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<https://jaac-sca.org>

ISSN 2637-3610

Volume 7 Issue 4

December 31, 2024

Creative Arts Education in Effutu Municipality: Challenges of Implementing the Music and Dance Aspect

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Citation: Bamongya, A. Y., Arhin, B. O. J. & Acquah, E. O. (2024). Creative arts education in Effutu municipality: Challenges of implementing the music and dance aspect . *Journal of African Arts & Culture*, 7(4), 1-17.

Abstract



This research paper investigated the extent to which the music and dance component of the creative arts curriculum has been implemented in primary schools in the Effutu Municipality. It highlighted the feasibility and effectiveness of the implementation process. The study aims to contribute to the development of a comprehensive creative arts curriculum in Ghanaian primary schools, thereby enhancing pupils' academic and artistic abilities. The study used the qualitative research paradigm with case study as the design. Data were collected through observations and interviews and the participants included six (6) teachers from two conveniently selected public schools in the Effutu Municipality. Data analysis was conducted using Patton's (2002) strategies. The findings revealed several factors hindering the successful implementation of the music and dance components of the Creative Arts curriculum, including inadequate teaching and learning resources including musical instruments as well as lack of qualified music teachers with the competent knowledge to implement the curriculum. The study

underscores the need for government and stakeholders of the primary school curriculum to engage actively in addressing these issues through organising refresher courses, providing the necessary teaching and learning resources and rethinking teacher competence in this discipline.

Keywords: creative arts, curriculum implementation, music education, Effutu municipality-Ghana

1. Introduction

In retrospect, the implementation of the music education curriculum at the pre-secondary school level in Ghana had encountered various challenges overtime. Consequently, a fresh curriculum was introduced in September 2019 to address these challenges. This curriculum called Creative Arts integrated visual arts with the performing arts, the latter in which music and dance aspect falls. However, preliminary study in Winneba Municipality shows glaringly some challenges regarding the smooth implementation of the curriculum. It, therefore, becomes imperative to delve into the implementation process of the music and dance facets within the Creative Arts curriculum to gauge its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. As a school subject, music plays a significant role in fulfilling educational objectives that extend into broader societal values. It supports the development of interpersonal relationships, fosters social cohesion, and helps establish, revive, and sustain cultural traditions (Ross, 2007). Music can be said to be an enriching and valuable academic subject (Canterbury, 2023) and it is relevant to find out and acknowledge the competences of teachers (Conway, 2023) who are the main implementers of the curriculum. Research shows that quality music education can improve self-confidence, good behaviour, and social skills as well as improve academic attainment in areas such as numeracy, literacy and language (Heble & Laver, 2016). Indeed, music is a potent instrument for preserving, nurturing, and transmitting the cultures of different societies, integrating seamlessly into various activities (Amuah & Flolu, 2003). It is widely recognised that music plays a significant role in religious rites, recreational pursuits, political events, social gatherings, and economic activities. Therefore, it is impractical to separate music from the life of the African child, as it is deeply intertwined with human life (Flynn, 2006). Therefore, it is unfortunate that children of the school going age may lack the experience of our rich musical cultural values and are unable to experience the full benefit of music as part of its total and holistic development (Bondzie, 2022). It is, therefore, vital that

a quality music education is available to all children and young people of a country that nurtures its citizens through education. If a country's educational curriculum faces implementation problems, it is ultimately its future leaders who bear the consequences. Therefore, it is vital that quality music education is accessible to every growing child across the country Ghana.

Ghana, a West African country, is administratively divided into 16 regions and over 100 municipalities. The Effutu Municipality, located in the Central Region, is one of these municipalities. As part of the Ghanaian education system, the Effutu Municipality is responsible for implementing the Music and Dance Curriculum in public schools, as mandated by the Ghana Education Service. Ghana's education system places emphasis on core subjects like mathematics, science, and language, often marginalising arts programmes like music and dance. In the Effutu Municipality, limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified music and dance teachers exacerbate this challenge. The region's cultural diversity, with over 100 ethnic groups, also presents a challenge in developing an inclusive music and dance curriculum. This study explores the challenges associated with implementing the Music and Dance Curriculum in primary schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana. In this regard, we hope to contribute to the development of effective strategies for promoting music and dance education in Ghana and similar cultural contexts.

The Effutu Municipality in Ghana is a coastal district located in the Central Region, approximately 30 kilometres west of Accra. The municipality has a population of over 120,000 people, with a significant number of children who depend on education to improve their socio-economic status. Education plays a vital role in the life of children within the Effutu Municipality, as it provides them with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to succeed in life. Education in Effutu Municipality is overseen by the Ghana Education Service (GES), which ensures that schools within the municipality provide quality education to children. There are several public and private schools in the municipality, offering education from basic to senior high school levels. Some notable schools in the area include Effutu Secondary School, Winneba Secondary School, and St. John's School. Despite the efforts of the GES and schools in the municipality, education in Effutu faces several challenges. One major challenge is the lack of infrastructure, including classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. This

hinders the delivery of quality education, as teachers and students struggle with limited resources. Additionally, poverty and financial constraints force some children to drop out of school, denying them the opportunity to acquire education. To address these challenges, the Effutu Municipality has implemented initiatives aimed at improving education. For instance, the municipality has established programmes to provide free school uniforms, textbooks, and meals to needy students. Additionally, the Effutu Municipal Assembly has built new schools and renovated existing ones to improve infrastructure. Implementing music and dance in Effutu Municipality is a vital step towards promoting cultural heritage, social cohesion, and economic development. Music and dance are essential aspects of Ghanaian culture, and Effutu Municipality is no exception. The municipality has a rich cultural heritage, with a unique blend of traditional and modern music and dance styles. Firstly, music and dance can play a significant role in promoting social cohesion in Effutu Municipality. Traditional music and dance have long been used to bring people together, celebrate festivals, and mark important life events. By implementing music and dance programmes in schools, community centres, and public spaces, the municipality can foster a sense of community and belonging among residents. This can help to break down social barriers, promote understanding, and build relationships among people from diverse backgrounds. Secondly, music and dance can contribute significantly to the economic development of Effutu Municipality. The municipality can leverage its rich cultural heritage to develop a vibrant tourism industry, attracting visitors from across Ghana and beyond. This can generate revenue, create jobs, and stimulate local economic growth. Additionally, music and dance can provide opportunities for local artists to showcase their talents, develop their skills, and access new markets. Currently, Music and dance have emerged as integral elements of the school curriculum in Ghanaian schools. Their significance extends beyond mere artistic expression, as they synergize with other academic disciplines such as reading, social studies, and mathematics, enriching the overall learning experience (Gardiner, 2010). Some scholars have observed similar challenges with the implementation of art education curriculum in Ghana (Bodjawah et al., 2019) and set out to assess this notion with the introduction of music curriculum into the new creative arts curriculum. The initiation of new programmes and curricula often encounters obstacles, with the implementation process presenting its fair share of challenges. Frequently, the rugged terrain of implementing new curricula and

programmes yields adverse effects, potentially undermining the intended objectives. The outset of the music component within the Creative Arts curriculum may confront hurdles like limited funding, inadequate curriculum resources, deficient teaching proficiency, scarcity of musical instruments, absence of trained music educators, and insufficient support for instructors, among other impediments. These serve as limitations for music teaching and learning in the schools. Numerous international researchers provide evidence that teachers' content knowledge significantly impacts both the substance and methods of instruction, thereby influencing not only what is taught but also how it is taught (Treagust, 2002). Studies indicate that research efforts have proposed various suggestions and recommendations for improving music teaching and learning in Ghanaian schools (Amuah & Folu, 2003). However, in spite of these various recommendations for improvement, musical instruction as enshrined in the Creative Arts subject of primary schools continues to decline.

The challenges could be attributed to the fact that new curricula are often implemented hastily due to political pressures, without adequate preparation. This rushed implementation undermines the potential effectiveness of the curriculum. Consequently, implementing the curriculum regarding music instruction in the primary schools in Ghana, particularly within the Effutu municipality, has encountered significant challenges since its introduction in September 2019. Despite the recognised benefits of integrating music and dance into the educational framework -such as enhancing academic performance, fostering social cohesion, and preserving cultural heritage -numerous obstacles have hindered the successful execution of this curriculum. These impediments not only undermine the curriculum's objectives but also deprive learners of the full educational and cultural benefits intended by the curriculum. Consequently, there is a critical need to investigate the extent and effectiveness of the implementation process of the music education component of the Creative Arts subject, examining the adequacy of teacher preparation and the material resources for classroom instruction.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Meaning of Curriculum

The term curriculum is defined as the totality of learning experiences undertaken by learners within an educational programme (Behar, 1994). It encompasses a cultural and philosophical basis that clearly outlines

its goals and objectives. These learning experiences are translated into the teaching syllabus, where all stakeholders play significant roles. The formalised structure of the curriculum, however, positions the teacher and the learners as the main actors. The teacher is responsible for articulating and facilitating the content knowledge necessary for successful completion, thus helping to produce knowledge. Conversely, the learner is expected to effect the desired behavioural changes (Kwao, 2017; Wang & Webb, 2023). The context examines how the implementation of the curriculum at the primary schools meets quality education in relation to the best practices in the policy implementation process in some selected primary schools in Effutu municipality.

2.2 Implementation of New Curricula and Programmes

The implementation of new programmes and curricular innovations are critical components of educational reforms (Chavhunduka & Moyo, 2003). Curriculum contains learning practices and teaching approaches designed by the school to bring about desired outcomes in the learner. That is to say, it embodies all worthwhile activities geared towards all round development of the learner, physically, intellectually, spiritually, morally, socially and otherwise. These activities, of course, need to be child-cantered to achieve the desired results. Quality education demands the holistic development of the child across affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains. To enhance quality education, the counsellor is concerned with a curriculum that promotes the total development of the individual (Adadu et al., 2012). Again, Metz and Bartley (2012) gave four implementation framework for a successful programme or curriculum implementation, and they are:

1. Initial Implementation Stage, where the new programme or initiative is put into practice. This stage often faces significant challenges. Key activities include strategies to promote continuous improvement and quick problem-solving. It is crucial to use data to assess implementation, identify solutions, and guide decision-making. It is also critical to address barriers and develop system solutions quickly rather than allowing problems to re-emerge and reoccur (Metz & Bartley, 2012).
2. Installation Stage, which is often overlooked in the implementation process. After deciding to adopt a programme model, many structural and instrumental changes are needed in various settings and systems to start the new practices. Practical efforts at this stage include developing pathways, making sure that human and financial resources are available, and finding physical space or buying equipment and technology. Developing the competence of practitioners is

crucial to ensure the programmes are implemented correctly (Metz & Bartley, 2012). 3. Full implementation stage where it happens when new learning at all levels becomes integrated into practice. This is where the practitioners provide the needed services, how they can be carried out and the various support services for successful implementation. While the system is never completely stable, it has largely been adjusted to fully support the new practices. The time of implementation from the beginning stage to the last stage may vary depending on the nuances of the new programme model. This may include the basic infrastructure, the support available for implementation and the resources including other contextual factors (Metz & Bartley, 2012). 4. Sustainability stage incorporate all activities that form part of the initial stages of implementation. In this case, the financial and programmatic sustainability must be present. Financial sustainability ensures that there is enough funding streams for the established new practice. This should be reliable and adequate. Programmatic sustainability relates to ensuring that such support services as coaching, training, as well as other performance assessment protocols are put in place to measure fidelity, make data-driven decisions for continuous improvement. It is also to ensure that policy-making and procedural decisions continue to support full implementation (Metz & Bartley, 2012).

The responsibility of improving educational affairs at the national level lies with both the government and teachers' unions, where the government makes policies, and teachers' unions implement them (Mahlangu & Pitsoe, 2011). Addressing the challenges at each of the stages - installation to sustainability - is essential to ensure the success and longevity of new educational programmes.

According to Govender (2008), making school policies has become the job of government officials and policy experts, while putting these policies into practice is seen as the teachers' responsibility. This division creates a gap between making policies and implementing them, leaving teachers feeling sidelined. To bridge this gap and achieve the policy's aims, it is essential that all stakeholders, including policymakers, teachers, and other educational professionals, are actively involved to implement the curriculum. This collaborative approach ensures that the policy is effectively translated into practice, addressing the needs and realities of the educational environment.

2.3 Music and Dance Teachers at the Primary schools

Opoku-Asare et al. (2015) and Boafo-Agyemang (2010) noticed that primary school teachers teaching Creative Arts, especially music and dance, often do not have enough knowledge and skills in music education. In research by Adjepong (2018), who advocated for supporting pre-service teachers, he identified expressions of fear and a lack of content knowledge and skills among these teachers during their teaching practice. Amuah and Adum-Attah (2016) previously highlighted that a major issue in teaching this subject is that teachers lack the skills needed to effectively teach the materials in the syllabus. The deficiency in knowledge, skills, and understanding in music appears to be a significant challenge for the majority of teachers in providing quality learning experiences for pupils in primary schools (Adjepong & Obeng, 2018). Many promising educational initiatives have failed mainly because they did not adequately consider the “teacher factor.” The quality of the teacher largely determines the quality of the educational system (Rogers, 1973). Therefore, addressing these issues is crucial for implementing the Creative Arts curriculum successfully, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to deliver effective music and dance education.

Training and re-training of teachers play a crucial role in enhancing quality teaching and improving teachers’ productivity within the educational system (Tella, 2018). Research findings consistently highlight that generalist teachers often lack confidence and perceive themselves as insufficiently competent to teach subjects like Music that are part of the curriculum. This ongoing challenge persists despite historical, economic, and ideological reasons supporting the concept of general primary class teachers. The persistence of generalist teachers in primary education systems creates significant obstacles for music education, particularly regarding structural and resource implications for initial training and ongoing professional development. Without adequate support and training tailored to the specific demands of teaching music, generalist teachers may struggle to effectively deliver music education as prescribed by the curriculum. Addressing these challenges through targeted training programmes and ongoing professional development can help alleviate the barriers to effective music education in primary schools.

The integration and interdependence of artistic and pedagogical knowledge and skills during teacher training are influenced by the context and structure of training courses. Specialist institutions theoretically have a

better opportunity to achieve this balance and integration concurrently, but the institutional culture may inadvertently hinder this process (Hennessy, 2000). Given that a significant portion of music education in schools is entrusted to generalist teachers, it is imperative to closely examine this situation. Ensuring that qualified music teachers are available to teach music and dance at primary schools is crucial. This approach ensures that pupils receive quality music education, thereby enhancing the effective use of instructional materials in lesson delivery (Ghanney, 2008).

3. Methodology

The study was a qualitative study with case study as the research design. Indeed, case study research design is a qualitative research approach that has gained popularity in various academic disciplines, including social sciences, education, and health sciences (Mohajan, 2018). This approach enables researchers to investigate real-world phenomena in their natural settings, providing in-depth insights into complex issues as intimated by Priya (2021). Instrumental case study was used to detail the data to draw contextual understanding of the phenomenon. Laframboise and Shea (2009) describe that instrumental case study approach serves as a tool (or instrument) to facilitate the understanding of something else. In this case, it was used to gain in-depth insights into a creative arts education in Effutu Municipality. Again, two (2) public primary schools were conveniently chosen for the study: University Practice Primary 'A', North campus, and A.M.E. Zion primary, both located near the university campus. As members of the University community where these schools are situated, we found them very convenient to use them as the study areas. These schools were selected due to their proximity, allowing for more accessible observation and engagement with the teachers involved in the study. All lower primary creative arts teachers from the two schools, totalling six (6) teachers, were purposively chosen for the study. The selection of lower primary teachers was based on their role in handling the foundational aspects of the Creative Arts curriculum.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to interview the six teachers. The interviews aimed to uncover how they had been teaching the music and dance components of the Creative Arts curriculum, their knowledge in the subject matter, and how they acquired the necessary teaching resources for the implementation process. Additionally, teaching sessions of the Creative Arts subject were observed. Each teacher was observed on

two occasions during their Creative Arts lessons. The multiple approaches in collecting data was in line with the assertion by Nuraeni et al. (2020) that assessing the execution of a new curriculum should involve a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. Data analysis followed the strategies outlined by Patton (2002) while we employed thematic analysis, following the framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). We coded transcripts and observational notes, identified emerging themes, and built overarching themes. All gathered information was verified across the sampled teachers to identify connections and draw comprehensive insights into the implementation process. This method ensured that the findings were robust and reflective of the actual experiences and challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the music and dance components of the Creative Arts curriculum as implemented by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019). Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional Review Board of the University of Education, Winneba and participants provided informed consent before participating in the interview and observation sessions.

4. Discussion of Findings

Prior to the 2019/2020 academic year, no suitable or approved textbooks were available for the Creative Arts subject, yet teachers were expected to commence teaching this curriculum. This lack of preparation highlights a significant oversight in the implementation process, as the new curriculum was introduced without ensuring corresponding textbooks were available in classrooms. According to the Global Education Monitoring Report (2016), every child should have access to textbooks, and the amount a country invests in learning materials reflects its commitment to providing quality education for all. Textbooks are crucial in enhancing learning outcomes and should have been prioritised by the Government prior to rolling out the new curriculum.

The study observed a significant shortage of resources and materials essential for teaching and learning the music and dance components of the creative arts subject. Respondents unanimously reported that this scarcity has a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of teaching and learning in these areas. Many teachers expressed frustration over learners' consistent failure to bring required materials to school, which hampers the successful implementation of music and dance education. Some teachers attributed these challenges to the government's implementation of the curriculum

without providing adequate logistical support. Additionally, they criticised certain parents for not fulfilling their responsibility to supply necessary materials and items for their children's education. One participant said this:

We lack materials on the subject, including textbooks and teaching aids, making it difficult to guide classroom activities. Neither the teachers nor the pupils have resources for reading and reference. Consequently, we rely solely on pictures and documents downloaded from the internet, and often use our mobile phones to play tunes when demonstrating music and dance gestures as stipulated in the curriculum. The absence of textbooks and other teaching aids is a significant problem.

Moreover, the study noted that inadequate classroom infrastructure has resulted in large class sizes. These large classes pose significant challenges for both pupils and teachers. Learners find it difficult to concentrate and engage in the learning process, while teachers struggle to maintain control and ensure effective instruction amidst the distractions. This situation often leads to some learners becoming disengaged and disrupting the learning environment during lessons.

The 2019 curriculum placed significant emphasis on specific pedagogical approaches for teaching and learning in primary schools. However, the study revealed that some of these approaches, particularly the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT), were not implemented at all as indicated in the study of Awuni (2022). This failure was primarily due to the lack of necessary facilities in many schools, such as computers, public address systems, synthesizers, and other ICT tools essential for effective teaching.

Furthermore, the study found that most schools lacked access to musical instruments and other equipment crucial for music and dance education. This deficit severely limited the ability of teachers to deliver comprehensive lessons and engage learners fully in the practical aspects of music and dance. The absence of these resources hindered the implementation of the curriculum's objectives related to music and dance, thereby compromising the quality of education provided in these subjects at the primary school level.

The study aimed to determine whether primary school teachers responsible for teaching the music aspect of the creative arts curriculum were qualified music educators. Findings indicated that none of the teachers specialized

solely in music education at the primary school level; instead, they were generalist teachers with basic knowledge of music. This corroborate a similar study done by Agbenyo et al. (2021). Moreover, the research revealed that several primary schools still did not offer music and dance education, despite the mandate of the 2019 curriculum requiring all schools to include these components in the creative arts subject. A teacher reported this:

It is unfortunate that music instruction has been neglected in some classes, resulting in most students from grades 1 to 6 lacking regular interaction with music lessons. This neglect stems from the assignment of generalist teachers, who often lack specialised training in music, to teach the music component of the new curriculum.

The quality of the teacher, to a large extent, determines the quality of the educational system (Rogers, 1973). It is very important that the foundation of every subject must be taught by specialists who are well-trained in that field of study. The issue of quality of teachers lacking in the teaching of the subject actually is a reported in a study where Annobil (2011) postulates that curriculum developers should set goals that make how school life should be organised and taught with qualified teachers that help to avoid frustration and waste of resources.

The study also revealed that general teachers' confidence and perceived competence to teach the subjects on the curriculum show that music and dance is persistently the subject that most generalist teachers are least confident in and find the most daunting to teach as also reported in the work of Akuffo and Lamplighter (2020). Whatever the historical, economic, and philosophical reasons for the idea of the general primary class teacher, this continues to create challenges for music education in many primary education systems where the structural and resourcing implications for initial training and ongoing professional development and support are not fully addressed. We observed that teacher preparation was absent in the Effutu municipality and supervisory of the new curriculum especially the music and dance component was also absent. The new curriculum relied on the generalist teacher's capability to handle the new subject and this has not yielded any positive benefits but has rather created a new challenge waiting for a solution.

Generalist teachers have limited subject knowledge, they may not have as much subject-specific knowledge in music as specialist music teachers, which could limit their ability to provide in-depth instruction or answer advanced questions from learners. From time to time, these generalist teachers could be retrained in the music and dance subject in order to enhance their confidence in the subject. Training and re-training of teachers will improve the quality of teaching, enhance teachers' productivity, and strengthen the educational system (Tella, 2018).

5. Conclusion

The study findings underscored significant issues regarding the implementation of the new curriculum, revealing that the process was rushed and lacked essential elements such as providing textbooks for the new syllabus. The Global Education Monitoring Report (2016) argues convincingly that every child should have access to textbooks, which are crucial for improving learning outcomes and serve as a key indicator of a country's commitment to quality education. Therefore, the provision of textbooks should have been a top priority during the implementation of the new 2019 curriculum. Again, it is imperative that music educators from Colleges of Education and Universities collaborate to develop and implement workshops series and in-service training programmes. These initiatives are aimed at empowering the primary school teachers to deliver music lessons effectively in the classrooms. According to Adjepong and Obeng (2018), such training workshops are pivotal in advancing music and dance education in Ghanaian primary schools.

To address the existing challenges, a comprehensive approach is necessary. This includes securing increased funding specifically allocated for music and dance education. Adequate funding would facilitate the acquisition of essential resources such as textbooks, musical instruments, and other necessary equipment. These resources are crucial for enriching the learning experience and supporting effective teaching practices in music. Moreover, efforts should focus on recruiting and training more qualified teachers who possess specialised knowledge and skills in music education. This would ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to deliver the curriculum and support learning effectively. To address these challenges, it requires a concerted effort of all stakeholders. When these strategies are implemented, Ghana can significantly improve the quality of music and dance education in its primary schools, thereby enriching

the educational experience and promoting cultural enrichment among learners. In conclusion, this research provides a roadmap for others to follow in exploring creative arts education in similar contexts. By employing a rigorous methodology and thematic analysis, this study contributes to the understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing music and dance aspects of creative arts education.

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