

## Beyond Classroom Walls: The Impact of Field Trips on Pre-Service Teachers' Engagement with Performing Arts in a Bachelor of Education Programme

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates how field trips to a jazz concert and theatre performance enhance pre-service teachers' engagement with performing arts in a South African Bachelor of Education programme. The objective was to assess their impact on music and drama education. The sample included 530 students across four years at a university of Technology. Findings show 92% had no prior exposure to formal arts venues, with increased enjoyment, cultural connection, and content knowledge in jazz and theatre. Students reported greater interest in integrating arts into teaching. Using Engeström's Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the study emphasises field trips' role in addressing South Africa's arts access disparities. It informs teacher education to foster culturally responsive pedagogy.

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## Introduction

Access to arts education in teacher training programmes is often limited, particularly in resource-scarce contexts where opportunities for cultural engagement are minimal. This gap hinders pre-service teachers' ability to develop creative pedagogies that incorporate performing arts, which are vital for fostering inclusive and engaging classrooms. In South Africa, this challenge is amplified by a historical legacy of apartheid, which restricted marginalised communities' access to formal cultural spaces such as theatres and concert halls. As a result, pre-service teachers completing a Bachelor of Education programme at a university of technology have little to no exposure to live music concerts or professional theatre productions. Field trips, defined as educational experiences outside the classroom that enable interaction with performances to connect with concepts and subject matter (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014), offer a solution to bridge this gap. By attending a jazz concert and theatre performance, pre-service teachers gain transformative opportunities to engage with real-world contexts, enhance their understanding of music and drama, and develop as reflective practitioners capable of integrating the arts into their future teaching. This experience is particularly significant for pre-service teachers who will teach performing arts in primary schools, as it models out-of-classroom learning they can replicate for their own learners. This study investigates the research question: How do field trips to live performing arts events enhance pre-service teachers' understanding and motivation to integrate music and drama into their teaching practice in the context of South African teacher education?

## Historical context

As tertiary educators in Cape Town, South Africa, a trip to the theatre and concert hall is one riddled with historical complexity. During Apartheid, theatre spaces and concert halls were divided along racial lines, with separate venues and seating areas for white and non-white audiences. The apartheid regime enforced racial segregation in performance venues, privileging state-funded arts councils catering to white audiences (Van Heerden, 2008:20), while marginalising black performers and community theatre groups. Despite systemic injustices, artists like John Kani and Winston Ntshona pioneered groundbreaking "Township theatre" that challenged apartheid narratives (Hauptfleisch, 2007:73). However, these productions operated outside formal venues and lacked state support, perpetuating racial disparities in arts funding and audience demographics. Contrary to the enforced limitations of the apartheid regime, partially privately funded theatres such as the

Baxter in Cape Town and the Market Theatre in Johannesburg bucked this trend and showcased many of these so-called “township plays” (Hauptfleisch, 2007:73).

In post-apartheid Cape Town, the legacy of segregated theatre persists, with predominantly white audiences still occupying formal theatre spaces. Many students lack exposure to these venues, limiting their understanding of mainstream theatrical traditions. In the surrounding areas, however, vibrant community-based theatre and music-making still exist. Although many of our students have engaged with this informal performance scene, most have never been to the theatre. Similarly, music concerts have been dominant in certain areas, for example, within churches and some community halls. While very limited exposure has been identified, visits to a formal concert hall to be a part of the audience have, sadly, been minimal.

### Theoretical framework

This study will employ Engeström’s (1987; 2001) expanded Vygotsky’s Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) model to include a broader systemic view of activities, highlighting the social and collective aspects of activity systems and the dynamic nature of these systems.

We will also draw on selected concepts outlined in performance studies as “liveness” (Auslander, 1999) which is central to a performing arts field trip. Liveness in performance studies refers to the quality or condition of being live and the immediacy of a performance event experienced in real time by both performers and audience. According to Auslander (1999), liveness emphasises the co-presence of the performer and audience, creating a shared temporal and spatial environment distinct from mediated experiences such as film or television. This concept underscores the unique interaction and potential for spontaneity that characterise live performances.

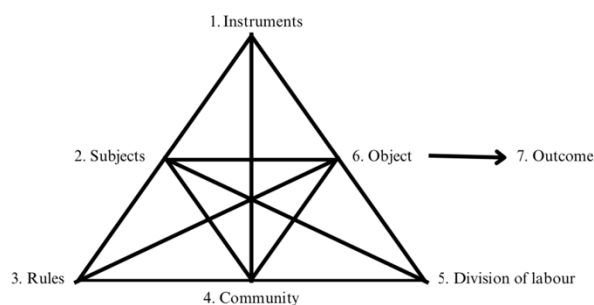


Figure 1. CHAT (Engeström, 1987:78)

The framework of performance studies will also be used to examine the implications of the field trip's location – a performing arts theatre & music concert hall, which speaks to taking teaching beyond the four walls of the classroom. We chose to use Engeström's (1987:78) adapted model of CHAT since this is a paradigm that provides consideration for relationships as well as for the environment that influences teaching-learning activities (Nussbaumer, 2012:41). We chose the "second generation" CHAT model and not Engeström's (2001) expanded "third generation" model that includes "networking systems with shared object, tensions, and contradictions" (Nussbaumer, 2012:41). Although we acknowledge that this expanded model provides more room for nuance, due to space constraints in the article, the simple model is more suitable for our discussion and will be further expanded upon in the discussion section of this article. We will use the terms "instruments", "subjects", "rules", "community", "division of labour", "object", and "outcome" as a framework to discuss the field trips.

### Potential Contradictions and Tensions

CHAT also emphasises contradictions and tensions within an activity system that can lead to development and change. This can include the fact that students may focus on grades (exchange value) rather than the intrinsic learning experience (use value). Other contradictions may include the following:

- Between different components of the activity system, such as the tension between the educational goals of the trip and the entertainment aspects of the theatre experience.
- Between students' preconceptions about theatre and the actual experience, which might challenge their existing knowledge and assumptions.
- When new models of integrating theatre into education (proposed by the trip) conflict with traditional teaching methods students have learned.
- Between the students' activity system and the broader institutional systems, such as university curricula that may not fully support arts integration.

It is important to also note the inherent contradictions that exist in trying to merge the CHAT model with a performance theory framework. The father of performance theory, Richard Schechner, writes in his seminal "Approaches to Performance Theory" (Diamond, Goodman & de Gay, 2000:197), that a defining characteristic of a performance is its inherent "non-productivity". The CHAT model, used to measure outcomes and objectives, has certain limitations in analysing the subjects' interaction with a performance. This is because, contrary to the "productive" work that often characterises higher education with its clear objective of equipping the subject with the tools to cope in their field, "The separation of performance activities from productive work is a most interesting, and unifying,

factor of play, games, sports, theatre, and ritual” (Diamond et al., 2000:197). Any analysis of the outcomes of this type of trip must thus be done with humility. Being informed by these two theoretical bodies, of performance and activity, our emphasis in the analysis will be on description and reflection as opposed to the measurement of “productive” learning.

## Method

Purposeful sampling of Bachelor of Education students, specialising in the Foundation or Intermediate Phase of teaching, were approached for this study. Pre-service teachers in their first, second, third and fourth (n=530) years of study, and who have chosen music and drama as their electives, were the participants. For the first-year Bachelor of Education students, both music and drama are compulsory, and form part of the course code called Life Skills and the Arts. From the second year of study, students are allowed to select their performing arts electives. A social constructivist paradigm was used, which posits that each pre-service teacher creates their understanding and knowledge through social development; observation and perception skills; giving meaning to learning; providing first-hand experience; and stimulating interest and motivation.

The survey questionnaire was utilised to provide basic biographical detail and inquire whether the pre-service teachers had experienced any previous field trip experiences. The reviews of the music concerts and theatre visits were analysed, to provide the data for this study. Focus groups were set up, which provided a safe space for pre-service teachers to share their experiences of the field trip. This was valuable as not all the students went to the same theatre production or music concert. However all performances overlapped in the inclusion of cultural aspects, which included community theatre, and the concert consisted of jazz students from a nearby university performing in various ensembles. The jazz genre was therefore maintained for all the field trips for the music component. Data from these groups was transcribed and anonymised by a third party and made available for analysis.

This study employed a qualitative research methodology, which was exploratory and descriptive, as a means of understanding how the sample of pre-service teachers documented their experiences of learning within the music and drama course codes while attending a field trip. Thus, a phenomenological approach, combined with a narrative design, was used by pre-service teachers to document their experiences while attending and being a part of this field trip and included these basic questions:

1. Have you attended any live music performance or theatre before?
2. What did you learn from attending this concert/theatre performance?
3. What did you enjoy or not enjoy about this experience?

Similarly, we identified our roles as the lecturers and researchers in this context and in recognising the continued societal inequalities within the arts, we were conscious of developing ways to make this field trip experience more accessible and noteworthy to ensure that further field trip experiences are possibly carried over to be a part of the classroom experience when the pre-service teachers become novice teachers. As authors, we additionally employed an autoethnographic approach, where over a period of five years we engaged in self-understanding and discussion of the field trip phenomenon.

### Data Analysis

The pre-service teacher questionnaire, concert and theatre reviews, together with the focus group discussion, formed the basis for the data collected for this study. Even though the questionnaire is a module requirement, availing the responses for the analysis for the research was voluntary. A research assistant anonymised the responses of those participants who voluntarily availed their questionnaires for analysis. Consent forms were distributed, which were administered by the research assistant. The analysis was facilitated using ATLAS.ti version 22, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. We were guided by the research questions while analysing the responses from the questionnaire, transcripts from the focus group discussions and the performance reviews, using the coding strategies according to Saldaña (2021). We conducted data reduction, coding, and decoding analytic processes to analyse and interpret various qualitative data forms, as described by Saldaña (2021: 8-10). We examined the transcribed data to identify patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the research questions. The narratives were coded according to themes, in accordance with the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2006). Following Saldaña's guidelines (2021: 133-148), we employed descriptive, process, and in vivo coding, all of which were created inductively based on the data. In addition, we employed our collaborative autoethnography, where our personal reflections were corroborated, of past field trips with pre-service teachers to support the data analysis.

## Results: Themes

Within the teaching profession and particularly the context in which we find ourselves conducting this research, we have discovered that pre-service teachers have little training or pedagogical knowledge relating to the process of field trips. In fact, even while they were learners at school, most participants cannot recall a field trip to a music concert or theatre. Anderson, Lawson and Mayer-Smith (2006:239) explained that pre-service teachers who gain “field experience of conducting a field trip, gain a more functional, applicable view of constructivist education and teaching skills”. It is therefore valuable that field trips be included in all aspects of teacher education. Additionally, teacher education programmes, especially within the arts, should include experiential education, which includes field trip preparation and implementation, for all pre-service teachers, who need to understand their responsibilities and roles before, during, and after a field trip (Tal & Morag, 2009). Our reflection and qualitative analysis generated six themes which allowed us to understand the importance and concerns of the field trip experience.

### Theme 1: Logistical concerns

Based on the Tal & Steiner (2001) patterns of teacher (in our case lecturer) involvement while conducting a field trip, the authors aptly describe the three patterns, namely: 1. Involvement and participation in preparation and activities. 2. Institution tradition may dictate the field trip. 3. Disassociation of (teachers) lecturers in the field trip. As lecturers, we certainly identify with the first pattern of involvement. Even though this type of field trip has been ongoing for several years (it was stalled during the COVID-19 pandemic), it is not rigidly linked to the field trip. In choosing a field trip most suitable and beneficial for our pre-service teachers, we had to take multiple logistical and physical matters into consideration. We have broken these down into the various categories listed below, which we will discuss by employing the CHAT model outlined in the theoretical framework section.

### Theme 2: Safety

One of the difficult realities our students face is that of physical safety. Our country has one of the highest murder rates in the world and gender-based violence and the threat of rape is a daily reality for South African women. Our pre-service teacher body, particularly within the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase, is largely made up of women. When we started working at our institution

and planning these field trips, one of the first questions we were asked by the students was whether it would be at night. Most of our students do not have their own transport and rely on public transport, taxis, or lifts from friends or parents. Many live in areas where they do not feel safe to come to the city in a taxi at night. We were thus constrained by the fact that they could only attend during the day. Any discussion of “Community” would thus have to emphasise these barriers in getting students to access the theatre. The fact that they have no transport also means that they cannot attend plays far from campus. Many of our students stay in residences on campus but have minimal disposable income to spend on transport to get across the city. We were most fortunate, however, that our campus is located very within walking distance of the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. We could thus organise a trip that students could access on foot should they not have transport. Similarly, the music concert venue was either the Baxter Concert Hall or a performance venue at the South African College of Music, perfectly located behind the Baxter, on the slopes of Table Mountain.

### Theme 3: Finances

The second issue we faced was that of finances. Theatre or concert tickets to a professional play or a musical performance can range anywhere from R150 - R500<sup>1</sup>. This is above the means of the majority of our students, and one of the prime reasons we suspect they had not been to the theatre or a concert previously. Financial constraint is one of the biggest barriers to accessing professional performing arts. This is despite South-African theatre tickets being well below international prices. We thus had to find an alternative. The Baxter Theatre hosts the “Zabalaza” festival, which showcases the best in community theatre. Tickets to these shows are R35<sup>2</sup>, which meant that all our students could attend. In terms of “Division of labour”, students were tasked with bringing the cash and buying their own tickets. We wanted the students to have the experience of going to the box office and securing tickets for themselves. We felt that in this way they would be empowered to reclaim the theatre space as their own and to possibly lower the barrier of entry should they come again. This means that the “subject”, should they become the teacher, will possibly affect change in the “community”.

The solution for music came in the form of student performances at the conservatorium. This meant that students could access quality live music performances in a professional setting – the music hall,

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<sup>1</sup> Between \$8-28 USD.

<sup>2</sup> Approximately \$2 USD.



without having to pay the high fees one would normally do for an orchestra. Music students enrolled for the jazz performers' qualification were required to be a part of a jazz ensemble performance as their final year mark. This performance was a part of the biweekly lunchtime concerts which took place at the music conservatoire. This we considered to be a win-win situation, as the jazz performance students enjoyed performing for an audience and our pre-service teachers enjoyed the participation as audience members.

#### **Theme 4: Accessibility**

The final issue we had to think through was that of accessibility. This had different implications for music and drama. In considering which theatre production to take the students to, it was important to us that we not alienate them by taking them to something they could not uncode (See "The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama" by Elam, 2003). In terms of the "Division of labour", as lecturers, we saw our role as providing the students with at least some of the tools they would need to engage with the performance. The nature of our course is such that our engagement with them in class is limited to a few hours a week. Most students we receive in their first year have not done a drama class at school. This means that their exposure to dramatic signifiers and codes of performance is very limited. It is important to note again that most students have engaged with some form of informal playmaking or storytelling, as our surrounding areas have a strong community theatre scene. By noting this lack of formalised exposure, an implied hierarchy should not be assumed. However, the reclaiming of the formal theatre space as something partially state- and publicly funded should be a priority with our historical context of inequality. We wanted them to enjoy their first play but also to feel like the theatre was their space.

The "Zabalaza" festival did this in two very important ways. The first was the fact that the festival is performed primarily in our indigenous languages and not in English. Since many of our students speak either Afrikaans or isiXhosa at home, this is an especially important factor in making the productions accessible. The second important characteristic of the festival is that the performers and performances were created in the very communities our students hail from. This is a wonderful inversion of expectations in terms of the CHAT model. Many of our students are the first in their families to get a tertiary education. Anecdotally, students will often tell us how their parents worked hard to keep them safe in the communities they grew up in, the implication often being safe from gangsterism or drug abuse. The fact that these communities are now helping to form part of their tertiary education is possibly an example of Conquergood's (2002:151-152) contention that

performance can “bridge segregated and differently valued knowledges”. The community they hail from becomes their teachers and this in turn forms a sense of togetherness and belonging where all experience equality, shared identity, and genuine human connection in the moment. Students were incredibly proud when they informed us that they knew the actor and that the director lives just down the street from them. In this way, the theatre becomes, we hope, an extension of home and *communitas* (Turner, 1982: 47).

In terms of music, the issue of genre was especially important in terms of making the trip accessible for students. Very few, often almost none, of the students we receive have any formal classical music education. Many of our students have a strong musical tradition at home and in their communities, however, and can harmonise instinctively when given a singing assignment. As in the case of drama, we felt that taking students to a performance of the European canon of orchestral classical music would only serve to alienate our students. We thus decided to take them to a jazz performance where they were exposed to scatting, an especially thrilling experience for them as many are well-versed in using their voices as instruments.

#### **Theme 5: Interest in subject**

Drama performance and music offer unique pathways for pre-service teachers to engage with educational concepts, connect with diverse learners, and develop their pedagogical repertoire. The majority of our pre-service teachers were not exposed to any form of music or drama classes while at school and many expressed that this was their first time in a theatre or formal concert hall space, as described by a music student below.

I attended my first music concert which was held in Main Road, Rondebosch, in one of the major Theatre venues in Cape Town.

Most pre-service teachers come into the higher education space with little to no experience of performing arts within their schooling. They are therefore often amazed that performing arts is a part of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum. While in higher education we advocate for introducing students to be able to teach performing arts within the curriculum, if pre-service teachers do not display an interest in the subject, evidence suggests that they will either struggle or not teach it within their classroom practice. Pre-service teachers displayed their surprise when they actually enjoyed the music concert. As a lecturer, careful consideration was given to the type of music genre (as discussed in accessibility) to expose the

students to as their first introduction to a field trip. A second-year student relayed her enjoyment of the jazz concert.

The atmosphere was incredible, and the sound quality and instrumentation enhanced the overall experience. We were ecstatic when we left the show. The concert was the greatest I've ever seen.

Building an interest in any subject starts with enjoyment of the subject. This was evident in most student music reviews, as indicated by another second-year student below.

I fell in love with how amazing it is to listen to different kinds of instruments playing so beautifully together producing such a relaxing atmosphere. Ensemble 5 led by Michael Bester consisted of eight members, which were two Vocalists, Tenor Saxophone, Trombone, Guitar, Piano, Bass, and Drums. The instruments played beautifully together. I loved how each and every instrument played beautifully in harmony.

This enjoyment was corroborated by a third-year fellow music student.

When it was finally time to enjoy the concert, the sound of such compositions sent shivers down my spine. While the instruments in each ensemble had their own individual sounds, I particularly liked the first one's use of both saxophones. The setting was fantastic, and the music and instrumentation made the experience even better. When we left the performance, we were elated. The performers engage with and involve the crowd throughout the act, making it the best concert I've ever attended.

Incorporating music into field trips enables pre-service teachers to experience cultural traditions, engage with diverse musical genres, and harness the expressive potential of sound to deepen their understanding of curriculum topics and promote inclusive pedagogies (Barry & Caravan, 2020). Likewise, integrating drama into field trips allows pre-service teachers to embody historical figures, enact real-life scenarios, and explore complex social issues through role-play and improvisation, fostering empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills (O'Toole & Dunn, 2002). Therefore, by weaving drama performance and music themes into field trips, teacher educators can create immersive learning experiences that resonate with pre-service teachers' personal and professional identities, nurturing their passion for teaching and their commitment to lifelong learning.

## **Theme 6: Content Knowledge**

Due to the global demand for high-quality teachers in all areas of the curriculum, developing content knowledge in teachers early in their teacher education programmes can be critical for their becoming effective in the classroom (Norville & Park, 2021). As with our field trip, we discovered the pre field trip research and post field trip reflection was essential for consolidating learning.

Reflection allows students to document their experiences, noting what they learned and how it

relates to their future teaching practice. The focus group sessions served as valuable spaces and tools for ongoing reflection and professional growth, where pre-service teachers shared their reflections and discussed the impact of the field trip on their understanding of music and drama in education. This further enriched the post field trip learning process; thus, these discussions provided an opportunity for collective learning and the exchange of insights and ideas.

Prior to the field trip various music instrumentation lectures and listening exercises were presented. Students were taught and explored various musical genres and were required to identify these instruments and genres. The music concert field trip allowed the pre-service teachers the opportunity to be able to identify various instruments within the performance, thus using their content knowledge to inform their review of the concert.

Hearing [the] piano[s], tenor saxophone, and guitar with vocals was breathtaking, and when these instruments were played, it brought peace to my mood.

Developing lesson plans that incorporate elements from the field trip is another practical post-trip activity. For instance, students might create a music lesson using techniques observed at the concert. For drama, this meant writing a play review which evaluated the use of the dramatic elements. This also meant that the lecturer could evaluate the success of the students' ability to integrate their experiential learning with the theory taught in the class. This application of knowledge ensures that the field trip has a lasting impact on their teaching practice.

To maintain and further develop content knowledge in music and drama, we ensured that regular practice of theatre and music activities be integrated into the curriculum. This included weekly singing, for music and various acting exercises, for drama. Similarly, collaborative projects that require students to work together on music or drama performances took place, which promote teamwork and the integration of cross-curricular themes. These projects can enhance their creative and organisational skills while reinforcing their content knowledge.

By incorporating a field trip into the curriculum, pre-service teachers can significantly enhance their content knowledge in music and drama. By attending the music concert, instrument recognition was solidified, new techniques in jazz music – scatting was identified and a more in-depth understanding of the various forms within the jazz genre, like bebop, swing, fusion and modern jazz - was recognised.

Students were also exposed to various jazz composer giants, as relayed by one student below.

There was one composed by Chick Corea-500 Miles High, the ensemble members playing the instruments were....

Through comprehensive preparation, active engagement during the trip, and reflective and practical post-trip activities, pre-service teachers are equipped with the skills and understanding necessary to effectively integrate these art forms into their teaching practice. This multi-faceted approach not only enriches their educational experience but also prepares them to inspire and educate future generations through the arts.

## Discussion

Our discussion utilises Engeström's (1987; 2001) CHAT model as a means to understand and discuss the importance of field trips within the music and drama modules of a Bachelor of Education programme, and the value in having to facilitate the learning within and outside the classroom space. The aim of this activity is to enhance the understanding of music and drama concepts, as well as to facilitate a better understanding of the value and need for field trips within these disciplines.

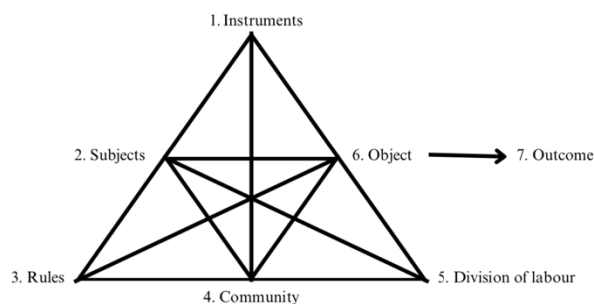


Figure 1. CHAT (Engeström, 1987:78)

Using the above activity system components, the following elements can be substituted in the figure above to analyse our various field trips to the theatre and concert hall.

### 1. Instruments:

In the context of Engeström's CHAT model, "instruments" refer to the tools, signs, symbols, and artefacts that mediate the relationship between the subject (individual or group) and the object (goal or motive of the activity). In Engeström's model, these instruments are essential for mediating the educational experience during field trips. They help transform abstract concepts into tangible

experiences, making learning more effective and engaging for pre-service teachers. By understanding and utilising these instruments, future educators can better appreciate the value of experiential learning and incorporate similar strategies in their own teaching practices. Tools and/ or artefacts include physical ones, which can refer to the tickets for the theatre or concert together with the programme, which indicates the theatre synopsis, or the selection of musical pieces played by performers in the concert. Symbolic tools include prior knowledge of educational theories, theatre arts concepts, musical theory and instrumentation, together with musical genres and cultural narratives. In the music concert field trip, the jazz genre was specifically chosen, as it has significantly influenced South African music, intersecting with the country's unique cultural heritage and history of segregation. The interaction between jazz and South African music has fostered rich musical innovations and has played a role in the socio-political landscape, particularly during and after apartheid (McConnachie, 2016). Selecting the jazz genre as the focus of the musical concert allows for pre-service teachers to identify with their cultural heritage, as during apartheid, jazz became a form of cultural resistance. It was a medium through which black South Africans could express their struggles and resilience. Jazz gatherings and concerts served as spaces for solidarity and expression of anti-apartheid sentiments.

## 2. Subjects:

The pre-service teachers are at a critical stage in their education, where they are consolidating theoretical knowledge with practical teaching skills. They are future educators who will benefit from understanding how arts can be integrated into the curriculum. Performance Theory encourages us to consider the student not just as a learner but also as an active participant in a performative event. The theatre "spaces are uniquely organised so that a large group can watch a small group – and become aware of itself at the same time" (Diamond et al., 2000:198). Any analysis of the subject must thus keep in mind the inherent power dynamics at play in such a setup and also discuss the potential of the subject to gain insight and self-awareness.

## 3. Rules:

Explicit rules are addressed and discussed with the pre-service teachers, when we relay the code of conduct for the field trip. This is addressed together with theatre and concert etiquette. Whereas in previous years, we would take for granted that students are familiar with concert etiquette, we soon realised that making them aware of the various pieces, when to applaud, and when to speak softly,

was crucial to an enjoyable experience for all. Discussion around the academic expectations for reflections and assignments such as play reviews were also discussed. Implicit rules included the discussion of cultural norms around theatre attendance and behaviour. We extended the discussion to include the educational norms of critical engagement during the field trip and reflective practice after the concert and theatre experiences.

#### *4. Community:*

The community comprises various stakeholders, namely the pre-service teachers, peers, and lecturers of the various course codes, namely drama and music. The broader community also consists of theatre staff, together with the artists who perform in the theatre and the musicians who perform in the musical shows and concerts. The student community involvement was to engage in the field trip experience and to reflect on their observations. Performance Theory emphasises the student's role as both an observer and a performer in the sense that their responses and reflections are part of the performative act (Goffman, 1959). As lecturers within the community our role was to facilitate and arrange the field trip, guide the student reflection, and connect the field trip experiences to educational theory. The theatre staff and musical artists contributed to the community by providing insights into the theatrical process and its educational value. In addition, the importance of peers, and other students, is valuable in sharing and discussing their experiences and perspectives.

#### *5. Division of Labour:*

Tasks and responsibilities were divided among the lecturers, pre-service teachers/students, participants in this study, and the performers within the theatre and music concert. Students' contributions included active observation, note-taking, participation in discussions, and completing reflective assignments. The lecturers' role consisted of organising the field trip, providing context and theoretical frameworks, leading discussions, and assessing student reflections. The theatre personnel, musicians, and theatre-makers' contributions were in the role of offering performances.

#### *6. Object:*

One of the primary goals within a university of technology is to provide an immersive learning experience that bridges theory and practice. The field trip to the theatre and music concert aims to

expose students to live performances and the educational potential of performing arts. Engaging with a live performance “allows an investigation of the materiality of the corporeal, since the presence of bodies requires direct and present engagement” (Madison & Hamera, 2005: 510). This contrasts with the often text-rich, relationship-poor environment that typifies higher education. Dwight Conquergood (2002:151-152), another leading scholar in performance studies and ethnography, writes a vehement critique of this text-focused approach. He views this as an approach to education which ignores subjugated forms of knowledge (à la Foucault) and proposes that performance theory, with its liminality, can “bridge segregated and differently valued knowledges” (ibid). In our postcolonial climate of rethinking tertiary education, this is a point to be considered. The “liveness” of the event thus complicated a neatly outlined “outcome”. A live performance cannot function as the more measurable object usually found in traditional education: a text-rich lesson. Liveness is inherently non-productive and ephemeral, making its outcome difficult to measure.

### 7. Outcome:

The outcome is thus multifaceted, albeit complex. Attending a live performance may cause students to learn how to incorporate theatre arts into their teaching practices, thereby enhancing their pedagogical skills. In addition, the exposure to diverse narratives and artistic expressions may broaden students' cultural perspectives. These theatrical performances create “communitas”: “a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities” (Turner, 1982: 47). The cultural awareness and enrichment of the pre-service teachers is possibly enhanced hereby. Their practical knowledge is also possibly enhanced as students gain insights into the logistics and creative processes of theatre production, which they can translate into classroom activities. They also observe the lecturer's organisation of the field trip, which they can emulate as future teachers. Together this builds on what we want to encourage as the future practice of pre-service teachers, and we hope that through this experience pre-service teachers feel that they can one day take their own classes to the theatre and a music concert. It should be said, however, that any neatly outlined “Outcome” in the context of performance theory is to be taken with a grain of salt. Schechner's (2000: ??) assertion that a defining characteristic of a performance is its inherent “non-productivity” should make us question and direct lines drawn between students seeing a live performance and, for instance, “greater love for the subject” or “more subject knowledge”. Although this is mentioned as a hoped-for outcome, the CHAT framework's emphasis on outcomes



(and the field of educational research generally), may miss the more nuanced “non-outcomes” that remain immeasurable and can best be worded as “enrichment”.

## Motivation

Both researchers/authors are current education lecturers within Bachelor of Education programmes at the institution where this study is being done. The first author, a primary/elementary school music teacher for 25 years, now a music lecturer, and second author, a theatre studies and drama lecturer, argue that there should be a balance between direct instruction within the lecture rooms and independent, learning and exploration within the arts. There is therefore sufficient argument for the inclusion of field trips enabling students’ adequate opportunity to inquire, explore, engage, discover, and apply what they learn within the classroom to what is experienced when engaged in the process of a field trip. This research will build on our knowledge of presenting the drama and music courses within the Bachelor of Education programme. The data will also allow the researchers to understand the students’ prior knowledge and adapt the curriculum delivery to best suit the students. If just one of our pre-service teachers (out of over 350 per year group) chose to take their students to the theatre or music concert, once a year throughout their career, it would result in 1513 students, who might otherwise not have had the opportunity, experiencing the theatre and music space. This calculation is based on an average teaching career of 42 years, considering the mandatory retirement age of 65 in South Africa, with a standard class size of 36 students, which is a conservative estimate since many classes exceed 40 students. A follow-up study of a more quantitative nature that investigates whether these students were more likely than a control group to take their learners to the theatre/music hall would be an interesting opportunity for further enquiry.

## Conclusion

This research clearly displays the nuanced benefits of a theatre and music field trip within pre-service teacher education as a visual resource space within the regimented parameters of teaching and learning in our classrooms. Framed by Engeström’s Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the findings reveal a tension with performance theory, which highlights the inherent “non-productivity” of live performances (Schechner, 2000). Unlike CHAT’s focus on measurable outcomes, performance theory emphasizes the ephemeral, communal experience of “liveness” (Auslander, 1999), where the impact of a live performance together with its spontaneity, cultural resonance, and

emotional depth, defies precise quantification. These field trips, set against South Africa's post-apartheid context of historical exclusion from formal cultural spaces, foster cultural awareness and inspire pre-service teachers to weave music and drama into their future teaching. However, the nuanced reality of live performances means their transformative potential, such as cultivating reflective practice or *communitas* (Turner, 1982), resists full measurement. By offering access to these experiences, field trips bridge theoretical learning and lived experience, modelling a culturally responsive pedagogy that pre-service teachers can emulate. Teacher education programmes should thus prioritise arts-based field trips, not for quantifiable gains, but for their capacity to enrich educators' perspectives in South Africa's diverse educational landscape, contributing to a more inclusive vision of educational reform.

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