

Disparate Trajectories in Pre-Tertiary Music Education in Ghana: Implication for Holistic Education

Moses Nii-Dortey

Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon

Adwoa Arhine

Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon

Abstract

This paper investigates an obvious paradox in the pre-tertiary music/aesthetic education of Ghana, which defies the pedagogical principles of continuity and progression. This paradox involves the simultaneous disappearance and growth of music/aesthetic education at the foundational basic schools and high schools respectively. Growth at the high schools is evinced by rising number of schools, students and teachers offering and teaching the subject, as well as registering for and writing the West African Examinations Council's West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examinations since 1990. The initial assumption, based on the logic of educational continuity and progression, is that private tuition and basic schools are responsible for the growing interest in music at the high schools since public schools have literally failed in that regard. This paper argues, based on fieldwork findings, that the assumption that lower levels of education must necessarily be responsible for future developments in a subject at higher levels of education is only partly true as far as balanced personality development is concerned. As far as examination-based measurement and attainment are concerned, there are other pedagogical, administrative and logistical factors that can mitigate any shortfall from the lower levels.

Introduction

In this article, we investigate an obvious paradox in Ghana's pre-tertiary music education curriculum. By pre-tertiary we mean the nine-year basic (made up of six years primary and three years junior high) on the one hand and the three-year high school (SHS) system on the other. The teaching and learning of music at these two levels of the pre-tertiary education structure seem to be operating in disparate trajectories. While music is a part of the high school curriculum and is actively being patronised by schools, students and teachers, the subject is factually non-existent at the nine-year basic schools from where the high schools draw their intake of students. Music has long been scraped from the curriculum of basic schools (particularly the public schools) and has been replaced with another subject called 'creative arts.' As the name of the new subject suggests, it has been designed to integrate everything art: including visual arts [drawing, weaving, modelling, casting, carving, painting, sewing, and performing arts [music, dance and drama] into one (CRDD, 2007). The integration, according to the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ministry of Education of Ghana is intended to emphasise, among other things, "national creativity, development of emotional, material, spiritual and intellectual life..., enhance the growth of one's imagination and self-expression through the various arts" (CRDD, 2007: ii, Flolu & Amoah, 2007).

The integrated content and stated objectives of the 'creative arts' subject seem to suggest an emphasis on aesthetic education (Weitz, 1972; Denac, 2014), or what Herbst et al. (2003) have labelled as "musical arts..." in early childhood education. Both configurations stress a more holistic approach to arts education expressed in terms of "visual representations, movements, sounds, verbal expression..." (Denac, 2014 p. 2), compared with the individual subjects. In essence, aesthetic education and, by implication, 'creative arts' is not opposed to music education. It is obvious that most Africanist music educationists favour this principle

to integrate music with some related arts subjects such as dance, drama and storytelling, poetry and costume arts (Nketia, 1970; Nzewi, 2003; Herbst et al. 2003). It is a preference informed, first of all, by the understanding that, in Africa, “the performance arts are seldom separated in creative thinking and performance practice” (Nzewi, 2003). Second, it is also informed by a post-colonial pan-African quest to decolonize the content and pedagogy of formal education in Africa (Nketia, 1999; Flolu & Amoah, 2003; Herbst, Nzewi & Agawu, 2003; Nzewi, 2007).¹

In this paper, we have chosen not to focus on the merits or otherwise of replacing music with ‘creative arts’ on the basic school curriculum. Instead, our focus is to highlight the fact that neither music nor the much-preferred ‘creative arts’ is being taught effectively in Ghanaian public basic schools. Personal experience and several research results have shown that, apart from a few schools, which are mainly privately owned, music education at the basic schools has been reduced to weekly singing lessons. Occasionally, events such as special open and prize-giving day commemorations and the Education Service’s biennial arts and cultural festivals (during which schools compete for laurels in choral singing, sight reading, drum poetry recitals, dance and visual art exhibitions among other activities) feature musical and other artistic performances. In the few instances where real teaching and learning of the subject ‘creative arts’ has taken place, it has been botched by teachers’ limited knowledge which is, in most cases, in one or few of the individual subjects that make up the ‘creative arts’ (Boafo, 2010; Ampeh, 2011; Enstua-Mensah, 2016).²

¹ In Ghana, the earliest initiative to reform the music curriculum to reflect the holistic tendencies of the African arts was by the Ghana Music Teachers’ Association (GMTA), in 1975, when they sought to introduce a first bi-musical music textbook into the education system. Unfortunately, neither the syllabus nor the textbook ever saw the light of day as the Ghana Education Service failed to support the initiative. The formation of the Pan-African Society for Music Arts Education (PASME) in 2000 and the subsequent publications of the “musical arts in Africa” modules seem the most recent and pragmatic Africa-wide effort toward realizing those dreams.

² Scholarly works by Boafo and Ampeh which focused on the true state of creative arts education in the Kumasi and Swedru metropolitan areas of Ghana are particularly worth noting. Both of them discovered, among other things, that more than 80% of the teachers in the public basic schools they sampled did not teach the

Factors responsible for the poor state of music education at the basic schools

Some findings from our fieldwork attribute the current challenge facing basic school music education in Ghana to two related policy directives by the Ghana Education Service (GES). First is the rather high number and disparate nature of the subjects integrated as the ‘creative arts’ curriculum which make it too unwieldy to be taught by one specialist teacher. The second is the removal of music from the list of externally examinable subjects [Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE)] conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC).

The unwieldy nature of the creative arts

The history of formal music education in Ghana reveals that the creation of the creative arts subject³ is the third time in thirty years that music has been integrated with other subjects. The first of such initiatives happened in 1987 when, as part of the Cultural Enrichment Programme (CEP), music was integrated with non-art subjects like religious and social studies called ‘Cultural Studies’ contrary to all expert positions (Nzewi, 2003; Herbst et al., 2003). The Ghana Music Teachers’ Association (GMTA) expressed its collective disquiet over the cultural studies curriculum suggesting a more cautious approach to its implementation, which was ignored (GMTA, 1991; Flolu & Amoah, 2007).⁴ The second reconfiguration happened in 1994 after a review of the 1987 CEP curriculum. Religious and social studies were taken out, and music was integrated with dance only to be known as ‘music and dance’ (Flolu & Amoah 2007). Even though the ‘music and dance’ syllabus

practical aspects of the constituent subjects of the ‘creative arts’ because they lacked the requisite knowledge and skills to do so. The teachers engaged the children in free-hand drawing and musical games instead.

³ The creative arts subject resulted from the UNESCO inspired twelve year (2003-2015) ‘Education For All’ programme designed by the Anamoah Mensah-led committee.

⁴ The association argued to keep music (at least its rudiments) as a stand-alone subject because the technicalities of music language demand that it is taught as a separate subject. GMTA’s suggestion was rejected on the grounds that it was a conservative stance intended to maintain western classical music academic tradition to enforce theoretical rudiments and cognitive development over practical music making (Flolu, 1993; Flolu & Amoah, 2007; Gibson & Patterson, 1992).

seemed the most ideologically and functionally workable because of the proverbial affinity between the two performing arts, it hardly got implemented for lack of political will.

The 'creative arts' which followed the 'music and dance' syllabus has failed to achieve the most basic of its intended objectives, which is to promote creativity with an emphasis on the normative interrelationships that exist among the arts in real life (Nketia 1970; Nzewi, 2007; Nii-Dortey 2012). The failure is partly due to the curriculum reviewers' failure to consider the obvious impracticality of training individual teachers to master both visual and performance art subjects well enough to teach them effectively. This technical problem is more formidable with the 'creative arts' than with the earlier ones (i.e. cultural studies, music and dance). One wonders whether sufficient evaluation of the previous two syllabi was carried out as a basis for designing the 'creative arts.'

Indeed, in real African performance contexts, the possibility exists for some individual artists, such as professional storytellers and musicians, to combine a number of fields like singing, dancing/dramatisation and storytelling in a single performance. Generally, however, the integration of the arts is never one man's responsibility: it happens as a result of the pooling of expertise by drummers, singers, and dancers. Realistically, therefore, the curriculum planners ought to have encouraged the specialised teaching of the individual art subjects by the trained teachers but also encourage the teachers to undertake joint performance projects for the children to participate in. This approach, perhaps more than the one intended through the creative arts, has the potential to expose the children to the much sought-after integrative essence of the performing and visual arts without sacrificing the need for specialisation. Music/aesthetic education, all over the country's basic schools, has been turned into an unwieldy and a boring subject that teachers wish to ignore, and head teachers prefer to replace with other so-called more critical subjects on their timetables.

Removal of music from Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE)

The second disruptive policy decision of the GES that has added to the woes of music/creative arts education in Ghana is the exclusion of music from the list of externally examinable subjects by the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC). This policy was contained in the 2003-2015 'Education for All' reform. The learners would participate more freely in creative arts activities when exams are de-emphasised and ensure a better foundation for them as they climb the educational ladder (CRDD, 2007).

The first time, in Ghana's education history, that music became externally examinable was in 1990, and this was courtesy of the reform introduced through the 1987 Cultural Enrichment Programme (CEP). Prior to the 1987 reform, music education, at high schools, in particular, was denigrated as the most useless subject in class primarily because music students at that level had nothing to show for it by way of certification. The only option for interested students then, was the Associated Board of Royal School Music (ABRSM) run from London. The effect of the no-examination policy introduced through the 2003-2015 reform, therefore, is that it has reversed the modest fortunes of music education back to the ignominious days preceding 1990. Currently, what most basic school headteachers do is to sacrifice the periods allotted for 'creative arts' education for the science subjects because the sciences are externally examinable. As a direct result, they would also refuse to admit trained music/creative arts teachers from the training institutions posted to their schools with the excuse that there is no work for them to do.

Thus, when the designers of the 2003 – 2015 music syllabus (CRDD, 2007) truncated the 1987 reform arrangement to examine music at the BECE level, they effectively took out the one compelling factor that ensured that heads of schools respected and worked with the whole curriculum. It can thus be argued that the 2003 – 2015 educational reform which

produced the 'creative arts' curriculum is partly to blame for the poor state of music education in Ghanaian basic schools.

Music in the Senior High Schools

If we are to proceed based on the logic of educational progression and continuity (Bennetts, 1995), then the current poor standards of music education at the basic schools should result in an equally damning situation at the high schools they feed. The continuity principle suggests persistence in aspects of content, learning activities, and certain assumptions about a subject as educational necessities that enable learners to build upon previous experiences to develop in a structured way as they move through the education system (Bennet, 1995). The implication of this is that the absence of a structured and sustained music/aesthetic education during the first fifteen years of Ghanaian children's development can affect their optimal development, interest and performance in music and related areas as they go through the education ladder.

Ironically, the prevailing situation at the country's high schools seems to suggest an exception to the continuity and progression logic. In contrast to the gloomy picture of music/creative arts education at the basic level schools is a relatively successful story of music (not creative arts) education at the country's high schools. Success here is defined quantitatively to include a progressive rise in the number of high schools and students who register to study the subject countrywide, as well as undertake the West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) in music. Most of the students who sit for the WASSCE exams in music are recording good grades too. Starting with a measly national figure of twenty-three (23) students in 1990, when the first batch of candidates of the 1987 curriculum reform wrote (Flolu & Amoah, 2003), the number of students has shot to 3300, in 2018, nationwide.

Additionally, unlike what is happening at the public basic schools, many more state-funded high schools from eight of the ten administrative regions of Ghana⁵ are registering students for WASSCE music. A ten-year set of data (2006 – 2016) on WASSCE high school music students secured from the WAEC⁶ offices in Accra indicate that a modest figure of 40 high schools and 531 students registered for WASSCE music in 2006 (see Appendix A for test Score). By 2016, the number of high schools and students that registered and sat for WASSCE music had risen to 123, and 2704 respectively.⁷ Below is a table showing the number of high schools and students that have offered music in the last ten years.

Table 1: Statistics on WASSCE Music Results, Ghana (2006-2017)

Year	Number of regions that registered students for music in each year	Number of schools that registered students for music in each year	Number of students that wrote WASSCE music in each year
2006	7	40	531
2007	7	46	757
2008	7	52	780
2009	7	55	687
2010	No	Exams	

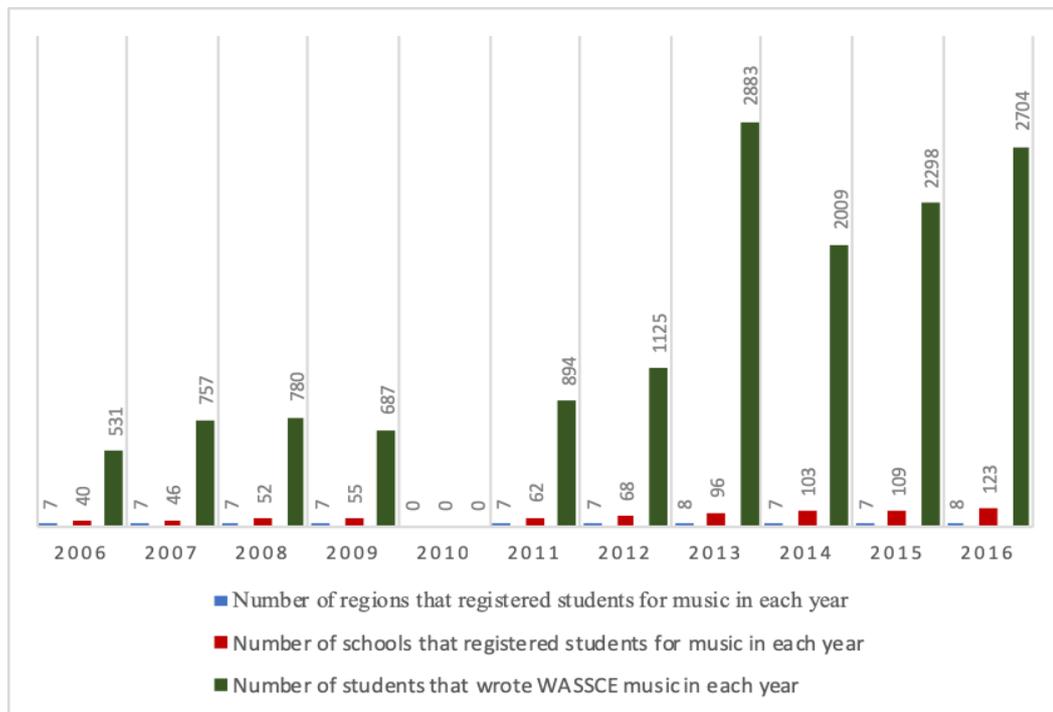
⁵ The latest Administrative Region (Bolga Secondary) to register students for WASSCE music, in 2016, was Upper East and the school was (MOE-SHS National Profile - 2014/ 2015 School Year Data).

⁶ West African Examinations Council (WAEC) performance statistics of students in music subject (2006 – 2016).

⁷ From unofficial sources, the number of schools has further appreciated to 137 and 145 in the 2017 and 2018, and those of students to 3,545 and 3,933 respectively, in the same years.

2011	7	62	894
2012	7	68	1125
2013	8	96	2883
2014	7	103	2009
2015	7	109	2298
2016	8	123	2704

Table 2: Statistics on WASCCE Music Results, 2006 – 2016



Graph, courtesy- Jonathan Bannor, 2018

Ordinarily, a national figure of 2,704 music students out of a total of 274,255 WASSCE candidates in 2016 should provide very little basis for celebration (WAEC, 2016). However, our interest in this project is not premised merely on the absolute student and high

school numbers. It is also based on the fact that such numbers have been rising consistently for nearly thirty years (**see table 2**). The figures also have a national spread and are anchored on relatively improved attitudes of high school headmasters and school administrators towards the teaching and learning of music compared with their counterparts at the basic level. Finally, the gains come along with a parallel growth in the number of trained music teachers from the country's teaching universities who are actively engaged in teaching the subject in the respective high schools. This represents a remarkable improvement in music-teacher retention rate over the situation at the basic schools. Most of the teachers posted to the basic schools presently, as was the case in some high schools a few years back, are either turned away or made to teach subjects other than music.

In addition to developing a super structure on a weak foundation, the country seems to be reaping where she has not sown when the rate of progress in music education at the high schools is compared with that of the basic schools. What factors account for such disparities in the music education policy trajectories at the two pre-tertiary levels in Ghana? Are there other factors that are driving the growth of music scholarship at the high schools despite the poor foundation at the basic level? If yes then what are those drivers, and are they sustainable? Finally, what will be the implication of such contradictions on the whole theory of educational/curriculum continuity and progression and early childhood music/ aesthetic education in general?

Why music education is performing better in high schools- Field Report

Based on these critical questions, we set out to investigate the reasons behind the consistent growth of music education at the high schools when it is literally dead at the basic schools. Our initial assumptions were threefold: 1) that the growing number of students interested in studying music at the high schools can, most likely, be occasioned by a

foundational interest cultivated at the basic schools. Since public basic schools have failed in cultivating this interest, then private basic schools and, to some extent, home-based private tuition may have filled that educational void. This assumption is premised on the fact that private participation at all levels of Ghana's education system is very high. Additionally, private schools tend to exercise greater discretionary authority over extra-curricular activities (including music, dance, drama, sports and club), which they aim at giving their schools advantage over their competitors.

2) That the growing students' interest in music education at the high schools may also be due to interest generated from participating in the biennial arts and culture festivals organised by the Ghana Education Service, for all pre-tertiary public schools. Every school-going child in Ghana is likely to experience the festival more than three times in his or her basic school education alone. To illustrate the importance of the festival on the pre-tertiary schools' calendar, we refer to Flolu and Amoah's description about how participating schools invest several months to learn the competition songs and sight-reading pieces. Very often, so much time is invested in the preparations at the expense of other subjects on the schools' curriculums hence both teachers and pupils become so fatigued that they literally suspend everything music until the next competition songs are announced (Flolu & Amoah, 2007).

3) We also assume that informal exposure to music at homes and churches may have also played additional significant roles in nurturing and sustaining the growing students' interest in music at the high schools.

The assumptions that the inter-schools' cultural festivals, private tuitions and informal influences at homes and churches may partly be responsible for the growing students' interest in music at the high schools can be investigated in any of the eight administrative Regions of Ghana with equal chances of success. However, the one about private schools seems to make the Greater Accra Region the most ideal place for a case study. According to the Ghana

Education Service EMIS⁸ report for 2014/2015, out of the 7,452 basic schools in the Greater Accra Region in the 2014/2015 academic year, only 2,468 representing 33%, were public schools. 4,984, representing 67%, were privately owned (MOE/EMIS 2014/15).⁹ The national average figures in the same year were 61% to 39% public to private schools respectively. The region with the closest figures to those of the Greater Accra is Ashanti Region with 54% and 46% public and private participation respectively. Perhaps, another compelling reason for the choice of the Greater Accra Region as our research area is the fact that it is the most accessible from our base in Legon regarding proximity and cost.

Based on these assumptions, therefore, we carried out a number of field trips to the seventeen (17) high schools, which fielded candidates for the 2016 WASCC Examinations in the Greater Accra Region. The research was essentially a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods for a good reason: because it allowed us to work with a fixed sample size, collect both close-ended and open-ended data that probed each respondent for some nuanced information on the basis of their interest in music. We began our fieldwork in December 2017 when most high schools were writing their end-of-term exams, and we continued until the second week of May 2018. The timing of our visits to the schools was informed primarily by the convenience of the music teachers (who we often contacted ahead of time) and their students to avoid disrupting their class schedules.

We randomly sampled three music students of all grades and gender from fifteen out of the seventeen high schools on the WAEC's 2016 list.¹⁰ Apart from the students, we also interviewed the respective music teachers. In all, 45 students and 15 music teachers responded to our interviews. We asked questions ranging from students' names, statuses of

⁸ EMIS is the acronym for Education Management Information Systems.

⁹ National Basic Schools Profile Report is produced by the Ghana Education Service Education Management Information Systems' (GES/MIS).

¹⁰ The two schools we left out were Fasco Senior High, Tema Community 7 and Gospel International Senior High, Madina. They did not have any music teacher or student at the time of our visit in December 2017 and 14th May 2018 respectively.

basic schools they attended (whether private or public) and their locations, and whether or not those schools offered music at any time during the students' stay. We further inquired if the students studied music formally or informally in their homes and/or churches, and participated in the biennial art and cultural festivals, particularly the choral and sight singing aspects. We also sought from both teachers and students their respective views on what administrators of high schools and music teachers may be doing right to attract and keep students in their respective music programmes. Finally, we asked whether there are other known factors motivating students to study music.

Findings

Nine (9) out of the forty-five (45) students we interviewed, representing 20%, confirmed ever receiving any form of music education at the basic schools they attended. Thus 36 students representing 80% of the total number of students interviewed said they never received any form of tuition in music at their basic schools. Out of the nine basic schools mentioned, only one, namely St. Anthony Catholic Junior Secondary School, is a public school. The rest of the eight are all private schools.¹¹ Thus while the result discussed above partially confirms our initial assumption that private basic schools may have filled the music education gap created by the public basic schools, the private school's input seems so negligible (less than 20%) that it does not support the hypothesis entirely. The result thus defeats the initial assumption that private basic schools may largely be responsible for feeding the high schools with students who possess previous backgrounds in music.

Additionally, 14 out of the 15 teachers reported admitting students with no previous knowledge at all in music rudiments. The only exception was the music teacher of the Labone

¹¹ Names of the private schools which offer music as part of courses on their curriculums include: Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Labone, Steadfast Academy Obuasi; Christ Royal School, Achimota; St. Andrew Junior High School Madina; the Golden Age Junior High School Abelenkpe; the Calvary School Ltd. Teshie; and the Tema Parents Association, Community 6.

Secondary School who confirmed occasionally admitting students, from some of the elite private basic schools in the Osu Cantonment and Labone areas, with previous knowledge in music rudiments.¹² Indeed, out of the number of students interviewed, only one student at the Tema secondary school¹³ confirmed to have undertaken private tuition in violin and organ playing at the hands of her own father, both at home and church. Again, just a few of the students interviewed (6 in all) admitted taking part in the biennial cultural festivals in their basic schools. However, none of them attributed their interest in music at the high schools to the festivals they participated in. For the greater majority of students, therefore, their first exposure to the formal study of music was at their respective high schools. The responses from the teachers and students instead established the following as contributing factors to the progressive growth in students' interest in music education in Ghanaian high schools.

The high pass rate factor

The first is what they describe as the relatively high pass rate factor for general arts students who offer music compared with those who opt for French.¹⁴ All music students and teachers interviewed attributed the growing students' interest in the subject to what they describe as a relatively high pass rate of candidates who sit for the WASSCE music. In other words, when general arts students choose music as one of the mandatory elective courses for the WASSC Exams, that choice increases their chance of securing a relatively better overall aggregate score compared with those who do not. Such a conclusion may be based on one of two possible assumptions: first, that music is relatively easy to study and pass, or that the specialist music teachers are so good that they can teach and motivate the students so well as to guarantee them good grades when they study hard.

¹² Schools such as Morning Star, SDA, and Ghana International were particularly mentioned.

¹³ She was a first year female student by the name of Sharon Addy.

¹⁴ In terms of the subject clusters available for general arts students, they always have to make a choice between French and music and this is where most of them have come to conclude that the pass rate for music is better.

To verify the authenticity of this high-pass-rate claim, we computed the ten-year WAEC examination results to find out if the national average pass rate confirms it. For example, the averaged national scores of the ten-year WASCCE music results (2006 – 2016) indicate that out of the cumulative number of 14,653 students who sat for the WAEC exams in music within the period, 8,809 candidates representing 60.1% of that number obtained between A1 (80% -100%) and C6 (50%-54%).¹⁵ 2843 candidates, representing some 19.4%, had simple passing scores between D7 (45%-49%) and E8 (40%-44%). 1,244 representing 8.5% failed the exams scoring F9 (0%-39%), while 740 were either absent on the examination days or had their papers cancelled (refer to Appendix A).

It is reasonable therefore to conclude that a national averaged pass rate of about 60%, does support the high pass rate argument alluded to earlier, particularly when compared with 33% pass rate for maths in 2016 (WAEC, 2016).¹⁶ The statistics look even more impressive when we narrow the analysis down to some specific years' results, or even to those of some individual high schools in the Greater Accra Region. For example, in 2011 the results improved significantly nationwide. Out of the 894 candidates who wrote the exams, 778 representing 87% passed with grades ranging between A1 and C6, with 106 representing 13% either failing with grades between D7 to F9 or were absent on the day of the exams (refer to table 2 in the appendix). Also, Accra-based schools like St. Margaret Mary and Ebenezer Senior High Schools have recorded high pass rates between 80% and the much coveted 100% between 2013 and 2017. These figures seem to confirm the argument that relatively higher pass rates of previous music candidates have served to motivate other students in subsequent years to subscribe to the music programme.

¹⁵ The grade points, A1 and C6, represent the highest and lowest acceptable range for admission into tertiary institutions in Ghana respectively.

¹⁶ WAEC report of the 2016 WACCSE on English, Mathematics and Science were as follows: a total of 125,065 students obtained grades A1 to C6 in English Language (53.19%), 77,108 (32.83%) obtained A1-C6 Mathematics; and 113,933 students obtained A1-C6 in Integrated Science.

Career prospects

Another major reason for the growing interest in music education in high schools is the growing awareness among students and parents that music offers a quicker and lucrative career prospects. Unanimously, all the music teachers we interviewed confirmed that their students who showed greater interest in the music practicals in particular (singing, instrument playing, and composition) have been motivated by the prospect of creating financially rewarding professions and hobbies out of them. Unlike some other disciplines on the school curriculum, they argued, music requires relatively shorter gestation period, individual creativity, and has a ready and elastic market through live performances and internet sales. They cite several local and international examples from new media of young people who are profiting from one music-related job or another, some with very little or no background at all in formal music education. Others also confidently expressed the interest in enlisting in the military, police and other security agencies' bands in the country when they complete their studies.

Teacher commitment, resourcefulness, and sacrifice

Again, our research emphasised teacher-commitment and resourcefulness as one critical factor that attracts and retain students in the music programmes as well as ensure the relatively high students pass rates. The teachers begin with targeted motivational speeches to fresh students at the initial orientation sessions and go the extra mile to sacrifice their private time before and after the scheduled contact hours. Some teachers say they extend their sacrifices to meeting the largely disadvantaged students on Saturdays, Sundays and public

holidays.¹⁷ Some of the teachers use their personal instruments in instances where resources for teaching and learning music are inadequate. Such sacrifices, the teachers maintain, are necessary for making the teaching and learning sessions rewarding for the students and for ensuring that they catch up on the whole music syllabus in a timely manner for the WASSC examinations.

School administration support

Finally, 14 out of the 15 music teachers also attributed their own performances to the support by their respective school administrations.¹⁸ Head Masters/Mistresses, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Management Boards are providing various administrative and logistical assistance that have created a relatively congenial learning atmosphere for music education to flourish in these high schools. For example, some high schools including Labone, Legon Presby, St. Aquinas, Amanfro, Tema Secondary, and Osu Presby, now have dedicated classrooms fitted with some basic musical instruments for the exclusive use by music teachers for music lessons. Most of these schools can also boast of at least one of the following ensembles: school bands (brass, combos, pop bands), choirs (both mixed and female choirs). The mixed choirs, in particular, perform for their respective schools during special occasions and represent them at inter-school choral music competitions. Until recently, it is only Achimota High School that can boast of relatively good facilities for teaching and learning music. The development is therefore quite recent for the ones named above. Arguably, therefore, the administrative support factor accounts for the difference between a high school that offers music and one that does not.

¹⁷ Our second visit to the Ebenezer High School, in Dansoman, to interview the music students and their teacher Mr Albert Kofi Adams, was on the May 1st public holiday.

¹⁸ The only school about which the teacher made no such attribution was St Margaret Mary High School, Dansoman.

Implications for music/aesthetic education

There is no doubt that the developments described above have very positive implications for music education at the high schools and the universities as well. Implicitly, the developments hint at a future secondary education regime in which students who desire to study music will stand a better chance of fulfilling their dreams irrespective of the administrative region and/or high schools they chose. Additionally, such a development is likely to impact on the number of students who would study music at the tertiary levels.

Admittedly, however, the judgment of the prevailing high school's music education situation as successful based exclusively on numbers can be extremely problematic. This is because that attribution ignores the more qualitative psycho-social values and skills that may have been permanently lost by the students because they missed out on music education during their first fifteen years of schooling. This reference is no attempt to discount or downplay the significant socialising roles that other agencies, like the church and home, play in the children's upbringing. In Africa, such socialising experiences, among other things, play significant roles in the acquisition of critical skills such as language development, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments through direct and indirect means. These (complementary socialisation roles of the home and church) notwithstanding, the effects of the absence of a structured music/aesthetic education for the first nine years of Ghana's education system is worrying because of its potential to undermine the holistic/balanced development of children permanently. These concerns are even more serious for high school students who may never again have the opportunity to study music because the subject becomes elective beyond the basic level.

Several educational psychologists and neuroscientists have affirmed that early interaction with music has an enormous effect on the quality of a child's life. One of the most recent works is the one by Emily Gersema (2016) of the Brain and Creativity Institute,

University of South Carolina (USC) which established that children's brains develop faster with music training. The study found a significant difference in the social, cognitive and emotional development of children who undergo musical training (play instruments) and those who did not. The study further established that children between the ages of six and seven who have the privilege of undergoing musical training are often more accurate in processing sound because the areas of the brain responsible for processing sound, language development, speech perception, and reading skills develop faster. In a similar vein, Campbell, Connell, and Beegle (2007) have identified five principal themes within the expressed meanings of music that are important for middle and high school adolescents. These include: "(a) identity formation in and through music, (b) emotional benefits, (c) music's life benefits, including character-building and life skills, (d) social benefits, and (e) positive and negative impressions of music school programs and their teachers" (Campbell et al. 2007, p. 224).

Another Educational psychologist, Olga Denac (2014), has also described the extent to which affective, perceptive, imaginative and cognitive qualities of the arts in general help to shape and cultivate genuine humanity in the whole man and guarantee balance and harmony in the development of the child's personality. The idea of balance and inner harmony in children's personality development is in direct reference to the threat of 'rational unilaterality in education' (Denac, 2014). According to Herbert and Alga Denac, this threat occurs when education systems emphasise rational thinking and cognitive development through science and technology to the neglect of the arts (Gilbert & Kuhn, 1967).

Similarly, history of pedagogical theory has established that these benefits from music/aesthetic education are not only for learners but also for teachers whose primary preoccupation is to search for the most effective ways that can enhance the delivery of quality education for young children. Aesthetic experiences, including music making, are known to

expand the learning environment because they encourage even very reserved children to explore their learning environment because of the aesthetic satisfaction they tend to derive (Ko & Chou, 2014; Broudy, 1972). Most adults can appreciate how learning pieces of historical facts like names of countries, cities, and rivers of the world in their respective schools through songs made it extremely easy to recall later. This pedagogical essence of music is exceptionally immanent in indigenous African communities where music is often cultivated as an integral part of socio-cultural life, and hence knowledge of it is a prerequisite for participation in social life (Nketia, 1999).

The famous Hungarian music educator, Zoltan Kodály's dictum, that "music is a right of the child, a right to use music as another element just as speech..." (Kodály, 1964 in Nketia, 1999 p.9) sums the whole essence of music in early childhood education. "In the kindergarten," Kodály further asserts, "music is perhaps even more important than language." In other words, it is necessary to develop singing and the ability to read music, just like learning how to speak, read, or write (Choksy, 1981; Nketia, 1999).

There is, therefore, no doubt that the rather messy handling of music/aesthetic education in the 2003 – 2015 educational reforms coupled with the skewed emphasis on science subjects have compromised holistic and balanced education for Ghanaian children and must be corrected as soon as possible. At the heart of all the three curriculum reviews in the last thirty years is the quest to make aesthetic education the basis for Africanizing the educational curriculum as a whole (Flolu & Amoah, 2003). However, this objective has not been realised essentially because of limitations imposed by the undue politicisation of education in the country. Such reforms seem to be driven by ruling party manifestoes rather than on altruistic national goals implemented on consensual terms.

There are hints of another reconfiguration of music/creative arts curriculum by a committee set up by the current government to replace the creative arts syllabus. It is our

fervent hope that the committee makes the right decisions and also engages with all stakeholders—particularly the classroom teachers whose responsibility it is to implement such reforms. If the necessary evaluations and consultations are done, then the existing weaknesses in the ‘creative arts’ syllabus can be corrected in the new curriculum to revive music/aesthetic education at the basic level for the first time in post-independence Ghana. Otherwise, we can predict that the new curriculum will also suffer the same fate as the ‘creative arts’ and the nation will be the poorer for it.

Conclusion

The chequered history of music education in Ghana shows that the country has vacillated between three different configurations of basic schools’ musical arts syllabi in the last thirty years, and there is the possibility of a fourth very soon. Additionally, there is a clear disconnect between what goes on at the basic school level and the high schools they feed—a remarkable and progressive growth of music education in the high schools on a fragile base at the basic school’s level. What motivated this research is the need to find answers to the music education paradox at the two pre-tertiary levels of education in Ghana. The answers proffered have been arrived at based on first-hand field data and analysis. There are, however, important unanswered questions that fall outside the scope of this paper and yet are pertinent for understanding the full effects of the disparities, and these include: whether the growth at the high schools are sustainable without an equally strong base in the basic level; whether the high school successes can ameliorate possible psychological deficiencies in the lives of the children caused by the absence of music/creative arts education at the basic level; and finally, whether the positive developments in music education at the high schools are having a corresponding impact on university-level music education in the country.

These questions seem to suggest that the basic schools’ music education problem can be placed at the doorstep of curriculum planning. For instance, while integrating music with related subjects is no longer an issue for debate, it is not clear what philosophy has guided the CRDD in implementing it this far. What subjects to integrate, how many should be enough to constitute one musical art subject, should such a subject continue to be exempt from examination externally, and finally, how can specialist music teachers be prepared well enough and in good time for a smooth implementation of such a subject? Answers to these important questions hold the solution to the intractable challenges facing music education in Ghana. They would also provide the needed assurance for sustainability at the secondary and tertiary levels as well as deal decisively with the possible psychological defects in Ghanaian children occasioned by the current challenges.

Appendix A. (Table showing distribution WAEC Music Results from 2006-2016)

Year	Regions	Total no. of Candidates	A1-C6	D7-E8	F9	Absent	Cancelled
2006	Greater Accra	52	15	18	8	11	0
	Ashanti	185	158	19	6	0	0
	Central	90	49	31	8	2	0
	Eastern	4	2	2	0	0	0
	Volta	164	85	56	11	12	0
	Brong Ahafo	16	12	4	0	0	0
	Western	20	5	10	2	3	0
	Total	7	531	326	140	35	28
2007	Greater Accra	93	11	27	56	0	0
	Ashanti	265	118	85	62	0	0
	Central	101	53	43	5	0	0
	Eastern	8	6	1	1	0	0
	Volta	242	43	123	75	1	0
	Brong Ahafo	28	11	12	5	0	0
	Western	20	6	10	4	0	0
	Total	7	757	248	301	208	1

2008	Greater Accra	120	49	46	15	10	0
	Ashanti	233	183	23	6	21	0
	Central	139	112	21	3	3	0
	Eastern	11	11	0	0	0	0
	Volta	202	91	89	16	6	0
	Brong Ahafo	47	37	5	0	5	0
	Western	28	6	20	2	0	0
Total	7	780	489	204	42	45	0
2009	Greater Accra	84	19	42	7	16	0
	Ashanti	257	142	72	21	22	0
	Central	95	57	27	5	5	1
	Eastern	12	5	6	1	0	0
	Volta	164	46	74	34	10	0
	Brong Ahafo	40	27	9	1	3	0
	Western	35	16	12	4	3	0
Total	7	687	312	242	73	59	1
2011	Greater Accra	78	60	8	4	6	0
	Ashanti	400	366	13	3	18	0
	Central	167	150	10	0	7	0
	Eastern	34	32	2	0	0	0
	Volta	158	121	25	0	12	0
	Brong Ahafo	34	33	0	1	0	0
	Western	23	16	1	3	3	0
Total	7	894	778	59	11	46	0
2012	Greater Accra	139	76	28	9	26	0
	Ashanti	479	336	78	40	25	0
	Central	154	105	24	18	7	0
	Eastern	28	21	6	1	0	0
	Volta	220	128	64	17	11	0
	Brong Ahafo	48	41	5	0	2	0
	Western	57	5	25	22	5	0
Total	7	1125	617	230	107	76	0
2013	Greater Accra	425	308	59	8	50	0
	Ashanti	843	685	106	20	32	0
	Central	523	341	83	61	38	0
	Eastern	39	36	2	1	0	0
	Volta	776	511	185	35	45	0
	Brong Ahafo	118	73	26	15	4	0
	Western	158	57	74	13	14	0
	Northern	1	0	0	0	1	0
Total	8	2883	2011	535	153	184	0
2014	Greater Accra	309	193	64	30	22	0
	Ashanti	553	355	126	36	36	0
	Central	335	179	123	25	7	1
	Eastern	38	33	4	0	1	0
	Volta	508	241	167	75	16	9
	Brong Ahafo	138	101	16	15	6	0
	Western	128	42	67	14	5	0
Total	7	2009	1144	567	168	93	10
2015	Greater Accra	452	302	96	31	23	0
	Ashanti	554	444	68	13	29	0

	Central	421	242	117	52	8	2
	Eastern	80	42	30	4	4	0
	Volta	566	239	216	83	27	0
	Brong Ahafo	116	74	37	3	2	0
	Western	109	42	61	5	1	0
Total	7	2298	1385	625	191	94	2
2016	Greater Accra	443	312	81	30	20	0
	Ashanti	654	444	159	26	22	3
	Central	481	250	134	75	19	3
	Eastern	69	43	18	5	3	0
	Volta	715	376	214	101	24	0
	Brong Ahafo	102	93	8	1	0	0
	Western	180	101	58	14	7	0
	Upper East	60	44	15	1	0	0
Total	8	2704	1663	687	253	95	6

References

- Akrofi, E. A. (1987). "Achieving the objectives of the music education in the Curriculum Enrichment Programme." *African Music Education*, (5), 18 – 29.
- Bennetts, T., (1995). "Continuity and progression." *Teaching Geography*, 20(2), 75 – 79.
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23753314>
- Boafo, A. R. (2010). *Creative arts in crisis: Teaching and learning of creative arts in selected public primary schools in Kumasi metropolis* (Unpublished master's thesis). Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Campbell, P. S., Connell, C., & Beegle, A. (2007). Adolescents' expressed meanings of music in and out of school. *Journal of Research in Music Education*. 55(3), 220 – 236.
- Chia-Hui, K., & Mei-Ju, C. (2014). Aesthetics in early childhood education: the combination of technology instruments in children's music, visual arts and pretend play. *Journal of Social Sciences*. 10(1), 39 – 45. Retrieved from <http://www.thescipub.com/jss.toc>.
- Choksy, L. (1981). *The Kodály context: Creating an environment for musical learning*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Choksy, L. (1999). *The Kodály method I and II: Comprehensive music education* (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- CRDD. (1987). *Suggested Cultural Studies for Junior Secondary Schools (1 – 3 years)*. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- CRDD. (2007). *Teaching syllabus for creative arts. Primary School 4 – 6*. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- Denac, O. (2014). The significance and role of aesthetic education in schooling. *Creative Education*, 5, 1714 – 1719. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ce.2014.519190>
- Elliot, D. (1995). *Music matters: A new philosophy of music education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Entsua-Mensah, T. (2016). *Music education and the creative industry in Ghana*. Proceedings of INCEDI Conference, Accra, Ghana, 29 – 31 August 2016.
- Evans, R. (1975). The real versus the ideal: Gaps in our school music programme. *Notes on Education and Research in African Music*, 2.
- Gardner, H. (1995). *The Frames of Mind*. Ljubljana: Tangram.
- Garesma, E. (2016). *Children's brains develop faster with music training*. Retrieved from <https://news.usc.edu/102681/childrens-brains-develop-faster-with-music-training>
- Gilbert, K. E., & Kuhn, H. (1967). *History of aesthetics*. Beograd: Kultura Beograd.
- Flolu, J., & Amoah, I. (2003). *An introduction to music education in Ghana for universities and colleges*. Accra: Black Mask Limited.
- Herbst, A., Nzewi, M., & Agawu, K. (Eds.). (2003). *Musical arts in Africa: Theory, practice and education*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Nzewi, M. (2003). Acquiring knowledge of the musical arts in traditional society. In A. Herbst, M. Nzewi, & K. Agawu (Eds.), *Musical arts in Africa: Theory, practice and education*. (pp. 13 – 37). Pretoria: University of South Africa.

- Nzewi, M. (2007). *A comprehensive study of musical arts informed by African indigenous knowledge systems: Illuminations, reflections and explorations*. Centre for indigenous instrumental African music and dance.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. (2003). *Education for all National Action Plan: Work Programme (2003 – 2015)*. Accra.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (Ed.). (1999). *A guide for the preparation of primary school African music teaching manuals*. Accra: Afram Publications Ltd.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (1970). Music education in Africa and the West: We can learn from each other. *Music Educators Journal*, 57(3), 48 – 55.
- Radford, M. A. (1992). Meaning and significance in aesthetic education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 26(1), 53 – 66.
- Weitz, M. (1972). What is aesthetic education? *Educational Theatre Journal*, 24(1), 1 – 4.

About the Authors

Moses Nii-Dortey (PhD) is a Research Fellow and Coordinator of the ‘Music and Dance’ Section of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. He has researched and published on African art music history, music education in Ghana, African folk opera, and traditional festivals as integrated performances. He was one of the first cohorts of African Presidential Scholars Fellowship by the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 2008 – 2009, and received the African Humanities Dissertation Fellowship (AHP) of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) in 2011 – 12.

Adwoa Arhine is a lecturer and the Acting Head of the Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon. She has taught courses in Music of West Africa, Music and Gender Studies, and Ghanaian Traditional Folk Songs. She was a beneficiary of a Fulbright Scholarship in 2014. Her interdisciplinary research falls within the fields of African Studies, Ethnomusicology, and Gender Studies. Particularly, her areas of research interest are women’s songs and oral performance, performance practice and African identities, music and play. Her papers have appeared in peer-reviewed journals.