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A Phenomenographic Study of UEW Music Students' Conceptions of Musicianship Course: A Case of Sophomore Class

Augusta Arko-Mensah [1]
Veronica Agyeiwaah [2]
Department of Music Education,
University of Education Winneba
augusta.arkomensah@yahoo.com [1]
agyeiwaahveronica5@gmail.com [2]

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Abstract

The paper was a result of a phenomenographic study which sought to identify a number of conceptions of a Musicianship course among level 200 students pursuing Bachelor of Arts, Music Education, at the University of Education, Winneba in individual interviews of a sample size of 20. The study was premised on the fact that students have diverse understanding of the musicianship course thereby affecting its significance on their general musical practice. These conceptions were grouped into four categories related to the students' preferred explanations for Musicianship. (a) the ability to play or perform by hearing (b) performing in an ensemble work (c) gaining mastery in reading at sight (d) transcription of musical pitches or sound from audio or video recordings into notation. Using the concept of integrated music learning' and improvisation as the framework, the findings from this study raised two critical but general issues regarding Musicianship learning. The first of these is the critical role

played by students in their everyday practice to acquire the necessary skills for understanding and interpreting concepts in the Musicianship course. A second issue is the tendency for students to extend their understanding and interpretation of concepts in the Musicianship course to actual performance of their major and minor instruments. This study argues that an understanding of the Musicianship phenomenon by students should form an integral component of the teaching of the course, both as points of origin for lesson planning and for the development of curricular materials. It is envisaged that the results of the study facilitate a better understanding of student's learning of the Musicianship course as part of their training as music educators while it gives further direction to teachers of the course to use the integrated approach to help students acquire the necessary skills in the course.

Keywords: musicianship, phenomenography, Integrated music Learning, Sophomore, sight- reading

Introduction

One of the courses that the Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba (UEW), has prioritized to train its student teachers is Musicianship. The Musicianship course as it pertains to the Department comprises Aural Skills, Sight-reading Skills, Ensemble participation, principal instruments as well as required instruments. The required instrument is the keyboard, but where a student majors in keyboard, that student chooses from Winds, Strings, Voice or African instruments. Music as an aural art makes it indispensable for the Musicianship course to be taken by students at all the levels of the undergraduate programmes in the Department. The reason is to heighten performances and improve in the musical practice of the students who are being trained as teachers.

Many scholars have given exposure to many different styles of music and different kinds of musicians available to the active listener and creative performer today (Frenneaux & Bennett, 2021; Godlovitch, 2002; Hugill, 2018; Lesiuk, 2005; Volioti & Williamon, 2021; Willoughby, 2021).

In Ghana, scholars have established that the type of music practiced are popular music, art music and indigenous traditional music (Dor, 2005). These types of music are stressed in the music curriculum of the Department of music Education, University of Education, Winneba. The music teacher trainee is

exposed to acquire the needed skills to acquaint themselves with these existing musical practice in the Ghanaian society. The Musicianship course becomes one critical area which trains the auditory capabilities of students to have greater effect on their performance practice.

Perhaps surprisingly, many accomplished musicians from all styles of music tend to agree on what constitutes great musicianship. At the highest levels of music, there is general agreement about the skills a musician should have. As a music student, focusing on developing solid musicianship skills should be a definite priority, as stated by Russell and Evans (2015). A preliminary study showed that a greater number of students in the Department of Music Education, UEW, do not appreciate the musicianship course and submerge themselves in it in order to yield the necessary results expected in their performances and general music practice.

In this regard, it is doubtful the extent to which students' understanding of the Musicianship course has yielded positive results in reflecting their ability to play or perform by hearing, how it reflects in their ensemble work, how they gain mastery in reading at sight and how the course assists them to transcribe musical pieces from audio or video recordings. The ability of students to understand what goes into the Musicianship course goes a greater length to reflect in their training as music educators.

This study, therefore, is a phenomenographic study that sought to investigate how level 200 Music Education students (a sophomore class) understand their Musicianship course and how it reflects in their musical practice. As student teachers with the expectation of being trained for the world of work in the teaching field, and who have so far spent a year in the Department, and experiencing the Musicianship course, it is palpable to elicit such substantial information on the course from them to redirect attention to the teaching and learning of the course. In dealing with the problem, four research questions were derived to guide the study. 1) What conception do students have on the Musicianship course on their playing or performance by hearing? 2) How do students perceive Musicianship in their ensemble work? 3) What is the improvement in reading at sight through the Musicianship course? 4) To what extent does the Musicianship course help students to transcribe pieces from audio or video recordings?

Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the concept of Integrated Music Learning' and Improvisation which deals with the teaching of Musicianship and Theory through 'menus, maps, and models. This concept was developed by Larson (1995). The concept explains that music learning can be best when it is integrated and combines different ways of understanding musical relationships. This concept was represented by an eight-pointed star as below.

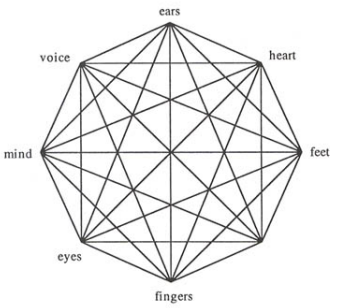

Figure 1. Concept of Integrated Music Learning' and Improvisation

According to the author, each point represents one way of "knowing" musical relationships. One of the points is left blank to suggest that there may be other ways of knowing musical relationships. The author illustrates that when the structure of a major scale is considered, it is likely that intellectually, the major scale has half steps between its third and fourth and between its seventh and eighth scale degrees. In this regard, it is easy to recognize visually (eyes) the locations of these scale degrees in music notation. For the ears, voices, fingers and the heart, Larson (1995) explained:

> One may recognize aurally (ears) the differences between third and fourth or seventh and eighth scale degrees. One may also know vocally (voice) how to sing given scale degrees on command. One may know digitally (fingers) how to play a scale or a given scale degree on the piano and after hearing the fourth and seventh scale degrees resolve respectively to the third and eighth, one may feel the resolution emotionally heart. (p.76)

He continued to explain the aspect of the feet in the eight-pointed star and its connection with the structure of the major scale:

> We can also know things kinesthetically (feet); to know something kinesthetically is to feel it in or with any part of your body (I use the word "feet" because it reminds me of dancing, but conductors may prefer to think of this as "arms"). By the way, though it seems less obvious, I think we also may know kinesthetically (feet) about the structure of the major scale as we learn to associate its distinctive resolutions with the qualities of felt gestures. (p.76)

This integrated music learning is linked with the impact of the Musicianship course that is likely to connect all the illustrated pointed starts. Thus, if Musicianship fails to achieve the improvement of all the "stars", then much has not been embedded in its teaching and assimilation. Until teachers and students consciously know intellectually, the sound production and the active musical tones involved in the aural musicianship, until students recognize sounds as tonal events with their resolutions, until students associate themselves to know with their minds and ears in a manner that will enable them to discriminate sounds, perceive sounds as they pertain to their instrumental performance, sight-reading and do transcriptions – all connecting the eight stars – there cannot be any integration of learning of the musicianship and thus, consequently, affect the significance of musicianship in their general music learning and practice.

Review of Related Literature

According to Woody and Lehmann (2010, p. 102), "it is reasonable to expect that unique sets of skills are acquired by young musicians based on their varying developmental experiences". The scholars indicate that such subskills of musicianship include sight-reading, playing by ear, improvising, and expressive performance. Indeed, many musicians are able to reach expert levels at one or a few of these skills and virtually remain with them for their musical practice. This connotes that the musicianship course should include sight-reading or sight singing, ability to play by hearing and how these skills can be expressed in performance and improvisational activities. The kind of musicianship training in the Department of Music Education goes a greater length to incorporate all these skills including performative practice in ensemble work. What is left is students' understanding of these skills, as embodied in the Musicianship course, in order to consciously appreciate the need for the course.

Students' Ability to Play or Perform by Hearing

Woody states, "In music, it is the ear that defines great musicianship. Sound is the material of music and what the ear is designed for (2012, p.16). He continues to be of opinion that the ear is the musician's ultimate asset to unlock understanding of the expression and creativity of sounds and its general organization into music. This shows that the development of one's auditory capability in sound detection is critical to the study of music as an aural art. A music teacher being trained as such needs this development to be able to listen and interpret sounds correctly as essential as possible. Similarly, Woody and Lehmann (2010) indicated how performance skills are transmitted aurally in natural social settings through observation and imitation. Conversely, in today's traditional school music instruction, students work predominantly from the printed notation of professionally composed pieces of music, most of which are limited to Western classical and Art music styles. As intimated by Woody and Lehmann (2010), many formally trained musicians, ear-based musicianship is viewed as a mysterious ability, often attributed to innate talent or giftedness. They gave an example of the famous anecdote of a 12-year-old Wolfgang Mozart, visiting the Sistine Chapel, hearing Allegri's Miserere only once, and then writing out the entire piece from memory. Over the years, this and other stories of tape recorder–like memory have been debunked, and a less fantastic explanation of such abilities have emerged. It is in this regard that students are taken through the Musicianship course to expose them to a variety of activities to listen and train their auditory capabilities, although, some of such students might have acquired some level of such skills based on their innate talent or giftedness. In another development, Parncutt and McPherson (2002) further stated that ear playing is an acquired skill with admittedly large individual differences, like many other skills in music performance. Amazingly, some musicians do not have these skills because they have not had the requisite experiences to acquire it for themselves. Playing by ear may be the most foundational of musical skills, contributing to the ability to sight-read, improvise, play from memory, and perform rehearsed music.

Training teachers for the music classroom demands a holistic approach and the musicianship course is essential. As Wolf and Kopiez (2018) postulated, the music education profession has always recognized the importance of the ear to music-making. In this regard, ensemble participation must reflect experiences students have acquired from the musicianship course, that is, how to listen, what to listen to including high-quality music recordings as homework outside of class, listening carefully during individual practice, and definitely listening

when rehearsing with the rest of the ensemble. This practice is likely to build students' aural skills in many ways. Wolf and Kopiez (2018) again explained what playing by ear can do in the school system:

> Listening by ear does not mean musicians should listen in order to make expressive decisions about, say, dynamics or tempo. Playing by ear means that the notes they play—that is, the pitches and rhythms—are informed by an inner hearing. Skilled ear players do not require cues from notation (or another source) to know what notes to play, but instead are guided by an internal model of what the music should sound like. (p.23)

Indeed, school music instructions, from the preliminary study, have traditionally gone down over the years. It is very common that all musical notes students play are notated. Even during concert performances, students are glued to the musical score sheets. The continuity of training in this manner is likely to make students run the risk of never adding to their performance range the ability to play by ear, participate in an ensemble, and do proper transcriptions but will only encourage sight-reading skills. That is to say that, notation-guided performance offers fewer opportunities for aural skill development and impedes performing pieces from memory. By this assertion, it is clear that musicianship training in the schools is sine qua non (essential) to developing musical dexterity and performance acuity.

Performing in an Ensemble Work

McCaleb (2014) states, "Ensemble performance often plays a large role in musicians' careers and development". In this case, ensemble work is also critical to the training of student-teacher musicians in the University. However, it is not known whether or not the ensemble participation and performances are the reflections of the skills acquired in the Musicianship course. Models of ensemble education are effective means of improving students' abilities to play together but that is also dependent on the extent of skills students have developed. Atik, as cited in McCaleb (2016) stresses how Western education, especially when running University ensembles, dwells on mimicking the rehearsal and performance patterns, ensemble repertoire (either by themselves or under a conductor), performance of that repertoire and using concert cycles to improve musicianship and consequently affecting positively on participation in an ensemble.

McCaleb (2014) gives an exposure to the teaching of ensemble and the related musicianship in the United Kingdom (UK):

> Teaching ensemble performance within universities is highly idiosyncratic. Whilst performing in ensembles is part of many UK degrees, learning outcomes range from developing 'skills relating to the effective preparation and performance of ensemble repertoire' (Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama) to 'skills that are necessary for making chamber music work: the ability to listen to each other carefully; to know in detail your group's parts and not just your own; to plan effective rehearsals; to identify those elements of the music that require the most work and find a working method to overcome those difficulties' (University of York). (p. 32)

McCaleb is of the view that there are varied models which focus on, reliance on students' experience within ensembles as the main pedagogical approach suggesting an assumption that students acquire appropriate skills primarily through participation. He considers that in ensemble performance, critical transformation necessitates empowering students to confidently and creatively contribute toward the aesthetic development of an ensemble and to use reflective practice to guide that development (McCaleb, 2016). In our opinion, performing in an ensemble is a great opportunity for students to be able to grasp certain ideas and practices that they could not achieve while working on themselves individually. Just as it is important for students to work in groups, so it is important for musicians to play together with other colleagues in an ensemble. This in a way also develops musicianship in the students and gives them the play, practice and rehearse with their fellow colleagues in order to help build themselves musically.

Gaining Mastery in Reading at Sight

McPherson et al., cited in Kopiez, R. and In Lee, (2008), defined sight-reading skills as the ability to perform a repertoire of rehearsed music, to perform music from memory (where music was memorized using notation and then re-created aurally), to play by ear (where music was both learned and reproduced aurally), to improvise in both 'stylistically conceived' and 'freely conceived' idioms, and to sight-read music without prior rehearsal. This definition encapsulates a broad spectrum of musical practice as against mere reading of unseen pieces as practiced among the students.

Sight-reading as a component of the musicianship course is an integral part

of the musical experience for all musicians. As cited in McPherson et al. (2008), sight-reading is characterized by great demands on the performer's capacity to process highly complex visual input (the score) under the constraints of real-time without the opportunity of error correction. This means that it is not significant for only music practitioners and professionals, such as piano accompanists, conductors, or orchestra players, but it is also one of the basic performance skills every musician should acquire.

Sight-reading is a skill that causes difficulty even to some accomplished musicians. This is why Sloboda (1974) gives the opinion that "the reasons for this are usually not clear to the introspections of musicians themselves, yet there is some evidence of major perceptual differences among musicians which have nothing to do with visual acuity" (p.4). If Sight-Reading is well acquired in Musicianship, it can be considered a procedural component of learning repertoire as well. When the nature of the sight-reading activities do not give much opportunities to learners, they may not yield the desired goals it needs to achieve. For instance, the nature of the sight-reading task may vary according to the situation in which it is undertaken. Students having various principal instruments may be given few minutes to engage in examination and preparation of material, or they may be called upon to sight-read music with little or no preparation. In any case, the performance of sight-reading material precludes total refinement of physical movements in the motor execution phase of the task. The sight-reading task may be viewed in direct contrast to a repertoire task in which the pianist has engaged in weeks and often months of cognitive and motor training and thus gained a high level of physical familiarity with the music" (Wristen, 2005, p. 44).

Furthermore, Sloboda (1974) has shown that short fragments of musical text displayed briefly are more accurately recorded by good sight-readers than by poor sight-readers. He found that good sight-readers could record five notes accurately in any one fixation whereas poor sight-readers could record only two or three notes with the same degree of accuracy. Whilst this finding is important, in itself it sheds little light on the underlying cognitive processes which are responsible for the apparent superiority of good sight-readers in perceiving musical text. In this regard, varied methodologies will be pertinent to take care of students' ability in acquiring such sight-reading skills. The ability to acquire the skill of sight-reading enables one to practice highly difficult musical scores under time constraints and sometimes without the opportunity of making corrections. Ability to acquire these sight-reading skills will have a tremendous

implication for students to do transcriptions from audio and video recordings as it helps them to gain mastery on rhythms and note value interpretations.

Method and Process

The study was rooted in phenomenographic research design as propounded by Barnard et al. (1999). According to the authors, "phenomenography is a study of how people experience and make sense of their encounters with the world" (p.34). They explain that this research method provides a way to identify, interpret, systematize, and describe the qualitatively different ways in which individuals experience phenomena. This method was effective to assist the authors in generating the type of categories of student understanding that we were seeking for. Moreover, the ontological assumptions made by this approach were considered to be preferable to those of other similar designs such as case study which could not have allowed for interviewing the number of participants used for the study. In dealing with the problem, 20 students from the Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba, were chosen accidentally from Bachelor of Arts, Music Education, level 200 group. The University was chosen by convenience means. Purposive sampling was also used to select the student programme as a result of them being trained as music teachers. The level 200 students were purposively chosen since they had already spent one year experiencing the musicianship course, and who, could give their experience at that level for pertinent issues to be addressed. A semi-structured interview guide was developed and administered to the 20 students. The main purpose was to elicit their understanding of the Musicianship course and how it has affected in their performance by ear, in an ensemble, sight-reading skills and in transcriptions. A period of one month was used with intermittent intervals to accidentally select the participants for the study.

The entire students were met by the researchers and the essence of the study was explained to them. Initially, they were afraid as to whether it had any implication for the instructor but we promised them their confidentiality and anonymity. We assured them that the results would be used for the improvement of the teaching and the learning of the course. Data were collected from the individual participants, some from their hostels and some on campus using mobile phones, notebooks, and pens. The data collected from the participants were transcribed individually but were grouped and discussed according to the themes generated in the objectives.

Data Presentation and Discussion

One of the pertinent issues addressed in the study was to identify the conception students have on the Musicianship course on their playing or performance by hearing. It was revealed from the study that students have little understanding of the musicianship course and its implications on their general musical practice. Some were aware that it is significant to their musical training.

One participant for instance said this:

> *Musicianship is there to help us to sight-read and also get a deeper understating of music. As a musician, you should be able to transcribe your own music and also be able to read songs whenever the need comes. And I enjoy the aural and sight component of this course a lot. I expect that I would be able to read music, play my instrument.*

This is an indication that this respondent is fully aware of the need of musicianship as postulated by Ilomaki (2011) that students exposed to musicianship progress better than those who learn through the use of scores. Similarly, another respondent said this:

> *So far, from what I have experienced, we are being trained to gain musical knowledge in terms of rhythms, and also to have a feel about lots of instruments, and aural. Sight singing is the component that I like in the musicianship course and I expect that I would be able to interpret rhythms and also train my aural skills as well.*

However, most of the respondents were of the view that the broad spectrum of musicianship, in terms of incorporating aural, sight-reading, ensemble work, major and minor instruments is a worry to them. One had this to say:

> *Musicianship is about the various instruments we play as well as aural and sight. And I like the aspect of playing the piano. I also expect that at the end of my stay, I would be able to gain upper hands on my sight, aural, and also playing of my major and minor instruments.*

Some students gave the literal meaning of musicianship to incorporate all the things involved in music and was of the view that:

> *Looking at the literal meaning of musicianship, it is just like the things you have to know as a musician, what music is about, the*

> *things it is made up of, and what it entails not only about the singing and playing of instruments. The component I like best is the sight-reading aspect but I am not too good, and I am still practicing to be better. I also expect that at the end of the day would acquire all the basic skills, such as the reading of the score appropriately among other things.*

Some also attributed their inability to understand the course to its expansive nature. They expressed that the course is very broad and have no idea how all the aspects can be acquired within the semester. Some author is of the view that "brain capacity to process information and perform a task correctly is largely affected by the body's physical state" (Kurata et al., 2015), especially when the workload overpowers the attention span of the student. Some could only understand the course differently from the acquisition of specific skills. One respondent for instance said this:

> *My understanding of musicianship is the way one handle's his instrument, crafting, branding, and also one's lifestyle as a musician. Both in the music life and out of the music life. It entails how someone practices their music and their life. I like the voice aspect of this course. At the end of the course, I would like to be able to play my musical instrument.*

Clearly, apart from voice, this respondent had no understanding of the aims of the course. There was a great indication from the responses that some students actually indicated how the course has helped them to be able to play by ear yet a greater number of them did not see how the course was applicable to helping them to play by ear. One respondent also had this to say:

> *Yes, I am able to play my instruments very well, but I am unable to replicate the sound I hear on my instrument because sometimes, hearing it for the first time seems very complicated and I have to seek assistance. Unfortunately, I am not able to get the skill from the Musicianship course.*

Other respondents were of the view that they can perform a bit by ear as a result of their pre-university experience and that the course has not provided enough to improve their performance by hearing. This buttresses what Freer and Tan (2014) intimated that an individual's experience in a particular field of study has the propensity to have an impact on their academic performance.

One respondent said this:

> *Yes, sure I can play my instrument very well, and I can listen to any sound and replicate it on my instrument. This is because I had knowledge about the instrument before I came to school. So, adding the skills that I have gained over here has improved it more.*

Like another said.

> *Yes, I am able to play my instrument, but no, I am unable to listen to any sound and replicate it on instrument.*

Many of the participants indicated that they could not listen to any sound and replicate it well on their instruments. They do not have the skill of listening to any sound and playing it back on their instruments. The data revealed considerable variability in the students' conceptions of Musicianship which depended upon the nature of the task involved in the learning process. Although many respondents could not deny the fact that aural is a good component of the musicianship course to help them play by ear, it was very clear and obvious that they had no idea how the course could improve their playing or performance by hearing as McNeil (2000) postulated. Many opinions given were that it is not easy to perform by hearing. The data, therefore, revealed considerable variability in the students' conceptions of Musicianship which depended upon the nature of the task involved in the learning process. Many opinions given were that it is not easy to perform by hearing. In fact, Wright (2016) has indicated which has been proved to be true that many professional musicians rely considerably on aural skills in a variety of ways in teaching, conducting, rehearsing, and analyzing musicology.

Another issue determined in the study dealt with how students perceive the Musicianship course in their ensemble work. Most of the data collected from the respondents clearly identified that all the students belonged to one or two ensembles and they equally take an active part in their various groups. The significance of ensemble has been espoused by Keller (2007) that it is through ensemble that musicians coordinate their actions with remarkable precision. It is the ensemble cohesion that makes predicated group members in sharing a common goal to ensure a unified concept of the ideal sound. This is why it is a great idea to realize that most of the students belong to one or two ensembles.

One participant indicated that:

> *I belong to an ensemble and also yes, I take an active part in the ensemble, during ensemble rehearsals, there is only the use of scores in their performances.*

This indicates that the respondent is fully aware of the importance of joining an ensemble yet, he is equally unaware of the positive impact that performing in an ensemble has on their musicianship practice. Most of the respondents were of the view that they belong to an ensemble and they take active part in the ensemble. During ensemble rehearsal time, they use scores in rehearsing. Clearly, a majority of the respondents belonged to an ensemble and took it lively and also as a requirement but were not conscious of the impact of the musicianship course on their ensemble participation.

In contrast, other respondents also indicated that although they belong to an ensemble, they were unable to take an active part in it because they were discouraged. One of these respondents indicated this:

> *I belong to an ensemble, but no, I do not take an active part in the ensemble, because most of the time at the ensemble, they practice what they know already and since I am new to the instrument, I am unable to follow and play along with them. And it discourages me a lot. All of our ensemble rehearsals are scores-based and not audio-based.*

It was also found out from the interview that the vulnerability nature and ill health of some of the respondents prevented them to take an active role in their various ensemble groups.

Another respondent also said:

> *Yes, I belong to an ensemble but no, I do not take an active part in it because of my ill health. During ensemble we mostly use scores.*

In other cases, some respondents also attributed their inability to take an active role in their various ensembles because they do not use scores, instead, they

listen to audio or video recordings. As Keller (2001) said, resources such as these must be allocated to foster attentional skillful, and flexible different sound sources to improve the practice of the individuals. One respondent intimated:

> *Yes, I belong to an ensemble, and I do not take an active part in the ensemble. This is because, during ensemble we don't use musical scores, we listen to music and replicate them on our instruments during rehearsals.*

Another respondent also said although they listen to audio or video recordings during ensemble, he is able to replicate them on his instrument because he had prior knowledge of the instrument before coming to school. He stated that:

> *Yes, I belong to an ensemble, and I take an active part in the ensemble as well. During ensemble we don't use musical scores, we listen to audio and replicate them on our instrument during rehearsals.*

A few respondents also stated that, because of the nature of their ensemble, they dance according to the drum patterns, and not by score or audio recordings. Some were also of the view that:

> *I belong to an ensemble and yes, I take an active part in the ensemble but we usually perform via the sound of the drums.*

They also indicated that they only use scores when they are learning a new repertoire of ensemble songs. It is worth stating that students belonged to one or two ensembles and took an active part but usually found it difficult adjusting to the rituals of the ensemble because they were not able to acquire the necessary skills the Department demands from them. It was discovered that students do not know that the musicianship course will aid them to be able to perform well in their various ensembles.

The findings clearly show that all the students belonged to one or two ensembles and are active members of their various ensemble groups. They found ensemble work as good but could not indicate whether it is the musicianship course that improves their ability to play in the ensemble. What emerged was that they usually listened to others play and corrected themselves when they made mistakes. This indicates that they had not been very conscious of the impact musicianship course could have on their ensemble work as Bowmer et al. (2005) assert. They are of the view that it helps to gain meta knowledge or develop

one's awareness of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. Furthermore, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the Musicianship course had improved their sight-reading skills. In this case, some talked about how difficult it was for them to read at sight, this is due to inadequate material and opportunities. As the first respondent stated:

> *I am unable to play at sight unless I go through the piece for a few minutes before I can play. Similarly, I have acquired some skills but I feel that much opportunity has not been given in the course for improvement.*

Another respondent reiterated the above assertion:

> *No, I am unable to play at sight, because I am not able to grasp the concept that will build up the content of the musicianship course. I seriously need the requisite skills to do sight singing and sight playing, yet the materials given to improve this area are not enough.*

Indeed, some of the respondents rather were of the view that the musicianship course has helped them to pick up gradually in sight-reading.

One respondent said:

> *Yes, musicianship has helped me to play at sight but it is not as fluent as it is supposed to flow. Again, yes, much skill is needed in musicianship for sight singing. It demands a lot of practice and exercise to be able to get to perfection.*

Again, other respondents also indicated that the course is gradually helping them to be able to read at sight, and they are even better than they came to school. One respondent indicated that:

> *Musicianship has helped me to play at sight, because when I was coming to school, I had no knowledge in sight playing. Moreover, the skills I have acquired in musicianship has really helped me to be able to sing at sight as well.*

Similarly, another person also stated that:

> *Yes, I am able to play at sight gradually. My sight singing has also improved for the better, at least, it is much better than when I came.*

Some respondents also attributed their ability to read at sight to the fact that they had prior knowledge before enrolling for the course. Some respondents asserted:

> *Yes, of course, I came in with some knowledge in music, and the knowledge that I have gained in musicianship has helped me to be able to play at sight. Yes, much skill is acquired in musicianship for sight singing.*

According to the respondents, their prior knowledge as well as the knowledge they had acquired in musicianship has contributed to their ability to read at sight. Although the interview revealed that much skill is needed in reading at sight, there is no doubt that putting in much effort for the course will yield a very strong positive result. It is a gainsaying that reading at sight is a major problem for many of the respondents. A greater number of them were of the view that such opportunities to improve in the sight-reading aspect of the musicianship were not there. They usually had fewer sight-reading activities for improvement. In this regard, they suggested that teachers of the Musicianship course should provide more sight-reading activities to enable them to develop their reading skills.

On the issue of whether or not the Musicianship course helps students to transcribe pieces from audio or video recordings, it was revealed, by extension, that majority of the respondents had problems engaging in transcriptions from audio or video recordings. In music, transcription is the practice of notating a piece or a sound that was previously unnotated and/or unpopular as written music (Jehan, 2005). Musicianship course is able to develop a skill that will help students do transcriptions. Participants indicated whether the musicianship course had been of help to their ability in musical transcriptions. The first respondent had this to say:

> *I am unable to do transcription because I am not well equipped with the needed skills. The content of the course is not enough to transfer it to the actual performance of my major and minor instruments but much time and attention is needed.*

Another respondent also equally stated that:

> *No, I have not been able to do transcription properly, and also my practice has not really reflected in the course, but at least, yes, the content of the course is enough to transfer it to his actual performance of his major and minor instrument.*

Some were of the view that gradually the course has helped them to be able to do few transcriptions. Although it is not enough, they were still putting in more efforts. One person affirmed that:

> *Yes, I have been able to do few transcriptions on my own, and yes, my practice reflects in the musicianship course. And lastly, I am also able to transfer the content of the musicianship course to the actual performance of my major and minor instruments.*

Some were of the opinion that, the knowledge they had gained has helped them to do a few transcriptions and gradually their practice reflects in their general musicianship.

According to one respondent:

> *The knowledge that I have gained in musicianship has helped me to do some transcription and also my practice reflects in the musicianship course. The content of the course is enough to transfer it to my actual performance of my major and minor instruments.*

Most of the data collected showed that the majority of the respondents had not been able to try their hands on transcriptions at all. It was explained that it was partly due to a lack of exposure by the teachers or their doubts on the perception about what the course could do to help them acquire the skill of transcribing.

One stated that:

> *Transcription is a bit difficult thing to do, also my practice does not reflect in the musicianship course. Again, the content of the course is not enough to transfer it to my actual performance of my major and minor instruments.*

Another respondent also stated that:

> *I have not been able to do transcription but hoping to try it soon, gradually my practice reflects in the musicianship course but the content of the course is not enough to transfer it to actual performance of my major and minor instruments.*

Many participants indicated that they are not able to do transcription. Transcription requires enough skills to transfer the idea to their major and minor instruments. This connotes that, students are usually aware of the positive effect of musicianship course on their general music practice, yet they are not able to submerge themselves in it in order to yield the necessary results expected in their music practice. They acknowledged the fact that the musicianship course should empower them to do transcriptions from audio or audio-visual performances, however, such activities to expose them to that skill were not readily available in the course. This is why Klickstein (2009) postulated that transcribing music ensures that it can be replicated again and again by different musicians while still maintaining its melody, rhythm, and dynamics. He describes transcription as a beautiful thing that whoever transcribes can do wonders for their musicianship

Conclusions

There was a clear indication from the study as the preliminary study also showed that most Bachelor of Arts, Music Education sophomore class of the Department of Music Education do not appreciate the musicianship course and are not aware of the effect of the course on their general music performance practice. This accounts for their inability to submerge themselves into it. Students' conceptions of the course are clear about their naivety of the positive impact on their ability to play by ear, ensemble participation, improving on their sight-reading as well as their ability to transcribe. Issues of the content of musicianship are likely to be a contributory factor to such conceptions among the students.

It is worth stating that phenomenographic framework has provided a better description of the inherent variability of students' reasoning, but it also leads to pedagogical and programme review implications. Thus, it is also important for teachers of the Musicianship to try to understand the nature of the prior conceptions that students have in a particular course. This will enable them to strongly determine the particular phenomenon, or contexts being used in the instructional setting.

Indeed, these findings have some important implications, not just for consistent orientation to students by the Department regarding the need for the Musicianship course but the content as contained in the teaching and learning process. It is to provide the ability for the students to acquire stronger musicianship skills, allowing them to read music well, improve their sight-reading and do their transcriptions accordingly. As much as all musicians seek to acquire the requisite skills to be able to perform and improve in their musical practice, this study consequently has an implication for not only the teaching and learning of Musicianship alone but the teaching of music as an aural art in generally in schools of music. It is quite clear that integrated music learning combines aural, vocal, visual, intellectual, digital, kinesthetic, and emotional understanding of musical relationships. Teachers and students should consciously understand the sound production and the active musical tones involved in aural musicianship. They should also be able to identify sounds as tonal events with resolutions, associate their minds and ears to know in a way that will enable them to discriminate sounds, and perceive sounds as they relate to their instrumental performance, sight-reading, and transcriptions.

If the focus of the musicianship programme is to understand the expressive meanings of those musical relationships and the intent is for that learning to benefit students to perform, do transcriptions and improve on sight-reading, then much is to be done to sensitize students on the need to understand the course as an integrated subject while teachers approach lessons with the use of improvisation as a tool for developing musicianship skills with such integrative mechanism with confidence that the experience of the students can be theoretically consistent, pedagogically sound, and musically rewarding.

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