

PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SUNYANI MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract

The importance of providing learning experiences that enable the African child to acquire knowledge and understanding of the traditional music, dance, and drama of their environment and those of their neighbors' is now generally recognized. However, for a while, without this preparation, they will not be able to participate in the life of the communities to which they belong. This study was conducted to look at the status of performing arts education in public primary schools within the Sunyani Municipality. A descriptive survey was used for this study. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect information from 40 (30 teachers and 10 head teachers) participants. The teachers and head teachers were selected using purposive sampling techniques, respectively. The interview scripts were interpreted using an inductive data analysis technique to identify themes. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 24) was used for the quantitative data. The study showed that there is insufficient time allocated for performing arts in the school schedule, lack of available resources (e.g., instruments, textbooks, materials) to support performing arts, and teachers receive insufficient training and professional development in performing arts. It is therefore recommended that the challenges hindering the effective teaching and learning of the performing arts strands and the Creative Arts in the public basic schools be addressed to elevate the status of arts education in the municipality.

Keyword: Basic Schools, Dance, Drama, Ghana, Performing Arts, Teaching

1.INTRODUCTION

Music, dance, and drama are art forms described using sound and the human body as vehicles of articulation. The performing arts have been described as lively and exciting artistry that can be employed in a formal setting to enable the progress of the understudy and to bind together the mental, physical, and emotional features of the entire being (Dewhurst, 2014). Until lately, music and dance as a subject were taught primarily for extracurricular purposes and now it has become an actual training education program. It is presently perceived as an art form deserving of study (Garcia, 2015).

Performing arts education stands out as a vibrant and essential element of Ghana's educational environment, adding a dynamic cultural depth to schools that extends beyond textbooks and classrooms (Bonney, 2022). Based on a custom that regards drama, dance, and music as fundamental manifestations of the Ghanaian culture, performing arts instruction in schools represents a dedication to nourishing imaginative faculties, establishing cultural pride, and promoting overall growth (Craft et al., 2014). From modern theater plays to traditional storytelling accompanied by drumming and dance, performing arts education serves as a medium for students to connect with their cultural heritage while also honing vital life skills like self-expression, cooperation, and communication (Goldberg, 2021). The fact that Ghanaian schools offer performing arts education demonstrates the country's understanding of the significant influence the arts have on learning and individual development (Opoku-Asare and Siaw, 2015). Outside of the typical classroom, students have the chance to hone their creative skills, explore their artistic

abilities, and get a deep understanding of the variety of artistic mediums that make up Ghana's rich cultural heritage (Opoku-Asare and Siaw, 2015). A dedication to developing well-rounded people who are not just academically strong but also culturally aware, inventive, and have the abilities necessary to function in a world that is more linked is demonstrated by the inclusion of performing arts education in the school curriculum (Goldberg, 2021).

It is important to provide learning experiences that empower the African child to learn and understand African traditional music and dance (Floyd, 2018). However, with the interference caused basically by colonialism, religion, and urbanization occurring in Africa today, a few children particularly those in big towns and urban areas, presently experience childhood in their society without encountering and figuring out how to move their cultural practices. It is upon this that this study seeks to furnish children with this developing experience by showing traditional music, dance, and drama in the classroom. The performing arts play a very important role in recreational events, political, social, religious rituals, and all financial activities (Numekevor, 2021). Public primary schools in Ghana frequently struggle with a lack of facilities and resources for teaching performing arts. Having places, tools, and supplies that are not up to par makes it difficult to offer engaging and varied experiences in dance, music, drama, and other performing arts disciplines. As a result, this study attempts to: (1) examine the nature of performing arts education in the Creative Arts curriculum in public primary schools, and (2) identify challenges that are associated with the teaching and learning of the performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Global perspectives on performing arts education

The important role that arts education plays in encouraging students' creativity, critical thinking, and holistic development is highlighted by global viewpoints on performing arts education (Maneen, 2016). Educators, legislators, and researchers everywhere acknowledge the intrinsic worth of performing arts in

augmenting the whole educational encounter. The goal of performing arts education is to support students' overall growth. It aims to develop creativity, emotional intelligence, and social abilities in addition to certain knowledge and skill acquisitions (Roy et al., 2019).

Many studies conducted all around the world have shown how education in the performing arts improves cognitive abilities (Walton, 2020; O'Neill, 2019; Crowe, 2006). Participating in artistic endeavors like dance, theater, and music has been associated with enhanced cognitive abilities, such as memory, problem-solving, and spatial thinking (Gibson and Ewing, 2020). Education in the performing arts is acknowledged for its exceptional capacity to stimulate creativity. Students may explore their imaginations, try out new ideas, and cultivate creative thinking via the mediums of music, dance, and drama (Purvis, 2021).

Across the globe, educators are investigating cutting-edge methods for teaching the performing arts that integrate technology, interdisciplinary studies, and project-based learning (Huang et al., 2021). These patterns demonstrate an understanding of how students' requirements are changing in a world that is changing quickly. Even with the acknowledged advantages, there are still obstacles and disparities in the way performing arts education is delivered across the world. Particularly in underprivileged neighborhoods, problems including inadequate funding, inadequate training for teachers, and uneven access continue (Huang et al., 2021).

2.2. Performing arts education in Ghana

Performing Arts Education in Ghana is deeply culturally, educationally, and developmentally meaningful, adding to the entire richness of students' lives. Ghana has a rich cultural past, and the performing arts which include dance, music, and theater are essential to expressing and maintaining this legacy (Blankson, 2022). Traditional performing arts have a strong cultural foundation in Ghana and are frequently included in curricula. The government of Ghana has put laws in place to encourage the inclusion of the arts in the national curriculum because it understands the value of such education (Obeng, 2022). Education policies, especially those concerning the performing arts, are developed

and carried out under the direction of the Ghana Education Service (GES) (Addo and Adu, 2022). Ghanaian primary and secondary schools incorporate performing arts into their curricula. Pupils experience a range of traditional and modern performing arts, which fosters their exploration of contemporary artistic expressions and helps them establish a connection with their cultural heritage (Addo and Adu, 2022). Ghana's educational system benefits greatly from the dynamic and essential role that performing arts education plays in fostering community involvement, student growth, and cultural preservation (Anyan, 2016).

2.3. The nature of performing arts

Every society is built on the performing arts, which are essential to people's lives in a variety of ways (Adjepong and Obeng, 2018). They existed before the global and Ghanaian introduction of formal schooling. History has suggested that they are sources of joy, amusement, and self-worth during holidays, social gatherings, and ritualistic behavior, claim Adjepong and Obeng (2018). The performing arts have economic purposes as well as they are employed as a means of employment and as a means of advertising products and services. Adjepong and Obeng (2018) restated the following additional advantages of the performing arts:

Students who enroll in the various universities' music, dance, and drama education programs go on to become instructors of these arts in different schools across the nation. Other alumni work as organists, percussionists, trumpeters, guitarists, and sound engineers at recording studios. A portion of these graduates work as conductors and composers, using their training to organize and lead choirs that perform for pay at different social and religious events. (p.223).

During festivals and important events, dancers welcome and honor chiefs and other notable members of the community with gestures. Dramatic situations may show both good and tragic times in life. Songs' lyrics may be used to convey disapproval of particular events in a society and to make subtle remarks. To this end, Amuah et al. (2011) observed that "individuals and other members of certain communities express their sentiments to portray what they feel about what is going on in society through singing and dancing." In other

places, people are taught via dance and music how to maintain a clean environment and follow health precautions to be healthy. Maintaining cultural continuity is crucial in this sense. To make classes as natural as possible, teachers must have the right teaching resources.

Apart from the educational changes and regulations that support the inclusion of performing arts in the curriculum, Ghana's cultural policy was developed shortly after the country gained independence in 1957 and has undergone several modifications since then. "The National Commission on Culture organized a national stakeholder's workshop in 2004 that produced the most recent significant update" (Kuyini, 2013). Under the direction of Professor George Panyin Hagan, the cultural policy update occurred in 2004 during President John Agyekum Kufuor's second term as Ghana's president. The goal of the strategy was to support and facilitate Ghanaian societies' traditional practices. The purpose of the performing arts was to promote artistic quality and appreciation of Ghanaian dramatic arts and culture. Furthermore, to advance the performing arts and look out for the welfare of artists, the State would also support the establishment of associations and ensembles.

2.4. Challenges associated with the teaching and learning of the performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools

Ghanaian basic schools confront several obstacles in the teaching and learning of performing arts that affect the efficient implementation and curricular integration of arts education.

2.5. Lack of textbooks

The effective teaching and learning of performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools is severely hampered by the absence of textbooks. For instructors and students alike, textbooks are an essential source of advice, supplemental materials, and organized content (Adjepong, 2018). Teachers and students lack a standardized resource for learning and reference when textbooks are not available. Textbooks are frequently vital resources for ensuring that the curriculum is in line with accepted educational standards (Adjepong, 2018).

Without textbooks, teachers could find it difficult to deliver thorough and organized lessons, leaving students with a disjointed educational experience. Without textbooks, curricular goals, objectives, and the flow of information may be unclear, making it difficult for teachers to make sure that students are reaching the necessary learning outcomes. Theoretical concepts presented in class are reinforced by exercises, examples, and practice materials found in textbooks. The lack of textbooks prevents students from having access to important possibilities for applying and practicing performing arts concepts, which impedes the development of practical abilities (Acquah and Danso Kwofie, 2021).

2.6. Lack of teachers' handbook

One major obstacle to the successful teaching and learning of performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools is the lack of a teachers' handbook. A teachers' handbook is an invaluable tool that gives instructors direction, ways to teach, and extra resources to help them improve their methods (Gene and Acquah, 2020). A teachers' handbook is intended to provide instructors with pedagogical advice, covering lesson plans, teaching techniques, and methods for successful instruction. In the absence of this resource, performing arts instructors could not have access to a uniform curriculum, which could affect the uniformity and caliber of instruction at various institutions (Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2023). The handbooks for teachers play a crucial role in guaranteeing that the curriculum is implemented consistently. In the event of a handbook's absence, various schools may teach performing arts subjects in different ways, which might result in differences in the learning experiences and achievements of their students. One of the most important components of good teaching is lesson planning (Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2023). Most teacher handbooks provide templates, ideas, and suggestions for lesson planning. Teachers of performing arts may find it difficult to organize interesting and cohesive classes in the absence of a handbook, which might negatively affect students' entire educational experience (Nyanu-Adotey, 2016)

2.7. Inadequate specialist arts teachers

One major obstacle to the successful teaching and learning of performing arts in Ghana's basic schools is

the lack of qualified arts teachers. In order to promote creativity, skill development, and a greater respect for the arts, educators must specialize in the arts (Mereku, 2019). These educators possess training and expertise in fields like music, dance, and theater. Without specific training in the performing arts, generalist educators might not have the depth of understanding and proficiency needed to instruct students in the numerous performing arts disciplines. This may affect the standard of education and reduce the amount of diversity that pupils are exposed to in the arts (Opoku-Asare and Siaw, 2015). Teachers who specialize in the arts frequently instill in pupils a passion for their fields. The lack of these experts might result in lower student engagement since generalist instructors might not be as passionate or possess the necessary expertise to make performing arts lessons as engaging. Without specialized teachers, students with extraordinary talent in the performing arts would not receive the proper supervision and support. It may be the case that generalist teachers lack the experience necessary to recognize and develop such talent, which might result in students' potential being unrealized (Takyi et al., 2019).

2.8. Insufficient time allocation for the teaching of Creative Arts

A major challenge to the efficient teaching and learning of Creative arts in Ghanaian basic schools is the lack of time allotted for the instruction of creative arts, particularly performing arts. The distribution of time is a critical component in defining the scope, depth, and caliber of performing arts education (Essel et al., 2017). A lack of time for the creative arts frequently leads to a lack of exposure to other performing arts, including dance, theater, and music. Within the allotted time, students might not have the chance to investigate and enjoy the variety of artistic expressions. The performing arts demand a commitment to skill development and practice (Kwakye and Gartey, 2019). Time constraints might prevent students from developing their artistic abilities, which hinders their capacity to learn methods, coordination, and expressiveness in drama, dance, and music. In the performing arts, experimentation, improvisation, and the generation of novel ideas all take time in the creative process. Students' creativity may be hindered by inadequate time management, which would limit their ability to experiment with novel artistic

mediums and cutting-edge performance strategies (Boateng et al., 2022).

2.9. Negative attitude of teachers towards the subject

Effective teaching and learning of performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools is seriously hampered by the unfavorable attitudes of instructors toward the topic. Instructors have a significant influence on how students perceive and see the topic, and a bad attitude can lower the standard of performing arts education as a whole (De Villers and Sauls, 2017). Negative-minded teachers cannot be as enthusiastic when teaching performing arts classes. This may lead to dull lessons, lower levels of pupil participation, and a decline in interest in the subject. Pupils' lack of motivation can be attributed in part to negative instructor attitudes. Students may not be encouraged to actively engage, explore their creativity, or develop a sincere enthusiasm for performing arts when teachers show boredom or unhappiness with the topic (De Villers and Sauls, 2017). Learning experiences are significantly influenced by the classroom setting. Students' motivation to express themselves and participate in performing arts activities may be hampered by unsupportive and unenthusiastic teachers. Negative educators might unintentionally send the notion that performing arts are less significant than other topics. This may affect how important and relevant the subject is to the pupil's overall education (Seekoe, 2022).

2.10. A lukewarm attitude of pupils towards the subject

Another challenge affecting the teaching and learning of performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools is the students' ambivalent attitude toward the subject. Students' attitudes are a major factor in deciding how involved, how they participate, and how open-minded they are about the subject matter (Sakyi-Hagan and Hanson, 2020). This indifferent attitude is caused by a number of causes, and improving the performing arts learning environment requires tackling these issues. Students who have a neutral attitude could be less inclined to get involved in performing arts activities. This may have an impact on the classroom's vibrancy by reducing the number of possibilities for experiential

learning and real-world application of creative ideas (Sakyi-Hagan and Hanson, 2020). Pupils may exhibit hesitancy to participate in extracurricular performing arts events, including school bands, theater organizations, or dance ensembles. Students may lose out on opportunities to further develop their artistic abilities outside of the traditional classroom environment as a result of this lack of enthusiasm (Hayford, 2020). Pupils who have a lukewarm attitude toward performing arts may not be motivated to express themselves creatively. They could be less likely to take chances in their creative activities, experiment with various kinds of expression, and develop their artistic ability (Parey, 2023). It can be challenging for teachers to provide a positive and encouraging environment for performing arts in the classroom when pupils have a depressing attitude. It is more difficult to establish a friendly atmosphere where pupils are at liberty to express themselves (R'boul et al., 2024).

2.11. Lack of teaching implements

The successful teaching and learning of performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools is severely hampered by a lack of teaching implements, including materials and resources (Boakye-Akomeah, 2015). To promote creativity, create a dynamic and engaging learning environment, and provide students with hands-on experience in music, dance, theater, and other artistic expressions, teaching implements are crucial (Oppong, 2021). For practical learning experiences, teaching tools including musical instruments, painting supplies, and dance props are essential. The lack of these materials prevents students from actively engaging with and practicing performing arts topics, which impedes their ability to improve their skills (Oppong, 2021). The extent to which pupils may explore their artistic side may be limited by a lack of educational tools. Students may lose out on the chance to explore many artistic forms and styles if they do not have access to a wide range of instruments, costumes, and art supplies. Performance and real-world application are necessary for performing arts education (Abonyi et al., 2020). Teachers find it challenging to plan and lead practical activities, such as group performances, hands-on projects that reinforce theoretical concepts, and rehearsals when they lack the necessary teaching tools. In the performing arts, visual aids are crucial for communicating ideas, methods, and

historical context (Chanimbe and Dankwah, 2021). A less visually engaging classroom might affect pupils' comprehension and memory of material. Examples of these teaching tools include charts, visual aids, and multimedia resources. Having a variety of instructional tools at one's disposal fosters creativity in the performing arts. A lack of resources can inhibit pupils' creativity by preventing them from experimenting with various media, genres, and methods in drama, dance, and music (Chanimbe and Dankwah, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study design was a descriptive survey and involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study involved all head teachers and creative arts teachers from across the 30 selected public basic schools in the Sunyani Municipality. Through the purposive sampling technique, 10 head teachers and 30 teachers were selected for the study. The research instruments used were an interview guide and a questionnaire. Data collection started after explaining the purpose of the study to the respondents. The head teachers were interviewed and the teachers were given the questionnaire to answer them. The interview was done through audio recording.

Microsoft Word was used to transcribe the interview data verbatim. After transcribing, the material was printed out and presented by hand to the responders to ensure the correctness of the information provided. This was done to prevent researcher bias from arising. The interview scripts were interpreted using an inductive

data analysis technique to identify themes. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 24) was used for the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages and mean and standard deviations were used to present the results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study shows that 20 of the 30 teachers were male with females being 10 representing 67% and 33%, respectively. Of the head teachers, 80% were males and 20% were females. Regarding age, 40% of the teachers were aged between 31-40 years, and 10% were aged between 51-60 years. This implies the emergence of a youthful force in the profession and this is very promising. For head teachers, half of them were aged between 41-50 years, and 20% were aged between 31-40 years (Table 1).

With respect to the respondent's educational level, all the teacher respondents were first-degree holders, with 10 doing top-up courses to attain a higher level. This is in line with the Ghana Education Service policy that all teachers should have the requisite training and qualifications to teach in Ghanaian primary schools. Of the head teachers, 70% were first-degree holders and 30% were master's degree holders. Table 1 revealed that 67% of the teachers have been in service for 1-10 years, while 23% of teachers have been in 11-20 years of service. This indicates that only 10% of Creative arts teachers with relatively high working experience. 60% of the head teachers have been in service for 11-20 years and 10% for 1-10 years.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Teachers (n=30)		Head teachers (n=10)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender				
Male	20	67	8	80
Female	10	33	2	20
Age range (years)				
20-30	6	20		
31-40	12	40	2	20
41-50	9	30	5	50
51-60	3	10	3	30
Educational Level				
Degree	30	100	7	70

Masters				3	30
Work Experience					
1-10	20	67	1	10	
11-20	7	23	6	60	
21-30	3	10	3	30	

Source: (Field Survey, 2022)

Research question 1: What is the nature of performing arts education in the Creative Arts curriculum in public basic schools?

From Table 2, the average mean (2.69) indicates that the nature of performing arts education in the Creative Arts curriculum in public basic schools is not in good shape. Majority of the teachers agreed (mean=4.23, SD=0.56) that the Creative Arts curriculum adequately emphasizes performing arts education. The implication is that a curriculum that places importance on performing arts provides students with opportunities to develop and refine their creative and artistic skills. According to Gibson and Ewing (2020), adequate emphasis on performing arts in the curriculum suggests that students are likely to be more engaged in their learning. This engagement can lead to increased interest, participation, and understanding of performing arts, fostering a positive learning experience. The teachers disagreed (mean=1.69, SD=1.23) that there is sufficient time allocated for performing arts in the school schedule. Limited time allocation can impact the quality of performing arts instruction. Teachers may find it challenging to cover the curriculum thoroughly, provide adequate practice sessions, and offer individualized support to students. This could compromise the overall effectiveness of performing arts education. According to Gara et al. (2018), students may develop and hone their artistic abilities in music, dance, and drama given

enough time. This may result in the identification of latent skills and the formation of a lifetime enthusiasm for the arts. The teachers agreed (mean=4.10, SD=0.58) that the syllabus contains all the needed information for the teaching of performing arts. However, the teachers indicated there are no (mean=1.27, SD=1.22) available resources (e.g., instruments, textbooks, materials) to support performing arts. Making musical instruments available is a significant step towards creating a student-teacher setting to acquire skills in the playing of African indigenous ensembles (Flolu and Amuah, 2003 cited in Osei-Senyah et al., 2020). The finding is in support of Dzakey (2016) that there are challenges for music and dance students at the College of Education, Hohoe. Again, the teachers disagreed (mean=2.00, SD=1.32) that teachers receive sufficient training and professional development in performing arts. This implies that creative arts teachers in the study schools have not been given enough training and development in performing arts. Providing teachers with sufficient training and professional development in performing arts is essential for elevating the quality of instruction, fostering a positive learning environment, and ensuring that students receive a rich and meaningful arts education. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated that adequate training and professional development empower teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and pedagogical approaches specific to performing arts. This enhances their teaching competence and effectiveness in the classroom.

Table 2: The Nature of the Performing Arts

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
The Creative Arts curriculum adequately emphasizes performing arts education	4.23	0.56
Teachers in public basic schools are well-equipped to teach performing arts	3.00	1.26
There is sufficient time allocated for performing arts in the school schedule	1.69	1.23
The syllabus contains all the needed information for the teaching of performing arts	4.10	0.58
The available resources (e.g., instruments, textbooks, materials) to support performing arts	1.27	1.22

The assessment methods used in performing arts adequately measure students' skills	2.60	1.28
The current curriculum allows flexibility for incorporating diverse performing arts	2.70	1.44
Teachers receive sufficient training and professional development in performing arts	2.00	1.32
Average mean	2.69	

Source: (Field Survey, 2022). Scale: 1-2.4-disagree, 2.5-3.4-neutral, 3.5-4.9-agree

Responses from interviews with head teachers

Research question 2: Challenges associated with the teaching and learning of the performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools

Theme 1: Teaching and learning materials

The head teachers stated that:

Teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning resources for the teaching of performing arts. The schools do not have enough money to buy instruments and other electronic gadgets like stereos, computers, etc. There is a course syllabus for studying music and dance but most of them maintained that they did not have textbooks on music and dance. Also, they indicated that all the head teachers sampled for the study averred that they did not have regular practical lessons due to a lack of musical instruments in the college.

Theme 2: Human resource

Basic schools do not have Creative Arts specialists so teaching the subject is complex. Teachers who teach Creative Arts in basic schools are from different backgrounds but since the schools do not have specialists teaching the performing arts strand of Creative Arts teaching the subject is not effective. Lack of interest in music and dance by the school management or apathy on the part of management toward music and dance was a major challenge for music students in the schools.

Theme 3: Training and development

The head teachers indicated that:

Creative Arts teachers after completing their professional courses in colleges and universities have not been given any special training in Creative Arts. Since the schools are having financial constraints, the schools could not support Creative Arts teachers to invite external resource persons to aid in teaching the subject.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The creative arts, for that matter the performing arts, in the hands of persons who generally have no interest in the subject, lack content knowledge, and the requisite practical skill since they have not specialized in any of the creative art strands in college is a great gamble on the part of the Ghana Education Service. The study revealed the allocation of time for performing arts activities is not enough. Teachers express a need for more dedicated time within the school schedule to effectively cover the curriculum, engage students in meaningful activities, and provide the depth of instruction required for a comprehensive arts education. The lack of textbooks and instruments are major challenge facing teaching and learning of the performing arts in Ghanaian basic schools.

The study recommends that the Government should make provision for appropriate teaching and learning materials to enhance effective teaching and learning of the subject. In the absence, teachers are encouraged to improvise teaching and learning materials from the environment for their lessons. Ministry of Education, through the Ghana Education Service, should build music and dance studios for district education offices. This will enable music and dance students to have practical lessons.

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