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## The Current State of Music Education in Ghana: A call for integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

**Anthony Yaw Nyamful<sup>1</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

The essence of this paper is to identify the current situation of music education in Ghana at the basic, secondary and tertiary level of education and the extent to which Information and Communication Technology has been integrated to the demands of the modern music student in Ghana. After studying the programmes of tertiary music institutions and syllabuses of examinations for basic and secondary schools it was revealed that there has been little emphasis as regards Information and communication technology. Furthermore, an interview conducted among a sample of music students, music teachers and professional musicians which was made out of a population across the southern section of Ghana, revealed limited knowledge pertaining to Music Technology as part of teaching and learning of music. Considering the importance of the study of music, the author of this paper therefore seeks to postulate that, as a means of upgrading teaching and learning of music, the Ministry of Education should organize workshops and conferences for music teachers in the area of Information and Communication Technology and how it could be applied to enhance the teaching and learning of music.

**Keywords:** Music technology institutions, workshops, information technology.

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### **1.0 Introduction**

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Department of music and theatre studies, Methodist University College Ghana, Email: anyamful@mucg.edu.gh.

**Music is an accomplishment that distinguishes us as humans.** Regardless of the fact that music, like language, can be learned, one characteristic of music is that it touches man in all his learning domains: psychomotor (the development of skills), cognitive (the acquisition of knowledge), and particularly the affective where the learner willingly receives, internalizes and shares what is learned. It is in this regard that Yudkin (2008), has observed that music education is a field of study associated with the teaching and learning music.

**Music, in education, has meaning.** In discussing the meaning of music in education, two dominant themes appear: musical meaning and its practical function. Knlotman (2014) observes that musical meaning has to do with the definitional, philosophical construct whilst, as a practical and functional subject, music is valued for what it can do in a given setting. Knlotman (2004), further points out that in today's educational climate, heavy emphasis is given mainly to assessment of cognitive outcomes to the neglect of both the affective and psychomotor. This observation is rightly upheld in Ghana where school assessment in music education is heavily focused on the cognitive domain owing to the notion of ensuring that music programs are projected as valuable learnings in education.

**Music is considered a fundamental component of human culture and behavior.** In most nations, musical training from preschool through post-secondary education is common. Musical training forms part of the people's culture. Since culture is dynamic, innovations become absorbed and used to promote the people's well-being. Such cultural innovations include the use of new technology, in this wise, Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

**The use of ICT in music education has been underscored to be productive.** Rainbow (2007) particularly notes that studying music with ICT tools not only helps develop the child's use of Information Technology (IT), but also an understanding of historical, cultural and philosophical movements, as well as listening and analytical skills.

**The study of music, even without ICT, has its known positive effects.** Group music making, for example, is known to develop inner discipline, emotional wholeness, teamwork, inhibition of shyness and a way of expressing feelings that words fail to do. It fosters respect for others, self-esteem and sensitivity, which are all vital for a caring society (Rainbow, 2007).

**There have been several studies on music and its effect on learners.** In 2004, for example, Schellenberg, at the University of Toronto, Mississauga did a study of IQs of 6-year olds, studying music. In his study Schellenberg (2004), found out that there was an increase in the IQs of the six-year-olds who were given weekly voice and piano lessons as compared to a control group that did not take such lessons. Furthermore, children involved in music education and training have larger growth of neural activity (involving the nerves or system of nerves including the brain) than children not in music training.

In sum, thus, **the benefit of music education lies in not only being musical but having a better understanding of one's self: the understanding of art and the world.** When such training is coupled with ICT application, benefits can be far reaching. This, however, is not the case with the study and learning of music in Ghanaian schools.

## 2.0 Literature Review

**A historical perspective of general education in Ghana indicate that education in Ghana was mainly informal before the arrival of the European settlers.** It is in the light of this that Rustin (2014), stipulate that after the independence of Ghana in 1957, universal education became an important political objective. However, the magnitude of the task as well as economic difficulties and political instabilities have slowed down attempted reforms. Nonetheless, the Education Act in 1987, followed by the Constitution of 1992, gave a new impulse to educational policies in the country. In 2011, the primary school net enrolment rate was 84%, described by UNICEF as "far ahead" of the Sub-Saharan average. In

its 2013-14 report, the World Economic Forum ranked Ghana 46th out of 148 countries for education system quality.

However, with regards to music education the date or period of the introduction of it cannot be exactly traced, but it is believed that it all commenced in the castle schools around 18th Century, spread to the countryside and eventually became part of the school curriculum due to the effort of the early missionaries. Consequently, music syllabuses which were drawn up and adapted by Ghanaian schools were until recently, basically Western oriented, teaching the rudiments and theories of music, and the history and form of Western music.

**Music is one of the most loved activities in Ghana, yet it is considered to be the most trivial when it comes to formal music education or career choices.** Furthermore, urban life has destroyed opportunities for practical involvement in music, as Disc Jockey (DJ) and Compact Disc (CD) players have taken over the traditional musical focus of communities. According to Darwin Walker (2008), the reasons for music education being considered trivial in Ghana are many and that much of the problems stem from a utilitarian view of education which puts status or a 'good' job above the satisfaction of doing something we feel passionately about. There have been situations where parents pull their talented kids out of music and drama courses in order to undertake the drudgery of a life where wealth is seen only in material terms. It is therefore the view of the writer of this paper that the introduction of Information and Communication Technology will however add a new dimension to the teaching and learning of music, even with the creation of jobs.

This approach neglects the fact that education is also about the overall development of the child, including his emotional and physiological development; areas which music has a unique ability to develop. Thus we need to see beyond mere wealth creation and understand that the development of a nation may not be possible without nurturing its spiritual and emotional development. On the other hand, music needs to be made relevant to our cultural practices. Thus according to Swanwick (1990), one of the oldest and best established theory of music education is that which emphasizes that pupils are inheritors of a set of cultural values and practices, needing to master relevant skills and information in order to take part in musical affairs. This is because some of our children today are being influenced by foreign culture. In view of that Fلولu and Amuah (2003) assert that:

Music education in Ghana has witnessed several challenges in the last few decades not the least of which is the need to make school music more relevant to the local cultural environment. However, to date no single volume on the topic or any aspect of it has been published. Although a number of studies have been conducted, most of these remain in the form of articles, seminar papers, lectures, and postgraduate dissertations many of which are not easily accessible to the Ghanaian readership. As a result, music educators in Ghana continue to rely on Western conceptions of musical instruction by colonial masters (p.ix).

So powerful was the colonial influence in the area of music education that early teaching materials fell prey to the dictates of the body of knowledge that was transferred from Europe.

**In Ghana, at the preschool level of education, music is not a stand-alone subject.** In view of that, it is integrated into one unit as creative arts where music, drama, dance and fine art are supposed to be taught as one subject. In such a situation, for example, teachers who are inclined to fine art, teach only that to the neglect of music and other subjects. At the Junior High School (J.H.S.) level, music is studied as a stand-alone subject. However, the challenge at this level is that about 90% of the personnel assigned to teach music are not trained music teachers who have knowledge pertaining to international instructional methodologies such as that of Dalcroze method, the Zoltan Kodaly instructional technique, the Orff Schulwerk instructional technique. In addition, about 90% of the teachers have limited knowledge pertaining to the use of music instructional technology for teaching and learning.

**At the Senior High School level, music is considered as one of the elective subjects where the choice is left at the discretion of the student.** Thus, there are situations where only a few students choose to study music for the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). There may also be situations where due to lack of knowledge as regards job opportunities, about 70% of senior secondary school music students choose to do music just to make the grade or fill the gap in completing the number of subjects they are supposed to register for their examination. In view of this, few students end up studying music at the tertiary level.

**At the tertiary level, music lecturers are faced with the challenge of being abreast with the current modes of music education due to the introduction of computing into every fabric of it.** Computer-assisted instruction has, in some instances, replaced the student-instructor interaction in the teaching and learning environment. Thus, according to O. M. Hartsell (2004), instructional technology today consists of far more than visual aids. It represents a dynamic educational force encompassing the entire system for learning, the process of instruction, and the total environment for education. No music teacher can afford to ignore the currency of such resources for learning. This because, a new generation of students is demanding more relevant, challenging, and commanding modes of education geared to the times and to the needs of each individual. Specially written software packages designed to encourage composition and improvisation are now readily available for use in schools and at all levels of instruction. Internet resources serve as an increasing rich reservoir for teachers to challenge students to solve musical problems and to distribute and gather examples of creative products in music.

### 3.0 Methodology

A population of eighty-four people from six regions of Ghana across the southern sector as follows, Volta, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Western, and Ashanti were interviewed to ascertain what has been the current state of music education at the three levels of education in Ghana and the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning. Thus, fourteen people were selected from each region to answer the questionnaire below. The constitution of the fourteen people were as follows: Six music teachers with two from each of the three levels of education, that is, basic, secondary and tertiary. Four professional musicians, two of which were traditional musicians whilst the other two were popular musicians. Four students, with two from the secondary level and the other two from the tertiary level. Thus, in all the six regions, the total number of teachers interviewed were thirty-six, the total number of professional musicians who were not teachers, were twenty-four, and that of the students were also twenty-four. This summed up to a population of eighty-four people from all the six regions who were made to answer the following research questions.

1. Should the study of music be made compulsory for basic and secondary levels of education?
2. Would you want to go for further studies pertaining to music education?
3. Do you have any knowledge pertaining to music technology?
4. Will the introduction of music technology for music students and professional musicians enhance the music industry in Ghana?

With regards to question one, all the teachers and the professional musicians were of the view that music should be made compulsory for basic and secondary levels of education. Nonetheless, out of the total number of twenty-four students, fifteen of students, as against nine, were of the view that music should be made compulsory for basic and secondary levels of education in Ghana. With regards to question two, all the professional musicians and the teachers from the secondary level of education answered indicated their readiness to further their education in music.

However, five of the teachers from the basic level of education answered 'No'. With regards to question three, eight of the twelve secondary level teachers indicated that they had limited knowledge pertaining to music technology. However, ten of the twelve basic level of education teachers indicated that they had no knowledge with regards to music technology. The remaining two however indicated that they had limited knowledge pertaining to music technology. In the case of the twelve teachers at the tertiary

level, ten indicated limited knowledge pertaining to music technology. Nonetheless, with regards to question four, all the category of persons who were interviewed, that is, teachers, professional musicians and students, indicated that, the introduction of music technology for music students and professional musicians will enhance the music industry in Ghana.

Analysis of the answers given by the population of eighty-four people from six regions across the southern sector of Ghana interviewed reveals the following:

1. It is the view of many professional musicians, music students and music teachers in Ghana that the study of music be made compulsory for basic and secondary levels of education. This is because such people having involved themselves in music in one way or the other, have come to realize the importance of music to the growing child.
2. Few music teachers from both the secondary and the tertiary level of education made use of modern trends or digital approach to the teaching of music due to limited knowledge in music technology.
3. Music teachers and professional musicians who had little training in formal music education expressed the desire to continue their studies in music. However, majority of them were constrained financially and by the rigid entry requirements of the tertiary institutions. For example, a talented musician who could not make the grade in studying music at the secondary level had to wait till he or she attains the age of twenty-five or twenty-seven years before being given the chance to study music as a mature student at the tertiary level of education. Similarly, young music students who studied music up to the diploma level and could not make the grade at the secondary level also had to wait to attain the age of twenty-five or twenty-seven before pursuing the study of music for the first degree.

#### 4.0 Job opportunities for music students in Ghana

##### **There are many job opportunities available for music students after school.**

Students studying music can join the music section pertaining to any of the following security agencies:-

- The army
- The navy
- The Immigration Service
- The Prisons Service
- The Police Service
- The Fire Service
- Ghana Revenue Authority

Furthermore, music students studying music technology can work at radio and television stations, audio and video recording studios and score for films. Students who specialize in music composition can compose jingles for adverts and sell their own musical compositions. In addition, they can work with the music ministry of churches as composers and performers or become lecturers at any of the Universities where music is being studied.

Methodist University College Ghana is considering adding Music Therapy as a programme of study to other programmes which are currently being studied. If that is achieved, this may add a new dimension to the study of music and open more job avenues for prospective music therapists. Thus, they may be employed as a practitioner or clinician, a consultant, an administrator, a supervisor, or a lecturer in music therapy. They may work in private or governmental agencies, including hospitals, institutions, schools, clinics, residential treatment centers, group homes, day-care centers, nursing homes, etc.

It is however refreshing to note that at Ho, on April 2, 2014 participants at World Bank developmental dialogue workshop called on the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ghana Education Services and Musicians to collaborate for the re-introduction of music studies as a compulsory subject into the



curriculum of first and second cycle schools. They noted that the re-introduction and inclusion of music in the school curriculum as a core subject, in a broad context, constitutes not only to the development of artistic skills but also in cultivating business acumen in production and marketing techniques.

The participants, made up of Musicians, Producers, Copyrights Officers, Journalists Educationist, Academia and other stakeholders in the music industry and World Bank development partners in Ghana, were contributing to a discussion aimed at promoting a vibrant policy discourse in Ghana for the incorporation of the music industry into the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). The policy would make a great, distinct and invaluable contribution to economic development, guide the direction of social change and enhance political cohesion and cultural progress. The workshop on the theme: "Mainstreaming Music in Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme", was organized jointly by the World Bank, The Institute for Music and Development, a non-governmental organization, the Goethe Institute, the French Embassy in Ghana and other social partners.

Furthermore, the music section of the Ghana Police Service is collaborating with the music section of the department of Music and Theatre Studies of Methodist University College Ghana to establish Bandmastership program for the department. Such a move will be of great help to the security agencies since in the past, personnel from the security agencies had to be trained abroad for such a program. Thus, studies or articles in Bandmastership has been very limited.

## 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been established that the study of music is very important in the school environment. This is because the study of music touches on all learning domains, including the psychomotor domain (the development of skills), the cognitive domain (the acquisition of knowledge), and, in particular and significant ways, the affective domain (the learner's willingness to receive, internalize, and share what is learned). It has also been established that music teachers and professional musicians who had little training in formal music education expressed the desire to continue their studies in music. However, majority of them were constrained financially and also due to the rigid entry requirements by the tertiary institutions. For example, talented musicians who could not make the grade in studying music at the secondary level had to wait till the age of twenty-five or twenty-seven years before being giving the chance to study music as a mature student at the tertiary level of education. Similarly, young music students who studied music up to the diploma level and could not make the grade at the secondary level also had to wait to attain the age of twenty-five or twenty-seven before pursuing the study of music for the first degree.

Furthermore, few Senior High School music graduates end up studying music at the tertiary level. Some of the factors contributing to such a situation was due to the inability of some of the music teachers to impress upon the parents and the students the importance of the study of music and the job opportunities available to them. Additionally, few music teachers at both the secondary and the tertiary level made use of modern trends or digital approach such as MIDI (Musical technology Digital Interface), VSTI (Virtual Sound Technology Instruments), Music Theory Applications or other computer based technology (CBT) to the teaching of music to enhance the teaching and learning of music. Digital approach to the teaching of music is very important because computer-assisted instruction encompasses both human and nonhuman resources and includes not only electronic communication media, but a systematic design, implementation, and evaluation of the entire process of learning and teaching music. It complements the work of the music teacher and open vast new possibilities both to the music teacher and to his students.

Furthermore, music teachers can increase the impact of their teaching if they exploit present-day technology to assist them in their efforts. For example, an overhead projector can be used project images of a music application depicting guitar or piano chord or a map of Ghana showing a various ethnic groups and their music. In this case, the teacher uses the media to supplement his own style of presentation while remaining in complete control of content. Thus Reimer (2010), stipulate as follows:

The present use of computers and related technologies in music education, often limited to creative skill development, can expand to new horizons of musicality if they fulfil their potential of giving people direct access to creative decision making with sounds, storage and instant retrieval of those sounds, and devices to alter and refine the previous decisions; all the conditions that would enable genuine compositional creativity.

**The writer of this paper therefore seek to postulate the following suggestions as a means of solving some of the challenges confronting the current state of music education in Ghana.** Firstly, Ghana education service should consider the training of personnel who teach music at the basic level to improve their professional aptitudes so as to impart to the children quality music education. This is because common experience in music education indicate that music training should be started at an early stage, especially for those wanting to become professional musicians. On the other hand, music education at the basic level can also be of great value to young people without the ambition to become professional musicians, as it helps young people to develop the participation in and the understanding of culture and the music and arts, develop creative, personal and interpersonal skills that can be essential transferable skills for workers in a knowledge-based society, and provides social cohesion and intercultural understanding which is essential for a Ghana built on cultural diversity and cultural dialogue. Secondly, both public and private institutions where music is being studied should reach out to the basic and secondary school levels by organizing workshops and seminars so as to use that as a platform of educating them pertaining to the significance of the study of music and the job opportunities available.

Tertiary Institutions should inculcate in their music programmes, courses such as music video disc technology, sound engineering, music instructional technology, Bandmastership, pop music, and music therapy as pertains in some countries such as the United States of America. This will fit into the needs of the modern student who might be digital minded. Music programs at both the secondary and the tertiary level should be broad based to include the study of popular music to capture the attention of popular musicians in the country. Private Universities which are trying to attract music candidates into their institutions by introducing adding new dimensions into the study of music should reduce the fees charged to music students as compared to their counterparts in public universities. The study of music at the basic and secondary level should be practical oriented and channeled towards the needs of the society.

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