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A Tale of Five Countries: Background and Confidence in Preservice Primary Teachers in Drama Education across Five Countries

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Abstract: In many public primary schools across different countries, generalist primary teachers are required to teach all subjects, including music, dance, drama and visual arts. This study investigates the background and confidence of preservice primary teachers from five countries in relation to drama and drama education. It also examines if there is a difference between the preservice teachers' perceptions of their own background and confidence in drama education in relation to each of the five countries (Australia, South Africa, Namibia, USA and Ireland). On investigating the differences between countries, there were significant statistical differences in the means of responses from preservice teachers from the different countries in relation to both background and confidence in drama education. The paper concludes with suggestions for teacher educators, given their students' weak background in drama education.

Introduction

Alter, Hays, and O'Hara (2009) indicate that the generalist primary school teacher is often required to teach all subjects in their classroom. These include the 'important' subjects such as mathematics and literacy, as well as the other subjects such as science, social studies, physical education and the arts. This is a significant responsibility for the classroom teacher and, as Wilkins (2009) notes, often some subjects are taught more than others depending on the teacher's confidence and background in the subject.

When preservice primary generalist teachers enrol in their teacher education courses, research by Ng (2010) notes that they bring with them a wide variety of backgrounds, experiences, prior learning and related confidence in each of the subjects they are required to teach when they graduate. Research by Jacobs (2008) has indicated that they have little prior experience or confidence in any of the art forms and often bring with them their negative attitudes to the arts in the school setting.

Bandura (1997) indicates that the background and confidence of generalist teachers affects if and how much they teach the arts subjects. This paper reports on a study based on a larger unpublished creative arts survey across five countries (Australia, Namibia, South Africa, Ireland and USA). The study investigated the perceived background and confidence of 939 preservice generalist primary teachers in relation to drama education and if there was any relationship between their confidence and background in this art form. It also examined whether there were significant statistical differences in perception related to their country of origin. Based on the results of this survey, suggestions are made to enhance preservice teacher education arts courses to enhance the teaching of drama education in primary schools by generalist teachers.

Background

According to Bodily et al (2008), music and visual arts tend to be taught more than the other art forms with drama being included in English where appropriate and dance being relegated as part of physical education. However, more recently, many countries have reorganised the curriculum, and have developed a key learning area or larger subject called the *arts* or *creative arts*. This subject now includes music, dance, drama, visual arts and sometimes media arts. Despite this reorganisation, according to Baum et al (1997) and Fraser et al (2007), with the increasing focus on basic skills testing in numeracy and literacy, in most westernised countries the arts are still marginalised and are often the first to drop off the timetable.

However, not only the arts are marginalised because of this focus on numeracy and literacy and teachers' perceived lack of confidence and background knowledge other subjects also claim that they have minimal time in the primary timetable along with a lack of confidence of teachers to teach the subject. In relation to Physical Education, Morgan and Bourke (2008) comment that the preservice teachers they surveyed did not feel confident in teaching the subject, and also, the subject had little place or space in the primary classroom. Research by Jenkinson and Benson (2010) as well as Morgan and Hansen (2008) indicates that there are both institutional and teacher-related barriers to Physical Education not being taught effectively in schools, leaving it marginalised and taught spasmodically.

Science educators also indicate that primary teachers lack confidence in teaching science (Smith and Fitzgerald, 2013) and that science is taught poorly by teachers who lack confidence to teach the subject, resulting in little science being taught in the primary school (Jarrett, 1999). Fitzgerald and Gunstone (2013), in their research with primary school teachers, confirm these findings, indicating that teachers are reluctant to teach science and if they do teach science lessons, it is only very occasionally. Appleton's (2003) research found that primary teachers lacked science content knowledge as well as science pedagogical content knowledge.

In relation to computer technology, Flemming, Motamedi and May (2007) found that preservice teachers lacked confidence in using technology in the classroom. However when they had seen the use of technology modelled and used it regularly in pedagogical situations, it was perceived that their attitudes and skills increased in relation to using technology in the classroom. Similarly, research by Campbell, McRobbie, Ginns and Stein (2000) found that having students engaged in technology projects in their teacher education course significantly broadened and deepened their understandings of technology as a process for teaching.

Although Mathematics is compulsory in primary schools, and is actually taught regularly (compared with other subjects such as science, physical education and the arts, which, although compulsory are not often taught regularly) educators indicate that preservice teachers are reluctant to teach the subject. They also lack confidence in mathematics, often being very anxious when faced with both learning and teaching the subject (Brady and Bowd, 2005). Similarly, Bursal and Paznokas (2006) studied 65 preservice primary teachers in relation to their mathematics anxiety levels and confidence levels and found that students with low mathematics anxiety were more confident to teach primary mathematics than were their peers who had higher levels of mathematics anxiety.

As seen above, although primary teachers generally lack confidence and competence in teaching the arts, including drama, this can also be claimed in relation to other subjects in the curriculum. The next section examines the influence of background and confidence of students on their ability to teach drama.

Influence of Background and Confidence on Teaching Drama

Russell-Bowie et al's (1995) research indicates that if preservice teachers have a strong background in drama, this will generally influence their confidence and effectiveness in teaching drama within their classroom. Results from this study of preservice primary teachers indicated that if preservice teachers felt confident about themselves as teachers of the subject, then they would be more confident about teaching the subject. Bandura (1997) confirms this, indicating that the confidence of teachers is a significant factor in how well the subject is taught.

In a study into preservice teachers and visual arts by Welch (1995), results indicated that preservice teachers' self-concept about their own skills and background in the subject directly influenced their effectiveness as art teachers. Research by Calderhead (1988) confirms this indicating that the preservice teachers' own background impacts strongly on their confidence in teaching. The preservice teachers' prior experiences and the attitudes that they bring with them to their teacher education courses can powerfully influence their emerging practice, however this is not necessarily consistent across all preservice teachers.

Research by Ryan (1991) indicates also that if preservice teachers lack both a strong background in the arts and confidence in the arts, then this will impact strongly on their future classroom teaching. Alter et al's (2009) study confirms this, indicating that primary school teachers' lack of confidence in teaching one or more arts subjects impacts significantly on the effective teaching and learning within the creative arts classroom and that their life experiences shape the way they teach the arts subjects. Wright's (1999) research indicates that many students entering their preservice arts course indicate that they are nervous or apprehensive about participating in drama tutorials and this often inhibits their ability to involve themselves in these activities.

According to Carney and Chedzoy (1998) negative attitudes to a subject from past experiences will strongly affect preservice teachers' learning and reinforce their strong negative beliefs about their ability in this subject. Therefore effective, practical, positive and long term drama learning experiences throughout their initial teacher education course are imperative for preservice teachers to change possible negative attitudes and to become confident drama teachers in the classroom.

Arts Education in Five Countries

For many primary generalist teachers teaching the arts is a challenge they often neglect to confront. As noted in the above research, preservice generalist primary teachers need a strong background in drama and confidence in drama education as they are expected to teach drama and other art forms in their classrooms. This study covers the five countries of Australia, USA, Namibia, South Africa and Ireland. Current literature focuses on the teaching of drama in individual countries and there is little comparative information. Therefore this study aims to add to the general knowledge of drama teaching across five countries. The five countries were selected because teacher education institutions in these countries responded to the invitation to be involved in this research project. Institutions in other countries were invited to be involved, but did not accept the invitation. Therefore teaching of drama education in the primary classroom will now be discussed specifically in relation to these five countries.

Bamford (2006) indicated in her global studies of arts education, that in economically developing countries such as Namibia and South Africa, there is a significant lack of funding, resources, training and priority for the arts and where there was little funding for education as a whole, the arts were negatively influenced. Similar findings were indicated in Australia,

Ireland, the USA and other developed countries. Although the arts are a mandated part of the curriculum in each country, Bamford (2006) and Robinson (2001) observe that in practice the arts are rarely implemented effectively by generalist teachers.

In America, according to Bodily et al (2008) arts education in public classrooms has been given a low priority for many years with children receiving little arts education at any level. Henry (2000) notes that The National Endowment for the Arts notes that the arts are necessary for children's holistic development and that when children lack a quality arts education they can become disconnected from each other and from the world. However there seems to be discrepancy between the rhetoric of government policy and the practice in American elementary schools with a significant gap between the proclamation that the arts are significant in holistic learning and what actually happens in the public school classroom.

Bodily et al (2008) confirm that the implementation of the 2001 federal act, *No Child Left Behind* (Public Law: No child left behind, 2001) resulted in many schools focussing on the subjects that were to be tested, such as mathematics and reading, and omitting the other 'less important' subjects such as drama and the other art forms.

When the arts were taught in primary classrooms, teachers tended to focus on music and visual arts with dance and drama being taught much less. A federal survey of arts provision in 1999 – 2000 by the National Center for Education Statistics (2002) indicated that 94% of elementary schools had some form of music education, 87% had visual arts instruction, but less than 20% had any sort of drama or dance lessons.

The results of another survey of small and large elementary schools in America by Leonhard, (1991) indicated that elementary school teachers were the main instructors of drama education where this occurred. His research showed that only 34 out of 208 (16.3%) small elementary schools offered drama, with 11.8% of these having a drama specialist teacher. In relation to the large elementary schools, only 19 out of the 124 schools (15.3%) offered drama instruction, and this focussed mainly on performance drama.

In a later but similar study by the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), results indicated that about 19% of all public elementary schools offered students regular instruction in drama during the regular school day in 1999-2000. This report also indicated that in almost one third of elementary schools surveyed drama was also integrated into subjects such as English and Language Arts, with 43% of schools incorporating drama across the curriculum.

In Australia, drama was originally taught as part of the English curriculum but when the six Key Learning Areas were implemented, drama became part of the arts syllabus along with music, visual arts and dance (Russell-Bowie, 2011). Music and visual arts were legislated as having to be taught in the primary classroom but dance and drama are not, even though all four art forms are in the syllabus. In a national survey of arts education completed by the Senate Environment Recreation Communications and the Arts Reference Committee (1995) in many states the generalist classroom teacher is expected to teach drama. However the survey results note that throughout the years the general quality of arts education is unsatisfactory and that most primary teachers are ill-equipped and lacking in confidence when it comes to teaching the different art forms, including drama. Generalist classroom teachers are seen to marginalise the arts because they lack confidence to teach drama and the other art forms.

In a recent survey of practising primary generalist teachers by Alter et al (2009), results indicated that although the teachers valued the arts, they generally felt overwhelmed by the expectations to teach all the content knowledge and skills of each art form and most struggled to develop their children's understandings in these subjects. Most admitted that they taught the arts only irregularly and gave the arts a low priority compared with other subjects. These results confirm the findings from many reports into arts education in Australia over the years.

In Europe, the European Commission (2000) notes that there is an existing ranking of subjects within the curriculum with the arts being ranked one of the lowest of all subjects. Within the four art forms, drama and dance are often subsumed into other curriculum areas such as English or Physical Education. Robinson (1999) confirms this, commenting that policies of most European countries emphasise the importance of the arts in a child's development. However, in practice the arts are generally less prominent in their practice and provision.

The European Commission (2009) research indicates that in Ireland the arts are integrated in the early years but organised into separate subjects in later primary school where they are optional. The Irish curriculum places a strong emphasis on integration as one of its key principles and this is outlined in each of the individual arts syllabus documents. The generalist teacher is responsible for teaching the arts, however in a few schools specialist drama and music teachers are employed for these subjects.

Results from a 2002 report of the arts implementation in Ireland by the Department of Education and Science indicated that drama education as a discrete curriculum area is based on the 1971 curriculum. If it is implemented, drama education generally includes dramatic activities, linked with teaching Gaelic; however a few specific drama and mime lessons were also noted as happening in a few schools. It is hoped that the implementation of whole school evaluations and further staff development in Ireland, as noted in the Council of Europe (2011) report, will improve the practice of, and provision for, drama and arts education in Ireland as the paucity of provision of arts in Irish education has been well documented.

In black southern African cultures, Joseph and Klopper (2005), Mans (1997), Nketia (1998) and Woodward (2007) all confirm that drama and the other art forms have been integrally linked to life, both in the day to day home and work experiences as well as in the spiritual and festive celebrations. In the rural Southern African culture, children and young people learn about traditional customs and practices, obligations and responsibilities through their engagement in songs, drama and dances from a very early age.

In pre-apartheid Southern Africa Mans (2002), O'Sullivan (2000) and Russell-Bowie (2000) note that there were significant disparities between the quality of schools, resources and training of teachers, with the white schools having significantly higher quality in all these areas than the Indian or black African schools. Even in the post-apartheid era many of these latter schools struggle to reach optimum levels of quality in resources and teacher training and the arts are not a priority in these classrooms.

According to Mans (2002) two thirds of the Namibian population live in semi-rural and rural areas and are gradually getting access to sealed roads, electricity and communications systems. The lack of television and internet-based activities has led to these traditional communities developing strong self-constructed entertainment that includes music, drama (play) and dance, both by children and adults. Their community music play involves drama and pantomime as well as rhythm, movement, characterisation and imagination.

Within the school setting, the National Curriculum for Namibia, written by the Ministry of Education (2008) indicates that the arts, including dramatic forms are increasingly important and central to the development of the whole child. The arts are included as part of the basic competencies to develop communication skills. Although drama is mentioned as one of the art forms to be taught in the primary curriculum it is also noted that there is too little curriculum time to teach the arts, so after school co-curricular activities such as drama groups are recommended to supplement the curriculum.

In South Africa, Arts and Culture is one of the eight Learning Areas within the National Curriculum Statement, published by the Gauteng Department of Education (2002). As part of the Life Skills Program, Arts and Culture is seen as an integral part of life, integrating the spiritual, physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of children within society. The Arts

involve students in a broad experience of several art forms within diverse cultural contexts in the primary school, ensuring the integrity of the discrete art forms as well as valuing integrated learning experiences. However, as is the case in many countries, Gilbert (2005) notes that generalist primary teachers are expected to teach the arts to their children and few of them have adequate training or resources.

Although the discrete subject of drama may not be taught consistently across all South African primary classrooms, Carklin (1997) comments that drama is used as an intervention model in three ways: through a formal subject in school, as a methodology for teachers across the curriculum and as an outside intervention with theatre companies visiting school to teach about social issues such as Aids and Life Skills education.

In general across all five countries, drama and arts education in public primary schools do not seem to be a priority, and drama and dance are taught less often as specific subjects than are visual arts and music. This paper investigates the background and confidence of preservice generalist primary teachers in these five countries in relation to drama education.

Aim

This research is part of a larger unpublished research project that aimed to investigate the background and confidence of preservice primary teachers from five countries in relation to creative arts and creative arts education, covering music, dance, drama and visual arts. This paper is based on the questions from the survey that related specifically to drama.

This study examines the following questions:

1. Is there a reliable set of scales relating to confidence in drama education and background in drama that could be derived from the data using exploratory factor analysis?
2. How do generalist primary preservice teachers perceive their own background and confidence in relation to drama and drama education?
3. Is there a difference between the responses from preservice teachers in different countries in relation to their background and confidence in drama and drama education?
4. Is there a correlation between the preservice students' confidence and background?

Method

Participants

The participants included 936 university students enrolled in preservice education programs in Australia (41%), Namibia (20%), South Africa (27%), USA (6%) and Ireland (6%). A more even balance across the five countries would have been preferred, however these were the numbers of surveys that were returned.

Table 1 indicates the sample numbers and percentages of these countries. These institutions were selected on the basis of lecturers being willing to administer the instrument to their students and return the surveys to the author in Australia. The primary preservice generalist teachers were surveyed at the start of their first creative arts unit in the teacher education course.

In four out of the five countries drama was part of the creative arts Key Learning Area with USA being the only country where there was not an arts curriculum which included all four art forms.

Country	Creative arts as one Key Learning Area	N	%
Australia	YES	385	41
Namibia	YES	187	20
South Africa	YES	254	27
USA	NO	59	6
Ireland	YES	51	6
TOTAL		936	100

Table 1: Sample preservice teachers from five countries who completed the survey

The demographic details of the sampled students are included in Table 2. Of these students, 82% were females and 18% were males, 82% were aged 18 - 25 years, 18% were aged 26 years or older. Responses indicated that of the sampled students, 30% were in their first year, 25% were in their second year, 28% were in third year, 15% were in their fourth year and 1% responded with 'other'. It was also noted that some of the sampled institutions only had three years of teacher education while others had a four year course

Survey Item	Category	N	%
Sex	Females	750	82
	Males	162	18
Age	18-21	508	55
	22 – 25	252	27
Year level at University	Year 1	277	30
	Year 2	230	25
	Year 3	265	28
	Year 4	140	15
	Other	12	1

Table 2: Demographic details of sampled students

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was developed specifically for this study, but was based on a similar previously validated survey for primary teachers in relation to music education (Russell-Bowie 1993). The instrument for this current study focussed on preservice primary teachers, covered all four strands of the Creative Arts (music, dance, drama and visual arts) and was administered in five different countries. Apart from the demographic questions, each of the other questions had one stem with four endings, and each of the endings related either to music, visual arts, dance or drama. Students gave their responses on a five point Likert scale. Students were asked to complete the survey during lectures at each University or College and students took between 15 and 30 minutes to complete the surveys which were collected as students completed them. This study reports on those items related specifically to drama. In a follow up project it is anticipated that focus groups be developed to drill down into the results of this survey. However, for the initial survey, given the fact that participating lecturers in the five countries only agreed to distribute and collect the surveys, and were not positive about running focus groups to gain qualitative data.

Data Analysis

The raw data from the surveys were then entered into an SPSS file and analysed using factor analysis, reliability testing, cross tabulations and correlations. Statistical procedures were selected in light of the questions to be tested. A set of initial scales had been developed then exploratory principle component analysis with Varimax rotation was used to validate the

scales, and Cronbach alphas were computed to check reliability of the scales. Frequencies and cross tabulations of students' responses to these scales were also computed to gain an overview of the data and ANOVAs were used to test for differences between means. Listwise deletion of missing data was undertaken for each of the statistical analyses. Overall results for all sampled students were analysed using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) to identify if there was a correlation between the students' perceptions of their background and confidence.

Results

In relation to the focus questions of this study, the following results were found:

1. Is there a reliable set of scales relating to confidence in drama education and background in drama that could be derived from the data using exploratory factor analysis?

A selection of survey items that seemed to relate to aspects of confidence and background were examined using exploratory principle component analysis with Varimax rotation. This resulted in these survey items being grouped together to form two scales or factors (see Table 3). Factor 1 grouped items in relation to preservice teachers' perceptions of their formal drama background and Factor 2 grouped them in relation to their confidence and enjoyment of drama teaching. The criterion for selection of scale items was set at 0.5.

Table 3 lists the items from the survey which were used to ascertain students' perceptions of their drama background and abilities in drama education and shows the items grouped into factors or scales, the Cronbach alphas which indicate the scales' reliability, the mean and standard deviation for each item.

Factor 1, relating to the students' perceptions of their drama background, included five survey items. These focussed on whether or not students spent their leisure time involved in drama activities, whether their family was involved in drama activities, and if they had drama lessons outside of school. Factor 1 also included the survey items where sampled students indicated that they considered themselves to be an actor and if they felt they had a good background in Drama.

Factor 2, relating to the students' perceptions of their confidence and enjoyment in drama teaching, also included five survey items. These focussed on the sampled students feeling confident about teaching drama lessons, preferring to teach drama lessons in a team teaching situation, having taught successful drama lessons, enjoying the drama activities in lectures and being confident in teaching the different drama activities.

Item	Label (Factor loading)	Mean	SD
Factor 1: DRAMA Background (Cronbach Alpha = .71)			
<i>N of cases = 566</i>			
Q21d	In my leisure time I am often involved in Drama activities (.80)	2.1	1.4
Q22d	My family is often involved socially in Drama activities (.77)	2.1	1.4
Q23d	Outside of school I have had Drama lessons (.83)	1.9	1.4
Q25d	I consider myself to be an actor (.71)	2.3	1.6
Q36d	I have a good background in Drama (.59)	2.7	1.5
Factor 2: Confidence/enjoyment in DRAMA Teaching (Cronbach Alpha= .71)			
<i>N of cases = 566</i>			
Q33d	I feel confident about teaching Drama lessons (.73)	3.2	1.5
Q34d	In a team teaching situation, I would prefer to do Drama (.73)	3.2	1.5
Q37d	I have taught some successful Drama lessons (.61)	2.8	1.5
Q68a-e	I enjoy the different Drama activities in lectures (.75)	3.8	1.0
Q69a-e	I am confident teaching the different Drama activities (.81)	3.6	
	1.1		

Table 3: Items used to ascertain students' perceptions of their Drama background and abilities with Mean and SD as well as results of factor analysis.

- How do generalist primary preservice teachers perceive their own background and confidence in relation to drama and drama education?

When examining all the sampled students, over the five countries, results indicated that only 15% of the sampled students perceived that they had a good drama background prior to university (Factor 1), ie. the average mean of their perceptions of the 5 survey items in this factor were 4 or more (agree / strongly agree).

In relation to enjoyment and confidence in drama teaching (Factor 2) 46% of all the students indicated that they enjoyed and felt confident in teaching drama in the classroom, ie. the average mean of their perceptions of the 5 survey items in this factor were 4 or more (agree / strongly agree).

These results indicate that although almost half of the students indicated that they enjoyed drama teaching and felt confident to teach drama, 85% of them felt they had little background in drama.

- Is there a difference between the responses from preservice teachers in different countries in relation to their background and confidence in drama and drama education?

The next part of the study investigated whether or not there was a difference in responses from the students from the different countries in relation to their background in drama and their confidence in drama education (see Table 4). The results for Factor 1 (*Background in drama*) indicated that Namibian students' responses had a significantly higher mean (2.6) than those in Australia (1.0), USA (1.9) and Ireland (1.9). Similarly, the South African students' responses had a significantly higher mean (2.4) than those in Australia (1.0), USA (1.9) and Ireland (1.9). There were no significant differences between the means of students' responses in South Africa and Namibia in relation to their background in drama, although Namibian responses were slightly higher than their South African counterparts.

Factor 1: DRAMA background: 15% of all sampled students = Agree/Strong agree have a good background in Drama

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Australia	377	1.0 ^{^+*}	0.9
Namibia	176	2.6 ^{^*}	1.2
South Africa	235	2.4 ^{^*}	1.2
USA	59	1.9 ^{^+*}	1.0
Ireland	49	1.9 ^{^+*}	0.9

[^] Significant differences in background between Namibia and Australia, USA and Ireland.

⁺ Significant differences in background between South Africa, and Australia, USA and Ireland.

^{*} Significant differences in background between Australia, and Namibia, South Africa, USA and Ireland.

Factor 2: Confidence/enjoyment in teaching DRAMA: 46% = Agree/Strong agree have a enjoyment and confidence to teach Drama

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Australia	374	3.3 ^{^+}	1.0
Namibia	187	3.4 ⁺	1.1
South Africa	252	3.6 ^{^+}	1.0
USA	59	2.7 ^{^+}	1.0
Ireland	50	3.2 [^]	0.9

[^] Significant differences in confidence between South Africa, and Australia, USA and Ireland.

⁺ Significant differences in confidence between USA, and Australia, South Africa and Namibia.

Table 4: Significant differences between the perceptions of the students from different countries in relation to their background and confidence in drama education; Number, Means and SD of preservice teachers' background and confidence in relation to country.

When examining the results for Factor 2 (*Enjoyment and confidence in drama education*) once again Namibian and South African students scored higher than those in the other three countries. The means of the South Africa students' responses (3.6) were significantly higher than those students from Australia (3.3), Ireland (3.2) and USA (2.7). The means of the USA students (2.7) were significantly lower than those from South Africa (3.6), Australia (3.3) and Namibia (3.4). In general, the means relating to Factor 2 (*Enjoyment and confidence in drama education*) were much higher than those in relation to Factor 1 (*Background in drama*).

4. Is there a correlation between the preservice students' confidence and background?

Overall results for all sampled students were analysed using a Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's *r*) to determine the relationship between the students' perceptions of their background and confidence in drama teaching and education.

	Drama Background Coefficient / (Cases) / 2 – tailed significance	Drama Confidence Coefficient / (Cases) / 2 – tailed significance
Drama Background	1.0000 (n=866) P = .	.5600 (n=866) P =.000
Drama Confidence	.5600 (n=866) P =.000	1.0000 (n=866) P = .

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients indicating the relationship between the perceptions of the sampled students' Confidence and Background in Drama.

Results (see Table 5) indicated that there was a strong positive relationship between the sampled students' perceptions of their confidence and background ($r = .56$; $p = .000$), indicating that the stronger their background, the more confident the students perceived themselves to be in relation to teaching drama.

Discussion

The literature indicates that little emphasis is placed on drama education in public primary schools and the results from this study confirm the literature, with only 15% of the sampled students indicating that they have had a strong background in drama. Bamford (2006) and Robinson (1999) indicate that primary schools tend to marginalise the arts and focus on music and visual arts if they do include the arts in their primary classroom, so drama is left off the timetable or used with English or other subjects to assist learning outcomes from these subjects and not seen as a discrete subject in itself.

However, in contrast to their perceptions of their background in drama, almost half the students indicated that they enjoyed and felt confident in teaching drama in the classroom. Many of these students would not have had experience in teaching drama on practice teaching sessions as the survey was administered at the start of their creative arts course, so it is difficult to work out why they should feel confident about teaching the subjects despite their lack of background in drama. Research by Russell-Bowie et al (1995) indicates that if preservice teachers have a strong background in a subject then they will feel more confident about teaching it. The results from Research Question 4, examining if there is a correlation between students' perceived background and confidence in drama education, also indicate that there is a strong relationship between these two factors. Students who have a strong background in drama also feel confident in teaching drama and the stronger their perceived background, the more confident they are to teach the subject.

It is interesting to note that the results from Research Question 3 indicated that 15% of the students felt that they had a strong background and 46% of the sampled students indicated that they felt confident in teaching drama. This may be because the preservice teachers have a misperception about what drama includes, for example, they may think it is just giving children a script and having them read and perform it. This has been a fairly traditional approach to drama and one that students may have experienced in their primary school days. Or many of the students may have had no experience of drama in their primary schooling as the literature seems to indicate that very little drama education was being taught in primary schools in each of the five countries investigated. Without further investigation of this aspect of the data, perhaps through qualitative research, no conclusive reasons for these results can be given.

Once students understand that drama in the classroom can be much more creative, developmental and child-centred then they may change their perception of how confident they are in teaching drama. Perhaps results may have been different if the survey had been administered at the end of the students' creative arts unit instead of the beginning, as they would have had more understanding of the scope and content of drama education. Further qualitative research needs to be undertaken to investigate the reasons underlying these perceptions.

The main focus of the study was to investigate the differences between the perception of preservice teachers from different countries in relation to their background and confidence in drama education. The results indicated that the preservice teachers from Namibia and South Africa had a significantly stronger background in drama than those students in USA, Ireland and Australia. The results indicated that Australian students had a significantly poorer background in drama compared with those from the other countries. Most of the sampled students from the five countries would have been in primary school before drama was a discrete subject within the primary curriculum in the different countries, so this may be a reason why the responses from Australian, Irish and American preservice teachers indicate that they have a weak background in drama.

The Southern African preservice teachers who indicated they had a strong background in drama may have generally come from traditional black African backgrounds where the integration of music, drama and dance was part of their upbringing. This may have been taken into account as they answered the survey questions.

Culturally, the western preservice teachers have generally little background in music, dance or drama as they grow up, unless their parents pay for extra-curricular lessons in these subjects, or the children attend private schools. Thus, as Baum et al (1997) notes, primary aged school children tend not to be comfortable in moving their bodies creatively whether in dance, drama or movement to music. The strong focus on the basic skills testing in many schools in these western countries tends to marginalise the arts and train children not to take risks or be creative, so this could also have a bearing on the results from the western schools.

Also, the arts in western schools are divided into separate subjects, however, as Mans (1997) notes, in the traditional rural Southern African context the arts are integrated holistically as part of life outside of school. Joseph and Klopper (2005) confirm Mans' comments, indicating that children growing up in these rural traditional areas would be much more comfortable in dramatic play, dance and music as it is part of their life so this could also impact on why the Southern African students scored significantly higher in relation to background in drama than their western counterparts.

In relation to enjoyment of drama and confidence in teaching drama, South African students' responses were significantly higher than those from Australia, USA and Ireland, and the American students' responses were significantly lower in this area than the students' responses from each of the other four countries. Once again it appears that students from the western countries are not as confident in teaching drama than those from the African countries. The American literature seems to indicate that very few primary schools offered drama as a discrete subject and that students were involved in performances as the main object of drama lessons. This may have made the sampled students hesitant to indicate their confidence in teaching drama if they have had little experience of drama in primary school or if what experience they had, was based on performances. The new arts curricula which include drama emphasise the process nature of drama which is more important than the product, so those students who were familiar with this concept may have been more likely to indicate they were confident to teach drama lessons.

Conclusion

So can this situation be changed, or will preservice teachers continue to perceive that they have a weak background in drama? If, as the literature and these results indicate, preservice teachers do not have a strong background in drama and are hesitant to teach drama, the teacher education programs need to provide them with practical experiences to learn the knowledge and skills related to drama, to develop their confidence in drama education. Some research indicates that when students are engaged in practical and relevant learning experiences within their teacher education course, their attitudes, confidence and knowledge can change (eg. Campbell, McRobbie, Ginns and Stein, 2000; Flemming, Motamedi and May, 2007). Therefore arts educators need to present learning experiences that will promote a positive change in students' attitudes, confidence and knowledge. In drama education, this could include process drama as well integrating drama with other subjects, observation of quality drama lessons and development of personal drama skills of each student.

Process drama focuses on the *processes* involved in exploring and making drama, compared with drama that focuses on the final *product*. In process drama, the teacher and children work together, in and out of role, in an imagined world in which they create, develop and explore fictional roles, themes, issues and situations. Process drama activities may be less threatening to preservice teachers to learn and teach as they do not use written scripts. Rather they focus on improvising dramatic events that are created and developed over a period of time and are not limited to one-off experiences, lessons or scenes. Instead, children can explore problems, roles, issues, situations, themes or related ideas and learn to view and understand situations and people from different perspectives than their own to create authentic learning experiences (Russell-Bowie, 2102).

As seen in the research by Carklin (1997) and the National Center for Education Statistics (2002) some countries integrate drama with other subjects instead of presenting it as a discrete subject. Therefore teacher education courses can also focus on learning through drama. Although drama elements and techniques should be primarily used to develop dramatic learning experiences, they can also be very effectively used as an integral part of the learning process to help children learn about other subjects across the curriculum. Russell-Bowie (2012) notes that children with bodily-kinaesthetic and intrapersonal intelligences often find that they can develop a deeper understanding of the content and skills being taught if they can learn content and express what they know about the subject through drama.

In order to see quality drama lessons in action, preservice teachers also need to observe drama demonstration lessons being presented in the primary classroom. If logistically this is not possible, then videos of quality drama lessons should be available for the preservice teachers to view online or in lectures as this role modelling can impact positively on their own drama teaching. Finally, preservice teachers need to be given the opportunity to develop their own personal drama skills and enjoy quality live theatre performances. This could be done as an assignment where they have to be involved in a certain number of off-campus performances and workshops in drama to break down their negative attitudes to drama and to develop their personal confidence and experience in this area.

Although only 15% of the sampled students indicated they had an overall good background in drama, 46% of the students indicated they enjoyed drama and felt confident to teach drama. Given the paucity of their background in drama, it would be interesting to undertake some qualitative studies to follow up on the reasons behind these results. As these students enter our teacher education courses, teacher educators need to plan practical and carefully thought through courses to inspire students to teach drama, as well as giving them a

sound knowledge and practical skills to implement drama in the primary classroom. Maybe then a higher percentage of our preservice teachers will enter their teacher education courses with a strong background, confident to learn how to teach drama in primary schools!

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