

The Challenges of Music Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools in Offinso South Municipality

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the teaching of music and dance in primary schools in some selected schools in Offinso Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The research design was a survey design. The sample size was 50 teachers from primary schools in Offinso south municipality. The primary instruments for data collection used were interviews and questionnaire. It was found out that majority of the teachers at the primary school level have degrees in other subjects other than music and dance and this affected their teaching of music because they are not specialist teachers. Major challenges teachers encounter when teaching music and dance include lack of teaching implements, negative attitude of teachers towards the subject, and lack of textbooks. It was recommended that music and dance should be separated from the Creative Arts and make it an examinable subject like the other subjects in the National Curriculum.

Keywords: Music and dance, Attitude, Generalist program, Specialist program

Introduction

The importance of providing learning experience that enable African children to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding of traditional music and dance of their own environment and those of their neighbours is now generally recognised, for without this preparation, they may not be able to participate fully in the life of their communities to which they belong Nketia (1999).

Music determines the totality of human beings. Music is a powerful tool to determine conservation, growth and transmission of cultures of various societies and form part in all activities. Music is reserved for religious rites, recreational activities, political, social and all forms of economic activities. Indeed it is not practicable to separate music from the life of the African child and cannot be separated from human life. So to deny children our rich musical cultural values means denying part of the child's total and holistic development.

Hence this research work will be based on the teaching of music in the Ghanaian primary schools.

In many countries generalist primary school teachers are now expected not only to teach English, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Physical Education and many other across curriculum perspectives, but also to have basic knowledge, skills and confidence to teach music, visual arts, dance and drama. This is despite the fact that many of them have not been adequately trained in any or some of these arts subjects. As a result, many primary schools across a variety of countries have less than adequate music and other arts education programmes. Some of the problems identified include; teachers perception of low confidence and competence, lack of resources, time and priority to implement an effective music programme resulting in the marginalization of music education and programmes in schools.

In the case of Ghana, music and dance is a compulsory subject in the primary school phase, it is treated as a 'non-examinable' subject and learner progress is thus not officially assessed and monitored. Music education in Ghanaian primary schools is being taught by general classroom teachers who have had no formal music training apart from their exposure to this discipline during their general training at the Teacher Training Institutions or Colleges of Educations.

Given the specialised nature of music, these two aspects raise concerns about the quality of music education in Ghanaian primary schools, especially with regards to the teacher proficiency and commitment.

My study focused on the teaching of music in primary schools where in the case of Ghana, teachers, who, are not music specialists but nonetheless are expected to implement the Ghana Creative Arts curriculum to achieve its goals and objectives effectively.

It was found that Generalist primary classroom teachers, because of their own poor music experience at school, and because of inadequate teacher training in the Arts education, lack confidence, skill and competence to teach the arts which music is among. As a result, there is a strong impulse to marginalise the arts in their teaching.

Some of the challenges facing generalist teachers include; lack of knowledge and skills about the syllabus requirements, lack of time to prepare music lessons, not enough time in the teaching day, lack of priority for music, lack of personal musical experience and lack of adequate resources.

These are similar to the problems identified by Van Niekerk (1997) in South Africa, Mills (1989) in England and SERCARC (1995) in Australia. Lack of time and priority for music education were also identified by Roulston (1997) and Lean (1997), and McPherson (1997) identifies the lack of teacher confidence and skills as well as the inadequacy of training institutions to train teachers effectively in music education as key problems

in the implementation of effective music and dance programmes in primary schools. This study examines the teaching of music in the primary schools by primary school teachers in the Offinso South Municipality, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers in Ghanaian primary schools are required to teach music as part of the overall curriculum. Music is one strand of the Creative Arts in which many teachers displays a low level of confidence and competence to teach. This trend has been evident in many primary schools and has resulted in a decline in status of general school curriculum and its relegation to the periphery of curriculum importance. Yet music is considered to be an important subject that contributes significantly to the Childs' total development.

Primary teachers are prepared for music teaching in primary schools. Many opportunities also exist for broad societal exposure to varied forms of music. Most teachers have the perception that they have limited abilities and content knowledge to teach music and dance. Indeed adequate knowledge and skills is required of one to be able to provide appropriate and adequate music education for primary school pupils.

In a situation-specific context such as the teaching of music in early childhood education settings, any concerns that pre-service teachers have about their competence as music educators may eventually result in the implementation of poorly conceptualized and ineffective learning experiences in music that involve little more than a token commitment of effort and time.

If people tend to avoid situations they believe exceed their capabilities, but undertake activities they judge themselves capable of handling (Bandura, 1977), it is imperative to find ways to foster pre-service teachers' self-efficacy to teach music.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the teaching of music and dance in primary schools in some selected schools in Offinso Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

Research Question

1. What is the correlation between professional qualification and the ability of teachers to teach music?
2. What are the challenges primary school teachers' faces in teaching music?

Methodology

The research design was a survey design. The research involved all primary school teachers carrying out educational programmes in the Offinso South Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Educationally, the municipality has been divided into six circuits, namely; Offinso "A", "B", "C", "D" and Abofour "A" and "B". Currently, there are fifty eight public primary schools and twenty private schools in the Municipality with a total number of one thousand two hundred primary school teachers. As at the time of collecting the data the total number of primary schools in the Municipality was seventy-eight (78). The total number of teachers used for the study was fifty (50). This was made up of Males (30.0%) and Females (70.0%). Their ages ranged from age 21-55years. The participants that are generalist teachers teaching in Ghanaian primary schools were purposively selected from schools within the Offinso South Municipality through the permission of the Municipal Education Administration and the Head teachers of the selected schools who agreed to allow the teachers to participate in the study. The primary instruments for data collection used were interviews and questionnaire. The period for collection of the data was spanned between 16 weeks.

Results/Discussion

Research Question 1

What is the correlation between professional qualification and the ability of teachers to teach music and dance?

Table 1: Training and Music Qualification

Training and music qualification		Frequency	Percentage %
Initial tr. train.mus. educ.	Yes	40	80.0
	No	10	20.0
Formal musical training.	Yes	5	10.0
	No	45	90.0
Any musical qualification	Yes	3	6.0
	No	47	94.0

It is clear from table 1 that most of the respondents received initial training from college. Lawson et al (1994) noted that 'some teachers interviewed have received musical tuition as part of their initial professional training' (p. 13). Gifford (1993) researched this aspect of music education in a study which aimed to examine

how student teachers' musical skills, teaching ability, musical sensitivity and attitudes towards music were advanced through a music education. This question was asked if teachers have any musical qualifications, arising from the above points and from the comment by Thomas (1997), asserted that 'only a very small proportion of teachers in primary schools have any qualifications in music, even at a comparatively modest level' (p.220). Teacher's professional identities are informed in part by their early experiences in schools, these appeared to be characterised by praxis shock. McCormack, Gore and Thomas (2003) study found that early-career teachers had difficulties in achieving a 'solid professional identity' in their first year teaching as they struggled with consolidating their prior images of teachers with the realities faced in the classroom. In this way, the early experiences of classroom teachers combine with personal beliefs and prior experiences to form the professional identity of a teacher, which informs teachers' future practices (Hawkey, 1996).

Table 2: Academic and professional qualification of teachers

Teacher qualification	Frequency	Percent (%)
Teachers. Certificate. "A"	7	14.0
Diploma in Music	1	2.0
Degree in Music	2	4.0
Degree in other subjects	31	62.0
Diploma in other subjects	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

From table 2, it is evident that the majority of the respondents have degrees in other subject areas. Seven (7) out of 50 representing 14.0% holds Teachers Certificate "A", 1 and 2 representing 2.0% and 4.0% respectively holds Diploma and Degree in Music respectively. Twenty (31) of the respondents which is the majority represents 62.0% holds degrees in other subject and the remaining 9 representing 18.0% holds diploma in other subject areas. This statement is supported by Thomas (1997) that only a small proportion of primary teachers have any qualification in music education. Lawson, et.al (1994) indicates that having specialist teacher for music increases its image as a subject which can be taught in greater quality and depth by specialists.

Research Question 2:

What are the challenges primary school teachers' face in teaching music and dance? Challenges primary school teachers face in teaching music and dance are presented on table 2.

Table 2: Challenges teachers encounter in teaching music

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of textbook	10	20.0
Lack of teachers handbook	4	8.0
Lack of teaching implements	17	34.0
Negative attitude of teachers towards the subject	9	18.0
Lukewarm attitude of pupils towards the subject	4	8.0
Negative attitude of parents towards the subject	6	12.0
Total	50	100.0

In this questionnaire, teachers were asked to indicate some of the challenges they encounter in teaching music and dance as a subject, 10 out of 50 representing 20.0% ticked lack of textbooks as their major problem, 4(8.0%) ticked lack of teachers handbook. Lack of teaching implements were also identified by 17 respondents representing 34.0%, 9 (18.0%) responded to the negative attitude of teachers towards the subject, lukewarm attitude of pupils and negative attitude of parents towards music were also represented by 4(8.0%) and 6(12.0%) respectively.

Arguments supporting this view can be found in the research literature. Nzewi (1999) thinks that one of the problems sub-Saharan African countries are grappling with is lack of facilities for music teaching and learning. Akrofi (1998) confirms that equipments like stereos, television, and video tapes which are useful to enhance the teaching and learning of African music are non-existent in most of the schools in Ghana. This is clear from the above that music education is not a priority in Basic Schools, second cycles, Colleges and Universities in Ghana and the entire Africa as whole. Van Niekirk (1997), Mills (1989), Binns (1994) and Tillman (1988) agree that generalist teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach music. Wragg (1994) confirmed that confidence to teach music is lower than most other subjects. This is also supported by Odam (1979) that music "challenges teachers to reveal areas of knowledge and skill which in many are sources of severe feelings of inadequacy.

Responses from the Interviews and the Questionnaire

Most of the respondents agreed to the fact that the initial training acquired during pre-service was quiet good but because the subject has no value and they do not take it serious. HMI (1991) asserts that the quality of work in music, more than in other subjects depended largely on one or more teachers with specialist expertise. HMI discovered that music is more often taught by specialist teachers than any other subject at primary levels, and

that where such teaching is well planned and appropriately managed it results in high standards of musical work. It was also recognised that the presence of a specialist teacher is usually associated with good quality work in the subject whether or not the teacher is mainly employed in specialist teaching and comments the availability of a teacher with expertise in music is a crucial factor in achieving success. It was found that some of the primary school teachers never had any training in music because they studied education in the universities after completing the polytechnics. Consequently, music plays second fiddle to the “so-called” actual subjects (i.e. science, mathematics, English).

However, an interesting role played by the subject is that anytime there is boredom setting in their classes, songs are performed by the pupils as means of rekindling them or boosting their moral in order to begin and end their lessons successfully.

Another problem that was unveiled during my interview concerned the non-professional teachers. According to them their music teachers in the secondary schools used singing to begin all music lessons which were the accredited way of handling the subject. They could teach them how to play some of the African musical instruments, like “Atumpan”, “Apentema” and “Dono”. They invited personnel from outside the school who assisted them to prepare students towards programs organised in their various schools, however they could not teach the theory aspect of the subject, neither did they invite personnel from outside to assist in the teaching of the theory of music. As a result, they are half-baked music teachers. Their problem, to them is their incapability to impart knowledge of the theoretical aspect of music to their pupils.

The attention offered by students during pre-service preparation to the subject is a contributing factor to the failure of professional teachers to handle creditably in the teaching of music. Students do not attach importance to music and subjects that are not externally examinable, although teachers who handle those subjects pull their full weight behind the impartation on knowledge to them. Students rather adopt the strategy of memorization for examination after which they forget everything or most of the aspects taught to them. This attests to the inability of the professional teachers to perform efficiently and confidently.

According to them, the support needed for the enhancement of effective music teaching is not forthcoming. For effective music teaching to be achieved there is the need for the provision of implements that will help to promote effective teaching and learning of the subject. Materials like textbooks, musical instruments which should be provided by the government to enhance teaching and learning of music are not forthcoming. Finances to be used in the organization of musical programs in the schools as well as in the Municipality are inadequate. The capitation grant which was considered as a saviour for the upliftment of musical activities is gradually becoming a white elephant. This hampers the successful teaching and learning of music in the classroom as well as musical activities that need to be organized in the schools.

Music forms part of the creative Arts and the period allotted for the creative Arts is 30minutes (one period) per week. This indicates that music does not get the full period if it will be taught at all. Also music and dance has only two few units (3) each of the Creative Arts textbooks and does not cover all the aspects of the subject, the rest of the units are for the Arts. Furthermore, copies of examination questions which were shown to me attest to the fact that music is not examinable both internally and externally in the basic school level. This enables the teachers to play down music and concentrate on the other aspects of the subject Creative Arts.

Background Information of Respondents

Majority of teachers holds degrees in other subject areas but passed through the college and are knowledgeable of what they are suppose to teach. It was clear that only 4.0% of the respondents’ holds degree in music education, 2.0% holds diploma in music. Majority of the teachers do not have formal musical training but had initial training at college. 92.0% are class teachers as against 8.0% who are subject teachers.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to explore the teaching of music and dance in primary schools in some selected schools in Offinso Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It was concluded that majority of the teachers at the primary school level have degrees in other subjects other than music and dance and this affected their teaching of music because they are not specialist teachers. Major challenges teachers encounter when teaching music and dance include lack of teaching implements, negative attitude of teachers towards the subject, and lack of textbooks.

Recommendations

1. Regular and well organised In-Service training (INSET) programs should be conducted and well supervised by Ghana Education Service (GES) to update the knowledge of generalist teachers to enable them to engage their pupils meaningfully in the subject.
2. Music and dance should be separated from the Creative Arts and make it an examinable subject like the other subjects in the National Curriculum

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