

**TECHNOLOGY AND ITS IMPACT ON LEARNING, TRAINING AND TALENT
DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON PRAISE AND WORSHIP TEAMS IN
EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF ELDORET, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores negative consequences resulting from the use of technology with a specific focus on non-formal and informal channels of learning, training and talent development in evangelical churches of Eldoret, Kenya. The paper equally underscores the returns on investment gained in areas where musical operations have been technologically aided. However, the case is not the same in the area of performing arts as exemplified in this paper. The methodology of data collection employed relied heavily on personal interview, non-participant observation and participant observation during praise and worship sessions. A survey was carried out in twelve evangelical churches based in Eldoret town for a period of six (6) months. The results reveal that while it was expected that technology would make learning and training easier, the case is different in the area of performing arts and musical arts education in that; most youth are not investing physical energy and time in learning how to play instruments. Instead they are relying on computer generated beats and other computer generated surrogate musical instruments in their musical practice which has seen a big decline in the growth of talent in the area of playing instruments.

Keywords: Training, Learning, Technology, Musical instruments, Evangelical Churches, Talent development.

INTRODUCTION

Educationists view learning as a continuous process whose end results are determined by positive change in attitude and behavior of the learner. An individual is said to have learnt when, after going through the process, there is evidence of positive change in behavior and attitude. The key word here is ‘processes’. In practice, learning how to play an instrument of whatever nature has got no prescribed technical time frame. To some individuals, it is a life time process (Wekesa, 2013). This is because of the very varied underlying reasons and potential unique to every person and the respective instruments. Even to those considered to

be virtuosos in their respective instruments, keep on practicing to keep fit but still in doing so they are always learning something new every other time (Mutuku, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

During a preliminary survey exercise, it was established that there were only 12 evangelical churches in Eldoret town at that time (June, 2017- June, 2018). The study considered all the 12 churches as a total population through purposive techniques. Out of the 12 churches, the study selected one praise team leader from each church as the key respondents who were believed to have main information, making a total of 12 respondents. During the actual interviews, the point of saturation was reached on the sixth respondent. Therefore the study settled on 6 out of 12 respondents which constitute 50% of the total population of the respondents. This figure was considered as a representative sample which is above 30% lower ceiling as propounded by Babbie, (1999). Participant and Non-participant observation exercises were carried out in the 12 churches which accounts for 100% response.

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

In the 1960s through mid-1980s, the degree of technical music literacy among the Kenyan population was low. As pastor Otieno (personal interview, 2019) observes, this could have been attributed to the negative attitude that most parents had towards music (especially popular) because the popular music artists did not portray good moral standards acceptable by many parents. As a result, many parents discouraged their children from joining music groups such as bands and secular music choirs because such children were considered as lost sheep.

Secondly, music was viewed as a luxurious venture and not a career that one would undertake and have it bring food on one's table. This misperception also contributed to the slow spread of music literacy in Kenya in spite of the fact that not many institutions of learning were offering music as a subject. Nonetheless, the introduction of 8-4-4 system of education in

Kenya in the mid-1980s which incorporated music as subject, saw a gradual growth in technical music knowledge among the Kenyan population arising from the teaching that was going on in schools that were offering music as a subject. Otherwise before the introduction of music as a subject in schools, quite few people had basic technical music literacy. Most of the people did not know how to do the notation and a few that knew were notating music using a pen or a pencil on an exercise book paper which was more tedious and sometimes illegible.

With the emergence and incorporation of technology in our affairs the general expectations were that all was going to be well. Many sectors of our musical ecosystem have benefitted immensely with this development. For instance, the development of musical notation and transcription softwaresuch as Noteworthy composer, Sibelius and Finale have made it easier for musicians to notate their pieces of music more neatly and legibly. The computer aided notation is user friendly and neat. However, the case is not as such when it comes to other areas of performing arts especially the learning of how to play musical instruments.

According to Pastor Otieno (personal interview, 2019), most churches in rural areas and small towns in Kenya were not accustomed to the culture of praising and worshipping using any other musical instruments apart from the hand claps. He explains that with the advent of evangelical churches in Kenya, various musical instruments from the western world such as guitars, keyboards, drum sets, wood winds such as clarinets and saxophones were adapted and fused in the praise and worship culture of evangelical churches, but later on infiltrated other non-evangelical churches. He points out that since no body in their church had learned music in the formal way, instrumentalists learned based on trial and error method which used to take them a lot of time before one got to know how to play an instrument. To them that got to know, pastor Otieno notes that, they used to spend time and energy on practicing in order to perfect the skills and knowledge acquired. Over time he adds that this practice saw many

people develop patience, expertise and discipline. This experience made many of the people both the youth and grown-ups to develop talents that were thought didn't exist in the first place. This was seen on guitars, and non-transposable electronic keyboards. One thing that he appreciates is that although the process was tedious and lacked formal instructional procedures, the culture of live performance where individuals made music practically was achieved.

However, as much as the society expected a lot of value addition from use of technology, this survey has found out that, technological advancement in some areas has done more harm than good. A case in point is the introduction and use of electronic keyboards with a transpose function. The survey revealed that this aspect has created a shortcut route to many upcoming keyboard players who no longer are interested in exploring other keys because it takes a long time to master the scales. This was exemplified in 12 churches where the keyboard players across the board were found to be playing their keyboards during praise and worship sessions in the key of F sharp major. Whenever a different key was required they would simply transpose the pitch but maintain the F sharp notes. It therefore means that, when such players are given a keyboard without a transpose function, they will be faced with a lot of challenges to perform in a different key when the situation demands so.

Gitau (personal interview, 2019) a keyboard player in one of the churches explains that, their main process of learning and training is based on observation. New and upcoming players observe the experts techniques of playing and pick them to go and rehearse later. He also notes that most of these accomplished players are selfish and never willing to teach any other person in the praise and worship team. He adds that they also depend on the Holy Spirit to reveal to them new knowledge and guidance because the Holy Spirit is the best teacher. While by biblical standards this assertion could be true, it's however illusive when it comes to the pragmatic dimension of how the Holy Spirit can reveal or teach an individual a new

chord or a scale. To this extent, this study did not depend on this premise so much but it served as evidence in proving that indeed there is need for technical music personnel in the churches to lead people out of music darkness. Gitau continues to explain that the knowledge he has today was learnt from a friend from a neighboring church whom he observed playing in F sharp and also went to practice on the same. He points out that it is in crusades where most keyboard players from different churches in Eldoret such as: Deliverance, Redeemed Gospel, Logos Revival Ministries, The Now International, Happy Church, Maranatha, New Calvary, Halleluya Church, Neno and Faith International meet and exchange their experiences. He continues to explain that, this is also the moment where they observe the most proficient keyboard player who turns out to influence the ways and vision of the rest of the players. Most of the players get challenged and others get inspired with this prowess and begin to struggle to be like him without regard to whether or not he is doing the right things. This partly explains why there is a common trend of performance culture across the churches because of lack of access to formal and systemized curriculum and methods of instruction.

Doris, (personal interview, 2019) explains that they have a full set of equipment requisite to start a live praise and worship band. The instruments include drum set, three electric guitars, tenor and alto saxophones and a keyboard. She continues to explain that for reasons she doesn't quite understand, members of the praise and worship team in her church have no interest in these instruments apart from the keyboard. Asked to explain whether the keyboard player learned music formally, Doris indicated that the current player is a successor of the previous player who had equally no formal knowledge in music but she remembers him observing closely the way the other one was playing and promising that one day he would like to play like play like that or even better. Similar views were shared by Makamu, (personal interview, 2019).

Moreover, asked to explain whether or not they use percussion instruments during praise and worship sessions, Doris says “we do have a manual drum set but we never use it because the keyboard player always uses the beats from the keyboard and we dance to them as we sing praises and we feel complete that way”. Pursuant to the discussion held with Doris, it attests to the fact that the place of manual drum set is also threatened with the incorporation of the electronic keyboard with in built beats. This aspect makes it no longer necessary to learn a percussion instrument and the consequent is killing potential of physical manipulative talent and skill development in individuals who could be interested because the keyboard provides an alternative.

Anjere (personal interview, 2019) a keyboard player in Logos Revival Ministries explains that, he doesn't see the need of the rhythm guitar since the keyboard is a self-contained instrument that takes care of all the other sections of the instruments. He further argues that there is equally no need to learn other keys because it will be a waste of time and also negates the purpose for which the transpose function provision was introduced on the electronic keyboard. Anjere's views assert the negative impact of technology on the process of learning, training and talent development because of the narrow and linear dimension of looking at instruments. He forgets to realize that every instrument has its own unique talent potential, history, anthropology and pedagogy. Further, technology has created an environment that makes it no longer necessary to delve into advanced skills or open doors to other categories of instruments to be learned and utilized by the church since all of them are compressed in one instrument.

In the area of wind instruments, Makamu, (personal interview, 2019) observes that, it is one of the areas that has lagged behind in most evangelical churches. This has been worsened by technology especially electronic keyboard that has electronic sounds of various wood wind instruments. If need arises for a particular wind instruments, keyboard players simply press a

button and gets the sound effect required. This in itself compromises the chance that an individual would have used to learn a real wind instrument such a clarinet or saxophone and in so doing will be developing a talent. In essence, one electronic keyboard with all these manner of electronic sounds is denying opportunity to many individuals with regard to learning, training and developing manipulative skills and talents.

Mbinji (Personal interview, 2019) a keyboard player explains that, in their church they use a keyboard and a bass guitar. That the keyboard plays the lead role as well as the ostination role of the rhythm guitar as it were in an ordinary instrumental layout of a popular guitar band. This is also an indicator that the rhythm guitar is at risk. Rhythm guitar plays an intermittent role between the lead and solo as well as the bass guitar. Since the introduction of the keyboard, most artists prefer programming the rhythm line on the keyboard, quantize it and work with it to substitute the rhythm guitar. The same applies to the drum set. Most artists prefer to program the beats on the key board or on fruity loops software to substitute the drum set. These has seen reduction in the number of young people interested in learning how to play a physical drum set and rhythm guitars. This is because they prefer a short cut alternative which is available on software that takes seconds to mobilize and get what one wants. This largely informs the reasons why in the so called Praise and Worship live concerts, the entire sound process and performances depend on play back (mimicking of recorded tracks), as opposed to live bands where everything is done live from the singer, dance and player of the instruments because people are no longer investing time in learning how to play instruments. Technology is therefore killing the development of theory and practical musicianship skills.

CONCLUSION

The study established that because of this technology where the instrument is self-contained, performing artists are denied an environment to exercise creativity, innovation and artistry since the technology applied is rigid in the sense that it ‘thinks’ for an individual. Further, programmed beats or music is a risky venture to be relied upon since in the event of a breakdown of sound due to power outages during performance, it becomes a challenge to salvage the item since none of the practitioners are ever prepared to do it live.

The study established that indeed most of the instrumentalists and singers have neither formal training nor technical know-how on the musical instruments as well as sound technology. Their awareness is only limited to mechanical manipulation of the musical instruments.

The study also established that owing to lack of formal knowledge in this area, it has remained a big challenge to achieve well-structured and organized music rendition in these churches as compared to the main stream churches such as Catholic and Adventist churches. Notably, the music in these churches is characterized by too loud sound which is also discordant because of lack of the concept of central pitch between musical instruments and the singers. It is for this reason that the study observes negligence of Bloom’s taxonomy tenets which include: knowledge, comprehension, application, assessment, synthesis and evaluation that make a learner experience and mastery of the whole learning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Churches should identify talented youth in their respective areas and sponsor them for formal music training in certificate and other types of short courses to lead them out of ignorance so as to make praise and worship performance more effective, enjoyable and good to be part of.

2. Keyboard players should be challenged to begin attempting to practice playing in other keys in order to expand the mastery of keys and proficiency of playing.

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