

TEACHER COMPETENCE FOR THE MUSIC AND DANCE CURRICULUM IN GHANA

AGBENYO, S.¹ – ACQUAH, E. O.^{2*} – ARKO-MENSAH, A.²

¹ *Department of Music, University of Mississippi, Mississippi, USA.*

² *Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.*

**Corresponding author
e-mail: anacquah[at]gmail.com*

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Abstract. Teaching Music and Dance in Ghanaian primary schools has been a responsibility of the generalist teachers, who are usually ignorant about the subject and therefore, cannot interpret the Music and Dance syllabus. These teachers usually received their music training during the few years of their initial training at the Colleges of Education. Considering the specialized nature of music, we have raised concerns about the quality of music training education offered in the primary schools, especially with regards to teacher competence in the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and the general level of musicianship. Through an inductive research procedure, using five newly trained teachers posted to primary schools in Winneba, this case study, rooted in the Confucian philosophical underpinning, sought to investigate how the Music and Dance aspect of the Creative Arts curriculum was being handled by the generalist teachers. We also explored various ways teachers could be empowered to achieve success in teaching the subject. The study revealed that the generalist teachers did not possess adequate content and pedagogical abilities to teach Music and Dance. They therefore, resorted to unconventional ways of engaging learners which could not promote conceptualization of musical knowledge, skills and attitudes among learners. Our recommendations then included extension of duration for the pre-service music and dance curriculum, encouraging more student-teachers to major in music and dance specialty teacher preparation and participation in periodic in-service training programmes, through which they could be equipped with the necessary competences to augment their output.

Keywords: *competence, Effutu, generalist, creative arts, music and dance*

Introduction

Music and dance has been argued to be one of the most universal human needs and it is offered as a component of the Creative Arts curriculum (Arthur, 2014). Although it is compulsory at the primary school level in Ghana, it is treated as a “non-examinable” subject in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE). Hence, the learner’s progress is neither formally assessed nor monitored. Music and dance in the Ghanaian primary school is mostly taught by the generalist teachers (class teachers) who have had no formal music training apart from the exposure to this discipline during their initial training at the teacher training institutions. Given the specialized nature of music and dance, the extent to which the generalist teacher is able to implement the music and dance aspect of the primary school curriculum raises concerns about the quality of music education in Ghanaian primary schools in terms of teacher competence. In this study, we did not focus on the quality of music education in the schools, but decided to investigate the content knowledge and pedagogical abilities of the generalist classroom teacher. Problematically, the musically naive teacher is required to implement the primary school music curriculum to achieve its goals and objectives effectively. We

count this as an irony that cannot be taken for granted. Undoubtedly, music instruction in Ghanaian primary schools has crumbled to the point of extinction.

In this study, we have restricted our investigation to primary schools in Winneba Town. This decision was informed by the views of Fouché and De Vos (2005) and Babbie (2007) who argue that insights into a human phenomenon can be generated by a reflective study of a specific case. We, however, acknowledge that the results obtained from this case study do not present perpetual or universal truths, as they are bound to a certain point in time and a particular context. Yet it is our contention that the results are nevertheless transferable (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005; Morgan and Klaric, 2007), as they offer inferences for analyses of analogous cases.

Review of related literature

Philosophical underpinning

This study is rooted in the Chinese Confucian philosophy of education which contends that education of the individual is a necessary step in becoming a *jenzi* (an exemplary person); and a holistic classical education requires the learner to study and practice music as one of the Arts (Lau, 2008). This philosophy, propounded by Kong et al. (2018) denounces the perception and use of music as just an object of entertainment, arguing that music is a manifestation of virtue which is inherent in the universe itself. According to the Confucian philosophy, music constitutes the foundations of a properly ordered society and provides a means of self-cultivation and good governance. This system of beliefs partly explains the high premium placed on both professional and amateur musical cultures in China, thus ensuring the pertinent need to teach the subject with optimum competence in schools. In a similar vein, Houlahan and Tacka (2015) report Zoltan Kodály as accenting during one of his twentieth century lectures:

... this perception of the educated man is derived from a paradigm often referred to as "The Greek Triangle." The three primary areas of development which the Greeks believed resulted in a well- educated person included math for the development of a healthy brain, physical education for the development of a healthy body, and music for the development of a healthy sensitivity. This multi-dimensional model of the educated person is the ideal. For there is no complete man without music.

It is not a divergent perspective in Ghana, where music and dance is recognized as imperative for the development and communal life of the child (Flolu and Amuah, 2003). Thus, the mandatory inclusion of music and dance in the early-formative-stage curriculum in Ghana is an appropriately-philosophized educational policy worth upholding. It follows that such a curriculum which is competently designed also ought to be competently implemented by competent teachers for the effective realization of its goals. The onus of successful implementation lies on the classroom teacher who interprets the curriculum, and organizes pupils learning opportunities to make the content comprehensible to the learner through meaningful instructional techniques (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall, 2010). This pushy expectation in the Ghanaian instance then poses constraints to the non-musically skilled generalist teacher as the music and dance component of the curriculum becomes an ambitious reform project that requires a corresponding teacher competence; “an array of abilities involving musical activities, structures, requisite philosophical insights, and teaching strategies to

be ultimately effective” (Fullan, 2001), which are apparently lacking in the Ghanaian generalist teacher.

Competence is also defined as “the set of knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for a task, which manifests in activities” (Baltusite and Katane, 2014). It further refers to one’s possession of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, motivations and beliefs one needs in order to be successful in a job.” (Selvi, 2010; Gupta, 2006). Selvi identifies nine dimensions of teacher competences necessary for a successful educational system. These are Research Competencies, Curriculum Competencies, Lifelong Learning Competencies, Social-Cultural Competencies, Field Competencies, Emotional Competencies, Communication Competencies, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Competencies, and Environmental Competencies. Although all these dimensions sound vital, this paper aligns with curriculum competences. The curriculum competencies can further be divided into two sub-competencies as curriculum development competencies and curriculum implementation competencies. The latter is the precise focal point of this study. Curriculum implementation competencies are teacher oriented theoretical and practical competence, involving understanding of the curriculum philosophies, plans and skills for carrying out effective teaching and learning.

Without curriculum implementation competencies, it is difficult to produce and sustain an effective education service in schools (Selvi, 2010). For the purpose of this study, we may describe these as the nine generic teacher competences. Besides these generic teacher competences, the music and dance teacher needs subject matter competence, pedagogical competence and musicianship to function effectively. Santiago et al. (2016) postulate that “the teacher requires clear-cut content knowledge to be a competent teacher.” This is an essential and non-negotiable prerequisite for any teaching. Contrarily, studies on teachers’ subject-matter knowledge reveal that several teachers lack conceptual insight of their subject-matter in what they purport to be teaching (Kankam and Abroampa, 2016; Ball and Bass, 2000).

This assertion is correlated by Adjepong (2018) who discloses the content of the music and dance curriculum for Colleges of Education in Ghana, indicating among others the course titles (components), duration and status as shown in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Summary of music and dance courses offered in Ghanaian Colleges of education.

Course code	Course title	Credits	Semester	Mounted status
PRA121	Elements of Music Dance Principles and Methods	1	2	Core/compulsory
PRA221	of Teaching the Performing Arts 1 Principles and Methods	1	3	Elective/optional
PRA211	of Teaching the Performing Arts 2	1	4	Elective/optional

Source: Adjepong (2018)

The primary school performing arts syllabus

Juxtaposed with the Colleges of Education curriculum is Performing Arts, an integration of Music, Dance and Drama is a component of the Creative Arts curriculum (Adjepong, 2018; Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana, 2007). The syllabus prescribes and guides the teaching of the Performing Arts in an integrated

manner through composition, performance, listening and observing, a strategy as Jeanneret and Stevens-Ballenger (2013) postulate. The syllabus is designed to reflect the Ghanaian Communal Performing Arts culture with the view to providing Ghanaian children with knowledge, skills and understanding of the traditional music, dance and drama of their own socio-cultural environment (Nketia, 1999). The curriculum is further meant to unearth and nurture pupils' creativity and potentials in the Performing Arts for national development (Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana, 2007).

A careful examination of the Creative Arts curriculum suggests that having strong subject-matter knowledge is essential for a teacher (Ball and Bass, 2000; Shulman, 1987). Teachers are expected to know their subject-matter and also be aware of other factors like the curriculum, learners, as well as teaching techniques and strategies that might influence their teaching (Santiago et al., 2016; Samuel, 2008). This view expounded by Shulman (1987) with the identification of seven knowledge domains for teachers namely, subject-matter knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners, learning, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational philosophies, goals, and objectives. The paper draws on Shuman's view about pedagogical content knowledge to enunciate the issue of music teacher competence. According to him, the teacher ought to know how to create a conducive learning environment to facilitate students' understanding of a particular concept and to contribute to their intellectual development. He names this kind of knowledge "pedagogical content knowledge" and explains it as "...the ways of representing and formulating the subject that makes it comprehensible to others." This includes teachers' knowledge about specific topics that might be easy or difficult for learners and possible conceptions or misconceptions that they might have related to the topic. The harmonization of all types of teacher knowledge may yield effective teaching practices. However, a teacher does not often achieve that harmony among all types of knowledge that would facilitate their teaching practices as well as enhance their learners' learning (Kankam and Abroampa, 2016). It requires continuous efforts to be able to balance content, learners, educational goals, and assessment tools (Kilic, 2009). Pedagogical content knowledge is essential in establishing such balance because the knowledge of content, learners, and the (music) curriculum is embedded in that knowledge (Gess-Newsome, 2002; Grossman, 1990). Although pre-service teachers, as part of their initial training try to make sense of pedagogical content knowledge through their methods courses and field experiences during internship in order to be ready for their first year of teaching, this knowledge is to be developed as teachers gain more experience in teaching (Borko and Putnam, 1998; Calderhead, 1989).

Studies of pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills related to teaching have revealed that both their methods courses and field experiences are likely to contribute to the development of pedagogical content knowledge to some extent (Swars et al., 2007; Grossman, 1990). The acquisition of appreciable level of this knowledge is primarily dependent on what a teacher education programme or curriculum offers and exposes pre-service teachers to, in addition to knowledge acquired in-service. These complimentary training experiences provide an opportunity for teachers to better conceptualize, understand and relate with various experiences acquired during pre-service internship.

In addition to having the subject-matter knowledge and the pedagogical knowledge, Elliott (1995) holds the view that a competent music teacher will inevitably possess some qualities of musicianship. According to him, “musicianship and the ability to teach music proficiently are interdependent.” He defines musicianship as “a demonstration of musical understanding in a practical way and that musicianship can accordingly be demonstrated at five levels, which he clarifies as follows:

1. A person operating at the ‘novice’ level may have some formal knowledge, but strives to learn by means of trial and error. This person has a local and not global focus, attempting to resolve immediate problems. According to Elliott (1995), this person is unable to make music in a reliable and reflective way.
2. A person operating at the ‘advanced beginner’ level has a small amount of musical knowledge. This provides a small degree of surplus attention, which will enable the person to move back and forth between local and global levels of musical thinking in action. However, Elliott (1995) believes that this person is not yet able to reflect on music reliably and fluently.
3. A person operating at the ‘competency’ level, on the other hand, is able to demonstrate practical and theoretical musical aptitude. This person is able to reflect-in-action by monitoring what he or she is doing in relation to the standard of musical practice. As such, this person is able to solve many musical problems.
4. A person operating at the ‘proficiency’ level makes automatic music actions, characterized by fluent thinking and reflecting-in-action.
5. Finally, a person operating at ‘expert’ level demonstrates a deep situational understanding of music, distinguished by full development and integration of musical knowledge. This person deliberately searches for and finds pleasure in subtle opportunities for artistic expression. Elliott (1995) accordingly claims that music education should primarily be concerned with teaching and learning musicianship. During this process, teachers and learners should engage in finding, solving and meeting genuine musical challenges. The music educator’s role will essentially be one of monitoring, coaching and modelling. Elliott thus links the music teacher’s professional competence to his or her level of musicianship. This implies that teacher education institutions should be able to provide their trainees to operate at a level of musicianship that is higher than the novice and advanced beginner levels. Of a particular significance for this study is the view Flolu (2004) holds that music teachers, especially those teaching in Africa, need to exhibit knowledge and skills in the teaching of indigenous music and dance. This approach is supported by Rideout (2005), who believes that music educators should help learners to understand the expression of their own musical heritage by selecting music that leads to a broader understanding of their cultural expressions in music.

In summary, the primary goal of any teacher education institution is to enable future teachers to become competent in the professional practice of teaching (Morrow, 2007). This implies equipping them with core content knowledge, as well as developing the ability to organize systematic learning. In defining the ‘competent’ music teacher, the views of Samuel (2008), Morrow (2007) and Mohamed et al. (2017) are echoed by several scholars in the field of music teacher training, especially with regards to essential music content knowledge. In the case of a skills-based subject, such as music,

it is important to extend the concept of content knowledge to include the presence of certain basic music skills. In this regard, Flolu (2004), Choksy et al. (2001) and Campbell et al. (2012), all concur that at exit level, the student music teacher should not only have acquired adequate theoretical music knowledge, but should also have acquired practical competences, in other words, possess the skills of performing (singing, dancing, creating and playing instruments) as well as listening to and analyzing music.

With regard to teaching skills, Blackburn (2017) believes that a successful music teacher is a person who manages to involve all learners on an ongoing basis throughout the learning process. This is achieved through creating opportunities for demonstration, exploration and hands-on practice. An effective music teacher is a person who is able to facilitate learning experiences and develop concepts in an incremental approach that logically leads from one level to another. Blackburn also sees a successful music teacher as somebody with the ability to stimulate learners' imagination and creativity. Furthermore, Collins (1999) is of the opinion that a music teacher should have the ability to detect errors in musical performance. This author also stresses the importance of a good rapport with learners. A music teacher should be able to handle learners in a firm but fair manner, while at the same time promoting enjoyment, interest and participation.

Materials and Methods

Two research instruments were employed, namely, interview and document search. From the Efutu Municipal Education office, names of five newly trained generalist teachers (one male and four females) from various colleges of education who were posted to the municipality in September, 2019 were selected to constitute a purposive-snowballed sample for the study. They were stationed at Don Bosco primary, Ateitu D/A primary, University Practice primary (south campus), Presbyterian primary and Zion 'B' primary schools. By means of semi-structured interviews, data were collected from participants during separate individualized sessions spanning Monday 4th November to Wednesday 13th November, 2019.

The individualized interviews focused mainly on participants' perceptions about their preparedness and competence for teaching the music and dance component of the Creative Arts Curriculum in primary schools. Pre-scheduled meetings for data collection were held in their respective schools, at their convenient times, with each meeting lasting for approximately thirty minutes per session. The interviewees were asked to share information on the nature of their own music teaching in terms of content and pedagogy and to share their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of their training. The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to elaborate their views and also to introduce additional related issues of interest on the music and dance components of the Creative Arts curriculum. The interview data was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim within twenty-four hours in Microsoft Word. The transcription was then printed out and hand delivered to the participants for verification and validation of accuracy of the data. Also, music education syllabus was analyzed to take critical look at the content and its depth in relation to that of the music and dance aspect of the Creative Arts syllabus. The data collected with interview and document search were then analyzed inductively along two fundamentally emerging themes namely subject matter competence and pedagogical competence.

Results and Discussion

Results of the study revealed inadequate training in the Creative Arts, leading to their weak knowledge in the music and dance component of the curriculum. Some of the teachers could engage their pupils in some singing activities without much control over musical lessons to be learnt by their pupils from the singing exercises. Although all five participants had read the core course, Elements of Music and Dance in the second semester (of first year in training), none of them opted for the other two pedagogical courses which were offered during the third and fourth semesters (second year).

These courses are designed to provide pre-service teachers with basic knowledge, understanding and skills of teaching the Performing Arts. It is therefore, not surprising to find majority of generalist teachers not willing to teach the subject. Hennessy (2000) attests to this observation when he asserts that in England, music is found to be the subject in which generalist teachers had the least confidence in teaching and identified school-based training as an activity that influenced the confidence of these teachers to teach.

Our analysis of the content of the music education syllabus at the teacher training institution revealed the apparent absence of an underlying philosophy in which it is grounded. This demonstrates a pitfall of the teacher preparation programme since a clear philosophical premise is a hallmark of every school curriculum (Branscome, 2012), and it is anticipated that the teacher training curriculum would be pivoted on a philosophical framework in correlation to those of the primary schools that teacher would be implementing after graduation. The interview revealed that the participants could not identify the basis for their approach to their music instructions and were vague when asked about the underpinning philosophy of teaching and learning. This is a matter of concern, since the philosophical underpinning of a syllabus determines its nature, structure, and handling. The aims are clearly stated and derived from the Creative Arts syllabus, as meant to expose students to indigenous and popular music from Ghana, to develop literacy in staff and tonic sol-fa notations, to equip students with knowledge and skills to teach music, and to develop a positive attitude towards music education. Indeed, the teachers were oblivious of the tenets of the curriculum, a state of affairs which was not ideal.

The teacher training music syllabus articulates ten objectives altogether. In brief, it seeks to enable students to carry out procedures done by music teachers, such as planning for longer periods (work schemes), lesson planning and lesson delivery, to enable students to demonstrate an understanding of staff and tonic sol-fa notation, and to enable students to collect, grade and classify Ghanaian traditional/indigenous songs and instruments. In general, the course focuses strongly on exposure to contemporary music from Ghana. However, little reference is made to the appreciation of traditional and indigenous music of Ghana, Western music just as Flolu and Amuah (2003) observed and the music of other cultures. The development of the students' music literacy skills is exceptionally well represented but there is strong emphasis on the acquisition of the students' theoretical knowledge regarding Western note values, pitch names, time signatures, key signatures, tonic sol-fa and rhythms at the expense of the development of other essential music skills, particularly listening, improvising and movement to music. With regard to instrumental play, the course only emphasizes the playing of percussion instruments, which is a reason for concern, since the primary school syllabus (Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana, 2007) also includes the teaching of pitched instruments such as the *Atenteben*.

The list of methods and approaches highlighted in the teacher training curriculum comprises rote methods, the Orff and Dalcroze methods, the use of demonstration and audiovisual material. Management of teaching and learning appeared neglected. No reference to assessment strategies towards monitoring learners' progress in music could be found. All participants reported that pre-service lectures focused on the theory of music and music appreciation. They were not trained to play musical instruments, although the primary school syllabus requires teachers to play these instruments as Flolu (2004), Choksy et al. (2001) and Campbell et al. (2012) recommended. All five participants were of the opinion that the training was inadequate. In this regard, they identified insufficient lecturing time, as well as the poor musical background of students at entrance level, as a major impediment and concluded that, because of these impediments, 'half-baked and ill-groomed teachers are being churned into the school system', which perpetuated the vicious cycle.

Conclusion

Based on the results of our interviews with the Primary School Teachers, as well as our analysis of the syllabus, we have reason to assume that the majority of the teachers still operate at the 'novice' level, in other words, they tend to implement the music and dance curriculum by trial and error and are not able to tackle music lessons with the required competence. Although some of them operate at the 'advanced beginner' level, they are not yet able to reflect on music unfailingly as Elliott (1995) purported. In order to reach the required level of musicianship to function at least at the 'competency' level, more time, energy and resources will have to be invested in the training of the generalist teachers. We recommend that more pre-service teachers are encouraged to specialize in music, so that well-equipped teachers could be injected into the schooling system.

Furthermore, one needs to ask whether limited exposure and music teaching during the teacher training years are really equipping non-specialists with the required competences in order to teach this subject effectively. We have already argued that, in addition to sound content knowledge (Morrow, 2007), as well as firm pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), a music teacher also requires reliable music skills. Several strategies can be implemented to improve the generalist pre-service teacher's musicianship level, but this will require intense specialized music training over an extended period of time, not just at the college of education. In this regard, we recommend that students in colleges of education be allowed to specialize in particular disciplines during all their training years, so that music specialists who are properly trained and are musically sound will assume responsibility for this subject in the primary schools.

Finally, we recommend intensification of in-service training programmes such as workshops, seminars and conferences to ensure equipping and updating the generalist teacher on best practices in terms of strengthening their competences in the subject matter as well as pedagogical techniques in music and dance. We count the foregoing recommendations as formidable ways of ensuring that the music and dance component of the Creative Arts curriculum is taught with the necessary extent of subject matter and pedagogical competences.

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Conflict of interest

The author confirm that there are no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research.

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