

**ENHANCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICAL MUSICIANSHIP AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BUNGOMA COUNTY: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE
STUDENTS' LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

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ABSTRACT

Many scholars of music such as Kodaly, Dalcroze and Campbell have argued for the need of developing practical musicianship among learners in Music Education. One of the purposes of Music Education is the creation of an environment in which the human potential is nurtured to bring forth an understanding of a variety of musical experiences. Music is a phenomenon that is experienced by nurturing the intrinsic interest and motivation of a learner. This paper is therefore based on a study that was conducted to examine the development of practical musicianship among students of music in secondary schools. The main objective of the paper is to determine the various learning activities and strategies that students engage in to enhance practical musicianship. Adopting a descriptive survey design, secondary schools in Bungoma County that offer music as a subject formed the area of study. The respondents included 19 teachers and 177 students of music from 15 purposively sampled secondary schools. Data was collected using personal interviews, observation schedule, document analysis and a questionnaire. The collected data was then analyzed descriptively, and its findings presented in bar charts and tables. The study established that students engaged in dancing, singing and playing musical instruments as a way of enhancing their practical musicianship skills. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the balance between practical and theoretical components of the curriculum should be addressed. Provision of opportunities for students to talk about their musical interests, likes and dislikes on a regular basis in order to better facilitate meaningful musical instruction should be encouraged. Stronger marketing of musical activities might ensure that learners are fully aware of the music opportunities in the schools. Provision of new activities, such as jazz and popular bands, jazz choirs, folk groups and other kinds of ensembles might generate wider enthusiasm from the learners alongside traditional orchestra and choir groups.

Keywords: Practical musicianship, Music education, Ensemble, Student centred instruction Teacher centred instruction, Curriculum, Theory and practice.

INTRODUCTION

For many years, the traditional teaching style or specifically, teacher-centered instruction has been dominant in music education. In a traditional classroom, students become passive learners,

or rather just recipients of teachers' knowledge and wisdom. They have no control over their own learning as teachers make all the decisions concerning the curriculum, teaching methods, and the different forms of assessment (Duckworth, Quinn & Seligman, 2009). Drawing from Elliot's Praxial Music Education (PME) philosophy, Margaret Barrett (2007) reiterates that the PME philosophy puts emphasis on appreciation of music. Music appreciation according to Elliot (1995), occurs in and through various forms of musical engagement including knowledge of cultural and social contexts, and the uses of music in experience" (p. 56). Duckworth et al. (2009) asserts that teacher-centered learning prevents students' musicianship growth and general educational growth. In contrast, in a learner-centered classroom, students are actively involved in learning and they have greater input into what they learn, how they learn it, and when they learn it (Weimer, 2012).

This means that students take responsibility of their own learning and are directly involved in the learning process. Learner-centred teaching style focuses on how students learn instead of how teachers teach (Wohlfarth et al., 2008). Weimer (2012) further indicates that in a learner-centered classroom, teachers abandon lecture notes and power point presentations for more active, engaging, collaborative style of teaching. McCombs and Whistler (1997) observe that teachers of music are strongly encouraged to employ learner-centered pedagogical approaches if they are to nurture musicianship among students. These authors further indicate that learner-centered instruction is most suitable for the more autonomous, and more self-directed learners who not only participate on what, how, and when to learn, but also construct their own learning experiences. The learner-centered approach therefore reflects and is rooted in constructivist philosophy of teaching (Brown, 2008; McCombs & Whistler, 1997). In Constructivism, the

learners learn by doing and experiencing rather than by depending on the teachers' wisdom and expertise to transmit knowledge (Brown & Jordania, 2011).

Langley (2003) consents that the ability to develop ones potential for practical musicianship makes one internalize music which then leads to aesthetic growth and sensitivity, enabling one to respond to music aesthetically, intellectually and emotionally, thereby gaining deeper meaning from musical experiences. The present Kenyan Secondary School Music Syllabus Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), 2004) documents that one of the objectives of music education is to awaken and develop a learner's intrinsic motivation for music. This is practical musicianship. Learners are expected to notate melodies and rhythms dictated to them, identify various intervals, cadences and modulations and develop interest in furthering these components after graduating. Unfortunately, there has been poor performance in the area of practical musicianship because graduates of music from secondary schools in Kenya are never keen on furthering musicianship once they are done with their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations. Music educators and other musicians agree that one of the goals of music education should be to help people develop what is sometimes called the 'inner interest', a potential of musical possibilities which people draw on in performance (Swanwick, 1994). Music learning is cumulative and requires that previously mastered skills be employed in new situations.

Practical musicianship therefore is the ability of the learner to harness, to interpret music theory and all the information learned in class into practice. This is evident in the competencies displayed in performance in sight reading written music, performance on stage, vocally and on instrument, execution of dance steps and movements in response to the sound produced. Given this background it became necessary to have a systematic study to investigate the influence of

instructional techniques employed by teachers of music in developing students' skills and competencies in practical musicianship.

LITERATURE UNDERPINNING

Plummerridge (1999) argues that music education has evolved over a very long period and music educators now support a variety of rationales and teaching approaches. It is for this reason that the characteristics of a competent teacher can be applied to secondary generalist teachers. As secondary classroom teachers are required to deliver the music curriculum as well as other subjects, they need to demonstrate similar skills of an effective teacher and have to employ a range of teaching strategies that enhance the musical experiences of students.

Today, one thing is obvious - educational practitioners, including teachers, students, and school administrators are living in an era of educational change (Smyth et al., 2000). Furthermore, Fullan (2001) asserts that 'educational change depends on what teachers do and think'. In contemporary society Drummond (1999) critically maintains that the main role of today's teacher now appears to be delivery of the curriculum. However, as Krueger and Casey (2000 pg, 134) argue, there are various major challenges that face today's teachers in schools on a daily basis. It is for these reasons that teachers have to acquire certain skills and knowledge in their profession to survive in the classroom. For effective teaching and learning in classrooms teachers need to develop effective teaching and learning strategies. Tait (1992) points out that the successful music teachers develop many strategies and styles in order to address varied needs of their students. Accordingly, there is no one best style for teaching music, but rather a repertoire of strategies and a range of teaching styles such as individualized situation and apprenticeship.

In general terms teaching strategies and styles have to do with the "how" of music teaching. Depending on the situation, the teacher may use a combination of strategies, which can be referred to as the style, which contributes to the teaching profile of a teacher (Tait, 1992). Philpott (2001) also argues that for teachers' activities, the approaches and tactics used by the teacher for bringing about learning are important. However, it is suggested that activities and strategies differ from each other in their description.

According to Okwelle (2014) resource materials are derived from various sources they can be purchased, locally made, imported or even improvised when necessary for effective resource delivery. The professional music teacher needs to note that every resource material has its definite unique strength in teaching-learning situation. Furthermore, better teaching and faster learning of music concepts can be facilitated by careful selection, development and skillful utilization of appropriate resource materials by the competent teachers.

Onasanya and Omosewo (2011) state that, utilization to a large extent judges the value of resource materials by the degree in which they singly or collectively satisfy the derived resource needs. Resource materials are not ends in themselves but means of attaining specific resource functions. The ability of the teacher to effectively utilize the available resource materials optimizes the attainments of resource situation; this varies with the level of utilization.

There are various strategies that are suggested to enhance the Music teachers' competence in the selection, development and utilization of resource materials for effective music instruction delivery hence; develop positive attitude towards the development and use of resource materials utilization in music resource delivery in schools, the resource objectives, content learning activities (Wanjala, 2004). Taking into consideration the evaluation instruments by the teacher at the time of selection, development and utilization of resource materials is fundamental. In other

words, maintain appropriateness of the materials to resource objectives, the music content for which the resource materials is being selected, where in doubt, the music teacher should consult. The aphorism that two good heads are better than one good head becomes more relevant in the field of education particularly in teaching.

Onasanya and Omosewo (2011) add that it also reflect individual differences of learners' characteristics in the use of resource materials. This is because the age, level, interest, socio-economic background, learning style, musical skills of the learner often varies and hence materials to be selected, developed and used should relate to the individual differences of the learner. This is necessary because learners as human beings learn through various senses and hence the resources/materials that appeal to more than one sense should essentially be utilized.

Economic factors should be considered in selecting resource materials for use in music lesson delivery. Finance is one of the major problems facing schools. Therefore, the teacher must consider the cost of financial implications of the resource to be selected for classroom utilization. There are a lot of resources in the local neighborhood which innovative teacher can exploit for the benefit of their students. Before selecting or developing any resource, consideration should be given on the number of teaching/learning situations to which the resource can be applied. This is because it is more economical to buy or develop materials which have dual usage than ones that can be applied in a single learning situation. Therefore, acquisition of teaching aids having a wide range of practicability is essential (Urevbv, 2006).

The teachers should realize the need for improvisation if the cost of purchasing is high. Such improvisation is a way of increasing inquiry, curiosity, creativity and productive application of intellect. Development or improvisation of teaching aids could also be done concurrently with

the students such as project or group assignment in designing some gadgets of learning. This also promotes creativity among students.

Onasanya and Omosewo (2011) also included that some dynamic variables such as the size of the target audience, the classroom social climate, sitting, viewing and listening arrangement, available time space, the desired level of learners' response and participation are to be seriously considered in the decision, selection and development of resource materials for use in music lesson delivery. Once a resource material has been selected and developed, the teacher should preview the material before they are brought to the class to determine the operational state of the intended material, especially the manipulative aids, before the actual presentation. Multidimensional presentation should be encouraged as the use of variety of the materials will increase curiosity and may appeal to more than one sense of the learner. At the end of presentation with the teaching aids, outcomes should be measured to evaluate the effectiveness of resource delivery.

For future music education emancipation and multi-culture so far, this article has highlighted the conception that informal and individualized strategies do not necessarily result in motivation, participation and inclusion. Music educational issues, closely related to the knowledge development and content of the subject, have concerned misgivings about progression and the concern that areas of music creativity, composition and music listening are not highly prioritized in music education.

This paper has also stressed the fact that decentralization and an increase in individualization have resulted in large differences between schools. As a result of a sharp focus on individual students' interests and an openly formulated curriculum where (music) education is given

opportunities to be situated; the context and traditions of the individual school combined with the participants' experiences it is possible to speak of music education in terms of culture.

Sernhede (2006) draws a parallel between this development trend and a general increase in ideas of distinctiveness, as well as what is sometimes referred to as 'tribalization' (Maffesoli, 1988), which can lead to problems like marginalization and class segregation. Sernhede (2006) argues that it is unfortunate if schools are contributing to a strengthening of these segregating tendencies. Furthermore, this relates to considerations of the democratic task of schools to develop tolerance and understanding between geographic, ethnic, social and musical cultures; to facilitate meetings between people of different generations, gender and who have different interests. Young people in today's society neither adopt nor grow unreflecting into their parents' life choices, cultures or a particular traditional canon. Meaning and goals must be created and reconstructed by the individual (Sernhede, 2006). If schools succeed in their democratic task, they will not only develop responsible, aware and unprejudiced citizens but also students will be able to find alternative and multiple identities, life worlds and choices – which are referred to as emancipation in critical pedagogy (cf. Freire, 1972; Wright, 2008).

Problems surrounding an individually or locally rooted music education connect to the relationship between the local, the global and media's functions in these processes. Media is an important inspiration in young people's identity construction. Media 'teaches' people what values are considered to be important, what lifestyles are possible and desirable. It is sometimes said that young people live in a global music culture, where through media they both encounter and can 'conquer' different genres and cultures (Skolverket, 2004b).

Even though we, in this context cannot further examine this complex issue, it is necessary to stress that the cultural multitude and its role models, through globalization, has actually

decreased (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Bauman, 2000, 2001; Lundberg et al., 2003; Smiers, 2003). It is therefore necessary for teachers, parents and religious leaders to develop a professional awareness concerning issues related to the role that media plays in young people's lives. Undoubtedly, music education needs to address and include popular culture, but it should also contain a critical and sound discussion concerning popular culture and media. In that way, music learning has the potential to contribute to a thriving multitude and will encourage solidarity, acceptance and awareness within the frame of compulsory music education (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010).

Undoubtedly, school is a part of the society, as is popular culture and as a result schools need to strive towards an understanding of this culture. Students also need to be able to have their own experiences of music – physically, intellectually and emotionally – and be given opportunities to understand cultural processes and structures in society, as well as in educational settings (Ruud, 1997). Thus, a central issue is what functions and roles music education as part of compulsory school will and can have in the future. It may not be productive any more to strive for schools to become more informal and further approach students' everyday lives (Sernhede, 2006).

Personal development and construction of meaning both occur through encounters between the known and the unknown. Sernhede (2006) argues that young people lack confidence in the current school system, not because of too much alienation, but because schools “let them do whatever they want”(pg. 15). Instead of deliberately structured and formalized learning, large parts of music education are currently characterized by informal pedagogical strategies. The original development that has influenced current Swedish education had democratic ambitions, but Sernhede argues that the resulting practices today do not lead to liberation and emancipation. In order to contribute to young people's identity work, opportunity to construct coherence and

meaning, schools need to represent a meeting place where questions can be asked from different perspectives (Sernhede, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

This study was based on constructivist research paradigm which basically explains how people learn. The constructivist paradigm considers that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiences and reflection on those experiences (Bereiter, 1994). In the classroom context, the constructivist view of learning can point towards a number of different teaching practices. In the most general sense, it usually means encouraging students to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. The teacher makes sure he/she understands the students' pre-existing conceptions and guides the activity to address them and then build on them (Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

Descriptive Survey research design was used in this study adopting a mixed approach so as to explain the existing situation and generalise it to the entire population. Therefore, the main tool used for data collection was the questionnaire, Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), Interview schedules and observation schedules. Bryman (2004) observes that the design is relevant since it entails the collection of data on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of data in connection with two or more variables, which are then examined to detect the patterns of association.

This study targeted secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The County has a total of 261 secondary schools but only 15 secondary schools offer music. In these 15 secondary schools offer Music, there were a total of 624 students who take Music and a total of 19 teachers of

Music (County Education Report, 2014). Of these students, 318 were in Form Four at the time of conducting the study. The target population comprised teachers of Music and the students who learn Music among the sampled schools. Stratified sampling was used to group the schools in sub-counties after which purposive sampling was done to select 15 out of 260 schools that offer music. In total, 19 teachers of Music were purposively sampled with a census sample of 177 students Form four students who undertook music.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

| Sub-County (Strata) | Bungoma West | Bungoma South | Kilimili Bungoma | Webuye West | Bungoma East | Bungoma North | Mt. Elgon | Total |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Secondary schools | 30 | 60 | 31 | 30 | 51 | 51 | 17 | 260 |
| Purposively sampled schools | 4 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Students (All form four in selected schools) | 55 | 33 | 46 | 9 | 16 | 10 | 8 | 177 |
| Teachers (Purposive sampling of music teachers) | 5 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 19 |

The collected data was cleaned, coded and thematically analysed. The responses were then interpreted based on the consistency of the facts and logical themes adduced to them. Descriptive statistics were used during data analysis and presented in charts and tables inform of frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to establish how practical musicianship was enhanced among secondary school students in Bungoma County, the author set an objective to examine the various learning strategies as well as activities engage in by the students. Teachers were therefore asked to state the music

activities in practical musicianship that the learners engage in while at the school. Majority 12 (63.2%) of the teachers indicated that students play musical instruments. These were followed by those who indicated that the learners engage in the composition of the songs. Figure 1 presents a summary of the responses.

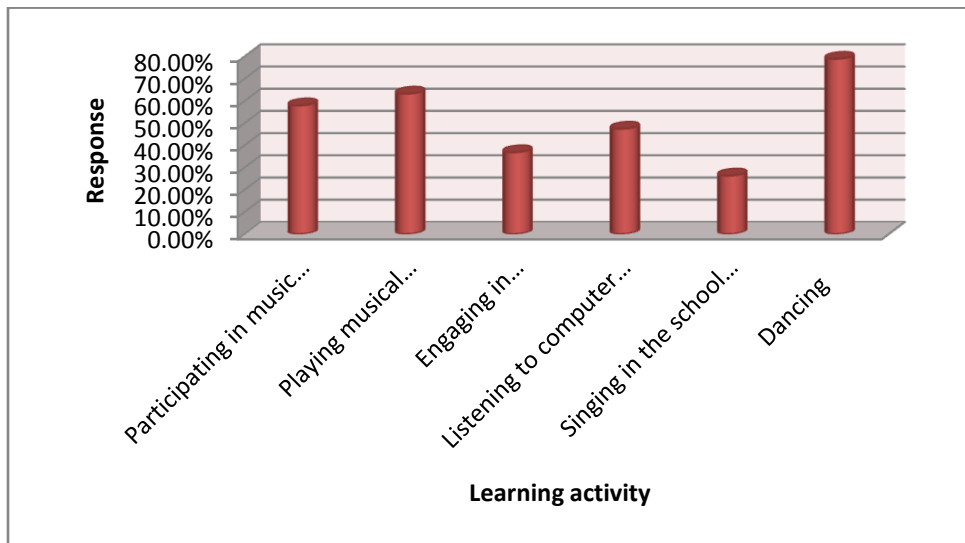


Figure 1. Teachers' response on learning activities that students engage in

Extent to which Students Conducted Music Learning Activities in Class

To further achieve the objective for which this study was set, the students were asked to rate a set of given music activities meant to enhance their practical musicianship and the frequency with which they engage in these activities. On this the students' opinion were sought as to which extent the music learning activities were conducted in class. A four points Likert scale was used to rate the response provided by the students thus; 1 for Always, 2 for Occasionally, 3 for Not known, and 4 for Never. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency with which students engage in practical musicianship activities

| Musicianship activity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Mean |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Playing musical instruments | 51 | 67 | 42 | 18 | 2.143 |
| Singing | 7 | 25 | 58 | 87 | 3.273 |
| Dancing | 60 | 70 | 33 | 14 | 1.993 |
| Composition | 25 | 51 | 51 | 44 | 2.670 |
| Participating in music festivals | 24 | 52 | 59 | 43 | 2.680 |
| Aggregate mean | | | | | 2.552 |

Based on the findings in Table 2, it can be observed that a good number of students (M=1.993) engaged in dancing as a way of enhancing their practical musicianship skills. It was also noted that a good number of the students (M= 2.143) took part in playing music instruments as a way to further develop their practical musicianship skills. An aggregate mean of 2.552 is indicative of the fact that students engaged often in activities that developed their practical musicianship skills.

Students were also asked to indicate the music activities they were able to execute after class instruction. On a five-point likert scale of 1 for Strongly Agree, 2 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Disagree to 5 for Strongly Disagree, the learners provided their feedback against a list of activities. The responses are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Music learning the students were able to execute after instruction

| No | Activity | S. Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | S. Disagree | Mean |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|------|
| 1 | Instrumentation | 4 | 67 | 48 | 53 | 5 | |
| 2 | Composition | 5 | 34 | 61 | 59 | 18 | |
| 3 | Sight reading | 6 | 71 | 83 | 12 | 6 | |
| 4 | Notating | 15 | 80 | 65 | 18 | - | |
| 5 | Vocal training | 12 | 47 | 89 | 18 | 11 | |
| Total | | 42 | 299 | 346 | 160 | 40 | |

From Table 3, a large number of students were unable to execute the given music activities after being taught in class. Among those who were able to undertake some of the music learning activities, majority considered notating and vocal training which is merely theoretical at (15) and (12) respectively.

The authors then sought to identify the music performing groups in which students belonged to outside class and frequency with which they participated in these groups. School choir, church choir, local band and community musical theatre were some of the available options. There were 33 (37.3%) students who indicated that they were participating in the school choir, 34.6% were participating in the church choir, 58.7% were members of the community musical theatre group while 40.0% were members of the local band. Table 4 presents a summary of the students' responses.

Table 4. Students' participation in musical activities outside class

| Out of class musical activities | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| School choir | 33 | 18.7 |
| Church choir | 40 | 22.7 |
| Local band | 46 | 26.0 |
| Community Musical Theatre | 58 | 32.6 |
| Total | 177 | 100 |

In addition, the teachers were also asked to mention the support activities towards enhancing practical musicianship provided by the school. A summary of the responses is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Support activities in enhancing practical musicianship Activity

| Support activities in enhancing practical musicianship Activity | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Music festival participation | 10 | 53 |
| Worship programmes | 5 | 26 |
| Public functions | 4 | 21 |
| Total | 19 | 100 |

From the results presented in Table 5, music festival participation and school worship programs were the main activities that were supported by the school through which practical musicianship may be enhanced. In an observation to address this objective, this study established that choir activity was the most popular activity that majority of the students were engaged in to enhance practical musicianship amongst learners of music in all the 15 schools sampled for this study. It

is therefore clear as indicated by the teachers of music that their students engage in playing of musical instruments to enhance the development of practical musicianship. Composition of songs by the students came second in the list. In support of this finding, Akuno (1997) concurs by arguing that participation in musical activities serves as a means of educating the emotions, the mind and the intellect. Schools, colleges, universities, government as well as private groups in Kenya have different participatory music programmes in their annual calendars. It is notable that ensemble playing and singing in groups has the capacity to foster the ability to use or make music in and out of working environment or in school curriculum. Teamwork, more specifically group performances apart from encouraging the spirit of co-operation, provides opportunities for potential musicians to develop confidence when they are before an audience. Further, Hoffer (1964) buttresses the finding by noting that one of the ways of enhancing interest in Music is through the development of group performances which are inherent in practical musicianship activities.

CONCLUSION

Teachers of Music were asked to indicate the activities that their students engage in to enhance the development of practical musicianship and majority of them indicated that students rarely play musical instruments. It was also noted that most of the students only engaged in dancing which is not enough to develop their practical musicianship skills. The study findings were indicative of the fact that students rarely engaged in activities such as singing groups, instrumental bands and music festivals that could further developed their practical musicianship skills.

RECOMMENDATION

While compulsory involvement in choirs and orchestras in schools is not advisable, there is an evident lack of awareness of musical pursuits within secondary schools in Bungoma County. Stronger marketing of activities might ensure that learners are fully aware of the music opportunities in the schools. Provision of new activities, such as jazz and popular bands, jazz choirs, folk groups and other kinds of ensembles might generate wider enthusiasm from the learners alongside traditional orchestra and choir groups.

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