



The Music Education Background of Teachers in Ghanaian Public Primary Schools in Winneba Region of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the music backgrounds of primary school classroom teachers who teach the music component of the Creative Arts in selected primary schools in Winneba, Ghana. Data were collected and analysed qualitatively with a case study as a design. Interview and observation were used as research instruments which enabled the researcher to identify and describe the actual music education background of teachers in the selected primary schools. This study revealed that there were virtually few specialist trained music teachers in the primary schools. As a result, most of the teachers in the selected schools did not teach the music aspect of the Creative Arts subject because they lack the skills and the knowledge for it. The evidence conclusively pointed to the fact that the teaching and learning of the music component of Creative Arts in the primary schools was ineffective and left in the hands of teachers who did not have adequate knowledge and skills and did not make enough effort to teach it. It is suggested that, Colleges of Education should therefore train specialist teachers for all the aspects of Creative Arts in the primary schools, especially Music.

Keywords: classroom teachers, creative arts, music, primary school



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Introduction

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the body responsible for music education policy in schools in England as mentioned in Hargreaves, Marshall & North (2003) explained the numerous benefits of music education to a child:

“Music is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act. It brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development. As an integral part of culture, past and present, it helps pupils to understand themselves and relate to others, forging important links between the home, school and the wider world. The teaching of music develops pupils’ ability to listen and appreciate a wide variety of music and to make judgements about musical quality. It encourages active involvement in different forms of amateur music making, both individual and communal, developing a sense of group identity and togetherness. It also increases self-discipline and creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment.”
(QCA, 2003).

Hence, music which is an art is a vital component of any good school curriculum of any country. This was confirmed by Heneghan (2001) in Music Education National Debate (MEND) that, “Music and (Music) education may therefore be regarded as an inseparable pair, mutually indispensable if, as in other areas of human endeavour, music is to survive and progress from generation to generation. We thus have posited the proposal that music should be incorporated in the education process, which can be formal or informal, to name the generally accepted division in the perception of modes of transmission.”

Flolu & Amoah (2003) disclosed that, music was first introduced into the Ghanaian school curriculum during the colonial era when missionary activities expanded in the then Gold Coast. Consequently, there was the need to train teachers for the mission schools and the local church work. These trainees after undergoing this experience were supposed to teach songs like the western hymns of the various doctrines. It was at this point that music was introduced into the Ghanaian school curriculum. One could deduce that, the experience of music in the curriculum before Ghana gained independence (that was colonial era) was solely for missionary purpose. As a result, it was just meant for the advancement of the western religious practice in the Gold Coast and nothing else. In addition, this confirms the absence of the native music (Ghanaian traditional Music) in the school system during the period. Of course, anything traditional was considered by the missionaries as devilish, which was seen contrary to the Western Religious believe. This is where Hargreaves, et al. (2003) in British Journal of Music Education asked “what are arts and music education for? Is

music an end in itself, such that music education presumably ought to promote musical and artistic skills, or does it have broader personal and cultural aims?"

On the contrary to the purpose of the missionaries' introduction of music in the Ghanaian curriculum, many scholars exposed that, music in any curriculum goes beyond teaching rudiments and singing. This follows the line of reasoning by Ebeli (2013) in her assertion that, music in basic classroom should provide the opportunity for all children to be exposed to variety of musical experiences and should be allowed to talk about musical performances. In the same vein, Mubita et al in Herbst (2005) explained that, the role of music is to motivate and refresh the learner in the course of teaching and learning. This is also to say that, it serves as a medium and as well aids teaching and learning of subjects like Mathematics, English, and Science among others. Mubita et al in Herbst went further to confirm that, music can be used as a starter. That is for introduction of lesson in order to arouse the interest of the learners. Aside that, various words in these different subject areas can be put into music for easy memorisation, a competency skill every learner must have. Again, they mentioned music can be used to convey vital information or ideas to learners on some important issues. I strongly agree with the above authors on the role that music education play in the general education of a child. Apart from helping and making the delivery of other subjects easy, it also has its own peculiar benefits that the learner turns to gain from when studied effectively and efficiently. Some typical examples are some numerous self-satisfying and lucrative carrier opportunities in the Creative Arts industry.

Nonetheless, Flolu & Amoah revealed that, even after independence, missionary influence in Ghana was so strong that there was no significant change in the structure of music teaching and learning curriculum even in the Colleges of Education. Meaning, the focus was still on the singing of English hymns and patriotic songs, rudiments of music and theory of western music. As a result, most of the materials studied by teacher trainees had no relevance for student teacher as far as teaching music was concerned in the elementary school. Since the Training College syllabus had no bearing on teaching music in the first cycle schools. Many newly trained teachers especially those who had the opportunity to be posted to the missionary schools, used the music period on the time table for teaching of Western Hymns and other English songs. Under these circumstances, music education in the elementary school became stagnant and remained virtually a singing lesson.

In the 1970s, there was a reform which was different in structure and content from what was inherited from the colonial masters in the Ghanaian educational sector. This was necessary because it has been realised Ghana inherited an educational system where citizens were trained to run an administration and an economy which still depends on other countries for support. Educational system could not give citizens enough skills to secure an appropriate employment, solve environmental problems and

also there was the need to develop a structure which will enable children get access to the then free compulsory basic school education. Flolu & Amoah pointed out that, the new content of the syllabus at the primary school after the reform included Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Cultural Studies (where music was embedded), Ghanaian languages, English, Agriculture, life Skills and Physical Education. For the JSS, Technical Drawing, Pre-technical Skills and Pre-vocational Skills were added to the subjects studied at the Primary School level.

In 2007, Creative Art subject was introduced into Ghana's primary school curriculum. Currently, Music has been made part of the Creative Art subject in the Primary School but from my observation and a few interviews with my students as a Senior High School teacher, class teachers in the primary schools do not pay attention to music teaching. They rather use the music period for extra curriculum activities or to teach other subjects. In Krehbiel's (1990) study, as stated in Collins (2016) held that, classroom teachers ranked the arts including music as the least important subject they taught. An empirical studies on primary school teachers indicated that, although music was taught them at the Training College (now Colleges of Education) , it was offered in one of the first year semesters as core and subsequently as an elective subject in the second year. Few students opt to offer it because majority of them had no basic lessons in music when they were in basic school hence the lack of interest and ability for the subject. The implication is that, they have little or nothing to teach during the music period when they come to the field.

When you come to the Junior High School, music is not on the time table at all in some schools. This is because the subject is not examinable at that level. Hence most headteachers and teachers see the teaching of music as a waste of time. This therefore creates a very big gap since some students moving to the next level from Junior High School may meet it as an optional subject at the Senior High School. The General Arts and Visual Arts have the option to select music as an elective. But the lack of basic knowledge and skills may not allow talented and interested students, because they do not have the pre requisite knowledge to be able to offer the subject. Therefore the absence of music at some levels and stages in the Ghanaian educational system especially the primary schools has a negative effect on individuals who desire to read music and making it a carrier.

Statement of the Problem

Although the main focus of the Creative Arts syllabus was critical and creative thinking, problem solving and socio-economic progress, the teaching and learning of the music aspect of it has become an area of concern. There were some factors hindering the teaching and learning of the musical component of the Creative Arts subject, for instance, inadequate funding, insufficient curriculum resources, poor teaching skills and lack of support for teachers among others. These further, serve as limitations for music

teaching and learning in the schools. It has been noticed that, some teachers find it difficult to interpret the syllabus and plan their lessons while others could not teach the music aspect of the Creative Arts at all, simply because they lacked the requisite knowledge and skills needed to teach it effectively. Even those teachers who seemed to understand the importance of Creative Arts to their pupils' learning and creative development often ignore the teaching of Creative Arts for lack of artistic skills. They prefer using instructional periods allotted to Creative Arts, which music is a component, on the school timetable to teach English, Mathematics and Integrated Science (Ampeh, 2011). It is in this regard that the researcher seeks to investigate the Music Education background of teachers who teach the Music component of the Creative Arts in selected primary schools in Winneba so as to understand the difficulties and the problems that come with it and make recommendations for changes that could improve the situation.

Who should teach Music?

In many parts of the world, generalist teachers teach all subjects including music in primary schools. This is not different from what goes on in Ghana. Right from primary one to six, generalist teachers are the personal. Specialist teaching begins from the Junior High School.

Opoku-Asare, Tachie-Menson & Ampeh (2015) disclosed that, Generalist teachers cannot support or foster pupils' ability to think in sound, to solve musical problems, and for that matter, teach Creative Arts effectively. With respect to music, Wiggins and Wiggins (2008) in Opoku-Asare, Tachie-Menson & Ampeh (2015) assert that generalist teachers lack both the requisite content knowledge of music and the pedagogical knowledge to teach music effectively to benefit their pupils. According to <http://alleducationschools.com> music teacher at elementary and secondary public schools are special breed who are specially educated in this subject area and credentialed as teachers. Music teaching in Ghanaian schools should be the responsibility of specialist music teachers who have had considerable training in the implementation of a curriculum underscored by the Music Education as Socio-Emotional Education and the Curriculum (MESEE) philosophical orientation. Tertiary institutions responsible for the teaching of music educators are requested to prepare graduates with skills and knowledge that will enable them translate the curriculum based on the MESEE philosophy for the benefit of in-training teachers they prepare to teach in the basic schools. I strongly agree and personally, I believe that one who must teach music should be that person who is so passionate about music and has at least gone through the required education in the field of music, who has preferably, a degree in music and also enthusiastic about children. This is in reference to persons who want to teach in the schools.

Research Question

What is the music educational background of teachers who teach in the public primary schools in the selected school in Winneba?

Significance of the Study

The study has brought to light the current state of the teaching and learning of the music component of the Creative Arts in some selected schools in Winneba. The study provides stakeholders with detailed information about the actual picture of music teaching and learning. Although many factors affect the teaching and learning of the music component of the Creative Arts but the teachers' background is key. With suggestions like organisation of in-service training, seminars, workshops, teacher preparedness, competence and commitment of the teacher, there would be an improvement on the issue of inadequate knowledge for teachers to deliver.

Research Design and Methodology

The researcher used a case study design which focused on four selected primary schools in Winneba, Ghana. Stake. (1994 & 1995) as stated in Vanderstoep, S. W. & Scott, W. (2009) explicitly explained that, Case study design enables the researchers to present an analysis of the major themes or issues that emerge from the investigation, and also provide interpretations or recommendations, hence the use of case study design. Qualitative method was also chosen because it empowers researchers to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. They do not bring individuals into a lab (a contrived situation), nor do they typically send out instruments for individuals to complete. This up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context (Creswell, 2014).

The Study Area

The Effutu Municipal Assembly is one of the 216 districts in Ghana and one of the 17 districts in the Central Region. It was carved from the then Awutu- Effutu-Senya-District Assembly and it covers a total land area of about 64 square kilometers. It is about 60km from Accra, the capital of the Republic of Ghana and about 40 minutes travelling time from the regional capital. It is located between latitudes 5°16' and 20.18"N and longitudes 0°32' and 48.32"W of the eastern part of Central Region.

Winneba which is the district capital is about 66 km west of Accra, Ghana's capital, on the Accra – Takoradi road. Medium sized and traditionally known as Simpa, Winneba is the principal town of the Effutu State founded around 1530 AD. According to history, the name Winneba originated from sailors who plied along the Atlantic Coast and who were often aided along the bay by a favourable wind. From their constant use of the words "windy bay" the name Winneba was coined. The indigenous

dialect of Winneba is Effutu but Fante is also widely spoken. As a coastal town the principal occupation of the people is fishing. The main types of fish produced are tilapia and mudfish. The system of fishing is mainly by motorized canoe, which engages about 6,000 fishermen. The main fishes caught are herrings, shrimps, tuna, lobster and octopus.

The Municipality has several unique traditional festivals and cultural practices some of which include Aboakyer festival, Masqueraders festival, Shrines; traditional village cultures and monuments which are of interest to Tourists. The Municipal Assembly is therefore putting emphasis on the promotion of cultural and eco-tourism.

The Municipality is grouped under three (circuits) for the purposes of education management. The Municipality has 30 private Nurseries/Creche, 42 KGs made up of 17 public and 25 private. There are 42 primary schools made up of 19 public and 23 private and 26 Junior High Schools consisting of 16 public and 10 private. The Winneba Senior High School is the only public second cycle institution and there are six (6) Private Senior High Schools in the Municipality. Retrieved from www.efuttumucipalassembly.comon on 20th September, 2014.

Data Collection

For the purposes of this research, the study population comprises a cross section of four (4) selected primary schools base in Winneba. These schools were A.M.E Zion Basic School, Roman Catholic Primary School 'B', Roman Catholic Primary School 'C' and Presbyterian Primary School. A convenient sample of 8 participants being teachers was selected from the four schools to undergo interview. That is two from each school. Also, a class was randomly picked in each school for observation. Data was obtained from primary and secondary sources. The foremost data was gathered through interaction with the participants which provided enough evidence on the field. Meanwhile the secondary source was obtained from materials which were published. Preceding to going to the selected schools to conduct interviews and observation, contacts were made with the head teachers and the participating teachers in order to deliver letters to inform each school of the nature of the research and to acquire the assurance of their participation. The list of topics for interview was made know to the participants and a chance was taken to discuss the purpose of the research. This was to help the participants feel free to express their views during the research process.

Findings

The musical backgrounds of teachers

The researcher found out the educational level of respondents and this was reflected in the table below.

Table I: Level of Education of Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teachers' Certificate 'A'	1	12.5 %
Teachers' Diploma	4	50%
Degree	3	37.5 %
Total	8	100%

Table I. Reveals that (1) 12.5 % of the eight (8) teachers observed held the Ghana Teachers Certificate 'A' qualification whereas (4) representing 50% held Diploma in Basic Education. Another minority of 37.5 % being (3) had University Education. This is an indication that all the teachers in the sampled schools are qualified to teach in the primary schools because they have the requisite training and qualifications that are required to teach in Ghanaian primary school. The data also suggests that the introduction of Distance Education option of some Universities in Ghana has given some primary school teachers the chance to further their education while also teaching in their respective classrooms. As a result 50% of the respondents acquired the Diploma Certificate which is higher than the certificate "A" previously the minimum qualification for teaching in Ghanaian schools. If all these teachers hold the above qualifications, then it means each one of them had tasted a music course during their training as teachers.

The first question about the musical backgrounds of teachers was aimed at finding out whether teachers at the selected primary schools had received any training in music across the curriculum. That is, in the schooling life time of the respondents, from Basic School, through Senior High School to Tertiary. Respondents submitted that, all of them who attended Collages of Education had the opportunity to study music for a semester in the first year and so had the chance to choose music as an elective subject, when they were pursuing their teaching career program. However, because most of them did not have any music background from the primary school as well as the Senior High School, they were inclined to neglect Music Elective. They explained that, even the few who choose it then (when they were in college) did not get the in-depth understanding of the course before coming out of school. In this case, they were not well equipped to teach the Music component in the Creative Arts subject. Collins, 2016 agree by adding that, achieving competence in a subject area is made far more difficult when the student enters a course with a low level of subject knowledge and receives minimum instruction in it. Yet these are the teachers who are supposed to teach all subjects effectively and efficiently in the primary school in each class they are assigned.

Another informant who happened to be a music teacher in one of the selected schools, because she continued the music program to the degree level, underscored this fact that, all of the class teachers in her school do not have enough knowledge about music. And so certainly, they overlook the music aspect of the Creative Arts. So then the music periods within the Creative Arts were used for teaching other subjects or better still become a free period. According to her, she intervenes whenever she is free, but it rarely happens because they are all independent class teachers, hence leaving her class for a music lesson in another class would interfere with her teaching schedule for the day.

It was also observed that, five out of the eight respondents do not even prepare lesson notes on music. At least a lesson plan would guide the teacher on what to engage the pupils in. Instead, the periods were used for entertainment which was led by the class teachers. They lead the pupils in singing of popular music like gospel, dance, jump, and clap and make themselves happy. Yes these were musical activities but they must be planned to fall in line with the aims and the objectives of teaching and learning of music in the curriculum. These teachers indicated that, although they are deficient in music knowledge, they love songs and also love to sing. Some are even song leaders at their various Christian Religious Denominations. That is why they engage the pupils in singing during the music period. A similar thing which happened during the colonial era mentioned earlier on.

Having given all these information, participants from these sampled schools expressed serious worry vis-à-vis the current state of primary school music teaching and learning practices in their schools as well as other schools in Winneba. The teachers reported that, they have observed a trend taking place in their schools in which there were fewer or no music specialists to teach the music component of the Creative Arts at the primary school level (primary-6) as a result of an alarming increase in the number of primary schools teachers that have little or no knowledge in music education at all. According to a teacher, from a school;

“...especially at the class one (1) to six (6) level, music teaching has been neglected, to the point where most kids at class 1 to 6 don't actually have any consistent contact with music lessons. This is as a result of the background of teachers who mount the primary classes.”

Discussion

Musical background of teachers

Quality teaching of music necessitates qualified, proficient and dedicated teachers with adequate subject matter knowledge and effective teaching skills. Interview with respondents indicated that, schools do not have enough qualified, proficient and dedicated music teachers. Furthermore, music teachers seldom have opportunities for

professional development in order to improve their knowledge and teaching skills. As a result, these teachers who happen to be generalist teachers do not show enough interest to develop learners' (pupils') interest in music.

Participants expressed a clear opinion that too much is expected of teachers with regards to teaching all the aspects of the Creative Arts, therefore, most of the teachers considered this a huge demand on their individual skills and knowledge. A statement which confirmed the situation expressed by a respondent was "I studied mathematics as elective in school and did not get the chance to study very well the music aspects of the Creative Arts before, how am I expected to teach topics in this area in my classroom?" It is then true that the musical background of a teacher affects what he or she teaches.

In a broad-spectrum, teaching the two main components of the Creative Arts is an impracticable demand from the generalist who does not have in-depth knowledge and requisite skills. The Creative Arts subject is a broad area of study which has Performing Arts and Visual Arts as two main branches. Even the Performing Arts itself has another three main dimensions being Music, Dance and Drama. As such the sampled teachers involved in the study considered this beyond most classroom teachers' skills and knowledge.

On what the teachers do when they come across music topics in the creative Arts, 50% of the respondents told the researcher that they skip them and move on to a different topic whereas 20 % of them said they either ask a friend to teach it or consult a resource person for further instruction and teach it themselves only 30% to their best to teach it.

In drawing attention to the problem, I do so in full awareness of the fact that the critical subjects that materialized in this teacher's background concerned the nature of teacher knowledge of;

- a) Needed practical understanding and skills for teaching the music aspect of the Creative Arts subject, and
- b) The interest of teachers for the subject.

Obviously, a number of issues can be identified as contributing to the inability of schools to do significant classroom music in the selected primary schools. However, the main factor was the capability of primary school teachers to deliver an efficient and an in-depth music lessons.

Again, the researcher believes it is too much of a burden to expect primary teachers to teach all subject areas of the primary curriculum effectively considering their lack of specialized training. This supports Alexander et al (1992) as cited in Opoku-Asare et al (2015) proposition that the curriculum for primary school

education is a far too demanding expectation of a generalist teacher's subject knowledge.

Conclusion

Taking a brief, sweeping look, Music teachers are expected to have certain level of knowledge and skills in order to teach music effectively, meanwhile, participants' submissions indicated that that, they consider these items to be very important but not adequately addressed in their carrier training as generalist teachers. It has been established that, majority of the classroom teachers (generalist teachers) who mount the primary in the selected primary schools for this study lack the requisite knowledge, the understanding and skills to teach the music component of the creative arts effectively. This is because they have not acquired enough to execute the teaching effectively and efficiently. Some teaches who would want to avoid disgrace and embarrassment do not make the attempt to teach the music at all. As a result, the preparation of teachers for primary schools in Ghana regarding content must be reviewed. This highpoints the significance of outlining teacher education reforms within the perspectives of disciplines.

Recommendation

From the research findings of this study conducted in four primary schools in Winneba, Ghana, there is vivid evidence that teachers in the primary school who teach the music component of the creative arts lack adequate knowledge and skills due to their fragile background in the subject. For this reason, it is therefore recommended that:

- i. The Ministry of Education should liaise with Ghana Education Service to organise workshops on the music aspect of the creative arts for these teachers so as to instil content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and some form of practical skills in these teachers who will in turn teach the pupils in the primary schools. Apart from that, at least one specialist music teacher can be recruited in every primary school to teach only music. He or she must be responsible for all the classes in the primary school.
- ii. Teacher employment agency (Ghana Education Service) and policy makers should employ subject teaching in the primary schools so that various subjects like creative arts and its components would be handled by the respective professionals. There are a lot of music teachers who complete the university and are still home because of unemployment issues. Therefore, if subject teaching is embarked on, many of those people will have work to do.

- iii. Further study should be embarked on to identify the most appropriate ways to prepare classroom teachers (generalist) in the Music teaching aspects of Creative Arts. It does seem, however, that teacher respondents feel that this area should be addressed in the courses pursued in the Collages of Education in the country. This can be achieved by intensifying the music program in the Collages of Education and also reviewing of its content to suit what a teacher must know as a primary school teacher.

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