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The pedagogical choices of specialist and out-of-field Grade 9 drama teachers

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Abstract

Drama is a specialized field of knowledge included in the South African Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as part of the Creative Arts learning area in Grades 7 to 9 curriculum. There are few Drama specialists in the country so there is a widespread tendency to allocate out-of-field teachers to teach the Creative Arts. This study investigated the pedagogic choices made by both specialist and out-of-field teachers with respect to teaching the poetry section of the Grade 9 Drama curriculum. Shulman's (1986;1987) knowledge base for teaching was the framework for discussion of the knowledge required for a teacher to teach a particular subject.

Data was gathered through structured interviews with 2 specialist and 2 out-of-field teachers to explore the reasons for choices they made for teaching the poetry section of the grade 9 Drama curriculum, and the grounds for their choices. Broad analysis of content and pedagogic content knowledge provided an understanding of the differences and similarities in pedagogic practices among these teachers; and provided further insight into the pedagogic choices made by specialist and out-of-field Drama teachers.

Although the study was a small-scale study the findings suggest that out-of-field teaching in Drama does not necessarily amount to an inability to teach Drama. If there are some intersections between content of the teachers' specialist subject and Drama, then it may be feasible to teach Drama despite a lack of specialization or training in Drama. The study also found that training in a particular subject does not guarantee effective or meaningful teaching of the subject.

Keywords: Drama teaching, out-of-field teachers, knowledge base for teaching, pedagogic choices