

## CHALLENGES IN TEACHING THE MUSIC COMPONENT OF CREATIVE ARTS AND DESIGN IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN KWABRE SOUTH DISTRICT OF ASHANTI REGION, GHANA

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### ABSTRACT

The study aimed to evaluate the instruction of Music as a component of Creative Art and Design in Junior High Schools within the Kwabre South District of the Ashanti Region. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, the study focused on a target population of 16 teachers from Junior High Schools in the district. Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that most teachers responsible for Creative Arts instruction at this level possess degrees in fields other than Music, which has impacted their effectiveness in teaching the subject. The main challenges identified in teaching Music and Dance include a lack of teaching instruments, teachers' negative attitudes towards the subject, and the absence of textbooks. The study recommended conducting workshops for Creative Art and Design teachers, with a particular emphasis on Music and Dance, to better equip them to teach and prepare students for the Creative and Design curriculum, now an examinable subject in basic schools.

**Keywords:** Music and dance, Creative art and Design, generalist programme, specialist programme (GES), Ministry of Education (MoE), and National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NaCCA).

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent times, basic music education has experienced significant advancements. It has been incorporated under Music and Drama in the new curricular hierarchy and grouped with disciplines such as Pattern-making and Visual Arts under the broad category of Creative Arts. This subject is now featured in lower primary, Junior High Schools, senior high schools, and tertiary institutions. Understanding the extensive transformation in the Ghanaian curriculum, it is essential to recognize that Creative Arts includes components such as Music, Dance, Drama, Visual Art, and Media Arts. The curriculum for this course is well defined, raising awareness among pupils and students about the opportunity to study Music and Dance at various educational levels. This exposure has brought substantial benefits to students who study music, enabling them to perform with a variety of instruments and styles, including folk, jazz, hip hop, and hip life. It is important to note that music is not only valued for its intrinsic qualities but also for its role in aiding children's development and learning across other curricular areas. The

integration of Creative Arts, including music, into the content and teaching methods encourages a teaching approach where students build and demonstrate understanding through an art form across all subjects. This integration enhances student engagement in a creative process, thereby connecting music with other subject areas. Music also plays a vital role in other disciplines such as mathematics, science, and history. Teaching mathematics, known to be challenging, can be facilitated by using musical notes to teach fractions and pitch to explain frequency and ratios. Indeed, mathematics and music share common elements. According to Spelke (2008), science content can use music to teach various concepts. For example, teaching weather in science can be related to music through songs like "Rain, Rain, Go Away." Similarly, music can teach about body parts and animal anatomy through songs. Music is integral to human development and activities, including life stages such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death, as supported by Kohler (2023). Music and poetry also reflect cultural traditions and folklore, seen in national anthems, patriotic songs, and traditional songs derived from epic and heroic poems (Zabuzhanska, 2023). Music, being an art of expression and communication, unites humanity and brings beauty to life, often referred to as a universal language. The Performing Arts strand in the Creative Arts curriculum encompasses Music, Dance, and Drama. This strand promotes self-expression, imagination, perception, reflective thinking, critical observation, and listening, analytical, and practical skills, enabling students to compose and perform in various artistic forms. Through this strand, learners enhance their visual literacy by examining and expressing their views on diverse compositions and performances from different cultures worldwide. These components are part of Ghana's new educational reforms, which cover all educational levels. As outlined by the Ghana Education Service (GES), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NaCCA), the new reforms classify Kindergarten, primary school, Junior High School (JHS), and Senior High School (SHS) as basic education. JHS 1-3 and SHS 1 are now referred to as BS 7-10, respectively, with SHS 1 being BS 10. Students from JHS 1 to SHS 1 follow a common core program (CCP) comprising nine subjects, including Mathematics, Languages, Science, Religious and Moral Education (RME), Physical and Health Education (non-examinable), Career Technology, Social Studies, Computing, and Creative Art and Design.

## **2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Music, as a performing art, requires performers to render a musical score, impacting how listeners perceive the music, whether classical or non-classical (Choi, 2023). This places a structure on how music is taught and interpreted in terms of tempo, dynamics, pitch, and timbre. In Ghanaian primary schools, music is part of the Creative Arts curriculum. However, many teachers lack confidence and competence in teaching music, leading to its diminished status within the curriculum. Music is crucial for a child's holistic development, yet many teachers perceive themselves as having limited abilities and content knowledge to teach music and dance effectively. Proper preparation and adequate knowledge are essential for providing effective music education in primary schools. Most teachers believe they lack the necessary skills, resulting in poorly conceptualized and ineffective music learning experiences (Zipman, 2023). This apprehension may lead teachers to avoid engaging with music education, fearing it exceeds their capabilities (Wolf, 2023). These concerns justify the need for research to address the challenges and improve the teaching of music in primary education.

### **3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine the link between professional qualifications and the ability of teachers to effectively teach music.
2. To identify and analyze the challenges primary school teachers face in teaching music.
3. To explore and evaluate the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in teaching music.

### **4.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the link between professional qualification and the ability of teachers to teach music?
2. What are the challenges primary school teachers face in teaching music?
3. What are the pedagogical approaches used by the teacher in teaching music?

### **5.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to identify the challenges of teaching the music component of Creative Arts and Design in Junior High Schools within the Kwabre South District, Ashanti Region.

### **6.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.**

The theory that backs the study considered constructivist learning theory which posits that learners construct their understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and reflecting on those experiences. Hatcher, J. A., & Bringle, R. G. (1997). In the context of teaching music in Junior high schools, this theory supports the idea that students need active, hands-on, and participatory learning experiences to effectively engage with and understand music. Teachers can create an interactive and collaborative learning environment where students experiment with music, participate in group performances, and reflect on their experiences. Gardner, H. E. (2011) theory also suggests that individuals possess different kinds of intelligence, including musical intelligence. This theory is particularly relevant in highlighting the need for differentiated instruction that caters to students' varied strengths, including musical talent. Recognizing that students have diverse intelligences, educators can tailor their teaching strategies to include musical activities that engage students with high musical intelligence, thereby fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

### **7.0 METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive survey Design was employed by the researcher to achieve the objectives of this study. This research aimed to observe, describe, and document parts of a situation as they naturally occur. The researcher reported on already existing conditions. It helps to depict an accurate profile of the situation, event and people. Adjei, E. K. (2023) also postulates that a descriptive survey seeks to provide measurement and report characteristics of the population under study. As observed by Castellan, C. M. (2010) descriptive survey involves the collection of data from members of a group, students, teachers or other persons associated with the educational process. Survey Design allowed the researcher to observe the status quo as well as facts rather than manipulate variables (Creswell and Plano, 2006). The Design was therefore appropriate for the study since this study was interested in establishing the facts and state of

music and dance at the basic school. The main instrument for collecting data was the interview where letter of permission was given to the District Director of SISO and Headteachers for the research to be conducted. The population for the research was basic school teachers in the Afigya Kwabre South, Ashanti Region for 22 schools. Each has 13 teachers selectively as visual art teachers. However, the large number of teachers put together would not permit the researcher to deal decisively with finding considering only creative art teachers and therefore selected 10 schools out of the 22 schools because of proximity. Within the schools selected had 2 creative art teachers one for visual art and one for performing art. The reason was that creative art is integrated and therefore needs specialized teachers to handle various aspects and components of the creative arts. This also corresponded with the qualification used in the teaching at the basic level. The table below indicates the list of schools selected.

Schools	Creative arts Teachers
Aduman D/A primary	2
Afrancho D/A Primary	2
Ankaase Methodist Primary	1
Aoagya Anglican Primary	2
Bronkrong D/A Primary	2
Odumakyi D/A Primary	2
Kodie Methodist Primary	2
Wawase R/C Primary	1
Mpobi R/C Primary	1
Sasa D/A Primary	1

**Table 1: Selected schools and number of Creative arts Teachers**

Schools	Qualification	Area of Specialisation
Aduman D/A primary	DIPLOMA -2	VISUAL ART
Afrancho D/A Primary	DIPLOMA-2	VISUAL ART
Ankaase Methodist Primary	DEGREE 1	VISUAL ART
Aoagya Anglican Primary	DIPLOMA 2	VISUAL ART
Bronkrong D/A Primary	DEGREE 2	VISUAL ART
Odumakyi D/A Primary	DIPLOMA 2	VISUAL ART

Kodie Methodist Primary	DIPLOMA 2	VISUAL ART
Wawase R/C Primary	DIPLOMA 1	VISUAL ART
Mpobi R/C Primary	DEGREE 1	VISUAL ART
Sasa D/A Primary	DEGREE 1	VISUAL ART

**Table 2: Teachers' qualification and area of specialisation.**

## 8.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

**RQ1.** What is the link between professional qualification and the ability of teachers to teach music?

It can be gleaned from the table that teachers strongly agreed that the negative attitude of pupils towards the subject, lack of facilities, lack of teaching resources or materials, and teachers' lack of knowledge on the subject were among the challenges they faced in teaching music. It was revealed that basic teachers at the Afigya Kwabre South obtained their qualification through distance education with a diploma and degree as the main qualification in teaching. Many of these teachers did not specialize in music education. It was seen that they have never learned music before and therefore find it difficult to teach the subject. The subjects that made them obtain qualification were early-grade education and primary education. This also tells that teachers put more emphasis on teaching visual art followed by drama leaving music and dance at the mercy of the pupils to learn on their own. According to some of the teachers: they quoted that; they do not understand the music topics in the creative arts curriculum and therefore need the expertise to help them acquire the knowledge before teaching or even not to teach at all.

**RQ2.** What are the challenges primary school teachers" face in teaching music?

The study also revealed that some of the teachers lack the expertise to handle the music aspect in the creative art curriculum because that is not their area of specialization and their background in the subject matter paints a poor picture of lesson delivery. I agree with the teachers as cited in Kwofie, F.D (2023) that if teachers have a strong background in teaching music, it would generally influence their confidence and effectiveness in teaching their subject areas well within their classroom boldly (Graham, C. A. (2023). In addition, when teachers are confident about themselves as teachers of the subject then they would be more confident about teaching the subject as Kohli, A. K. (2023) corroborates. Similarly, Welch (1995) indicated that teachers' self-concept about their skills and background in the subject directly influenced their effectiveness as music teachers and instrumental teachers because the case proved to be different at the basic school.

**RQ3.** What are the pedagogical approaches used by the teacher in teaching music?

Teaching music comes as a result of knowing your content very well. The creative art Design implored various areas in art like visual art, drama, dance and music where teachers are obliged to teach the following aspects of music: the history of a particular dance and how they are

performed. Teachers are to use their knowledge gained in music to help pupils learn technical terms like *moderato*, *Vivace*, *crescendo*, *grave*, *piano*, and *mezzo forte* in music as well as to explain to pupils how major scales are constructed. It is obvious that teachers hardly understand the concept of music and therefore skip topics when it is performing art in the creative art curriculum. Lack of materials is also a hindrance to teaching music because most of the schools need to have a properly set up music studio to help in the teaching of music. Most find it difficult to teach as a result of not having teachers' guides and books to facilitate the teaching of music. Many music teachers are rethinking how to help pupils acquire skills and experiences to understand the concept of flexibility that will make teachers embrace varied possibilities for expanding their musical knowledge and skills. Teachers need to consider an activity-based approach to perpetuate pedagogical concepts.

## 9.0 FINDINGS

From the table, it was revealed that ten schools consisting of 16 teachers were selected as the target population. The table outlined the number of teachers and their qualifications and this was clearly shown that all the teachers selected from all ten schools, 11 were diploma holders and 5 were degree holders. The finding also revealed that all the teachers specialized in mathematics, English language, Science, and Ghanaian language but fell short in teaching the content of creative art and Design as taught in the basic schools. The reason is that they can only teach visual art, drama, and a little dance but cannot teach music as a subject. It is divulged that music topics are strenuous to comprehend. Besides, they don't have the knowledge and the expertise to teach. In the same vein, the subject is looked at as not necessary and not examinable because of that teachers do not study them as subject. Another critical concern was that teachers lack the skills and the confidence to perform the practical test which therefore leads to failure and in limbo teaching music as a subject. A scholar has propounded that music practical performance tests among students should be done with sight-reading from an individual at a much lower skill level than they read as a group. (Omaggio, 1993) also cited by Acquah, E. O., & Danso Kwofie, F. (2021). Another way to motivate performers is to identify their favourite artist or preferred style of music by using pictures of artists or icons for students to watch. In addition, Acquah, E. O., & Danso Kwofie, F. (2021) postulated that students should select songs or pieces for performance that are representative of their preferred music from limited or multiple options strategies and methodologies adopted for teaching music practical. Again, Jørgensen, H. (2008) is of the view that practical music lessons could be done better for students if they choose the repertoire they love. It brings to attention that spending months on learning scores would help one to become perfect. It also indicates that one needs time to learn a wide variety of repertoire every year. Taking advantage of these could help one to find works that inspire him to a new level of intensity. Similarly, it is good to memorize the score for performance in music practical lessons. Just as most martial arts consist of a mix of punches, kicks and throws, music consists largely of scales, chords, and arpeggios. Memorizing them gives great confidence when being performed. Lehmann, A. C., & Ericsson, K. A. (1997) indicated that practicing technical requirements could help one to perform better and to get a better mark, but gain a better understanding of the building blocks of the pieces they play. Cited by Acquah, E. O., & Danso Kwofie, F. (2021) Music is also an exceptional subject which also requires a lot of practice and adequate preparation before going to teach. It was crystal clear that teachers at the basic schools are not able to teach music because there are no standardized books that have a comprehensive note to cover all three aspects of the creative arts as a result

it is difficult to cohort the teaching of music in the classroom. It also revealed that there is a big gap between the pupils and the teachers on how to answer music questions during B.E.C.E, concentration is drawn on visual art, drama, not dance and music.

## **10.0 CONCLUSION**

Findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: Public teachers at Afigya Kwabre South in the Ashanti Region have insufficient knowledge on the contents and pedagogies of music and dance in the Afiagya Kwabre South. Teachers' lack of knowledge on the subject, the negative attitude of pupils towards the subject, lack of facilities, and lack of teaching resources or materials are the main challenges faced by teachers in teaching music. Teachers' content knowledge varies significantly among the teachers in the various schools.

## **11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Regular and well-organized in-service training programmes conducted by the Ghana Education Service will be of great Schools to enhance teachers' mastery of the content and application of different methods and strategies in teaching music. Sufficient instructional materials and facilities for practical aspects of the subject should be provided in every school. School administrators may have an appropriate budget to purchase those instructional materials. Teachers may also consider using mobile applications and musical instruments like Piano and others in teaching music. On the other hand, to develop learners' interest in the subject, programmes that promote music such as school chorale, instrument ensemble, and others should be initiated by teachers. Furthermore, teachers should be trained on how to read musical scores and play simple melodic instruments so they will be able to teach songs that are unfamiliar to them. Music should be assigned to teachers with a specialization in music. If there is no available teacher with that specialization, it should be given to teachers with a background or inclination to music. Generalist teachers to continue to teach music should receive appropriate pre-service training in their undergraduate programme.

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