specific terminology

The first aspect of terminology I delve into is the distinction between Western art music, African music, and Indigenous music. Throughout the thesis, I have chosen to capitalise the term ‘Indigenous’ to align it with ‘Western’ and ‘African’, as a way of expressing the view that that term and the practices associated with it are no less important.

When describing music, and indeed music education in Africa, many terms are used that incorporate subtle differences and are sometimes even interchangeable. First, the term ‘African music’ is contentious and outdated. I recognise that there is no one ‘African music’, but ‘multiple practices that vary according to factors such as geography, continuity and the passage of time’ (Carver 2017, p. 119). In the CAPS curriculum document (2005), the authors refer to ‘Indigenous African music’. The debate involving terminology has informed the term I use in my title and research questions, ‘African musical arts (education)’. I first came across this term in Herbst et al. (2003). ‘Musical arts’ refers to the practice of music in its many guises across many parts of Africa (Lucia 2002), as well as to African music as it stands in relation to dance, art, and drama.

Throughout the thesis, particularly in the synthesis developed in Chapter 3, I refer to the various terms used by authors in their papers. Nompula (2011) refers to Indigenous music, African Indigenous music, and traditional music; Herbst (2014) refers to Indigenous musical knowledge, African songs, and traditional music; Human and Van Niekerk (2014) refer to the Indigenous sub-Saharan African musical system, African musical arts performance, and *ngoma* (music and dance); and Pooley (2016) refers to Indigenous music, African creative arts, African musical arts, and Indigenous African music. The decision to reflect the authors’ words as accurately as possible is discussed in Chapter 2.3.1.6.

Lastly, I would like to elaborate on the terms used in my first research question and goal. I use the word perception, and the related terms regarded, understood, and interpreted, interchangeably throughout the thesis.

## **1.5 Methodology and approach**

As this study hinges on an in-depth and rigorous application of a meta-ethnographic synthesis, I have dedicated Chapter 2 to a full description of this methodology. However, I will add a brief introduction to the meta-ethnographic process here, to foster a deeper understanding of the relevance of the literature review presented in section 1.6.

Noblit and Hare (1988) set out seven phases which make up a meta-ethnography: choosing an initial interest; deciding what is relevant to the initial interest; reading the studies; determining how the studies are related; translating the studies into one another; synthesising the translations; and expressing the synthesis. The aim of meta-ethnography is to create a qualitative synthesis of studies around a particular interest/topic. In the second phase, deciding what is of relevant interest, the researcher determines a set of criteria to apply to a literature search in order to extract material to be included in the translation and synthesis phases. I present a list of the final criteria applied to my meta-ethnographic search in section 1.6. below.

## **1.6 Literature review**

This section reviews the literature relating to African musical arts education and perceptions thereof. I undertook an extensive literature search in order to situate my study in a broader research context.

The literature review process was essential not only with regard to contextualisation of my study, but also to the refinement of the selection parameters applied in phase 2 of the meta-ethnographic process. After immersing myself in the literature reviewed below, and considering it alongside my existing knowledge of the meta-ethnographic process, I established seven parameters, which include articles that are:

1. Published after 2010 – in the course of the implementation of the CAPS curriculum
2. Published articles (not theses)
3. Peer-reviewed research
4. Written in English or Afrikaans
5. In a South African context

6. Within Foundation and Intermediate school phases
7. About African musical arts education

The application of these parameters to the initial body of literature yielded five suitable articles. These are subjected to meta-ethnographic enquiry in Chapter 3 and are therefore not included in this literature review.

During my literature search, I was struck by the limited amount of information available from South Africa regarding African musical arts education, as well as by how outdated some of the articles are. In fact, I noted that the dates of the various sources referring to transformation in school curricula and African musical arts education are decades old and that little has changed since (Oehrle, 1986; Blacking, 1967; Ofei, 1974).

Various topics became apparent when conducting this literature search and are presented below within those categories. One is made up of historical studies on Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous music education, including African music viewed historically. Music education and the place of African musical arts education in Africa and South Africa is another prominent topic, with the South African music curriculum for Grades 10 – 12 playing a role in music education theses published since 2011. Another two themes are African music in tertiary education in South Africa and music education research.

### **1.6.1 Indigenous knowledge**

Outlining discussions on cultural preservation, traditional teaching methods, as well as social and political change, Erlman (1986), Dargie (1996), Omibiyi (1973), Amoaku (1982), Kwame and Lebaka (2004), Phutego (1999) and Dontsa (2008) contribute invaluable insights into tracing indigenous pedagogical approaches. Doing so helps to track where we have come from, at times a stark reminder that indigenous knowledge systems are far from integrated into current curricula which are still dominated by Western art music.

Erlmann (1986) poses critical questions which are starting points to consider. Questions such as, ‘Whose culture is it that should be preserved? Who is it that would like to preserve traditional music

and what are his/her interests? Who defines what is traditional culture and what is not?' (Erlmann, 1986, p. 114). His article serves as a foundational point discussing how black music education provides a space that confronts and uncovers social conflicts and views associated with these. Dargie (1996) offers a more personal narrative by juxtaposing Western music education, characterised by theory, instrumental technique, and certification, with his own firsthand experience of learning traditional African music in a rural setting. His narrative approach provides a poetic lens through which we explore African music pedagogy, drawing on his autobiographical accounts. I read this article early on in my exploration for this topic, which led me undertake a study of perceptions of African musical arts education because, as I noted in the introduction, I had an outdated understanding of this myself.

Tracey (1974) brings us back to broader concepts, by focusing on what he terms the 'genuine folk music' (1974, p. 33) of the African continent. This work provides a snapshot of the state of African music education at the time. It serves as a valuable resource for tracing the historical trajectory of African music education in South Africa and for examining the nuances of the terminology employed in the field. Omibiyi's (1972, 1973) two articles look at preserving this traditional music. The first (1972) offers a discussion on folk music and dance in African music education, with particular concerns about the encroachment of technology on folk traditions and concerns for their preservation and continuity. The second article by Omibiyi (1973) takes us into Africa's colonial past, shedding light on the cultural ramifications of colonialism. He documents a cultural reawakening in Africa, coinciding with significant social and political changes. Mngoma's article (1987) takes the discussion into a classroom environment, stating that understanding the culture and nature of the people studying a music course creates more effective learning and teaching. The relevance of this study is that it questions what and who music is for and maintains that, in a country with a history like South Africa's, we cannot avoid politicising this discussion, as a way of mirroring society. Amoaku (1982) similarly explores classroom teaching, by drawing a parallel between traditional African system of music education and the European tradition of Orff Schulwerk education. The article provides a good description of oral traditions and learning in African societies and how Western ideals took over.

The final three articles for this section are more recent additions to the discussion of Indigenous Knowledge and traditional African music education, and all concern the teaching of a particular traditional dance or instruments as part of music curricula in classrooms. Kwami and Lebaka (2004) take us to Ghana, where they delve into the teaching of *agbadza*, a traditional dance. Through three case studies, they advocate for a return to Indigenous teaching methods, shedding light on the complexities of imparting African music knowledge. Phutego (1999) also notes that many Indigenous musical instruments across southern Africa, particularly in Botswana, have not been used, or even explored for use, in classroom settings for teaching and learning. The study explores the potential of the *segaba* for classroom use and as a means to making a start on protecting cultural heritage. Finally, Dontsa (2008) similarly discusses the use of a traditional African instrument in the classroom – in this case, the *umrhubhe*, an instrument from the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The article describes its cultural use and value, how it is taught in certain tertiary settings, along with the idea that it now needs to be taken up and used in the school classroom. The conclusion speaks about the implications of teaching this traditional instrument as part of mainstream South African education.

### **1.6.2 Evolution of music education systems**

The study of music education in various African countries cannot be complete without acknowledging the diverse influences that have shaped different countries' music education systems. This section aims to provide an overview of some key articles that shed light on the historical evolution of music education in Nigeria (Adeogun, 2018) and South Africa (Oehrle (1991), De Villiers, 2015; Herbst, et al, 2005; and Swart, 2020). It also explores the post-1994 transformation of music education in South Africa and the role of music in empowering previously disadvantaged learners.

Adeogun (2018) provides a comprehensive historical review which outlines the development of music education in Nigeria until the end of the twentieth century. The article underscores multifaceted influences on Nigerian music education, ranging from Indigenous African traditions to Islamic, European and American elements. Notably, it emphasises the strong presence of Western classical music in Nigerian curricula and education policy. Much South African research is concerned with music education in South Africa since 1994, the year of the first democratic elections

in the country. Oehrle's article from 1991 was written in a time before any curriculum transformation had been considered. Oehrle refers to music education in South Africa as Western-aligned. Her article introduces African education philosophies and ways of doing.

De Villiers (2015) presents a case study of the transformation of music education in South Africa since 1994. This study tracks the development of South African music education and associated curricula, and makes reference to many issues and barriers. De Villiers specifies how, initially, post-1994 curricula were seen as relevant to a time of renewal for music education by their being underpinned by the democratic values of the constitution. Over time, these ideals were revised, and a return to a dominant Western approach occurred. Similarly, Herbst, de Wet, and Rijsdijk (2005) present a survey investigating music education in primary schools in the Western Cape as perceived by class teachers. It tracks curriculum changes since 1994 and considers how, at that time, class teachers were responsible for music education. Their experiences and difficulties are analysed, and the findings are interpreted through historical and philosophical lenses. A more recent study by Swart (2020) focuses on the role of music as an agent of change and a means of empowerment for previously disadvantaged South African learners and investigates how participation in music benefits learners in various ways. The article is very much located within a Western art music perspective, even though certain African philosophical ideas, such as ubuntu, are alluded to.

The literature reviewed here offers insights into the evolution of music education in South Africa and two other African countries. It highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted influences on music education in the African context and the potential for music to play a transformative role in education. Further research in this field could explore the intersection of traditional Indigenous practices, Western pedagogies, and African philosophical concepts to create a holistic and inclusive approach to music education in Africa.

### **1.6.3 African musical arts education**

Kalinde and Vermeulen (2016), Ogunyemi (2020), Mans (2022), Nzewi (1999), .Omolo-Ongati (2014), and Herbst (2005) explore various aspects to African musical arts education, such as different approaches to teaching African music, advantages of mother tongue instruction, as well as bridging the gap between traditional teaching methods and formal education.

Kalinde and Vermeulen (2016) focus on early childhood education and how, on the one hand, learning songs in English can hamper children's development in early childhood; and, on the other, whether, and if so, how singing Zambian Indigenous songs influences various aspects of learning, social development, and life. Ogunyemi (2020) continues this theme of music as part of a larger cultural framework of activities. She tracks how traditional elements of playing (including rhymes, poetry, stories, wrestling, music, and dancing) have been essential elements in various African cultures and contribute to the education of children. With colonialism and the modernising of the African continent, traditional playing declined both socially and educationally. The study identifies barriers to the integration of modern and traditional play, and how the powers that be can begin to rectify some of these issues. Sticking with notions of play, Mans' 2022 study, conducted in Namibia, delves into the value of play in arts education, particularly in the context of music performance and healing. It emphasises the contribution of play as a means of learning, self-expression, and socialization in music education. Mans' work extends our understanding of the pedagogical importance of play in music education.

Nzewi (1999) takes a broader approach by writing about the different stages of African music education, from learning as a new-born baby up to lifelong music education. He maintains that music pedagogy in Africa should be firmly rooted in traditional African practices and philosophies, whilst developing modern techniques to enhance a modern, real-world connection. Another article by Nzewi co-written with Omolo-Ongati (2014), is based on a case study of tertiary education in Kenya and South Africa and explores teaching, learning, and assessment models of African musical arts. This article discusses the history of music teaching and African music, the philosophies that underlie African musical teaching and expression, and how to translate this into a classroom setting. In a comprehensive volume containing many, varied discussions, Herbst's (2005) edited book offers various articles from the African continent and beyond. The text delves into many aspects and issues of, as well as solutions for, African musical arts education.

#### **1.6.4 Music education research**

A broader topic in this conversation encompasses research about music education as a whole, offered here by Harrop-Allin (2005) and Klopper (2008). Postgraduate research offers important insights

into current trends in schools, through the national curriculum. Drummond (2015), Carver (2020), Buthelezi (2016), McConnachie (2016) and Mailula (2018) have all written theses speaking to different aspects of this topic. Very importantly, tertiary education spaces are feeders back into the school system and Petersen (2009), Stacey and Mason (2019), McConnachie (2021) and Adeogun (2021) all speak to music education in tertiary education.

Harrop-Allin (2005) states that there is a disconnect – insufficient communication – between music research and music education, though she holds that there is great potential for academic research to inform the transformation of education. The article presents a number of reviews of music education research and how they can be used, practically, to inform teaching practice and education policy. Klopper (2008) continues this discussion, examining music teaching and posing questions about class teachers' readiness to teach all musical genres, as stipulated in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The study reveals that teachers lack specialisation in music and mostly only have access to limited training in any areas of Arts and Culture teaching. Research on previous curricula is always relevant because what came before still affects the current trajectory of music education in South Africa.

The five theses that I review in this section start with Drummond (2015), who highlights curriculum policy shifts over the twenty years since 1994, in line with social transformation. The research explores music teachers' capacity (as examined in Klopper, 2008), and the subsequent probability to accomplish what was expected of them in National Curriculum Statement and later the CAPS curriculum. The study highlights the inclusion of three distinct streams of music genres, namely Western music, jazz and Indigenous African music. A lack of support and resources, as well as clear policy guidelines are brought up as barriers to meeting the requirements of the curricula. Carver (2020) focuses more directly on one of these streams, namely the Indigenous African music theme offered by the CAPS curriculum for grade 10 – 12 learners as well as one tertiary curriculum. The thesis explores the disjuncture between African music and the curricula's reliance on Western theory, as well as knowledge production, transfer and the recontextualisation of African music. Buthelezi (2016) offers a more interpretative qualitative study based on interviews with five teachers concerning their experiences teaching traditional African music in schools. He found that traditional African music is mostly not taught in schools and that Western music is still dominant in the

curriculum. His study promotes equal representation of different musics in all schools and the discovery of traditional African music in schools and by learners. McConnachie (2016) again explores why teachers in government schools are not managing to achieve the expected outcomes for the Indigenous African Music syllabus in the CAPS Further Education and Training music curriculum. McConnachie speaks to the history of music education and curriculum models and development, before exploring how the use of the current curriculum can be improved. The final thesis in this section is by Mailula (2018), the only one exploring the Intermediate Phase (grades 4–6). Mailula explores the challenges of including Indigenous music into the curriculum in South African schools. The researcher further suggests ways of including and teaching Indigenous music in this phase, and how to support teachers to implement the Creative Arts curriculum.

Moving on from the school classroom, into the tertiary education space, Petersen (2009) offers a reflection on tertiary-education-institution-based teaching and presenting African music as a university discipline. The article offers personal insights, over decades of practice, and proposes ideas for improved implementation. Joseph (2014) bridges the school / tertiary gap by offering case studies from both Australia and South Africa, seeking to determine why it is important to teach multicultural music in a tertiary setting and how to prepare students to teach it in the best manner possible. Stacey and Mason (2019) locate their study in tertiary education by offering a survey of practice-based methodologies and outputs for ethnomusicology. They argue that, with calls for decolonising curricula and learning, knowledge-making itself is in question. Two more recent contributions to this section begin with McConnachie (2021), who reports on an instrumental studies music course run at Rhodes University. This course is contributing to decolonising the university music curriculum away from European musical ideals borne out of colonialism and oppression. This is an important study both framing historical contexts, as well for imagining a way forward in the education system. Adeogun (2021) is also concerned with decoloniality and presents a study concerning the coloniality that persists in university music education in Nigeria, and the lack of interrogation thereof. ‘Decolonising university music education in any society, it posits, involves centering music knowledge creation, understanding and sharing on multiplicity and entanglements’ (2021, p. 466).

## 1.7 Chapter outline

*Chapter 1: Introduction*– In Chapter 1, I set out the personal, socio-historical, and educational contexts of this research. I present my research title, questions, and goals, before moving onto a description of relevant terminology. A literature review of African musical arts education and meta-ethnography follows.

*Chapter 2: Methodology* – In Chapter 2, I delve into meta-ethnography, describing the application of the seven phases which comprise it, and refer to Noblit and Hare (1988) and worked examples. I describe grounded theory as it relates to meta-ethnography.

*Chapter 3: Analysis and synthesis*– In Chapter 3, I present my handling of the seven meta-ethnographic phases and end by synthesising the articles relating to perceptions, within the South African academy, of African musical arts education in the Intermediate and Foundation Phases in government schools,

*Chapter 4: Reflections on the practice of meta-ethnography* – In Chapter 4, I reflect on the process of conducting a meta-ethnography; examine suggestions by Doyle (2003) regarding the possibilities for meta-ethnography being more than merely a methodology; and undertake a brief review on meta-ethnography thirty years following its inception.

*Chapter 5: Conclusion* – Chapter 5 concludes this thesis.

In the next chapter, I present a thorough review of meta-ethnography, the methodology I employ in this study.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore meta-ethnography as a method of synthesis. I start by gaining an understanding of Noblit and Hare's core 1988 text, *Meta-ethnography: Synthesizing qualitative studies*. This book constitutes the primary source for this chapter because it is the original work that conceives of and describes meta-ethnography both conceptually and practically. However, to ensure optimal understanding and application of the meta-ethnographic process in my study, I drew on five worked examples. It is important to note that these are not the five articles which I selected for the purposes of my own study which is detailed in Chapter 3.

The example meta-ethnography articles are as follows:

1. Britten, N., Campbell, R., Pope, C., Donovan, J., Morgan, M., Pill, R. 2002. Using meta ethnography to synthesize qualitative research: a worked example, in *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, Vol 7(4): 209–215.

This paper is an exploration of the use of meta-ethnography. A study in the medical field, the authors were seeking a methodology that spoke to the methods of the studies they wanted to synthesise.

2. Doyle, L. 2003. Synthesis through meta-ethnography: Paradoxes, enhancements and possibilities, in *Qualitative Research*, Vol 3(3): 321–344.

Doyle engages in an in-depth meta-ethnographic study on educational leadership; this article illustrates the researcher's experience of engaging in a meta-ethnographic process. Additionally, the author believes there is place for enhancements to the method.

3. Kottke-Stich, E.B. 2008. *Elements of successful community college organizational change: A meta-ethnographic analysis*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Capella University.

Kottke-Stich uses four ethnographic studies, in this case, doctoral dissertations, in her meta-ethnographic exploration of community college transformations.

4. Rice, E.H. 2002. The collaboration process in professional development schools: Results of a meta-ethnography, 1990–1998, in *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol 53(1): 55–67.

The area of interest in Rice’s article is the professional development school movement and the process of collaboration in professional development schools. This is a large study employing the skills of more than one researcher. Sixty-six studies were identified in the first phase; following the refinement of criteria in phase two, the researchers were left with twenty case studies for their final sample.

5. Sleijpen, M., Boeije, H.M., Kleber, R.J., Mooren, T. 2016. Between power and powerlessness: A meta-ethnography of sources of resilience in young refugees, in *Ethnicity & Health*, Vol 21(2): 158-180.

This is a relatively large study with more than one reviewer, as described in the method section of the article. Twenty-six articles were settled on for the final review.

Following on from this, I detail the plan for my own meta-ethnographic journey.

## 2.2 Qualitative synthesis

Jones (2004) explains that syntheses in research represent a way of conducting systematic reviews of multiple studies. Previously, such syntheses were predominantly the domain of quantitative research, but Jones maintains that ‘qualitative research is no longer the poor stepchild of quantitative inquiries’ (2004, p. 95), and qualitative syntheses are ever more commonly applied. However, he cautions that it is an error to apply established quantitative review methods in qualitative studies. Reliance on quantitative review methods such as check-lists, standards, and hierarchies of evidence causes much of the nuance in qualitative data to be lost. Jones (2004) argues that a qualitative systematic review is best undertaken using explicitly qualitative methods. Popay et al. concur (1998, p. 346), saying that ‘the hallmark of good qualitative methodology is its flexibility rather than its standardisation’.

Chrastina (2018) explains that qualitative syntheses are more than summaries because the synthesising process reconceptualises findings and re-interprets them. Through this process, new insights are created, ‘beyond those attained from individual studies’ (p. 114). Chrastina lists various

approaches to synthesising qualitative studies: meta-ethnography; thematic synthesis; narrative synthesis; metasummary; critical interpretive synthesis; grounded theory; metanarrative; framework synthesis; ecological triangulation; qualitative cross-case analysis; and meta-study, which includes meta-method, meta-data, and meta-theory (2018, p. 114). ‘Meta-syntheses of conceptually rich qualitative studies have the potential to generate high-level evidence for research and knowledge transfer’, asserts Chrastina (2018, p. 114).

As in the case for this study, the onset of COVID-19 meant that much research that relied on classroom observation, face-to-face interviews or focus groups, for example, could not go ahead. Schools closed, and classrooms were no longer accessible. Countries were locked down and people were mandated to stay home. This meant that a qualitative synthesis was the best approach to use to complete my master’s research.

### **2.3 Meta-ethnography**

Meta-ethnography is a form of meta-analysis, used on ethnographies, though not exclusively. Fetterman, in his book, *Ethnography: Step by step guide* (1998) explains ethnography as a research method that aims to understand the culture, customs, and social life of a group of people. The researcher immerses him- or herself in the group’s life, observing, listening and participating in the group’s activities. The ethnographer uses a variety of research methods, such as observation, interviews, and document analysis to gather data. The prefix ‘meta’ is used in many fields to indicate a higher level of abstraction or analysis. In qualitative research, it is commonly used to indicate a level of synthesis or analysis that is higher than the primary studies being synthesised. Having looked at what the two words making up the phrase meta-ethnography mean, it is important to note that this kind of synthesis does not strictly have to be conducted with ethnographies. This is elaborated on in section 2.3.1.2.

In light of the considerations discussed in section 2.2, Noblit and Hare’s review method of meta-ethnography, originally published in 1988, offers an option to conduct a review across multiple ethnographies. In this section, I describe each of the seven phases of conducting a meta- ethnographic study, as set out in Noblit and Hare (1988). Additionally, as mentioned above, I have added information from the five studies to provide worked examples of the conducting of such syntheses.

These examples provide a variety of points of view and enhancements for applying the original methodology of Noblit and Hare's 1988 text. The original text, together with working through examples, has ultimately informed many of my methodological and analytical decisions.

### 2.3.1 Phases of meta-ethnography

The following description of the seven phases of meta-ethnography (Figure 1) is derived from Noblit and Hare's 1988 text (see Table 1, section 2.5, for a visual representation of the phases).



**Figure 1:** Model developed from Noblit and Hare (1988): Meta-ethnography: Seven phases to creating synthesis (Howard, 2016, p. 325).

### ***2.3.1.1 Phase 1: Getting started***

The initial phase involves settling on a research interest or topic. Having decided upon an interest, the researcher needs to read interpretive studies and ask ‘How can I inform my intellectual interest by examining some sets of studies?’ (Noblit & Hare, 1988, p. 27). Sandelowski (2000) provides a useful explanation of what is meant by ‘interpretive’. She explains that interpretive description is a method of enquiry that focuses on understanding the meaning and context of the experiences of individuals or groups. This type of research is particularly useful for studying complex and dynamic phenomena such as human experiences, emotions, and behaviours. In Chapter 1, I set out the background of my research interest and how my topic was refined to the point where I could endeavour to undertake a meta-ethnographic study.

### ***2.3.1.2 Phase 2: Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest***

In phase 2, the researcher settles on the parameters for selecting materials for the meta-ethnography. Before making choices in this phase, the researcher needs to understand that every choice must be justified at every step. It is important to justify why a certain number of studies, be it large or small, is being studied together. Part of the decision-making process is understanding the nature of the intended audience of the synthesis. In searching for material, it is preferable to be as thorough as possible and to avoid generating generalisations from the studies, which risks producing superficial results. Noblit and Hare assert that ‘in the end, a meta-ethnography is driven by some substantive interest derived from comparison of any given set of studies’ (1988, p. 27). The complexity of engaging in a meta-ethnographic review begins with the contextual nature of individual ethnographies. These authors caution against generalising for the sake of creating an expansive review; one should rather view studies with particular settings as particular and deal with the material as such.

Of the worked examples described in section 2.1. above, Rice (2002) and Sleijpen et al. (2016) are large studies, with Rice starting with 66 case studies, which narrowed to twenty after a refinement of the research criteria in phase two. Such a large study requires more than one researcher. Similarly, Sleijpen et al. (2016) settled on 26 studies for their final review and employed the skills of numerous researchers. A PhD researcher, Kottke-Stich (2008) used four ethnographic studies, all doctoral dissertations, for her research. Such differences, which relate to deciding on the number of studies to be synthesised, depend on the size of the studies and resources available, for example, the number of

researchers. Synthesising studies is time consuming and generates extensive amounts of data, which can be unmanageable and counter-productive, especially if, in this case, there is only one researcher. As indicated above, it is more important to undertake in-depth work with rich data sources, rather than aspiring to an expansive, yet more superficial, study. Doyle highlights that, when selecting case studies, the purpose is not only 'additive' (2003, p. 327), meaning that the researcher should not merely seek case studies with similar frames of reference, findings, or interpretations, but rather those which can yield the most abundant data and learning opportunities. He writes, 'Noblit and Hare (1988) encourage researchers not to exclude differences, but rather to use these valuable findings through maximum variation sampling' (Doyle, 2003, p. 328).

Sleijpen et al. (2016) provide an in-depth description of how they conducted their search process. Their search strategy was to examine five databases within a specified time-frame, with particular keywords, as well as scanning the reference lists of the articles found for further references. Certain criteria were stipulated, for example, those that were written in English; in a peer-reviewed journal; that used a qualitative or mixed-method research design; and that involved participants of a particular age. Kottke-Stich (2008) notes an aspect that is vital throughout this process, namely, the researcher keeping a log of everything he or she does, such as, the cases reviewed; the methodological decisions made; and the reasons for certain studies being included or excluded. Britten et al. state that, 'As ethnographers we were particularly interested in working with metaphors ... [and] use the term meta-ethnography ... even though the method is applicable to studies that are not ethnographies' (2002, p. 210). Noblit and Hare (1988) worked exclusively with ethnographies as examples, but Britten et al. (2002) raise the important observation that this methodology can be used to synthesise all types of interpretive studies.

Doyle (2003), in attempting to enhance Noblit and Hare's (1988) methodology, devised a list of conditions to guide the selection of studies. Doyle maintains that these conditions strengthen Noblit and Hare's requirements, with some aspects expanding on and others conflicting with the original.

The following is a breakdown of the conditions Doyle (2003, p. 329) found important for guiding study selection; these have in turn have impacted on the decisions I made in selecting my research materials:

- The studies should be more than case descriptions, and should also include ‘interpretation and analysis that evolved from established theories and methods’;
- Studies and theories should use established research methodologies, that is, those with widespread acceptance and rigorous use;
- Each study should have multiple data sources and take place over a sustained period (for Doyle’s study, at least one school year in length);
- Data collection in the studies included ‘intensive observations, formal taped and transcribed interviews, informal talk, and document review’;
- The researchers need to have described their methods of analysis explicitly, as well as undertaken assessments of validity and trustworthiness through triangulation. Carter et al. (2014) cite Patton (1999) to the effect that the triangulation in research refers to using multiple sources and/or methods to understand a particular phenomenon, as a ‘strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources’ (2014, abstract);
- The original study could not be made up of multiple case studies; as meta-ethnography is so complex, single case studies provided data without adding to the complexity.

Although Noblit and Hare (1988) recommend studies which use varying units of analysis, providing ‘strong contrasts for analysis’ (2003, p. 330), Doyle questions the importance of this. In her study, research using different units of analysis provided robust data in one or two of their sets but weaker data in others. Doyle, therefore, adds that this is not necessarily the right path for everyone and chose to narrow her units of analysis to the school where the research was being conducted. Regarding the meta-ethnography I conducted, I worked with the units of analysis that were presented through the literature search, each of which had varying degrees of contrast (see Chapter 3).

### ***2.3.1.3 Phase 3: Reading the studies***

Noblit and Hare maintain that ‘most proposed methods for synthesis move quickly to analyzing the characteristics of the study relevant to the topic of interest’ (1988, p. 28). In the case of a meta-ethnographic synthesis, reading the studies is an ongoing and intricate part of the process, with this phase identified as the ‘repeated reading of the accounts and the noting of interpretative metaphors’(1988, p. 28). Since the synthesis occurring in a meta-ethnography is text-based, careful

attention to detail is essential to extract relevant material through one's selected lens.

Rice (2002) describes phase 3 as involving reading, interpreting, and establishing themes, and recommends using open coding strategies to approach this phase. Creswell (1998) describes open coding, within the approach of grounded theory, as coding data to establish the key categories of information. Rice describes this phase as involving the 'form[ing of] initial categories representing a unit of information composed of happenings, events, and instances' (2002, p. 57). Kottke-Stich also provides insight into how to approach this phase, describing the first priority in research as reading the studies, in-depth, several times, and considering them separately. The importance of obtaining a deep understanding of each study before synthesising them is an important take-away from this particular study. The research questions were extracted from each and listed, and coding began by looking 'for details such as recurring themes, concepts, theories or beliefs, using the change taxonomy of the conceptual framework, and a set of introductory questions to guide the original readings' (Kottke-Stich, 2008, p. 63). As this is a PhD thesis Kottke-Stich describes in detail how she went about the coding process, including descriptions such as using post-it notes to mark places in the text, to show where all relevant details and key descriptors were recorded. Still dealing with the case studies separately, the researcher re-interpreted each one using the codes and descriptors developed up to this point, and these re-interpretations were written as one of the thesis chapters. An important aspect is to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of interpretations: Kottke-Stich sent their interpretations to each author of the original research to obtain their input into the accuracy of the new interpretation. Doyle (2003) and Britten (2002) similarly refer to this validity and credibility check, albeit a little later on in their studies, after the studies have been synthesised and interpretations made. This, in my opinion, is an important step, one which I have undertaken in my study. I did this by emailing the authors about how I had divided their articles into themes. I received a response from the author of two articles (Harrop-Allin, 2014, 2017). Harrop-Allin's responded about terminology clarification (multiliteracies as a pedagogy and multimodality), as well as complexities around the term indigenous musical knowledge in the context of children's games in contemporary culture.

#### ***2.3.1.4 Phase 4: Determining how the studies are related***

Determining the relationship between the studies is central to the meta-ethnographic process. Noblit and Hare suggest compiling 'a list of the key metaphors, phrases, ideas, and/or concepts (and their

relations) used in each account' and juxtaposing them (1988, p. 28). By the end of this phase, initial inferences about their relationships can be made. Having begun using open coding strategies in the previous phase, Rice (2002) extends this by applying themes relating to the different aspects of the research focus to various categories. In this case, they extracted four overarching categories to use to re-read the studies. Emergent themes were established and categorised. Rice adds that the 'coding paradigm was established and adjusted throughout the analysis process, as well as checked by another researcher' (2002: 57). Similarly, after working with the studies separately, Kottke-Stich began to 'determine the relationships between the studies, accomplished through the juxtapositions of the themes or beliefs identified in the previous stage in common or reoccurring ideas that crossed studies' (2008, p. 66). As mentioned earlier, Noblit and Hare (1988) propose that, towards the end of this stage, the researcher can begin to make initial inferences about how the studies relate. Kottke-Stich (2008) reminds us of Noblit and Hare's possibilities of relationships, that is, the reciprocal, refutational, and line-of-argument syntheses. I define these possible relationships in section 2.4. below.

#### ***2.3.1.5 Phase 5: Translating the studies into one another***

On one hand, in this context, translations are analogies relating to the similarities and differences between the studies. On the other, they are more complex than simply an analogy. Noblit and Hare specify that 'translations are especially unique syntheses, because they protect the particular, respect holism, and enable comparison' (1988, p. 28). A good translation plays a dual function, namely, within each study and between the various studies. The main metaphors and concepts in one account are maintained in relation to other metaphors and concepts in another account. Similarly, it compares metaphors and concepts in one study with that of another study.

As meta-ethnography involves analysing texts of original ethnographies and case studies, it provides rich, descriptive material for interpretation. Phase five is where analysis of the methodology comes into play. Noblit and Hare (1988) recommend using grounded theory (from Glaser and Strauss, 1967) for analysis. Doyle describes grounded theory as providing 'a means to isolate, create, and code metaphors in pursuit of conceptual density' (2003, p. 330). Doyle (2003, p. 330) points out that Noblit and Hare describe 'translations' of case studies by using metaphors to view the data to be interpreted by the new research question. These translations consist of data made up of 'textual units' and each translation is not a 're-interpretation of the same question but rather becomes an interpretation of

interpretations through a new lens ... [which are used] to synthesise case studies' (Doyle 2003, p. 330). I describe grounded theory in greater depth later in this chapter.

Each of the worked examples I am referring to describes their approach to phase five in varying detail. Sleijpen et al. (2016) explain how they translate the studies into one another, by completing both a reciprocal synthesis and a refutational synthesis. Cahill et al. describe these syntheses:

Reciprocal translation occurs when different accounts are translated into one another; in contrast, refutational synthesis allows interpretation of conflicting accounts, whereas line of argument synthesis is used to build an account of the overarching interpretation of the studies (2018, p. 167).

In the case of the study by Sleijpen et al., reciprocal synthesis was used to reveal the main concepts across the articles, by comparing codes they had created to data sources within the individual articles. A refutational translation 'was used to detect areas of incongruence in the key sources' (Sleijpen et al. 2016, p. 167). I elaborate on the various forms of syntheses in section 2.4.

Kottke-Stich (2008) describes step-by-step, practical ways of approaching data analysis, such as reading and re-reading the study; highlighting relevant passages and making notes; keeping a researcher's journal; and creating a grid to simultaneously examine the differing details and concepts of each study. They describe a process of repeated coding. The researcher writes: 'Each study was coded in sequence, and then re-coded to check against codes that were created in a later study' (2008, p. 67). Each layer of coding and repetition adds opportunities for uncovering new perspectives, which may also challenge the researchers' initial assumptions and bias. After coding and creating a code table, the next phase, writing the synthesis, begins.

Rice (2002) describes moving to phase 5, where the work of reading across the studies for similarities, differences, and interesting information is the priority. This process speaks to Noblit and Hare's (1988) description of meta-ethnography as an organised means of synthesising qualitative research by viewing the processes and results of a range of case studies. The process requires finding the balance between translating each study's richness and complexity while still drawing overarching conclusions from them (Rice, 2002).

Doyle (2003) stipulates certain enhancements to the original description of this phase by Noblit and

Hare (1988). Firstly, there is the conundrum that ‘the goal of meta-ethnography is to learn from a collection of individually unique cases. But this is seen as a contradiction in a world dominated by aggregation of similarities’ (2003, p. 331). Doyle recommends keeping up to date a journal of one’s personal meta-ethnographic process, including information about decisions made, insights in the studies, and so on, thereby explaining one’s personal relation to the text. A second important area is the integration of grounded theory into the process. Following Noblit and Hare’s publication of their book on this methodological approach in 1988, understanding of grounded theory has developed in a number of directions. Doyle (2003) cites Charmaz (2000) on constructivist grounded theory, as Doyle states that Noblit and Hare provide minimal clarity or assistance with regard to extracting and describing metaphors. They go on to say that it is important when ‘writing translations for each of the case studies selected ... that they are not only rich in detail, but also tell stories that make them believable and useable for readers’ (Doyle 2003, p. 332). Third, Doyle insists that translations of the texts into another, leading up to the synthesis, be in the original words of the case studies. Noblit and Hare provide the option for the researcher either to use the original language or generate a new language for the synthesis. Doyle explains that keeping the voice of the original author ‘preserves the particulars of each study longer, allowing them to speak more directly to the readers of the synthesis’ (2003, p. 333). This in turn gives the new line of argument more integrity. In order to achieve this, Doyle used key descriptors (the term preferred over ‘metaphors’), by looking for ‘salient language’ (2003, p. 333) with which to write rich, descriptive translations. In their own words:

My purpose was not to maintain an objectivist link between the data and findings, but rather to increase the power of practitioners through maintenance of their language. Affirming their words and those of the original authors helped distance me from the role of researcher as expert (Doyle 2003, p. 333).

In the discussion in Chapter 3 of this study, I explain that I had similar feelings, in that translating the author’s words often risked the loss of meaning and nuance.

### **2.3.1.6 Phase 6: *Synthesising translations***

Noblit and Hare define synthesis as ‘making a whole into something more than the parts alone imply’ (1988, p. 28). The translations constitute one level of the synthesis. If there are many, varied studies in the meta-ethnographic synthesis, and therefore many translations, these can be further compared to provide a second level of synthesis, by seeking themes, metaphors, and concepts within and between the translations.

Britten et al. (2002) acknowledge that synthesising qualitative research may not be a pursuit valued by every school of research. The reasons they cite for this include researchers' believing it to be an impossible task to synthesise research from varying contexts; that such syntheses will result in generalisations that ignore original rich description and detail; and that syntheses detract from the original studies. They assert that:

the full contribution of qualitative research will not be realised if individual studies merely accumulate and some kind of synthesis is not carried out. The method of synthesis should be appropriate to the research being synthesized, hence our choice of an interpretive method such as meta ethnography. We think that there are generalizations to be made across qualitative research studies that do not supplant the detailed findings of individual studies, but add to them. To claim that generalization is not possible is to deny the transferability of any shared meanings or generative mechanisms (2002, p. 214).

Britten et al. (2002) also discuss ways of testing the assumptions in the synthesis. As mentioned by Kottke-Stich (2008), one option is to present the newly formed synthesised data to the original authors, for them to indicate the applicability of the interpretations of their original research. They also highlight that going back to the original research data to assess the resulting meta-ethnographical synthesis and analysis is an important step. Both these steps speak to the integrity of retaining the original author's voice, as described by Doyle (2003) in describing phase five. Sleijpen et al. (2016) describe the sixth phase as involving a move from a descriptive process to an explanatory one, which precedes a description of how they disseminate the findings of the meta-ethnography (phase seven). Kottke-Stich (2008) draws on Noblit and Hare (1988) and Doyle (2003) to elaborate how to approach the synthesis phase in such a way as to represent the authenticity and voice of the original data and studies. Noblit and Hare write that the synthesis 'compares both the metaphors or concepts and their interactions in one account with the metaphors or concepts and their interactions in the other accounts' (1988, p. 28). Kottke-Stich (2008) speaks to this delicate balance faced by meta-ethnographers – of representing their research questions by interpreting original studies while retaining the authenticity of those studies. Moving from viewing each individual study to viewing them as a whole adds further complexity. Doyle describes the key difference between analysis and synthesis as the movement from viewing the cases as parts of a collection to viewing the collection as a whole', going on to say: 'to develop my synthesis, I analyzed my four translations using comparison and code reduction strategies and wrote a final narrative' (2003, p. 335). Employing

translation in this manner, Doyle was able to bring the main themes in each domain to the surface.

### ***2.3.1.7 Phase 7: Expressing the synthesis***

Since research syntheses are written as academic pursuits, the most obvious means of disseminating the information is for an academic audience. Noblit and Hare (1988) suggest other means of sharing the information, especially if the synthesis has been conducted due to certain concerns of the research participants. They suggest videos, plays, art, and music as acceptable forms of transmission. Taking the audience of the research into consideration helps the researcher to communicate intelligibly and appropriately. Noblit and Hare point out that this is ‘not to pander to the audience ... [but rather] for the purpose of enabling an audience to stretch and see the phenomena in terms of others’ interpretations and perspectives’ (1988, p. 29). In order to achieve this, much understanding of the audience’s culture is required, signifying both their commonality and their uniqueness.

Doyle (2003) reiterates this point and writes that the value of any synthesis relates to how the audience comprehends it – and that this comprehensibility is located in the line of argument. Doyle elaborates: ‘if the data are inadequate or if the audience cannot see the connection between the data and the argument, then the study becomes unbelievable’ (2003, p. 336). In this manner, comprehensibility and believability are central, and Doyle adds that an enhancement to this is proving trustworthiness. They draw on Lincoln and Guba (1985, in Doyle 2003, p. 337) who suggest the following to ensure trustworthiness and validity. First, ‘transferability in place of external validity’ (2003, p. 337) – in other words, how findings from one qualitative study are applicable to other studies. This is covered by Doyle in the discussion on synthesis. Second, ‘consistency for reliability’ (2003, p. 337). This can be established by leaving a paper trail and ample documentation. In the case of meta-ethnography, this is important because all the data used for the study is in the public domain and accessible. Lastly, ‘credibility for internal validity’ (2003, p. 337). In a meta-ethnographic study, this can be achieved by member checks – contacting the original authors of the texts used, with the translations and interpretations of their studies as data, in order to ascertain what was gained or lost in the translations, whether the interpretations are creditable, and so on, as also touched on by Kottke-Stich (2008).

## 2.4 Approaches to syntheses

The phases outlined above may overlap or run concurrently, as may be observed in Table 1. As Noblit and Hare point out, ‘what is unique about a meta-ethnography ... is not these phases, but the translation theory of social explanation that it involves’ (2010, p. 340). France et al. (2019, p. 2) elaborate on this by pointing out that, theoretically, meta-ethnography grew out of the work of two sociologists, Geertz, with his concept of thick description (1973), and Turner’s (1980) theory of sociological understanding as translation. With concepts such as thick description and translation from one text into another, it makes sense that, as stipulated in the description of phase two above, deciding which studies to include is a key consideration. Edwards and Kaimal maintain that researchers choose studies for their ‘relevance and integrity’ (2016, p. 31). The synthesis occurs between related studies by ‘reflecting them one into another’ (2016, p. 31), which acts as a translation, or a weaving through and together. The weaving translation involves a transfer of metaphors and concepts across the contextual studies, whilst prioritising preservation of meaning (Edwards & Kaimal, 2016). Britten et al. (2002, p. 210) write that ‘interpretations and explanations in the original studies are treated as data, and are translated across several studies to produce a synthesis’.

In order to understand this notion of translation, it helps to dig deeper into how Noblit and Hare (1988) draw on Turner’s (1980) theory of social explanation. They describe three fundamental elements of Turner’s theory:

1. All social explanation is comparative, at one level or another, either explicitly or implicitly. Even in case studies or single ethnographies, researchers bring into play their own expectations, understandings, and knowledge as a basis for hypothesising and for comparing their observations.
2. This creates an explanatory puzzle which aims to explain and understand the differences created by the abovementioned comparison. Noblit and Hare write that ‘the answer for Turner must be interpretive, citing different social and historical contexts, and differing values, norms, and/or social relations, as reasons’ (1988:30). The notion of a puzzle reflects how the researcher interprets the similarities and differences of the social practice they are studying in relation to their own.

3. This process of seeking social explanation through meta-ethnography should be inductive (Noblit & Hare 1988, pp. 30–31).

These elements are deemed vital by Noblit and Hare (1988). They write:

Not only is Turner's argument paradigmatically appropriate for a meta-ethnography, it also constitutes a methodology for the synthesis of ethnographies. First, it reveals that the 'data' of synthesis are interpretations and explanations rather than the data collected through interviews and observations. Second, it shows us that in the same way that interpretation is a comparative translation, synthesis is the translation of interpretations. A meta-ethnography appropriately proceeds by translating the interpretations of one study into the interpretations of another. Finally, Turner's analysis gives us the basic form of the translation itself: an analogy. (Noblit & Hare, 1988, p. 32)

The words that characterise discussions about qualitative meta-synthesis, the umbrella term under which meta-ethnography falls include interpretation, metaphor, analogy, translation, and comparison. Zimmer (2006) describes qualitative studies as contextual and often based on participants' direct experiences, which implies that undertaking a meta-synthesis or meta-ethnography involves an abstraction from the qualitative studies/ethnographies used. Of course, as indicated above, one of the aims of a meta-ethnographic synthesis is to maintain the individual integrity of the studies used. This issue posed by Zimmer (2006) forces the researcher to, firstly, prioritise this retention of integrity, but also to have a firm grasp of his or her goals and reasons for attempting such interpretive research. Noblit and Hare (1988) tackle this complexity by describing the various relationships ethnographies can have with one another and how to best deal with them together.

The four relationships ethnographies can have with one another include that they should be about different things; that they are roughly about the same things; that they refute each other; and that they successively build a line of argument (1988). What follows is a summary of how to deal with each of these different relationships (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Edwards & Kaimal, 2016).

#### **2.4.1 Reciprocal translations as syntheses**

This approach is taken if the studies are about issues that are comparable and produce non-conflicting results. They can be reciprocally translated into one another, in an iterative manner, by

first extracting the key metaphors, themes, or concepts. Key considerations here concern identifying how the concepts or metaphors of each study translate into the other studies, that is, which metaphors best suit all the studies. This can include a set of metaphors not extracted directly from the studies but which rather represent those that appear the most reasonable. Since each study is inherently unique, a single set of metaphors may not apply across all of them; in such a case, one can extract understanding from the translation of one study into another. Noblit and Hare (1988, p. 39) provide a succinct explanation of the process:

This requires not only careful reading, but also attention to which metaphors, themes, concepts, or organizers enable us to fully render the account in a reduced form. This process is facilitated by the emerging conclusion about how the studies in question relate to each other. Once we know that the studies are similar and what metaphors the authors employ, we proceed to construct the 'reciprocal' translations.

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the synthesis of my study was reciprocal.

#### **2.4.2 Refutational syntheses**

If studies refute each other, they cannot be synthesised as reciprocal translations, but must rather be synthesised by individual translations of the ethnographic studies and of their refutations. Noblit and Hare (1988, p. 47) offer practical insight into this process:

To be truly ethnographic, the synthesis must 'take into account' the implied relationship between the competing explanations. The implied refutation, then, is analysed substantively and subsequently incorporated into the synthesis. Our approach treats the refutation itself as part of the interpretation to be synthesized. In this way, we can also reduce it metaphorically and incorporate it into our transitional approach to meta-ethnography.

Refutations are complex in that the research commences with disagreement. It is important to understand what is meant by explicit and implicit refutations. Any reasonable interpretation is, by its nature, a critique of other interpretations and therefore implies a refutation, and, in such a case, is an implicit refutation. One must understand the essence of the explanations of implicit refutations to know whether a reciprocal interpretation is viable in the first place.

Some studies set out to present refutations. Refutations add value to reflective discourse. They form a valuable part of the meta-ethnographic process if, first, the implicit can be brought out and made explicit. Refutations can also be extracted and translated into other refutations in similar metaphorical

ways as can any translation in a meta-ethnographic synthesis.

### **2.4.3 Line of argument syntheses**

The focus of meta-ethnographic syntheses described up until this point has been of translating one study into another. Line-of-argument synthesis extends this by interpreting similar or dissimilar comparisons of the studies to a new context, thereby providing a space for a second level of inference. Noblit and Hare (1988) divide this second level of inference into two concepts: clinical inference and grounded theorising.

‘The goal of [a] lines-of-argument synthesis is to discover a “whole” among a set of parts’, through clinical inference (Noblit & Hare, 1988, p. 63). This means establishing structures of what is significant from each study and from all the studies as a whole. The researcher develops his or her line of argument by drawing out themes and interpretations from the individual studies and applying the most relevant across the set of studies. The drawing out or inference is achieved by consistently comparing the meta-concepts and themes with those occurring in the individual studies (Edwards & Kaimal, 2016).

## **2.5 Grounded theory**

As part of their description of line-of-argument synthesis, Noblit and Hare make mention of grounded theory/theorising (1988, p. 63), referring to Glaser and Strauss’s 1967 work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.

Charmaz (2014) offers a succinct overview of what grounded theory offers as a method:

Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus researchers construct a theory ‘grounded’ in their data. Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis. (p. 17)

Grounded theory has developed significantly since 1967. Glaser and Strauss’s work grew out of their collaborative research on death and dying in American hospitals (Charmaz 2014). They perceived a

need for methods different from the positivist quantitative research methods which were dominant at the time (Tweed & Charmaz 2012; Charmaz 2000). Positivism relies ‘on experimentation and observation to empirically test and verify hypotheses as a means of describing the world in measurable variables’ (Tweed & Charmaz 2012, p. 131). Glaser and Strauss’s work helped to legitimise qualitative research methods by means of with methodical, rigorous, and structured methods of inquiry. Qureshi and Ünlü (2020) concur with this appraisal, noting that the development of grounded theory paved the way for generating theory by means of qualitative research methods, ‘through a systematic, iterative, and rigorous data collection and analysis process’ (2020, p. 1).

With grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss proposed that qualitative analysis could be undertaken in a methodical, systematised manner in order to generate theory in a logical manner. They achieved this by providing a specific strategy for collecting and analysing data, one with the aim of producing ‘an inductively driven theory of social or psychological processes grounded in the material from which it was derived’ (Tweed & Charmaz, 2012, p. 132).

Charmaz (2014) summarises the main components of Glaser and Strauss’s grounded theory practice as follows:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis;
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data rather than from preconceived, logically deduced hypotheses;
- Using the constant comparison method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis;
- Advancing theory development in the course of each step of data collection and analysis;
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps;
- Sampling aimed at theory construction (theoretical sampling) rather than population representativeness; and
- Conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis (2014, p. 28).

Tweed and Charmaz (2014, p. 132) provide an illustrative description by comparing grounded theory to a pyramid. The foundation of the pyramid represents the raw data and the codes developed to make sense of this data. The next layer comprises codes and categories that build on from the initial codes and work towards making more sense of the data. Each layer that follows builds towards the top with ever more intricate levels of conceptualisation and understanding. Tweed and Charmaz (2014, p. 132) describe the final steps of the pyramid as follows:

Finally comes the peak of the pyramid either representing a core category, encompassing all those codes and categories subsumed within it; or a theoretical conceptualization of the processes interpreted from the data. Here is the pinnacle of the analysis from which the storyline of the grounded theory can be conveyed to others.

This echoes Glaser and Strauss (1967), who describe the process of grounded theory as a systematic method of research that involves simultaneously collecting and analysing data, using a process of constant comparison to generate codes and categories.

For a researcher new to grounded theory, there are various approaches to consider, each with different steps to follow. Qureshi and Ünlü (2020) highlight three distinct schools of grounded theory: Glaserian (1978); Straussian (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The three approaches align and vary at different stages of the process. For the purposes of this study, specifically with reference to the methodological decision-making involved therein, I summarise the practical steps involved and highlight where the various schools of thought align or differ. Qureshi and Ünlü (2020, p. 2) provide a useful summary of the approaches from which Table 1 draws information (GT refers to grounded theory).

The categories in Table 1 are those which constitute the components of grounded theory research. All three schools of thought approach the start of new research similarly, that is, with a broad research interest with broad questions and focus. When it comes to approaching the literature review, the earlier, Glaserian, school advocates avoiding a literature review, or at least delaying it, whereas the other two schools of thought recommend a literature review from early on in the research process. This is to allow the beginning of establishing robust theoretical underpinnings, as well as to be allow the recognition important aspects in the emerging data. The three schools agree, again, on data collection and analysis and employ the constant comparison method, which is one of the cornerstones

of the grounded theory pyramid, as described above by Tweed and Charmaz (2014).

**Table 1:** Comparison of the essential elements of grounded theory (GT), with three schools of thought, as discussed in Qureshi and Ünlü (2020, p. 2).

	<b>GLASERIAN GT (1978)</b>	<b>STRAUSSIAN (STRAUSS &amp; CORBIN 1990 onwards)</b>	<b>CONSTRUCTIVIST (CHARMAZ 2006 onwards)</b>
<b>Research interest</b>	Begin the research with a broad interest and research focus and questions which are not strictly predetermined.		
<b>Literature review</b>	Delay starting the literature review as long as possible, perhaps even avoiding one, so as to remain as impartial and open-minded as possible.	Both recommend a literature review to establish a robust theoretical underpinning and to recognise and compare what emerges from the data.	
<b>Data collection &amp; analysis; constant comparison method</b>	Collecting and analysing data simultaneously is a defining characteristic of GT. This requires the researcher to constantly compare the codes as they emerge from the data items and sets, thereby generating properties ‘of each category within the theory’ (Qureshi & Ünlü, 2020: 2).		
	<i>(continued overleaf)</i>		

<p><b>Coding</b></p>	<p>Referred to as the traditional approach/objectivist: theory emerges from the data.</p> <p>Involves substantive coding – coding conducted through open and selective coding; and theoretical coding – higher levels of abstraction and hypotheses where the theory comes into play.</p>	<p>Referred to as pragmatist and relativist, with theory seen as being rooted historically, and organising data to generate theory.</p> <p>Three stages of coding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Open: analysing the data from all possible directions;</li> <li>– Axial: analysing the relations in the data through context, consequence, interactions, and causally);</li> <li>– Selective: various core categories are devised and related to each other, depending on their relationships).</li> </ul>	<p>States that her approach is ‘one of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism’ (Qureshi &amp; Ünlü, 2020:2).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Speaks to the researcher’s role in analysis and theory creation.</li> <li>– Co-creation of theory between researcher and researched.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keeping memos</b></p>	<p>Memos/reflective notes are an integral part of the GT process, allowing researchers to provide clarity, track the development of the theory through the process, and remind the researcher of the process.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(continued overleaf)</i></p>		

<b>Theoretical sensitivity</b>	In this school of thought, theoretical sensitivity means being open-minded and not imposing predetermined notions onto what is emerging from the data.	Theoretical sensitivity implies that the researcher is actively involved with the data and where it is leading.	Having a constructivist approach, Charmaz values the co-construction of theory, which arises from the exchanges between the researcher and those being researched.
<b>Theoretical sampling</b>	‘This GT principle states that the theory decides where and what to sample’ (Qureshi & Ünlü, 2020:2), that is, sampling is aligned to the theory rather than being representative of the researched population.		

The schools vary regarding how they approach coding. The Glaserian approach to grounded theory is more traditional in that the theory emerges from the data through the use of substantive and theoretical coding. Substantive coding refers to the process of identifying and categorising data in order to identify patterns and themes within it, while theoretical coding is the process of creating higher levels of abstraction and hypotheses based on the data that has been coded (i.e. working to create a theory to explain the relationships between the themes and sets of data). The Straussian school speaks about three stages of coding: open (breaking data down into themes), axial (analysing relationships within the data and between the studies) and selective (selecting important concepts and themes to explain or speak to the research interest). These refer to the process of organising and analysing the data. The constructivist approach speaks of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism. According to Morgan (2020), pragmatism is a philosophical perspective that emphasises the practical application of ideas and actions and offers an...

...alternative to realism and relativism as philosophical bases for research. This is particularly important for Constructivist Grounded Theory in which it is common to assume that a constructivist stance inherently requires an acceptance of relativism since any other choice would require an approval of realism (2022, p. 64–65).

Pragmatism is a philosophical perspective that emphasises the practical application of ideas and actions. Symbolic interactionism is described as ‘a leading perspective and method within behavioural sociology, in which interaction is seen as the key to human behaviour and the construction of meaning’ (Hewitt et al., 2022, p. 2). Symbolic interactionism emphasises the role of

symbols, language, and meaning in shaping social interactions and understandings. In Chapter 4 (section 4.2.5.1) I expand on the Straussian approach, as this is the school with which this study is primarily aligned.

Chun, Birks and Francis describe theoretical sensitivity ‘as the ability to know when you identify a data segment that is important to your theory’ (2019, p. 6). Theoretical sensitivity is thus the capacity of the researcher to identify, understand, and interpret the patterns and themes in the data that are relevant to the theory being developed. This is an essential aspect of the grounded theory method as it enables the researcher to identify the core concepts and relationships that are central to the developing theory.

Although grounded theory and meta-ethnography are both methods for analysing and synthesising qualitative data and have different approaches and goals, together the two methodologies can be used together to extract theory from a meta-ethnography. This process involves conducting a meta-ethnography to identify the key themes and insights from multiple studies, and then using grounded theory to analyse and interpret these themes in order to generate a theory that is grounded in the data.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The aim of Chapter 2 has been to introduce meta-ethnography as a methodological tool for qualitative syntheses. Meta-ethnography comprises seven phases: getting started; deciding what is relevant to the initial interest; reading the studies; determining how the studies are related; translating the studies into one another; synthesising the translations; and expressing the synthesis. This process was described by referring to Noblit and Hare’s seminal 1988 text, as well as to five worked examples which were included to gain a deeper understanding of the practical applications of these phases. Introducing different types of syntheses and an exploration of grounded theory ended the discussion in Chapter 2. The detail included in this chapter is vital as I used it as a tool to understand the methodology and to plot the action I would take in my own research. As may be observed, there are various choices that can be taken within the framework, following which, decisions must be made. In the next chapter, I describe my use of this methodology and present my weaving of the synthesis.

## CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline my approach to conducting a meta-ethnography. Below, I describe phase two the literature search, which was completed using stringent search parameters. I discuss the in-depth process of translating the five studies into one to address my primary research question. I present the sub-themes and overarching themes as they pertain to the articles, after which I present the translations in the format of a discussion, before concluding with the emergent recommendations.

### 3.2 Phase 2: Literature search

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature search represents phase two of the meta-ethnographic process and involves finding relevant material relating to the research question and goals. Below is a list of search parameters I decided upon and applied to ensure optimal search results in an effort to find articles relating to the perceptions of African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases of education in government schools in South Africa. The search was conducted over three weeks in April 2022. The parameters I set for the search are as follows:

1. Published after 2010 – in the course of the implementation of the CAPS curriculum
2. Published articles (not theses)
3. Peer-reviewed research
4. English or Afrikaans language
5. South African context
6. Foundation and Intermediate school phases
7. African musical arts education

The search began with a much larger scope. I wanted to search from 1994 (the beginning of democracy in South Africa), but this yielded too many results. Refining the parameters is important in this case because fewer results afford a more in-depth synthesis. Upon reflection, I decided to look for material from 2011 onwards, which was important as this allowed the study to begin with the most recent change of the national curriculum. It meant that the results reflected material that is applicable

to present-day curricular issues. The other parameters speak to the specificity of the research question.

The next aspect of the search was choosing consistent keywords and applicable search engines, which I detail below. The list of keywords is as follows:

1. African musical arts education South Africa
2. Indigenous music education, South Africa
3. African music education
4. AMA education Foundation and Intermediate Phases South Africa
5. “African music\* education”<sup>1</sup>
6. African music\* education
7. African music\* education Foundation and Intermediate Phases

These keywords were generated from variations in the term ‘African musical arts education’, as discussed in Chapter 1, as well as by refining the search to specify the South African location and the Intermediate and Foundation school phases. Each search term was explored within six databases. These databases were selected after consulting the Rhodes University Library Education LibGuide (Qomfo, 2022) and following the suggestions set out there. The databases I started with were:

- ERIC (Institute of Education Sciences), an easy to use, searchable online library of education research.
- Emerald, a search engine specialising in business, management, and strategy; education; health and social care; human resources, learning and organisational studies; marketing; and operations, logistics, and quality.
- Web of Science, a multidisciplinary collection of databases that index the world's leading scholarly literature in the sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities.
- JSTOR, a database that provides access to more than 12 million journal articles, books, images, and primary sources across 75 disciplines.

I expanded the search using:

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<sup>1</sup> The asterisk is a symbol added to the end of the root of a word to search a database for all forms of that word.

- Sabinet, a comprehensive online news research service to meet the diverse needs of public and government libraries, universities, various private and government institutions as well as researchers.
- Scopus, the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature – scientific journals, books and conference proceedings.

Of these databases, ERIC and Sabinet yielded the best results. This makes sense as ERIC is a wide-reaching educational database, and Sabinet is a primarily South African research database. The only database which yielded no results was Emerald. Overall, I found a rich variety of material which has contributed greatly to the wider literature used in this study, as discussed in Chapter 1. From these potential sources, I identified five articles which were suitable for this synthesis; these are presented below in order of date of publication.

1. Nompula, Y. (2011) ‘Valorising the voice of the marginalised: Exploring the value of African music in education,’ *South African Journal of Education*, 31(3), pp. 369–380. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v31n3a542>.
2. Harrop-Allin, S. (2014) ‘Bana etlong retlobapala: Examining children's musical games on a Soweto playground,’ *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*, 11(1), pp. 1–20. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2989/18121004.2014.995438>.
3. Human, R. and Van Niekerk, C. (2014) ‘Assessing ngoma-ness: a generic cross-cultural framework for African musical Arts education,’ *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*, 11(1), pp. 21–35. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2989/18121004.2014.995434>.
4. Pooley, T.M. (2016) ‘Extracurricular arts: Poverty, inequality and Indigenous musical arts education in post-apartheid South Africa,’ *Critical Arts*, 30(5), pp. 639–654. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2016.1262438>.
5. Harrop-Allin, S. (2017) ‘Multimodality and the multiliteracies pedagogy,’ *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 65(1), pp. 25–51. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429417694874>.

What follows is a brief description of each article.

Nompula (2011): This mixed methods article explores traditional music, also termed Indigenous music, and expresses how valuable it is for learners to be taught music from their own culture in a school context. The study is a comparison between how isiXhosa-speaking children fared learning either European songs (even translated ones) or Indigenous songs in their mother tongue and how this affected their confidence, intonation, and learning. This was measured by independent music judges in solo and ensemble performances, and conclusions were drawn from the results of these performances. Choosing a mixed methods article did make me pause for consideration, due to the essentially qualitative nature of a meta-ethnography. Nompula's research may use quantitative means to collect and analyse data, but her findings and recommendations are very much located within the ethnographic context in which she conducted the research and end in findings which are unpacked qualitatively, with the assistance of related literature.

Harrop-Allin (2014): The essential question in this paper is: What musical games are children playing in the playground and how are these an organic representation of African musical arts, through singing, dancing, and clapping? How can educators take this into the classroom? Part of this paper explores the children's inclusion of popular media within their situated practice, making sense of the world around them through musical games, as well as the global similarities between children's games in different countries and contexts.

Human and Van Niekerk (2014): This article was the most challenging of the five in terms of content as it includes specific technicalities about how to assess African musical arts performances. This includes making the assessment process reliable to suit formal curricula whilst, at the same time, doing justice to the nature of the music being assessed and the musical process of African musical systems.

Pooley (2016): The article is beautiful and descriptively written and lays out the landscape of formal post-apartheid South African musical education, whilst tracking the same children as they participate in informal music making and competitions. The layers include public school vs private school music education; how Indigenous music may be thriving outside of formal education but acknowledging the lack of available capacity to bring it into the formal school system; and the colonial legacy which is perpetuated by overseas examination boards, such as Trinity College London and Royal Schools of Music.

Harrop-Allin (2017): This article is similar to the previous one in that it draws on the same data collected in a primary school playground in Soweto. It delves deeper into exploring questions of how the theoretical frameworks of multiliteracy and multimodality can assist with pedagogically drawing on playground games, and consequently develop into learning in the classroom, through the methodology of recruitment.

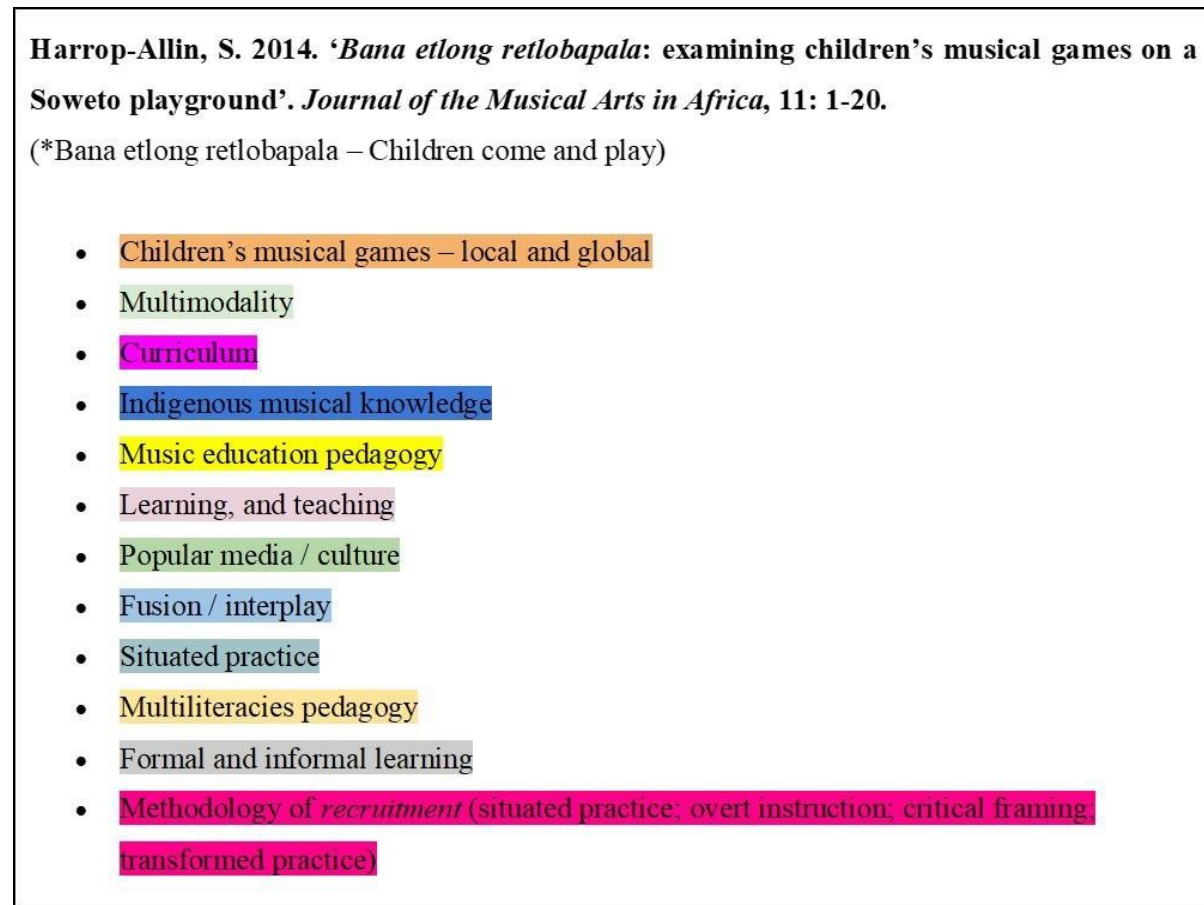
### **3.3 Phase 3: Deep reading and understanding**

During the third phase of my research process, I engaged in a meticulous and comprehensive review of each selected article. This involved a repetitive and in-depth reading of each article to ensure a deep understanding of the content. I retained the original wording in order not to lose the authors' meaning and intention. To enhance clarity, I utilised a bullet-point format for the summaries. This decision proved valuable in the review process, helping to extract and code themes for later stages of analysis. The structured nature of bullet-point summaries facilitated the extraction of key themes and insights from the articles, a critical aspect of the subsequent phases of the research. The selected articles, while addressing various facets of relating to the research question, all converge on the central theme of perceptions surrounding African musical arts education. This thematic focus serves as the unifying thread connecting the diverse perspectives and insights presented in each of the reviewed articles.

### **3.4 Phase 4: Establishing themes**

As indicated above, I read and summarised all five articles before assigning themes. I began with the first article and dealt separately with each article thereafter. I decided to use colour as part of my coding process to assist with thematic analysis at a later stage. I chose colour because of the visual ease with which I could engage the data. Each theme was allocated a different colour; similar themes across the articles share the same colours for later synthesis. I then identified passages in each of the articles that aligned with those themes and highlighted them accordingly. When deciding how to code certain passages, there were two considerations. First, identifying which passages linked to which theme; and second, if a passage linked to more than one theme, I had to decide which theme was more dominant.

Figure 2 provides an example of the presentation of the colours per theme, as used in the summary of Harrop-Allin (2014):



**Figure 2:** Research colour coding.

I named the themes based on descriptive words in the articles. Each article used slightly different words to name the same theme, which I later made consistent. In the deep-reading phase of meta-ethnography, it is essential that each source is first understood individually. For this reason, although some articles shared themes, I did not do more than assign them the same colour. Each article is reasonably different, except those by Harrop-Allin, which are related by both author and subject matter. I then highlighted the passages in the summaries which linked to particular themes.

Figure 3 is an example of an abstract that has been highlighted according to the colour of a predefined theme, from Pooley (2016, p. 639):

The bifurcation of the musical arts education sector in South Africa into its public and private dimensions reproduces inequality along lines of class, race and geography. This article reviews policy and practice in the post-apartheid era to provide new insight into the crisis unfolding in public schools. An ethnographic case study of school musicking in the Ingwavuma district of KwaZulu-Natal describes some of the strengths and challenges associated with music education in rural areas. Indigenous musics are thriving, but teachers lack training in music literacy and have limited resources at their disposal. The 2012 National Curriculum Statement accords music a peripheral (and in some cases, optional) position in South Africa's Basic Education syllabus (DBE 2012). Music is widely practised as an extracurricular activity that does not develop the skills in music literacy required for entry into tertiary education or the music industry. By contrast, students at private schools benefit from high-quality education in Western musics through independent examination boards. It is argued that an egalitarian approach to music education would return the study of music to the school curriculum in revised form.

**Figure 3:** Example of a coded paragraph.

Having completed the process of coding for all five articles, I placed all the same colour snippets and headings in new documents. In total, there were 26 themes, some of which were easy to identify as similar between the articles. Others involves subtle differences that made them related but not the same, such as the use of the words Indigenous musical knowledge; Indigenous African music education; and Xhosa music performance. I decided not to refine the colours – in order for them to better relate to each other and reflect these subtle differences – as I did not wish to lose the thread of connecting the information and the relevant article.

The initial themes I identified are listed here in alphabetical order:

1. African creative arts

2. Assessment systems + cross-cultural assessment standards / achievement standards
3. Authentic re-contextualisation
4. Children's agency
5. Children's musical games – local and global
6. Colonialism
7. Cross-culturalism
8. Curriculum / post-apartheid policy and practice
9. Ensemble and solo performances
10. European music performance
11. Formal and informal learning
12. Fusion / interplay
13. Indigenous African music education
14. Indigenous musical knowledge
15. Learning, and teaching
16. Methodology of recruitment (situated practice; overt instruction; critical framing; transformed practice)
17. Multiliteracies pedagogy
18. Multimodality
19. Music education
20. Popular media / culture
21. Private and public music education – inequality of music education
22. Rural music-making
23. Situated practice
24. Socio-economic context
25. Western music
26. Xhosa music performance

### **3.5 Phase 5: Overarching themes**

The themes listed above occurred to me whilst deep-reading the articles, that is, reading each text, and summarising and quoting from the text. Some of the themes span several articles, while others

only appear in one article. Many of the initial themes are related, which prompted me to group them together under broader umbrella terms, which I outline in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Overarching themes

<u>ORIGINAL THEMES (IN COLOUR)</u>	<u>OVERARCHING THEME</u>
<p>African creative arts</p> <p>Indigenous African music education</p> <p>Indigenous musical knowledge Xhosa</p> <p>music performance</p>	<p><b>African musical arts education</b></p>
<p>Children’s agency</p> <p>Children’s musical games – local and global</p>	<p><b>Children’s games and agency</b></p>
<p>Methodology of <i>recruitment</i></p> <p>Situated practice</p>	<p><b>Contextuality</b></p>
<p>Fusion / interplay Popular</p> <p>media / culture</p>	<p><b>Fusion / popular media</b></p>
<p>Colonialism</p> <p>Socio-economic context</p>	<p><b>Historical (colonialism) and current socio-economic conditions</b></p>

Assessment systems Crosscultural assessment standards / achievement standards Curriculum / post-apartheid policy and practice Formal and informal learning Multiliteracies pedagogy Music education pedagogy Private and public music education - inequality of music education	<b>Music education</b>
Ensemble and solo performances Rural music-making	<b>Music-making</b>
Authentic re-contextualisation Cross-culturalism	<b>Re-contextualisation and cross curriculum</b>
European music performance Western music	<b>Western music</b>
Multimodality	<b>Multimodality</b>

In this manner, I narrowed the 26 initial themes down to 10 overarching themes. The following subsection presents a summary of each of these with descriptions, indicating how the various articles fit within each theme.

### 3.5.1 Description of overarching themes

#### 3.5.1.1 *Music education*

All five articles add to the various sub-themes which make up the overarching theme of music education. All the articles consider music education as it currently stands in South Africa. This includes discussions of discrepancies among schools (for example, private and public schools; schools with more resources and less resources), the music systems being taught, and access to music

education. Besides information on formal learning in schools, there is discussion of informal learning, which occurs within communities, on playgrounds, and in homes. Various musical pedagogies are explored, with both past and present curricula and education policies playing an important part of the discussion. The important aspect of assessment systems and how to begin thinking about assessing outside of the dominant Western music lens is the focus of Human and Van Niekerk's 2014 paper. As my study, in particular, my research question, concerns music education, it makes sense that this is the broadest theme, encompassing many facets across all five articles. I have chosen to describe these overarching themes first because those that follow could, more or less, all fit under this umbrella. I explicate this theme and how the five articles feed into it in the discussion section 3.6 below.

Three articles (Nompula, 2011; Human & Van Niekerk, 2014; and Pooley, 2016) feature in this theme. All the articles approach the notion of Western music from a teaching and learning perspective, including how music is assessed. The other aspect relating to this is Western music performance, described by Nompula (2011), as it is relevant to a group of isiXhosa-speaking learners learning European folk-songs.

### ***3.5.1.2 African musical arts education***

The themes presented here can also fit within the theme of music education (3.5.1.1.). I have kept them separate for the purpose of this brief description, as – due to the nature of the topic – every theme can fall within music education and many under African musical arts education. Four of the five articles (Nompula, 2011; Harrop-Allin, 2014; Human & Van Niekerk, 2014; Pooley, 2016) make reference to this overarching theme. The sub-themes in this section are African creative arts; Indigenous African music education; Indigenous musical knowledge; and Xhosa music performance.

Nompula (2011) explores the place and value of African music in education. Using a case study, she explores how learning traditional Xhosa music, rather than European folk songs, benefits mother-tongue isiXhosa learners. The article includes a breakdown of the various components of learning Indigenous music, the skills learned, and how this affects other learning and overall musical development and confidence. Harrop-Allin (2014), by observing and undertaking a case study on children's playground games, explores contextual African musical knowledge and the possibilities for its inclusion in mainstream education systems in a relevant, modern, child-centred manner. Human

and Van Niekerk (2014) present the notion of *ngoma*-ness, that is, an African idea of holism. This relates to cross-cultural arts education in that *ngoma* describes African music and dance. Pooley (2016) explores formal and informal learning, as well as the various schooling and music education systems within South Africa. He maintains that education reform needs an on- the-ground approach to introducing African musical arts into the curriculum.

### ***3.5.1.3 Historical (colonialism) and current socio-economic conditions***

Three of the articles (Nompula, 2011; Pooley, 2016; Harrop-Allin, 2017) deal explicitly with the legacy of colonialism and its effects on music, music education, and the value of musical ideas and systems. This includes the dominance of the Western musical system within formal music education, and the devaluing of Indigenous music, as well as the disparity between music teaching at government and private school systems. All of these aspects are linked to South Africa's colonial and apartheid past (as touched on in Chapter 1). This Western dominance has never abated within the systems of formal education and music learning, which leaves little space for the African musical arts to exist, let alone thrive.

Pooley (2016) takes this one step further by delving into the current socio-economic conditions of the majority of South Africans. He maintains this is an essential backdrop to any discussion on music education, and more specifically Indigenous music education, as it is inextricably linked to the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. The discussion centres on school resources, parental involvement, the lack of resources within homes and the wider community, and how poverty and hardship overtake the importance of academic study. In such contexts, with all these other issues at play, policy reform for Creative Arts is not even on the radar.

### ***3.5.1.4 Music-making***

This is a brief overarching theme with two sub-themes and is found in Nompula (2011) and Pooley (2014). Reviewing what I highlighted for this theme in Nompula's article, I note that I highlighted only the heading. Her 2011 article concerns music-making; one of the sections I chose to highlight as African musical arts education focuses on Indigenous music making along with education. Pooley's (2014) article contains a section on rural music-making. Both of these entries may be regarded as important enough for this overarching theme to stand independently and not be absorbed elsewhere. I consider this matter further in the discussion section 3.6 below.

### ***3.5.1.5 Contextuality***

Initially, I had children's games and agency as a separate theme, but I realised that it fits well within contextuality; for this reason, this theme comprises children's games and agency, children's musical games – local and global, local practice, and methodology of recruitment (made up of situated practice; overt instruction; critical framing; transformed practice). The articles by Harrop- Allin (2014, 2017) make up this overarching theme.

Both articles by Harrop-Allin are based on the same data, which comprises observations and documentation of children's playground games in Soweto, South Africa. The data was collected over six months. The crux of this research concerns contextuality and situated practice. As mentioned above, children's games and agency was originally identified as an overarching theme on its own, but children's games and agency are so linked to context that it is necessary to include it under contextuality. Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) discusses how children and the games they play embody multimodality. She writes: 'This study is framed by the concept of multimodality, which concerns the representational, communicative and meaning-making potentials of different modes of communication such as speech, writing, image, gesture and sound' (Harrop-Allin, 2014, p. 2). Children have their own musical practices, which are based on their context, and which play out in playground games. These games, and therefore the children playing them, are musically agentic through necessary improvisation and adaptation. Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) highlights that this is a global phenomenon in children's games.

In both articles, Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) emphasises the methodology of recruitment to address how such playground games can contribute to teaching and learning in the classroom. This methodology comprises four processes: situated practice (the children's games); overt instruction (creating new learning in the classroom); critical framing (reflection on the process); and transformed practice. The methodology of recruitment begins with situated practice and for this reason this theme falls under the umbrella of contextuality.

Part of Harrop-Allin's research focuses on the influence of urban and township culture on the playground games. The next themes of fusion/interplay and popular media/culture were put together as a broader theme. However, since, in this context, those themes are only explicitly spoken about in

Harrop-Allin's two articles (2014, 2017), they speak to the context of the school and situated practice of the playground games. I thus decided to group them within this larger theme. In these two articles (Harrop-Allin 2014, 2017), mention of popular media and culture is made in relation to their fusion in children's agentive musical play. The textuality of children's games in an urban, township context, is influenced by the media, music, and dance around them. As Harrop-Allin points out, 'The remarkable variety of musical games observed during one playtime is a testament to the richness of Soweto children's oral culture – a culture that echoes past practices but is distinguished by a constant creation and recreation of games through interaction with a contemporary context' (2014, pp. 12–13).

#### ***3.5.1.6 Re-contextualisation and cross-curriculum***

Both sub-themes under this umbrella link to the article by Human and Van Niekerk (2014) on assessment. The notion of cross-culturalism refers to the reality that all classroom settings are cross-cultural and that one type of teaching and learning or one type of music-making no longer suffices across the globe nor, indeed, in South Africa. It requires that assessment systems become more flexible, which speaks to a process of authentic re-contextualisation. This refers to attempting to answer the challenge of integrating various music systems while still retaining the authenticity of the originals as much as possible.

#### ***3.5.1.7 Multimodality***

This theme stands alone. It is referred to in both of Harrop-Allin's articles (2014, 2017) – as an analytical lens through which to view children's games and their methods of creating them, and with reference to the multimodal nature of the games and musicality embodied in them.

### **3.6 Phase 6: Weaving a synthesis**

This, the discussion section of this study, constitutes the sixth phase of this meta-ethnography, the synthesis of the translations, that is, the weaving together of the coded data from all five articles to answer the research question and present a cohesive text. Chapter 2 contains a discussion of different types of syntheses and the relationships between the various studies. Noblit and Hare (1988) set out three broad relationships syntheses can have: reciprocal, refutational, and line-of-argument. It bears reminding ourselves here of the most important word in the title of this study: perceptions. This

brings me back to my first research question: How has African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases in government schools been regarded, been understood and interpreted in the South African academy since 2011?

This discussion section employs various terms: African musical arts, Indigenous musical education, Indigenous knowledge, and combinations of these. I have used the terms that were used in the articles themselves in order to best represent the voices of the authors (refer to Chapter 1 for a discussion of terminology). This section utilises direct quotations from the texts in order to rigorously maintain their authentic voice. This matter was discussed in Chapter 2.3.1.6., where Doyle (2003) elaborates on how to maintain the authenticity and voices of the different authors and studies.

The five articles grapple with many complexities of African musical arts education, and indeed music education as a whole in South Africa. The central question informing this study is perceptions of African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. Around this concern, many issues and contributing factors coalesce. There is a straddling of, on one hand, attempting to extract underlying perceptions and, on the other, highlighting related issues.

### **3.6.1 Perceptions of colonialism and apartheid**

It is important to begin with the history of music education in South Africa and consequent repercussions for the inclusion and perception of African musical arts education. Early on in her article, Nompula questions why ‘there is very little or no availability of African music material in the curriculum?’ (2011, p. 369). She answers her own question by saying that it is because of the dominance of Western art music. Harrop-Allin (2017) agrees that Western-based music education is the norm not only in South Africa, but in many African countries. Nompula states that a stereotype persists that Indigenous knowledge is ‘backward and proletarian’ (2011, p. 370). She notes that this notion arises from the fact that, ‘in pre-democratic South Africa, Indigenous African music and culture were thought of as proletarian, evil and unacceptable for worship’ (pp. 370- 371). Pooley (2016) and Nompula (2011) trace brief histories of colonialism as a background to these assertions of Western art music dominance in education.

Nompula (2011) paints a picture of Indigenous South African music and culture being incrementally usurped by European music and instruments in the course of colonialism in the nineteenth century,

partly due to the influence of mission schools and churches. From this time, Western music took over in the education system at black schools, and through this 'exclusive focus on western European music, learners came to believe that there is only one music system in the world, i.e. European music' (Nompula, 2011, p. 371). Nompula (2011) points out that, in being denied access to studying their own Indigenous music, learners lost respect for the value of their own cultures. Pooley (2016) brings this legacy into the present, arguing that to be musically literate means being able to read and write using staff notation or tonic solfa, as 'these are the terms that colonial music theory has imposed on our system of education as the sine qua non of musicianship' (p. 647).

Pooley (2016) draws out the unequal divides which exist in South African education as a whole. This inequality is realised through public and private education systems that co-exist and are segregated 'along lines of class, race and geography' (p. 39). A dominant feature in music tuition in private school education in South Africa is the use of independent examination boards. Pooley goes into detail about how this system perpetuates musical colonialism and Western art music dominance in South African education. These examination boards are represented by two international bodies, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and Trinity College London, and one South African body, the University of South Africa. Access to, and success through, graded examinations from these boards sets the standard for measuring progress for instrumentalists and vocalists in more privileged schools and is often the benchmark by means of which learners gain access to tertiary institutions to study music. Pooley outlines examples of the music theory curricula for these institutions, all of which are solely based on 'Western art music composition, performance and literacy' (2016, p. 649).

Pooley draws on Lucia (2007) to examine the colonial project perpetuated by these examination boards. Lucia (2007) refers to the dominance of Western musical theory in South Africa, and how this was perpetuated by the colonial system of the past. This situation is further bolstered by the overwhelmingly wide dissemination of such one-sided information in most books used for teaching music. The independent examination boards prescribe these books, mostly of which come from the USA and the UK. Pooley (2016) quotes Lucia (2007):

That such a system has remained critically unchallenged within an educational culture imposed by decades of colonialism and apartheid is perhaps not surprising (although other hegemonic systems, such as Christianity and the English language, have). What is more surprising, and evidence of the success of the system, is that in post-apartheid

South Africa the ideological basis of theory of music in the school and university curriculum remains unquestioned, when Outcomes Based Education has challenged most other spheres of educational philosophy (Lucia, 2007, p.177).

The quote makes mention of outcomes-based education, which was the national curriculum for South African Schools prior to the current National Curriculum Statement implemented in 2012.

A further quote from Lucia (2007, p. 183) concerns the ‘colonisation of consciousness in South Africa ... [by] an alien culture ... in the colonial, and later post-colonial state’. This discussion is applicable only to schools in the advantaged position of offering any music education at all – which provides a good opportunity to draw on the theme of socio- economic context. This theme is explicitly dealt with only by Pooley (2016), who uses a sociological and economic perspective to provide a deeper understanding of the discrepancies within the South African schooling system. This discussion takes place in post-apartheid South Africa, within the legacy of the colonialism touched on above. Post-apartheid South Africa is defined by inequality, with ever-increasing levels of socio-economic contrast, most of it still operating according to apartheid-defined social structures.

Poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity are the consuming reality for millions of South Africans. The education sector was early on identified as key to socio-economic empowerment for the poor and working class. Expenditure on education now amounts to nearly 20 percent of the national budget. But the impact of policy reforms and broad spending has been blunted by poor service delivery, inefficiency, corruption, and limited skills and capacity in government. The financial constraints on poor families continue to limit access to quality education at all levels (Pooley 2016, p. 640–641).

It is in this milieu that one can make a comparison of the economies of private- and public school education in South Africa.

### **3.6.2 Perceptions of educational access**

Pooley (2016) makes educational access one of the central concerns of his article by describing the two school systems. In public schools, there is often a lack of the basic facilities required for teaching and learning, let alone access to musical instruments, qualified music teachers, or time in a curriculum in which music instruction is not compulsory. Private schools, on the other hand, have music departments with instruments, qualified music teachers, and facilities built for music instruction and performance. Pooley writes that, ‘The consequences of this bifurcation between public schools for

the majority and private schools for the minority elite is an enduring inequality in the theory and practice of musical arts education, and to a large degree the exclusion of Indigenous African music from formal and practical study' (2016, p. 651).

### **3.6.3 Perceptions of post-apartheid curricula**

The outline in 3.4 speaks to oppression, domination, and the shaping of the colonisation of music curricula. All five articles include substantial sections discussing the post-apartheid curricula. Both Nompula (2011) and Pooley (2016) map out the history of South African music education during apartheid and thereafter. Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) and Human and Van Niekerk (2014) reflect on how to develop a more equitable curriculum that includes African musical arts. Pooley (2016) reminds us of contextual, historical details, mentioned in Chapter 1.1 and 1.2., concerning education during apartheid. The South African Nationalist government instituted the Bantu Education Act of 1953, thereby implementing the Bantu Education system, which limited access to quality education, to higher education, and controlled the training of teachers based on racial and ethnic classifications. Whites were taught within a system of Christian National Education, while blacks were taught inferior skills in inferior educational settings. According to Pooley, 'these measures were designed to ensure the superiority of whites in the workforce, and their culture in society. In the process, black South Africans were denuded of their culture and identity, their indigeneity exoticised and stigmatised as inferior and "primitive" (2016, p. 642). Nompula (2011) adds to this, noting that the South African Music Education Society (SAMES) was established in 1985 to begin changing the music curriculum. 'SAMES saw great need to preserve and transmit culture and values from one generation to another' (2011, p. 371), that is, to work towards establishing a new South African music curriculum.

In 1996, following the end of apartheid, the South African government published a White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, outlining 'how the arts would be funded for a multiracial South Africa founded on democratic principles. The arts had to contribute to the alleviation of poverty and nation building (reconciliation)' (Pooley 2016, p. 643). In 1998, OBE was adopted as the national curriculum. Pooley (2016) states that OBE prioritised social transformation, being more value-based than content-driven. Nation-building and the democratic principles in the constitution were a priority, but African musical arts remained peripheral. Outcomes-based education was not a success, and Pooley (2016) lists a number of reasons why, musically, it failed. The primary one was that class

teachers, rather than subject specialists, were expected to teach music. This had a particularly negative effect on African musical arts. Here Pooley quotes Herbst (2005):

The lack of performance-based skills has a disastrous impact on promoting the praxial philosophy of Indigenous Africa. Apart from this, very few teachers are able to improvise and compose music – a core characteristic of the performance-based musical arts in sub-Saharan Africa (Herbst, 2005, as cited in Pooley 2016, p. 644).

Pooley also draws on Nzewi (2003), describing how ‘musical arts education in Africa is holistic and communal rather than individualistic [but is] to be taught and examined in the system that privileges individual skill and assessment’ (Pooley 2016, p. 644). The integration of dance, music, and song into one subject to be taught by one teacher was an immense, often insurmountable, task. OBE was launched quickly, and most educators were unprepared. Pooley (2016) notes that by this time it was already too late, and the damage had been done.

Nompula (2011) describes the next curriculum adjustment, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), in 2005. Music fit within Arts and Culture in the NCS. Nompula quotes from the NCS to explain that the subject of Arts and Culture was developed to ‘build awareness, celebrate diversity, and acknowledge other cultures and music that had been marginalised for decades’ (NCS, 2005, as cited in Nompula, 2011, p. 369). The NCS document goes on to say that the curriculum prioritised ‘issues of social justice, human rights, a healthy environment and inclusivity’ (NCS 2005, as cited in Nompula, 2011, p. 369) as fundamental learning outcomes. The last quote about the NCS by Nompula is from the introduction of the NCS document where it is stated that the 2005 curriculum was an ‘attempt to expose students to the rich South African diversity, including religion, music and culture’ (2011, p. 371). She goes on to say that many studies have addressed the need for Indigenous music to be an integral part of the national curriculum, highlighting the significance of African musical arts education.

Pooley (2016) brings us to the revised, most current NCS for South African government schools (grades R–12), CAPS, which was implemented in 2012. He provides a summary of music education under CAPS, which includes a focus on diversity. I prioritise what Pooley (2016) says about CAPS in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases as that is the area of concern to this study. He writes about the intentions and goals of the current curriculum as set out by the Department of Basic Education:

The CAPS document emphasises diversity and allows students specialising in music the option of three streams: ‘Western Art Music’, ‘Indigenous African Music’ and ‘Jazz’. The goal is to make music education more accessible and relevant in schools, and to preserve and revitalise Indigenous knowledge systems. The democratic values of earlier policies are reiterated: ‘This curriculum aims to ensure that children acquire and apply Extracurricular arts knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives’ (DBE 2012: 4). The need for ‘social transformation’ is also recognised in an attempt to redress the educational imbalances of the past. The validation of ‘Indigenous knowledge systems’ and the values of the constitution are prioritised and given expression in various ways in the curriculum for Creative Arts (grades R–9) and Music (grades 10–12). (2016, p. 644-645)

Pooley (2016) further sets out music teaching and learning as it appears within the CAPS curriculum. Music falls under Creative Arts in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3). Creative Arts makes up one of four components (the others being beginning knowledge; physical education; personal and social well-being). In both the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, schools can choose two of four creative arts subjects to teach for a certain amount of time per week: music, dance, drama, and visual arts. In the Foundation Phase two hours per week are allocated to Creative Arts, and in the Intermediate Phase, 1.5 hours per week (or 45 minutes per creative subject). Pooley (2016) reflects that this time allocation is thoroughly insufficient for a technical subject such as music – and it is only an option, not a requirement. This choice is made by the school, not by the learners, and Pooley maintains that this ‘speaks to the awkward limitations of a fractured curriculum’ (2016, p. 645). He goes on to say that this ‘piecemeal’ and fractured approach in early education affects the progression of music education and individual learners’ access to studying music in high school and in tertiary education.

#### **3.6.4 Perceptions of music education and African musical arts education pedagogies**

Up to this point, this synthesis has focused on the history of education and music education in South Africa, including the various government curricula since 1994. I would like to delve deeper into the themes of music education and African musical arts education pedagogies and the associated themes of Western music and Indigenous African music and knowledge. Many factors make up music education. In each of these five articles, one or more of these aspects is covered.

Nompula (2011) focuses on the strengths of Indigenous music teaching and learning, how these skills are transmitted, and how this can be used to strengthen an approach to music teaching. Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) focuses on children’s play and innate musicality and musical abilities. Pooley (2016)

focuses on a case study of music-making in a rural area of KwaZulu-Natal which includes formal and informal spaces of music learning. Human and Van Niekerk (2014) focus on the assessment of practical music, how African musical arts assessment can fit into or be comparable to already existing Western art music assessment systems. The articles by Harrop- Allin (2014, 2017) and Human and Van Niekerk (2014) look forward to including African musical arts in mainstream education, and how it is even possible to do this in an authentic and sustainable manner.

One of the most important aspects of Indigenous African musical arts proffered by Nompula (2011), who draws on Ofei (1974), is that in African music there are songs about all aspects of life: people, historical events, culture and tradition, the environment, and so on. Music is not only for entertainment but plays a central part in life and culture. Ofei (1974) maintains that music can and should form a central part of an integrated curriculum. Human and Van Niekerk (2014) similarly speak about *ngoma* and *ngoma-ness*. They say that *ngoma* is a common term in many languages in Africa and refers to an ‘affirmation of the propagated idea of holism’ (p. 23). This description of the African-ness/*ngoma-ness* of African musical arts can be used ‘to illustrate the contemporary educational concept contextualised in *ngoma*’ (Human & Van Niekerk 2014, p. 23). Human and Van Niekerk go on to make a distinction between a Western approach to music education and an African approach. The Western approach is reductionist and favours ‘formal, analytical, theory-based and individualistic learning processes’ (2014, p. 22), whereas the African approach embraces a more holistic, non-formal learning process, integrating ‘active, performance- based musical experiences’ (2014, p. 22). What Human and Van Niekerk term ‘a cultural dialogue’ (2014, p. 22) is what facilitates communication between these two cultural approaches to music education in order to make meaning and negotiate the boundaries of assessment.

Part of Pooley’s (2016) research involves a case study at Ingwavuma in rural KwaZulu-Natal. His experience whilst conducting this research represents the duality of formal and informal learning taking place.

At Ingwavuma the indigenous musical practices range from *ingoma* dance to *indlamu*, *amahubo*, *amakhwaya*, Afro-gospel and isicathamiya, amongst several others. *Ingoma* (danced by girls) and *indlamu* (danced by boys) are arguably the least syncretic of these dances, and are often the highlight of music competitions and festivals. The terms *ingoma* and *indlamu* are inclusive of a wide range of dance styles, with their associated rhythms and songs (Pooley 2016, p. 646).

All this expression of African musical arts occurs outside of formal school contexts and integrating this into a school curriculum as music and/or dance is a challenge. Pooley (2016) explains that Indigenous musical arts do not fit into these separated art forms because...

...movement is intrinsic to the practice of Indigenous song. Dancers are singers and circuits to the musical pulse, moving in relation to and against the beat, and creating rhythm with their bodies through clapping, stamping, striking and gesticulating. The aestheticisation of Indigenous music and dance through the imposition of 'universal' concepts and literacies, or its shift to the autonomous sphere of 'theory', results in a conceptual dissonance the music curriculum has yet to resolve. For as long as these tensions remain unresolved, the practice of musical arts inside and outside of schools will struggle to take root because it does not speak to and for the cultures it performs (2016, p. 646).

The result of this is that, of the nine schools Pooley (2016) visited, none taught music literacy. Human and Van Niekerk (2014) concur, with their description of *ngoma*, that African music and dance cannot exist separately for a practice 'where subject and object, mind and body, self and the world, become one' (2014, p. 25). This is the depth of interrelatedness and holism required in African musical arts education. They pose the question of how this past wisdom can be connected to modern ways of expression, and how this can be shared with the world. Pooley (2016) also discusses how Indigenous musical literacy is so distinct to Western art music: 'These musics need to be understood and validated on their own terms, independently, comparatively and coextensively with Western theories of music and music literacy' (p. 651).

Part of Nompula's (2011) concern is that so much traditional music and many Indigenous African children's songs are being lost. The purpose of her research is to ascertain whether there is any development of notable 'cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills of learners when taught African Indigenous music' (2011, p. 370), as opposed to Western music. Another aim of the research was to 'assist educators with meaningful pedagogical approaches and alternative methodologies to enhance an inclusive learning and cultural experience in music pedagogy' (2011, p. 370). As a component of her research, Nompula (2011) sets out a detailed explanation of the process and value of African Indigenous music education. An integral part of African Indigenous music is improvisation, either instrumental or vocal. There are pre-composed songs or songs passed down, but during performance 'improvisation happens spontaneously' (Nompula, 2011, p. 372). This improvisation usually occurs with the leader, who is inevitably a strong singer. 'A leader should have an ability to improvise, that is, spontaneously create a tune to fit the words during performance. He

or she should not be shy and must be able to inspire both performers and the audience' (Nompula, 2011, p. 372). Nompula (2011) extends these discussions of performance practices to educational opportunities and strengths. For instance, the participation of children is encouraged in performances, which develop the confidence, self-esteem, and creative skills through the improvisatory processes. 'Through the process of improvisation, imagery, aural acuity, memory and cognitive skills are improved.... The voiceless are provided an opportunity to express their originality' (Nompula, 2011, p. 372). Such participation is not only about taking part of and enjoying an existing musical product but also about being part of the music-making process.

Nompula cites Nketia (1974), asserting that most sub-Saharan African countries traditionally emphasise singing, which, being linguistic, is a form of communication. Nompula adds another observation regarding the prevalence of singing, noting that, 'as many African languages are 'tone languages' in which pitch level determines meaning, the melodies and texts rhythms of songs generally follow the intonation contour and rhythms of the song' (2011, p. 372). Participating in traditional singing offers many educational and social learning opportunities, according to Nompula (2011), such as developing language and vocabulary; learning the names of and facts about traditional rituals or historical events; learning phrases and idioms; and learning good manners and behaviour. 'Indigenous music is an oral tradition that aims to transmit culture, values, beliefs and history from generation to generation' (Nompula, 2011, p. 372). Being an oral tradition does not make this music inferior to written musical traditions, just different. Learning through an oral tradition means that children listen to learn, improving their memory skills and internalising the forms, rhythms, and melodies.

When it comes to learning music, Nompula (2011) compares how a group of isiXhosa-speaking learners learned Xhosa music compared to how another group fared learning European music. Pooley (2016) undertook a case study in rural KwaZulu-Natal, where he found most music learning and musical activity taking place informally, outside the school system, but very actively. Harrop- Allin (2014, 2017) observed children's games in the playground and their innate ability to learn through their own agency. Each of these is viewing the learning of music from a different angle, depending on the context of the study. I discuss the themes of informal music-making, as well as children's playground games and agency in the next sections.

One of the complexities Nompula (2011) discovered in the way children start to learn songs at school is that these songs are European folk-songs and tunes with the words translated into isiXhosa. These are seen as ‘African’ songs but are confusing for the learners, because of the ‘incorrect language and musical accentuation resulting from the translation’ (2011, p. 377). This confusion results in various disadvantages for the learners, such as confusion, lack of self-esteem, a disconnect from their daily experiences and cultural values, and a lack of confidence. When the learners learned the traditional songs, including improvisation, they learned the songs faster; the songs made more sense culturally and linguistically; the songs spoke to their lived experiences or to those of their community. At first the improvising was a challenge, but it also exciting; the improvising improved over a few lessons which helped the learners develop a ‘greater vocabulary of rhythmic and melodic patterns [which in turn] leads to creative expression’ (2011, p. 377). Nompula states that, ‘as the development of creativity is an important objective of music education, the use of Indigenous music would seem to be an effective way of fostering creative expression’ (2011, p. 377). The rhythms of the isiXhosa songs were more complicated and took longer to learn, but the movement and dance elements were exciting.

### **3.6.5 Perceptions of informal music-making**

Pooley (2016) found a situation in KwaZulu-Natal which has been partially described earlier in this discussion. With none of the schools that Pooley visited offering music, very few of the children are engaged in any musical activities. The ones that are involved in music do so in clubs and societies outside of school. He asserts that ‘at Ingwavuma this reflects a shortage of skills rather than enthusiasm. Music and dance are popular “extracurricular” activities performed in the build-up to Heritage Month (September)’ (2016, p. 647). From July until September is competition season and the learners practice, perform in shows, and compete in the competitions. Pooley (2016) describes the competitions as being made up of choirs and dance troupes. The choirs and dance troupes prepared prescribed, as well as original songs that include all the Indigenous items discussed earlier in Chapter 3.4.4. There was modern disco dancing and *izibongo* (praise poems). These intense competitions were supported by the Department of Arts and Culture.

Their vibrancy should continue to be supported and celebrated because it marks an exceptional display of skill and flair in Indigenous idioms that should lead to further education and training at the tertiary level, and should feed into the cultural industries thereafter.... The reinvigoration of African creative arts is only possible if the

logistical and epistemological challenges of forging an inclusive, holistic and pragmatic curriculum can be achieved. This means addressing the problem of ‘music literacy’ in the African context, rather than returning to a concept of literacy based on Western notations (Pooley 2016, p. 647).

Significant in Pooley’s (2016) experience at Ingwavuma was how committed some teachers and community members were to training, conducting, and instructing for these competitions. He shares the story of Sibusiso Khumalo who coached an *indlamu* team in 2011 when they won in the province. Khumalo was unemployed at the time, and walked for kilometres to train the learners, who practised for hours. The dance troupe gained local recognition and when they won the provincial championship, the school also took great pride and received a cash prize. ‘This shows how there are both material and symbolic interests at stake in the performance of musical arts in schools.... Individuals find meaning and fulfilment in practising these arts. The musical arts promote *health*’ (Pooley 2016, p. 648).

The socio-economic conditions at Ingwavuma dominate the experience of the learners, schools, and wider community. Pooley (2016) describes it as a rural area where families rely heavily on subsistence farming, government social grants, and informal employment. Parents often work away from home as migrant workers, leaving their school-going children with grandparents or other family members. Schools are non-fee paying, relying solely on the government for resources and support. There is no transport, and children often walk many kilometres to school. Classes are large and teachers are overwhelmed amidst consistent teacher shortages. The children’s guardians are not in an academic position to assist them with schoolwork. With all these socio-economic challenges to contend with, creative arts policy reform is not even on the radar in an area like this.

### **3.6.6 Perceptions of children’s games and agency**

The enthusiasm and abilities expressed above at Pooley’s (2016) study site in relation to informal music-making point to learners, teachers, and community members acting and effecting change in their lives. Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) explains children’s agency and how this can be harnessed to further formal music education. Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) observes that the research on African children’s music is mostly located in rural settings, where musical games and children’s songs are interwoven with traditional culture, which has been the case in this meta-ethnography up to this point. Her two articles offer an insight into an urban setting for children’s games, a primary school

playground. She focuses on describing the games, linking the findings to a global context, and exploring how to bring them into a classroom setting as the basis for teaching and learning using a methodology of recruitment. Harrop-Allin outlines her research as follows, ‘this research offers insights into the musical content of African children’s games and songs and their moral, developmental function; it considers them ‘enculturative’ resources and a means of learning ‘the essential characteristics of their culture’’ (2014, p. 2).<sup>2</sup> Linking these studies to the questions of national curricula, Harrop-Allin (2014) draws on research undertaken by Nyota and Mapara (2008), who agree that Indigenous musical knowledge should be included into the curriculum. Harrop-Allin, however, points out that:

Research in this Africanist tradition tends to adopt a hermetic view of culture that may exclude culturally heterogeneous urban areas.... This research therefore emphasises the importance of investigating hybrid and syncretic forms characteristic of urban contexts as contributors to musical culture (2014, p. 2).

In her 2017 article, Harrop-Allin writes:

Allied to this is a propensity to adopt a hermetic view of culture, where children learn ‘the essential characteristics of the music of their culture’ (Campbell, 2006, p. 427) and ethnic groups are assumed to be distinct. Such studies may display a set of assumptions about the nature of cultures that limits the researcher’s interest in expressing what is contextually specific (2017, p. 28–29).

The second of these quotes speaks directly to my reason for doing this research, as explained in Chapter 1. The assumptions I carried about traditional African music education were the reasons I decided to embark on this study – to gain a more current view of academic perceptions of African musical arts education.

Harrop-Allin (2014) refers to Blacking’s book, *Venda Children’s Songs* (1967), as the first of its kind to analyse the autonomy of children’s music and link it to tradition. She maintains that Blacking’s structuralist approach remains an influence on how current researchers research children’s music. Since that time, especially internationally, diverse subject matter has been investigated by this genre of research, for example, folkloric and oral traditions, culturally specific ‘expressive practices’, and practices tied to identity, gender, communication, and society (Harrop-

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<sup>2</sup> Tan (2014) refers to enculturation as the acquisition of one’s own culture, including values, behaviours, customs and languages.

Allin, 2017).

In dealing with the abovementioned complexities about assumptions of childrens' musical worlds and experiences, an important aspect of Harrop-Allin's research is contextuality. Her research site was a primary school playground in Soweto, a populated urban centre in Johannesburg, South Africa. Harrop-Allin (2017) states that even though the games in this study are very much located in an urban context in South Africa, reference is made to shared, global elements. In both articles, Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) uses a multimodal framework 'which concerns the representational, communicative and meaning-making potentials of different modes of communication such as speech, writing, image, gesture and sound' (2014, p. 2). Harrop-Allin (2014) outlines the reasons for doing so:

1. A multimodal framework foregrounds the intricacies of the varied references to different cultures (interculturalism), referring to current media material, and drawing on the many modes of representation within township communication and style. These diverse elements constitute the everyday influences the children are exposed to and therefore make up part of their diverse musical games.
2. Music is sonic in nature, but in the games studied many modes are melded, including speech, movement, and gesture. 'Children's musical games are seen as an embodiment of multimodality and South African children's games are particularly compelling in this regard' (Harrop-Allin, 2014, p. 3).
3. The ways in which the children use these different modes for making meaning and music in their games can be described through multimodality.

A multimodal approach allows the researcher to identify various skills and capacities: 'to show both *how* children are musical and in what way this musicality is demonstrated' (Harrop-Allin, 2014, p. 3). As Harrop-Allin (2017) states, musical games are multimodality in action. This is music education research informed by learners' contexts, backgrounds, and interests, with this ultimate aim of creating 'a closer alignment between children's playground musicking, curricula and teaching practice' (Harrop-Allin, 2014, pp. 1–2). An important aspect of this contextual, multimodal viewpoint is that of children's agency. As Harrop-Allin points out, 'children's choices speak to their contexts' (2017, p. 32). These games hark back to past practices but are consistently created and re-created as the children interact in a contemporary context. An example of this is described in relation

to the game Barbie Girl medley, which shows how the children incorporate influences from various sources in their games. These sources include text and musical material from the pop song 'Barbie Girl', kwaito dance moves, and extracts from the movie, *Sarafina!* – all of which is flavoured with local references and communication, 'in the form of gestures and slang to produce a set of intertextual references' (Harrop-Allin 2014, p. 13). Harrop-Allin (2014, p. 13) draws on Marsh (2001), and explains that 'the interrelationship between the media and playground game performance practices involves the creative use by children of textual, musical and movement material derived from the media'. This emphasises a creative process beyond merely imitating other influences. The children choose what they want to include and change it according to what interests them.

Through these games, the children make sense of the world around them, and this makes the games relevant to them. Another example from Harrop-Allin (2014) demonstrates that some of the boys' games offer an opportunity to try out different forms of status. In *Bang' thengel' isipelete*, 'dance steps, postures, words and gestures signify a male township identity that confers status and power. The allusions to pantsulas or tsotsis in boys' musical games demonstrate younger boys' identification with older boys or gangsters' (2014, p. 13). Harrop-Allin (2014) says the traditional elements in these games include music that has been transmitted orally, musical structures, such as call and response; cyclical structures; and circle dance formations. In her 2017 article, Harrop-Allin describes the complexity of the games that are made up of all these elements. They are characterised by, among other, fast movements; complicated cross-rhythms; onomatopoeic words; jumping back and forth and turning around; lots of variations on clapping rhythms, cross clapping, and gestures that replace claps—all the while invoking cultural and phonetic nuances. Harrop-Allin reflects that 'it is striking to see (and hear) how children show musical and kinesthetic skills concurrently. While there may be a dominance of, for example, word–sound association, there is usually a complex use of language, movement, and rhythm operating simultaneously in one game' (2017, p. 40).

As alluded to above, children's agency is an imperative component of these games, which is a universal trait. In her 2017 article, Harrop-Allin explicates her findings on children's co-operative musicality and agency. Children will create opportunities for musical play with whatever they have available between them. Harrop-Allin (2017) draws on Marsh and Young (2006) who describe musical games as generative practices, with necessary addition, adaptation, and improvisation, which brings children's resourcefulness to the fore. 'From a multimodal perspective, resourcefulness is the

ability to recognize and capitalise on the affordances of different modes' (Harrop-Allin, 2017, p. 41). This means recognising the potential and possibilities of an action within a particular context or environment and transforming that potential into action. Harrop- Allin (2017) states that children have the capacity to design and shape actions rather than only acquiring actions from others. 'Designing with sound rather than learning a musical orthodoxy or literacy relates to music-making as an active process of shaping and transforming musical materials for specific purposes' (p. 41).

### **3.6.7 Perceptions of moving forward: into the classroom and through assessment**

How does the above discussion on children's agency, and multimodality in musical games as a whole, link to educational pedagogy? Harrop-Allin (2017) answers this question by positing that 'the sense of personal agency exemplified in children's control of resources and design capacity in their musical play can be capitalised on in music education' (p. 41). This is where Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) brings in the methodology of recruitment. She draws on Jewitt (2008, p. 247) in using the term 'modal affordance', saying that:

Awareness of 'modal affordances' is the ability to recognise the unique expressive, representational and communicative possibilities offered by different modes.... Skills such as recognising and capitalising on 'modal affordances' can be developed in the classroom through 'recruitment'. (2014, p. 15)

Recruitment is a component of a multiliteracies pedagogy. Harrop-Allin (2014) breaks down her thoughts on the components of multiliteracies pedagogy as follows:

1. Accessing children's interests and repertoires
2. Deciding how to incorporate these practices into the classroom
3. Four components (which also make up methodology of recruitment): situate practice, overt instruction, critical reflection, and transformed practice
4. 'This approach provides a way for teachers to build on learners' situated practices, which are the resources that learners bring to the teaching and learning context' (p. 16).

Harrop-Allin (2017) states that there is a definite lack of a teaching methodology that connects formal to informal learning in music. In her 2017 article, she took her 2014 research on playground games further and trialled teaching with the multiliteracies lens for four months in the school where she

conducted her initial research. Harrop-Allin (2017) reflects that:

The research confirmed how the multiliteracies pedagogy provides a way of accessing and utilising children's musical practices and abilities to create new learning in new artistic or musical contexts. It is thus pedagogy for transformation rather than reiteration.... Applying this pedagogy in Soweto schools demonstrated the potential for music education to become a more creative process built on children's agency. (p. 43)

Of course, learning and the generation of new knowledge does not occur simply because playground games are brought into the classroom. Harrop-Allin (2017) provides a useful breakdown of the concept of methodology of recruitment, as part of the multiliteracies pedagogy, by describing the practical steps involved. There are four processes for teaching and learning: – start with situated practices (i.e. the children's games); with the teacher adding knowledge to this intrinsic understanding through overt instruction; and the teacher then providing a space for critical reflection; to ultimately produce transformed practice. This involves 'the application of prior and new skills and knowledge to new creative contexts' (2017, p. 43), that is, the teacher extending the children's existing capacities by adding new skills through teaching new knowledge and ideas and making the process more overt. This approach moves learners, their backgrounds and heritages, as well as their contexts to the centre of learning.

Applying multimodality theory to children's musicking can create an expanded view of musicality that is more than learning musical skills to include being resourceful in relation to musical design. By viewing children as musically agentive, we may begin to focus on how to harness their multimodal capacities in music education more broadly to develop the creative inventiveness children display in their musical play. (Harrop-Allin, 2017, p. 44)

Human and Van Niekerk (2014) begin their article on assessment frameworks discussing cross-culturalism and diversity in contemporary classrooms. Due to globalisation, across the world teachers no longer have just one culture in their classroom. In South Africa multicultural classes are the norm, and in this context, teachers need to understand how to develop a cross-cultural space of learning, teaching, and assessment. This applies to both formal and informal education contexts and to bringing them together. Human and Van Niekerk express the need for:

an internationally recognised and generic structured assessment framework and/or generic developed evaluation system to be available for African musical arts in music education, which may serve as a general guideline for the development of crosscultural assessment standards applicable to Western, Eastern and African music education in a re-contextualised setting (2014, p. 22).

They are concerned with having a generic framework which shows that African musical arts education (Indigenous music) ‘is compatible with music representing formal music education, for example, Western music education’ (Human & Van Niekerk 2014, p. 22). The framework comprises, first, standards describing and accommodating ‘contents, knowledge and outcomes for an accomplished Indigenous oral-based African musical arts practitioner and teacher’ (2014, p. 22). Second, it is made up of the design of the individual organisations’, in order to address the aims of a particular curriculum framework. This includes describing the African-ness – or ‘*ngoma-*ness’, that is, holism, as described in many African languages (Human & Van Niekerk 2014, p. 23) – of African musical arts education; structuring music formally and systematically; being able to grade the music into different grades; and needing ‘to adhere to the generic aim of the curriculum framework, by constantly adapting the generic needs of the framework... to the requirements of, and standardisation in, contemporary music education’ (Human & Van Niekerk 2014, p. 23).

This brings to the fore the question of authenticity in the face of the globalised mixing of cultures, and terms such as cross-culturalism, diversity, and others. How is meaning-making in African musical arts affected by its entering global spheres also inhabited by other cultures, and pushing teaching and learning, as well as assessment, into new contexts? Re-contextualisation ‘includes not only rethinking what meanings might be, but also how meanings are assigned and interpreted. Re-contextualisation and meaning-making in music are inevitably linked’ (Human & Van Niekerk 2014, p. 23). Human and Van Niekerk explain authentic re-contextualisation as follows:

Authentic re-contextualisation (or authenticity within the re-contextualisation process) aims to create or recreate ‘within the style’ of the original music, aiming for a ‘pure’ and faithful imitation of the original musical setting, based on a deep knowledge of the original music culture. (2014, p. 24)

Human and Van Niekerk (2014) maintain that this endeavour is worth the effort. Recontextualised authenticity requires time, understanding, and a sense of equality and respect from both sides. They posit this re-contextualisation as a ‘solution for cross-cultural music education assessment’ (2014, p. 24).

One of the central questions Human and Van Niekerk (2014) are asking is how one can move forward, connecting past wisdom with modern ways of expression, while disseminating this in the world. They assert that a backward design is desirable when designing assessment-driven education, that is, working backward from the goal or desired outcome, which has implications for curriculum design and development. In their article, Human and Van Niekerk present their assessment framework in the form of a rubric which assesses three levels of proficiency: novice, proficient, and master. They apply certain standards to these three levels. 'Reflecting on the significance of standards as basis for developing a generic assessment framework, we found them non-contentious, neither philosophically bound nor methodologically constrained' (2014, p. 25). They maintain that the value of streamlining standards and applying them generically is partly that music educators accept working towards standards and that this would appeal to a wide array of such educators.

Standards work with defining and contextualising outcomes; they help to objectively measure such outcomes; they are autonomous; and they guide one towards best practice (Human and Van Niekerk, 2014). The following four standards are set out by Human and van Niekerk for their generic framework:

- Understand and conceptualise holism
- Understand, know and engage in communalism
- Understand and know inter-relatedness and inter-connections
- Understand, know, and engage in praxialism (2014, p. 26).

The example provided in Figure 4 (below) is a graphic representation of the framework, with different proficiency levels, benchmark expectations, and learning outcomes for each standard. The authors believe that this process-oriented approach to assessment enables assessment in formal and non-formal spaces of education, as well as aiding in standards and curriculum development (2014, p. 26).

STANDARD	LEARNING OUTCOME	LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT	HEADING	BENCHMARK
<b>STANDARD 2: UNDERSTAND, KNOW AND ENGAGE IN COMMUNALISM</b>				
<b>2.1 Display a communal, humanistic and democratic responsibility towards the community</b>				
<b>NOVICE</b>	<b>PROFICIENT</b>		<b>MASTER</b>	
<i>2.1.1 Repertoire and communal responsibility</i>				
Know and understand repertoire and its collective and humanistic accountability towards society. Display through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imitation</li> <li>• Self-instruction</li> <li>• Communal music-making.</li> </ul>	Know, understand and expand the repertoire and the self with regards to collective and humanistic accountability in society. Display through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal music-making</li> <li>• Exploration</li> <li>• Reflection</li> <li>• Development of repertoire.</li> </ul>		Act as a music repertoire referent for the culture with regards to its collective and humanistic accountability in society. Display through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective accountability</li> <li>• Responsible leadership.</li> </ul>	

**Figure 4:** An example of structuring of framework: Standard 2 (Human & Van Niekerk, 2014, p. 28).

### 3.7 Conclusion

The above synthesis presents itself as an inter-woven story, with each article contributing different points of view at differing times within the narrative. Nompula (2011) and Pooley (2016) focus large sections of their articles on colonial history (as the precursor to Western art music dominance within South African education) and the history of post-apartheid national school curricula. After dissecting the current, practical consequences of this history, and pointing out continued musical colonialism occurring via examination boards and unequal access to quality music education in schools, Pooley (2016) offers further insights into educational access. Nompula (2011) and Pooley (2016) feature most prevalently in the section on discussions of post-apartheid curricula. Nompula (2011) describes traditional African ways of music-making and how including children in this process is part of their musical education. The crux of her study is how important it is for children to learn traditional songs in their mother tongue. Pooley (2016) examines how active informal music-making was at his study

site, with deep commitment from all those involved (teachers, learners, and community members). Socio-economic and educational issues at a government departmental level stand in the way of these learners ever obtaining at school a music education that reflects the work and enthusiasm, and indeed, the musical success, that some of the learners display outside of school.

This personal and communal sense of agency is elaborated by Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) in her studies of playground games. Her two interrelated studies take the research out of a rural (Pooley, 2016) or more traditional music context (Nompula, 2011) and into an urban playground in Soweto. The children draw on their environment to create games that are a fusion of contemporary culture and music, melded with childhood games that are recognisable from the past. Many elements of musical learning happen in these games (for example singing, clapping, movement, and complex rhythms). Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) uses a multimodal framework to make meaning from her research. These playground games are multimodal by nature, so this approach makes sense. An essential aspect of this research is how to take the children's agency and musical arts expression into the classroom. Just replicating the games does not add knowledge or extend learning. In her 2014, article Harrop-Allin explains the methodology of recruitment. In her 2017 article, she provides feedback on implementing this methodology. The methodology of recruitment is a process of taking the learners' games into the classroom in order to effect learning. Four processes are described: situated learning (the games); overt instruction (knowledge added in a classroom environment); critical reflection (teacher and students reflect critically on the process); and transformed practice.

Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) provides one solution for taking what learners know, and placing this knowledge, along with the learners' backgrounds and context, in the centre of learning and expanding their knowledge. How can this be assessed? Human and Van Niekerk's (2014) contribution to this synthesis concerns assessment. They acknowledge that teaching and learning spaces are ever increasingly diverse and cross-cultural. This requires an 'internationally recognised and generic structured assessment framework and/or generic developed evaluation system to be available for African musical arts in music education' (2014, p. 22). They present a framework that attempts to solve issues of cross-cultural music assessment.

This synthesis comprises different perspectives all speaking to the crisis in Creative Arts teaching, specifically, the need for the consistent inclusion of relevant African musical arts education within the

Foundation and Intermediate Phases. Reading these articles several times, coding the information, and weaving the stories together was an exercise in meta-ethnographic synthesis and led to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, as well as the perceptions thereof.

As a result of this process, one is able to view the data in a holistic and goal-oriented manner. The synthesis allows a scholar to identify gaps, focus areas, shared points of concern, and differing opinions in a succinct and rigorous fashion. I discuss these issues in Chapter 5 when I make recommendations for further research.

In the next chapter, I analyse my own use of the meta-ethnographic approach to highlight its uses for future projects.

## **CHAPTER 4: REFLECTIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF META-ETHNOGRAPHY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The first concern of this study is to explore perceptions of African musical arts education in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases in the South African academy since 2011. This was presented in Chapter 3. The second research question, which pertains to this chapter, is: What is the merit of meta-ethnography, as a means of knowledge synthesis, in synthesising qualitative studies relating to African musical arts education? In this chapter, I reflect on the process of conducting a meta-ethnography as it pertained to my study. As this is a chapter for reflecting on this methodology, I consider further developments I could make in a larger study. I also reflect on meta-ethnography as more than a methodology, as posited by Doyle (2003). I conclude the chapter by reflecting on meta-ethnography thirty years on.

### **4.2 Reflections on my experience of meta-ethnography**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I came across meta-ethnography as a qualitative synthesis tool after completing an Introduction to Knowledge Syntheses short course. Reading about the concept of a meta-ethnography and finding Noblit and Hare's 1988 text in the university library was affirming, though on first reading the process was daunting. I started by trying to make sense of the original 1988 text. This was presented as a short handbook and was reasonably philosophical and abstract, though Noblit and Hare did provide ethnographic examples. The worked examples I refer to in Chapter 2 provided me with practical understanding of each phase and how researchers had approached them. Meta-ethnography is a complex process. In order to implement the approach, one requires a deep understanding of its intensity, as it is very refined and specific. I spent a few months making sense of the intricacies of the methodology because I did not want to launch into it without confidence. I knew that I needed that kind of rigour to produce results.

In the next sections, I reflect on each phase of the meta-ethnographic process individually, after which I review the process holistically.

### **4.2.1 Phase 1: Finding and refining a topic**

This phase is referred to as ‘getting started’ in Chapter 2. A broad topic had already been formed with my first, pre-COVID, study topic. I knew that I wanted to focus on African musical arts education in the foundation and intermediate phases in South Africa due to my personal connection with music education and my understanding of its value. As explained in Chapter 2, I realised that my own perceptions of African music and, indeed, African musical arts education were outdated and uninformed, which led me to the topic of exploring perceptions within the academic fraternity. As explained in Chapter 1.4 perceptions comprise regard, understanding, and interpretation. I chose to explore this in a South African context because music curricula vary in different countries, so cannot be referred to in the same study. The next phase describes setting the literature search parameters. The setting of parameters, as discussed in the next section, were very important to defining the topic, and vice versa. I needed to keep coming back to the topic to align it with the approach.

### **4.2.2 Phase 2: Defining parameters and searching for articles**

Phase two, deciding what is relevant to the initial interest, involves setting realistic parameters to speak to the topic decided on in Phase one. Initially, I had wanted to explore literature from 1994 (the beginning of South African democracy, and the inception of the first post-apartheid national curriculum). This long timeframe, however, produced too many results. As a lone researcher undertaking a master’s level study, the amount of data was unworkable. I also bore in mind what was quoted from Kottke-Stich (2008) in Chapter 2 – that less is more when attempting a quality synthesis. After reflection, I adjusted that particular search parameter to 2011, the beginning of the current national curriculum, CAPS, which yielded a more manageable number of results. This taught me that every parameter in such a study is there for a purpose, requires reflection, and can be changed at this stage. Other parameters I put into place were that the research articles were to be based in South Africa and written in English or Afrikaans; that these articles had been peer-reviewed; that they needed to concern school education (particularly the foundation and intermediate phases); and had to include African musical arts education. The five articles I found all relate to different aspects of the topic at hand. Three of the articles (Nompula, 2011; Harrop- Allin, 2014, 2017) located their research specifically in the Foundation and Intermediate school phases. The other two articles (Pooley 2016; Human & Van Niekerk 2014) do not specify a specific phase though their research pertains to all phases, including the two defined in the search. It was interesting to find two articles by one researcher, Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017). These articles are similar in that they spoke to different

aspects and phases of Harrop-Allin's research.

In order to speak to my parameters, a certain material was not included, for example, Senior or Tertiary Phase material, international studies, and theses. Senior and Tertiary Phase material was excluded because my research question concerns the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, and each educational phase has a different approach to music within Creative Arts in the CAPS curriculum. I excluded international studies as I particularly wanted to highlight South African researchers' voices researching South African education. Added to this, all countries have different curricula. I decided not to include theses because, although they could offer a rich source of data, there was too much information to synthesise, meaning that they were out of the scope of my requirements for a master's thesis. Part of this phase involved a very thorough search across various databases using appropriate keywords, which remained constant with every new search. I have detailed this process in Chapter 3. I am a qualified librarian, and even with my training, I found this process a daunting and painstaking endeavour. This was because I did not want to overlook any relevant material and felt added, self-inflicted pressure not to make any mistakes. This thorough process, however, assisted with the collecting of material for the literature review; that is, the development of thorough parameters helps a researcher to understand what needs to be included, but also how to use what has been excluded from the articles used for the meta- ethnography.

#### **4.2.3 Phase 3: Reading and summarising the studies**

I read each study and prepared a thorough summary of them in which I retained many direct quotations. I did this because it is important to retain the voice of the author. In Chapter 2, I point out that Noblit and Hare (1988) give the researcher the option retaining an authentic voice or generating a new language for the synthesis. I chose the former approach, and the researchers' words and voices changed minimally through to the synthesis. This is a decision that is important to implement from this phase, as the quotations are carried through to the synthesis. This also gave me a deeper understanding of the content in later phases, as I could use my summaries effectively and did not have to keep referring back to the original articles. The first reading was undertaken to obtain an overview of the articles. From there on, I undertook close reading of each article multiple times in order to generate a thorough summary.

#### **4.2.4 Phase 4: Determining how the studies are related**

Following on from the deep reading of the studies, I established themes for each. These themes were based on the intense reading and summaries I had made in the previous iteration. The quality of the initial reading and the summaries affect how this fourth phase pans out. Throughout the first phase, I did second guess myself about whether my understanding of each article was sufficient. I felt very nervous when I sent the summaries to the various authors. The authors of three of the articles replied with short comments, but nothing that changed my further reading or summaries. In hindsight, I should have sent the authors not the summaries but rather the synthesis to read. This would have given them a better understanding of what I was attempting to do. I would suggest that, in future, the synthesis is sent to the authors, giving them more time to read and respond. Although I gave them more than a month, in academia this is very little time.

In order to establish themes, I colour-coded each subject to develop 26 themes across the five articles. Colour-coding proved useful as a means of tracking the themes within and between the articles from this point to the point of synthesis. I dealt with each article separately, reading and assigning colours; I recognised themes that were similar across the studies and assigned consistent colouring to similar themes. As a result of assigning colours and themes, I could start seeing relationships and emerging patterns between the articles.

#### **4.2.5 Phase 5: Translating the studies into one another**

This phase moves on from the previous quite effortlessly because of the recognition of themes across the articles. I reviewed the existing 26 themes and aligned similar ones to fuse them into 10, and later seven, overarching themes. I retained the colours of the original themes but placed them under the title of the overarching theme. Retaining the original colour was useful as I had a large number of summarised pages, and being able to make sense of them by colour and to compile material from the articles according to theme provided a visual representation which aided my starting to weave the studies together logically. This is the phase where one can begin to make inferences about the relationships between the articles. As I have noted, I could already see a divide between the five studies, with two being more historically located and three looking towards future solutions.

This is also the phase where using grounded theory aids in the analysis and integration of findings from multiple qualitative studies on a specific topic. As explained in Chapter 2, the goal of using

grounded theory in meta-ethnography is to develop a comprehensive and coherent understanding of the phenomenon being studied, based on the collective evidence from the individual studies – which, in this case, was a matter of identifying themes across the studies. What I experienced in this process is that meta-ethnography and grounded theory work hand in hand, encompassing similar ways of working with data. With reference to Table 1 in Chapter 2, there are various schools of thought regarding how to apply the principles of grounded theory to data collection and analysis. It is worth taking time here to align my study with one of the three schools presented in Table 1 and to elaborate on this relationship.

#### ***4.2.5.1 Grounded theory***

In this section, I speak to aspects of Table 1 (Chapter 2) that apply to my handling of the data in this study. In Table 1, the first concern is how to deal with the literature review. The literature review presented in Chapter 1 was undertaken throughout the research process. Much of the collection of literature occurred naturally in the course of doing the broad, yet specific, literature searches for articles that fit within my parameters in order to answer my research questions. Early on in the study, I compiled an annotated bibliography as preparation for the literature review. The writing up of the literature review was only completed towards the end of the study. I decided on this because, having compiled the annotated bibliography, I had an idea of the literature and perspectives outside my study parameters. Engaging too deeply with the other literature would have interfered with my engagement in weaving the five studies together. In summary, I undertook half of the literature review process before the coding and translation phases and half thereafter.

Moving on to coding: the Straussian school of thought (Table 1, Chapter 2) is described as pragmatist and relativist, meaning that it is rooted in historical and social contexts. This approach of open, axial, and selective coding suited my study because, in meta-ethnography, this is how the information in the various studies is dealt with: identifying patterns and themes and then generating a theoretical lens through which to expound on the phenomenon under study. In traditional grounded theory, researchers collect data using various methods, such as interviews, observations, or document analysis (Charmaz, 2014). This is worth mentioning here because, with those data collection methods, data saturation (the point at which a researcher no longer finds new themes or patterns or connections) is reached by collecting more data sets, for example, conducting more interviews. In the case of meta-ethnography, the studies are finite data sets and data saturation occurred after

reading, re-reading, assigning themes, grouping these within overarching themes, and further refining these groupings within the synthesis.

Adding the aspect of grounded theory to this study was a result of following Noblit and Hare's meta-ethnographic methodology from their 1988 text. Although the ultimate aim of grounded theory is to generate theory grounded in the data from a study, a meta-ethnography itself does not need to generate theory. This study synthesises the findings of five articles, highlighting the authors' perceptions of African musical arts education and the lens through which each author views the complexities surrounding African musical arts education. It identifies key themes such as historical and current issues of inequality and access; traditional modes of education; harnessing children's agency; and assessment within formal education systems. This process of synthesising data, identifying themes, and generating theoretical insights is a key aspect of grounded-theory methodology.

#### **4.2.6 Phase 6: Synthesis**

The synthesis concerns how the various elements from the five articles create a narrative. It is this connection of events that is key to this research. Starting historically, examining socio-economic and educational consequences, and moving to how to proceed educationally, and from an assessment perspective, is the basic form of the narrative for this study. In Chapter 2. I elaborated on different approaches to synthesis, expanding on reciprocal, refutational, and line-of-argument syntheses. Here, I elaborate on my experience of conducting a reciprocal synthesis.

According to Noblit and Hare:

When ethnographies are roughly about similar things, the synthesis takes the form of reciprocal translations of each case into each of the other cases. That is to say, in an iterative fashion, each study is translated into the terms (metaphors) of the other and vice versa. (1988, p. 38)

This study involves a reciprocal synthesis. The process of weaving the articles together was intimidating because each added perception, as expressed through the lens of the author's particular experience and frame of reference, was unique and contextual. As the synthesis started coming together, a story emerged. Although each article presents a different angle, all are seeking a similar outcome: the deeper inclusion of African musical arts education in formal education.

Nompula (2011) perceives African musical arts education from a more traditional perspective, referring to the Indigenous teaching methods of learning through doing and being included. She also looks at traditional music as a mode of communication, storytelling, and cultural transfer. Pooley's (2016) perceptions come out of the lens of post-colonial socio-economic conditions and educational inequality as these pertain to a rural study site in KwaZulu-Natal. His study also speaks to the agency and determination of the community and musicians from that area who, against many odds, sustain a thriving musical culture. Harrop-Allin's articles (2014, 2017) perceive the possibilities of working with children, in a dense urban setting, with music practices that are contextual and agentic. This agency is taken into the classroom, where she researches how to create new learning based on the learners' experiences. Human and Van Niekerk (2014) perceive that there is no including African musical arts education into formal educational settings without a rigorous assessment framework that can span genres within the multicultural world we live in. The flow of writing the synthesis was like a discussion, but constructing the narrative highlighted the similarities and differences between the articles.

Reflecting on the meta-ethnographic process is interesting because there are ways of applying this rigorous process to larger projects. It could be adapted to form an important part of someone's literature review, such as using a mini meta-ethnographic process to assess the gaps in research data.

#### **4.2.7 Phase 7: Expressing the synthesis**

The final phase of a meta-ethnographic study is expressing the synthesis. In Chapter 2, I discuss how these studies are often written for an academic audience. Noblit and Hare (1988) suggest various creative ways of sharing a meta-ethnographic synthesis, such as using videos or plays or art. This synthesis has been explored and written for academic purposes and is expressed as such. Following on from sending the original researchers the coded sections of their articles, I would like to send the final product to the authors to further share how their work has been interpreted within this project, in order to share how I have incorporated their research into this process and to obtain their feedback on how their work was interpreted.

### **4.3 Possibilities of meta-ethnography beyond research methodology**

One of the authors I refer to in Chapter 1, Lynn Doyle, concludes her paper by referring to

representation in qualitative research and how meta-ethnography could ‘also be a process for rethinking and expanding democratic practices into research where there is a presumed supremacy of researchers over those whom they research’ (2003, p. 338). This is worth expounding here as part of this meta-ethnographic reflection. The section that follows is based on Doyle (2003, p. 339– 341), and the headings are from the text of her article.

#### **4.3.1 Meta-ethnography offers the possibility to empower**

Meta-ethnography has the potential to push the boundaries of qualitative synthesis from a research methodology to ‘one that furthers the cause of democratic principles because it offers new conceptualizations of how knowledge as power may be transgressed’ (Doyle, 2003, p. 339). Voices in individual case studies can be lost, no matter how valuable those voices may be, in the sea of research and in the limited confines of traditional research practices. As new understanding and concepts may be hidden in these voices, meta-ethnography encourages a critical examination of the limitations of specific perspectives and the exploration of new ways of thinking and acting in order to expand understanding for both practitioners and researchers.

#### **4.3.2 Meta-ethnography empowers by amplifying voices**

A meta-ethnography synthesises many voices, seeks new interpretations, and thereby adds to the intensity of each voice. Lincoln and Denzin (2000) mention using multiple voices as one way to encompass the Other, which speaks to the very objective of meta-ethnography. By focusing on the voices of the research participants in their academic descriptions and translations, meta- ethnographic researchers augment the voices of these participants.

#### **4.3.3 Meta-ethnography empowers by facilitating praxis**

Effective implementation of social policy for students requires a thorough understanding of the diverse needs of all students. Programme evaluation is a commonly used method for informing decision-making; however, qualitative findings are often overlooked or disregarded. To achieve praxis, decision-makers must give equal weight to both quantitative and qualitative evaluation results. Qualitative programme evaluations can be powerful tools for informing social policy decisions, but they must include key elements such as resource requirements, organisational readiness, and potential political implications. Meta-ethnography is a valuable approach in this case,

as it not only incorporates all of these elements but also presents them in a format that is easily understood by policymakers. Additionally, Doyle points out that meta-ethnography emphasises the inclusion of marginalised perspectives, ensuring that the voices and experiences of those individuals are given visibility and weight in policy decisions that affect them and their families.

#### **4.3.4 Meta-ethnography offers the possibility of weakening hierarchical roles**

Due to the nature of meta-ethnography as it is used in translating studies and weaving them together – taking particular care with individual voices and expressions – meta-ethnographic researchers strive to break down the inequities in the relationship between translator and speakers. For example, when meta-ethnographers choose to preserve the original expression of language in their analysis, they demonstrate a commitment to allowing the voices of the original study participants to be heard, rather than imposing their own interpretations or translations. This approach highlights the importance of respecting the perspectives of the individuals being studied, rather than asserting the researcher’s own authority or dominance.

#### **4.3.5 Meta-ethnography offers the possibility of extending borders**

Doyle writes that, ‘by reconceptualizing and synthesizing case studies, meta-ethnography compels us to acknowledge the importance of not only the uniqueness of individual cases, but also the uniqueness of collectives’ (2003, p. 340). Traditionally, synthesis is thought to be confined to the specific context of individual case studies. In contrast, meta-ethnography, as a method of analysis and synthesis, expands the boundaries of these contexts. Conventional approaches to individual case studies can restrict possibilities for understanding, both in practice and across a wider context, while meta-ethnography, when enhanced, has the potential to empower and broaden the scope of understanding across disciplines. Meta-ethnography extends borders by communicating across groups, disciplines, and backgrounds. Doyle draws on Eisenhart’s (1998) analogy of synthesis as a stone wall:

Meta-ethnography does not build walls brick by brick or dismiss stones from the wall because they appear not to fit. Instead, meta-ethnography has us re-conceptualize uniqueness from multiple disciplines and helps us build new walls that might not even look like our current image of a wall (2003, p. 340).

Meta-ethnography is a research technique that challenges the traditional concept of synthesis by

offering a new approach for the collective examination of ethnographies and case studies. By rethinking and expanding upon the original method described by Noblit and Hare (1988), meta-ethnography becomes a methodology with significant potential for both the researcher and the participants in the research process. Enhanced meta-ethnography requires researchers not only to analyse the outcome of their research, but the process itself too. This approach has the potential to make the research process more inclusive and democratic.

#### **4.4 Meta-ethnography thirty years on**

My study is primarily based on Noblit and Hare's 1988 text, augmented by the worked examples detailed in Chapter 2. This aim of this focused approach was to make sense of the core methodology and the phases that comprise it and to base my study on that. This aspect of the reflection involves understanding the development of meta-ethnography since 1988, and exploring broader possibilities for such a qualitative synthesis methodology than what has been presented in this study.

Noblit (2019) notes that although meta-ethnography originated in the field of education, most use of this methodology has been made in the health sciences. I have come across this myself: most of the articles I found and read were from health science disciplines, such as nursing. In his 2019 article, Noblit tracks the development of meta-ethnography as an interpretive approach from the time it was introduced to the world in 1988. The aim was to 'consider whole studies in relation to other whole studies and to not focus on data, but on the interpretations made by the authors... and how these interpretations were related to one another' (2019, p. 2). This results in another interpretation, involving the primary studies, as well as documenting how they relate to others. Initially, this approach was designed for ethnographies, but this ultimately gave way to successfully applying meta-ethnography to many other qualitative approaches as well.

In his 2019 article, Noblit mentions the delayed growth of meta-ethnography in education alluded to above. In their 2017 article, Uny, France and Noblit, compare the differing developments of meta-ethnography in health sciences and education. As mine is an educational study, here, I elaborate on the development of this methodology in education rather than health sciences. Uny et al., 2017, p. 250) attribute this delayed growth to three factors. First, in the late 1980s, when Noblit and Hare published their work, there was a burgeoning of qualitative research paradigms, especially in

education. Second, there was a politicisation of policy and practice in education, and often qualitative research was seen as contradicting the requirement that schools comply with educational reforms. Third, both Noblit and Hare returned to the research programmes they had previously been immersed in and did not structure any research programmes around meta- ethnography. Noblit (2019) indicates that Rice (2002) and Doyle (2003) produced the first educational meta-ethnographic syntheses since Noblit and Hare in 1988. What follows in this 2019 article is a literature review of sorts that describes the use of this methodology in educational studies. Notwithstanding the slow uptake of meta-ethnography in education, Urrieta (2018) holds that this methodology is ‘currently the most popular form of qualitative synthesis’ (p. 1).

Urrieta and Noblit edited a book in 2018, *Cultural Constructions of Identity: Meta-ethnography and Theory*. In the introductory chapter, Urrieta states that the ‘purpose of this book is to explore the effort to have qualitative and ethnographic studies speak to theory by way of meta- ethnography’ (p. 1), with the studies included therein speaking to the relationships between identity, identification theory, and meta-ethnographic synthesis. The book centres on the connection between meta-ethnography and theory, and on the impact of theory on meta- ethnographic syntheses. Urrieta (in Urrieta and Noblit, 2018) expresses a particular interest in how syntheses often concentrate on aggregated outcomes and practical applications rather on generating new theories. This concern harks back to my reflection on the use of grounded theory and theory generation earlier in this chapter.

In this brief exploration of how meta-ethnography has developed since 1988, there is evidence that, although the methodology has been taken up by health sciences more than by education, significant work is being done, and is waiting to be done, with regard to aligning meta-ethnography to larger concerns within education and the social sciences, such as those raised by Doyle (2003) in Chapter 4 of this study, and by Urrieta and Noblit (2018).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

A meta-ethnography is a substantial undertaking requiring a deep understanding of the methodology and how to apply the phases, to engage with the articles to be synthesised, and write up the synthesis. Writing this reflection chapter has been helpful for achieving a deeper understanding of my research

process, as it aligned with the process described in Noblit and Hare (1988). In order to gauge the success of this project, below, I briefly assess whether each phase has been a success.

Phase one was a success in that I identified a research topic that I am interested in and deemed worth subjecting to qualitative synthesis. Exploring this topic helped to shape my understanding and perceptions of African musical arts education and the complexities that surround it. Phase two was successful because the parameters I set produced a manageable number of good quality articles to work with, all of which pertain to various aspects of how African musical arts are perceived. Phase three was a success mostly because of my decision to retain the authors' voices and quote more than paraphrase in the summaries I wrote following deep reading. Phase four was where the methodological work started becoming more intense and difficult to allow me to deem it an outright success. Assigning themes is personal and depends on how the reader, in this case, myself, interprets the various articles. This concern resolved itself to a degree in the process of assigning overarching themes because they are more comprehensive and inclusive. The overarching themes also helped to show which themes occurred in which articles, leading into phase five – starting to translate the articles together. Thematic analysis using colours, then copying and pasting, provides a rich visual representation to work with. All this work is to weave a synthesis, as per phase six. One of the findings of the synthesis is the division between the two articles located more traditionally and historically and the other three, which look forward towards resolving classroom and assessment concerns. This means that the first part of the synthesis primarily comprises two articles, and the second part the other three.

I deem the synthesis a success because the articles spoke for themselves, and the story emerged from looking at them together. The issues relating to African musical arts education are multifaceted and complex. These complexities are located in discourses of the past, as well as in where these artistic expressions lie traditionally; they also exist in the present, because, as much as it is important to look back, it is equally if not more important to look forward to equitable and sustainable solutions. This is what is encompassed in the perceptions of African musical arts education in the five articles synthesised here.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 serves as the conclusion to this thesis. Here, I reflect on the methodology used and on the main findings. I conclude by referring back to my research question and goals in order to consider how they have been respectively answered and met, and I suggestions for further research. First, I remind the reader of the breakdown of chapters in the thesis, before elaborating on the methodology and main findings.

In Chapter 1, I began with a personal introduction before moving on to a socio-political educational context. I presented my research question and goals, the pertinent terminology, and an extensive literature review. Chapter 2 was dedicated to gaining an understanding of meta-ethnography and grounded theory and to working through the seven phases posited by Noblit and Hare in 1988. I selected five worked examples to enhance my practical understanding of the methodology. Chapter 3 speaks to my application of this methodology and presents the resultant synthesis. Chapter 4 presents a reflection of my experience of applying the meta-ethnographic process, as well as an in-depth reflection on the success of this undertaking.

### 5.2 Methodology

I decided on using meta-ethnography as a tool to synthesise qualitative and mixed method data in order to better understand my research interest: perceptions of African musical arts education in Foundation and Intermediate Phases in South African government schools in the academy since 2011: an exploration through meta-ethnography. Meta-ethnography refers to Noblit and Hare's 1988 text, *Meta-Ethnography: Synthesizing Qualitative Studies*. The methodology offers a seven-phase approach to conducting qualitative synthesis. The seven phases comprise getting started; deciding what is relevant to the initial interest; reading the studies; determining how the studies are related; translating the studies into one another; synthesising the translations; and expressing the synthesis. To aid understanding of the application of these phases, I referred to five worked examples. Meta-ethnography offers a detailed approach to conducting a synthesis. In my experience, the process of a meta-ethnography can end as a synthesis or go into generating theory through a grounded- theory

process. In my case, as this was the first time I had used this methodology, I aligned the phases with various grounded-theory steps but did not venture into theory generation.

### **5.3 Main findings**

In the synthesis in Chapter 3, I found a division of focus in the five articles that was a consequence of the different perspectives presented by the authors. The perceptions I extracted from the articles were presented under the following headings:

1. Perceptions of colonialism and apartheid
2. Perceptions of educational access
3. Perceptions of post-apartheid curricula
4. Perceptions of music education and African musical arts education pedagogies
5. Perceptions of informal music making
6. Perceptions of children's games and agency
7. Perceptions of moving forward: into the classroom and through assessment

This synthesis played a role in discussing the various authors' perceptions of African musical arts education, and made up the sixth phase of the meta-ethnography, synthesising the five articles. There is a striking divide in the various authors' views and in how these translate into perceptions. On one hand, Nompula (2011) and Pooley (2016) look back historically to colonialism, apartheid, the various post-apartheid curricula, and the consequent inequality within South African music education and, indeed, within education as a whole. Part of this involves looking at traditional African modes of education, as well as at formal and informal music-making. These discussions and perceptions dominate the first sections of the synthesis. On the other hand, Harrop-Allin (2014, 2017) and Human and Van Niekerk (2014) look forward to moving into the classroom through harnessing children's agency, as expressed in playground games, and through ideas on assessment within formal education systems. This duality in itself tells a story of the issues at stake when examining perceptions of African musical arts education. The past informs many current issues and inequalities in access and education; however, it also shows a way in which music-making has existed traditionally and still exists informally. The future involves understanding how children are agents of their own musical destinies by recognising their agency in their playground games. Another aspect relating to the future is the manner in which these games are brought into the classroom to be mobilised as part of the

development of new learning and how this learning may be assessed. I concluded Chapter 3 by drawing together the meta-ethnographic synthesis into a summary of the perceptions listed above.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for further research**

As mentioned previously, I had initially wanted to include data from as early as 1994. An interesting study could be undertaken by synthesising articles from an earlier date, exploring the changes in perceptions, if any, up to that point, and considering how this may have affected informal music-making, policy, the implementation of curricula, and teacher specialisation. This study concerns what academics write about music education, from an external perspective; what is missing here is an authentic voice. There is a gap in this research, within my own parameters, and that is a lack of the presence of teachers' voices. My pre-COVID research topic had aimed to gain insight into the teaching of African musical arts at the Foundation Phase level at government schools in Makhandla. This remains the insight I find missing in my engagement with this topic. I have learned so much through the process of meta-ethnographic synthesis that I am no longer necessarily considering what is happening with African musical arts education within the subject of Creative Arts but at how we can facilitate the expression of teachers' voices so that they are heard and so that they may find a space to write about their music teaching experiences. As difficult as this may be, and as impossible as it may sound, this is a concern in my mind.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this meta-ethnography aimed to synthesise the perceptions of African musical arts education as expressed by five authors. The authors were divided in their views, with some looking back historically at colonialism, apartheid, and inequality within South African music education while others looked forward to harnessing children's agency through playground games and assessment within formal education systems. The synthesis can be deemed a success as it unpacks the complexity of the issues surrounding African musical arts education, located in discourses of the past, present, and future. The study highlights the importance of looking back to understand the past and of looking forward to finding solutions.

I had planned to do a more field research-intensive master's project but due to COVID had to change

my approach. As one often finds, this change brought about deep introspection and led me to discovering what I think is an important methodology. I will definitely use this approach in future – if not for a full project, then certainly, modified, to serve a rigorous literature review.

After comparing Western and African musical arts throughout this thesis, it is worth considering the lens offered by James Flolu, the former principal of the College of Technology Education, in Kumasi, Ghana. He says,

We have been hindered by this concept of ‘their’ music and ‘our’ music, which has influenced our attitude and approach to the teaching of music in the classroom. We have become very conscious of something being ‘Western’ and another being ‘African’; however, at some point we will have to realise that, if we look around us, a lot of things that we see are neither Western or African – they just belong to ‘us’ (Flolu 2003 as cited in Herbst 2005, p. vi).

This perspective looks to a future where a consolidated, equitable music education is available to everyone – and that, after all, was my motivation for this research.

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