
**CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE OF MUSIC IN NUSRAT
JAHAN AHMADIYYA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, WA, GHANA**

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ABSTRACT: *One of the academic disciplines in the Colleges of Education Curriculum in Ghana that are structured to equip a trained teacher to fit properly at the Early Childhood Education Centers and the Basic Schools is Music and Dance. Due to its nature, it plays a dual role as a course of study and also serves as a form of entertainment during other school programmes where student music groups perform to grace the occasion. However, the study of music seems to be a bane among the students of Nusrat Jahan Ahmadiyya College of Education, Wa. They are ambivalent about receiving music instructions, probably, as a result of their religious and cultural inclination. Based on the theory of the perception and emotion of music, the author puts forward how Muslim and Christian students respond to music. Data were collected through interviews and participant observation. It is realized that Christian students embrace all forms of music but Muslim students frown on art music and the playing of Western musical instruments. They however welcome and join Christian students in the performance of traditional music and also enjoy recorded Ghanaian contemporary music. The discourse concludes that due to Muslim students' perspectives of music, the formation and organization of music groups on campus has become burdensome.*

KEYWORDS: Christian, Muslim, perspective, perception and emotion

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of the basic and Early Childhood Education curriculum is music. This subject together with other performing arts form the core of most of the lessons that are taught. At both levels, play is considered the work of the child hence to sustain their attention in lessons, the learning activities are play-based. According to Pellegrini (2009) cited in Whitebread et al (2017), in both animals and humans, play situations allow them to concentrate on the activities that they perform and by that performance of a task is not onerous. With music to accompany and complement the play, the performance of tasks at both levels becomes interesting. Hodijah and Kurniawati (2020) affirmed that music is employed as a learning method in early childhood education, coupled with its

activities that give room for children to interact with peers and school surrounding to make learning appealing. Apart from its use as a method of instruction, music learning in childhood helps in cognitive development and also touched on the other domains of learning so as to give optimal and holistic training to the child.

The training of teachers in the colleges of education in Ghana is geared towards the education of the learners at the early childhood education centers and the basic schools hence music is incorporated into the curriculum. Music was not included in the teacher education curriculum during pre-colonial and colonial eras in Ghana as posited by Flolu and Amuah (2003) cited in Otchere (2019). However, in 1975 music was introduced formally into the teacher training colleges of Ghana curriculum to train teachers to handle the subject at the basic schools. With this, the teachers in training for 3-year Post 'O' level Colleges were to be trained for Junior Secondary Schools and the courses were grouped into three categories (Gyansah & Esilfie, 2009). Music was part of the practical and vocational subjects such as Home Science, Commercial subjects, Art and Agriculture as areas of specialization. After completion, the candidates were awarded TEACHER'S CERTIFICATE 'A' (3-YEAR POST SECONDARY). When the Diploma in Basic Education was introduced to replace the TEACHER'S CERTIFICATE 'A' in 2005, Music and Dance was one of the optional courses to be offered by the generalist students as an elective subject for the second semester (Ocansey and Davis, 2016).

The Bachelor Degree in Basic Education was rolled out in 2018 when the last batch of the Diploma students were in the second year. It was then that the author joined the teaching staff of N.J.A. College of Education. At that time, there were no substantial music groups on campus and in an attempt to form a school choir and brass band to feature in the 2019 graduation ceremony, only Christian students agreed to be part of the two groups. While both males and females were part of the choir, only a few male students enrolled to learn the brass instruments. This attitude of students in NJA College of Education relates to Gartner's (2021) contribution to how brass band music is performed by the youth in Ghanaian communities, which says that as young men are instrumentalists in various brass band groups, their female counterparts in the groups are either singers or dancers. Wuaku (2015) was also of the view that the instrumentalists in the brass band groups in unintegrated female secondary schools consider being in the group for a lot of fun hence almost all members try to learn how to play the instruments. Even though males dominate the majority of brass band groups in Ghana, not everybody can play the brass instruments. A similar instance was experienced in 2019 in Nusrat Jahan Ahmadiyya (N.J.A) College of Education when ten students enrolled to learn the instruments and only two were able to continue. Currently, more students have enrolled and the number of members has increased tremendously and the group has received a boost for the first time in the annals of the college.

While the brass band group was made up of only male students, the choral group was dominated by the female students of the college who sing soprano and the alto parts. A similar situation exists in America where public singing by women became part of their history and their influential

involvement began to change their cultural insight of music, making choral groups currently not properly balanced between the sexes (Gates, 1989; Nannen, 2017). Amuah (2013) on the other hand posited that though women in Ghana are into the composition of popular and other types of musical genres and perform in choral groups, none is as associated with Music Theory and Composition (choral music composition). This situation is similar to music groups in N.J.A College of Education where membership is exclusively Christian students.

The ubiquity and permeation of Ghanaian traditional music in the northern part of Ghana helps to enrich the culture of the people. This led to their incorporation into worship by Christians, especially the *Bawa* music by the Roman Catholic faith which motivated most of the people to be part due to an element of their culture embedded in the faith. The known Islamic kingdoms in the northern enclave such as Dagbon and Waala kingdoms espoused the Damba festival into their culture. This festival was linked to the birth of the Prophet Mohammed and also to extol the chief (Tia, 1969). This is celebrated in the lunar month of *Damba* which is the third month of the Islamic calendar (Rabi' al-Awal). The Takai dance is usually performed at this annual event together with other traditional dances. This cultural and religious orientation contributed to the Muslim students' willingness to partake in the performance of the traditional dances in the College. However, choral and brass band music are performed by Christians during worship and other occasions hence the Muslim students frown on that due to the dichotomy that exists between the two religions.

During the 2019 graduation ceremony, the students performed the *Bina* dance to grace the occasion. In the cause of preparation, the students organized themselves and the Muslim students formed the majority of the group and also a Muslim was a leader. Much time was not spent on the rehearsal sessions as the students identified their colleagues that could perform the dance. The author only coordinated and directed them on how to perform on stage.

The Structure and Content of Music Courses in the Four Year Bachelor of Education Degree in Basic Education Programme

The University of Cape Coast started the Bachelor of Education Degree in Basic Education in 2018 for all the forty-six (46) Colleges of Education in Ghana for the first batch of students who are currently in level 400. In 2019, the forty-six Colleges were affiliated to five public universities including the University of Cape Coast. Four of the universities excluding the University of Cape Coast were led by the University of Education, Winneba to draw a curriculum whose content and structure were different from that of the University of Cape Coast the same year that the Colleges were affiliated to them. The University of Education, Winneba led the rest three because it was the only teacher training university among the other three universities at that time. The other three universities are The University for Development Studies, Tamale; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi and the University of Ghana, Legon.

Structure and Content of Music Curriculum Designed By the University of Cape Coast

- **Year One Semester One (Early Childhood Education)**

Performing Arts and Society

- **Year One Semester One (Primary Education)**

Performing Arts and Society

- **Year One Semester One (JHS Education) Other Content Areas (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education)**

1. Performing Arts and Society

2. History of the Performing Arts

- **Year One Semester Two (Primary Education)**

The nature of Performing Arts

- **Year Two Semester One (Primary Education)**

Sound and Movement Notation

- **Year One Semester Two (JHS Education) Other Content Areas (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education)**

Nature of Performing Arts

- **Year Two Semester One (JHS Education) Other Content Areas (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education)**

1. Curriculum Studies in the Performing Arts

2. Sound and Movement Notation

- **Year Two Semester Two (Primary Education)**

Basic Composition Techniques in the Performing Arts

- **Year Two Semester Two (JHS Education) Other Content Areas (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education)**

Basic Composition Techniques in the Performing Arts

- **Year Three Semester One (Primary Education)**

Principles and Methods of Teaching the Performing Arts

- **Year Three Semester One (JHS Education) Other Content Areas (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education)**
 1. Principles and Methods of Teaching the Performing Arts II
 2. Aesthetic Evaluation of Selected Works in the Performing Arts
 3. Introduction to Research in Performing Arts
- **Year Three Semester Two (Primary Education)**

Creativity in the Performing Arts
- **Year Three Semester Two (JHS Education) Other Content Areas (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education)**

Creativity in the Performing Arts
- **Year Four Semester Two (Primary Education)**

Performing Arts Business
- **Year Four Semester Two (JHS Education) Other Content Areas (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education)**

Performing Arts Business

All the courses mounted by the University of Cape Coast are elective courses. These courses are supposed to be offered by the students on the Primary Education programme and other course areas in the J.H.S programme. Those on the Early Childhood Education programme have only one optional course to offer in the first year second semester which is “Performing Arts and society”.

Structure and Content of the Music, Dance and Physical Education Curriculum for The Four Universities.

The course structure and content as captured in the Ghana Music Teachers Association (2019) conference paper by the four universities apart from the University of Cape Coast is as follows:

Core Courses

- Intersection of Physical Activity, Sports, Music and Dance. (To be offered in Year 1 Semester 2)
- Analysis of Policy Documents and Syllabi. (To be offered in Year 2 Semester 2)

- Sports, P.E, Music and Dance in Local and Global Cultures. (To be offered in Year 3 Semester 1)

Elective Courses

- Principles and Techniques in Music Composition. (To be offered in Year 2 Semester 1)
- Dance Drama Composition. (To be offered in Year 2 Semester 1)
- Further Principles and Techniques in Music Composition. (To be offered in Year 2 Semester 2)
- Performance practice in African Dance Genres & Art music. (To be offered in Year 3 Semester 1)
- Assessment and STS Preparatory Activities in Music and Dance. (To be offered in Year 3 Semester 2)
- ICT Integration and Equipment Maintenance in Music and Dance. (To be offered in Year 4)
- Professional Development and Advocacy in **PES-MD**. (Both to be offered in Year 4 Semester 2)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Situating a study in a vast context of a theory gives it numerous upper hands, the center of attention and projects it to be accurate. It also aids in framing questions that direct the study and gives a premise for expounding its findings. This paper is therefore guided by the *theory of the perception and emotion of music*. The theory proposes that to get meaning of why music attracts us emotionally, we should comprehend the concept of perception of music (Vickhoff, 2008). *The theory of the perception and emotion of music* got grounds in the perception-action theory which spelled out that mirror neurons are related to musical emotions (Preston & de Waal, 2002; Vickhoff, 2008). The mirror neurons make us ready to mimic movement patterns (Rizzolatti *et al.*, 2001). Mimicking through mirror neurons is known as resonance behaviour. This behaviour is psychological and also linked inextricably with the behaviour of people in society as buttressed by Paraskevopoulos, Tsapkini and Peretz (2010) that “*despite music’s universality, people perceive and interpret music according to their cultural background*”. Peoples’ perception and interpretation of music reflect their religious and ethnic background which is immanent in their cultural perception of music.

N.J.A Students’ response to music instructions on campus has been influenced by their religious and cultural orientation. These students hail from different ethnic and religious backgrounds with diverse musical orientations which compel them to respond to and accept a particular type of music and also frown on other types.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Christian religion started in Ghana during the pre-colonial era when the orthodox churches arrived to propagate the Gospel to the Ghanaian citizens. The music tradition that is associated with these churches are hymns and canticles which is based on the assertion that *music plays an active role in the construction of an individual's identity* (DeNora, 2000; Fletcher, 2015) and forms an integral and vibrant part of Christian life and church activities in Ghana and the country of origin of these churches. In the early 1900s, new churches such as Independent, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches started to emerge (Agordoh, 2000). The spread of these denominations saw the creation of Ghanaian hymns in the local languages which were accompanied by indigenous musical instruments during their worship. This is the musical genre that the Christian students of N.J.A College of Education mostly use to lead their worship and prayer sessions.

Presently, the Methodist church-Ghana adopted the *Ebibindwom* (Akan sacred music) into worship by Akans (Amuah, 2012). The lyrics of this music are based on Biblical texts in *Twi* and *Fante* languages. At Ho in the Volta region, Evangelical Presbyterian (E.P.) Church, Ghana the Ho-Kpodzi congregation welcomes the *Zibo* music into its worship at church and other practices outside the church (Mesiotso, 2016). In the other parts of the Volta Region, the same church fuses *Borborbor* music into their activities. The church members sing the hymns in the E.P. Church hymnal (*Hadzibale*) in Ewe language during worship to accompany the two dances. The African Faith Tabernacle Church otherwise known as Nkansah Church is mostly found in Akan communities in Ghana. This church also embraced the *Fontomfrom* ensemble which is used in the course of worship to accompany Ghanaian spirituals in *Twi* and *Fante* languages. The Roman Catholic Church is found all over Ghana and the members in the Upper West Region who are Dagaabas espoused the xylophone (*Gyile*) music into their religious practices both in church service and at other functions of the church apart from church worship.

The church is where Christians perform both spiritual and mundane activities. There are rituals that the church performs to usher in members from one stage to another. These rituals are some of the practices that are backed by the beliefs of the church and they go with selected music of the church. According to Morley (2009), *Musical activities and religious, or spiritual, activities have much in common* p.161 and are privately or communally performed by the members. Some of them are baptism, Eucharist, holy matrimony and confirmation. The performance of the rituals is spelled out in the liturgy and other holy books of the church. There are different types of hymns, canticles and Ghanaian spirituals that are dedicated and performed in the course of conducting the rituals. Apart from rituals, different religious songs are dedicated to festivals such as Christmas and Easter celebrations.

Every activity performed by Christians in relation to their religion is based on Biblical instructions depending on the denomination and its interpretation of the Holy Bible. The biblical interpretation of music reflects the way some denominations respond to music and its performance during worship. The Fundamental Baptist and the Seventh Day Adventist Churches in Ghana do not play

drums during religious worship even though both churches accompany their hymns with Piano, Organ or electronic synthesizers. A practice which some Adventists argue that they frown on to keep a serene atmosphere before God during worship which Faber (2020) maintained that Adventists attribute playing of drums in the church to divert the attention of members from God. Contrary to what prevails during worship, Adventists in Ghana lead brass band music with drums to accompany processions during funerals and other church functions.

The Holy Bible gave accounts of how some religious personalities responded to music in both the New and Old Testaments and the occasions on which these events occurred. Cole (1998) posited that music in the bible was used distinctively in many programmes. The use of music in the bible varies depending on the activity and the purpose. In Acts of the Apostles 16:25, when Paul and Silas were imprisoned, they praised God through singing and prayer. Aluede and Ekewenu (2009) remarked that the motive behind their singing in prison was to alleviate the psychophysical trauma they were going through. In this context, they used music to accompany their prayer and also to entertain themselves. This is an act which is peculiar to how Christian students of N.J.A. College of Education use Christian religious music on different occasions. Music also served as a tool in the bible to motivate warriors to fight their enemies and doubles as a force to bring down the Jericho wall.

Islamic religious worship is full of musical activities. The muezzin attached to a particular mosque calls the adhan with a euphonious voice to alert members to go for prayers. Parrott (2009) is of the assertion that *Islamic worship incorporates 'music' into worship, but not in the same sense as Christian choral or organ music* p.28. The cantillation of the holy Quran by the Hafiz with melodious voice inflection coupled with the call by the Imam and the response by the congregation are clear and distinctive manifestations of music being part of Islamic worship.

In spite of its indispensable role in Islamic religious worship, music is disapproved of by some sects of the religion. Per the interpretation of the *Salafi* and the *Shiah* Muslims' *hadiths* and the Holy Quran in addition to their doctrines, the two sects delineate music performance in Islam as *Kufr* (an act which is a digression from Islamic norms). Both sects based part of the argument on the proclamation of Prophet Mohammed that, "Singing and dancing are enchantment for adultery, it is a stepping stone or a way that leads to adultery" (Jebuni et al, 2020). Contrary to this assertion, Jebuni (2012) is of the view that the Tijàniyya sect does not regard music as *shirk* (evil) and therefore permits the performance of music and dance but ignores men and women dancing in a way that is sexually attractive and also dancing to musical performance in a pub. Ahmadiyya Muslims accept the same ideas as Tijàniyya sect concerning music-making coupled with the tolerance of people from other religions hence the College admits students with different religious backgrounds and allows them to practice their religion freely on N.J.A. College of Education campus.

METHODOLOGY

The study was situated in the qualitative paradigm with the interview and participant observation as data collection instruments. The author employed the purposive sampling technique in selecting three Muslim students, three Christian students and a tutor in charge of the selection of courses for an interview as opined by (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011) cited in Palinkas et al (2013) that *identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest* p.3. The three categories of participants were granted interviews by the author separately and individually as proposed by Creswell (2012) that *interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers* p217. While the interview for the Muslim and Christian students was based on their responses to music and performance groups on campus, a tutor in charge of the selection of courses for Junior High School Education Specialism was interviewed on why N.J.A. students do not select music as an elective course. The author observed the anonymity of the participants as posited by Kusi (2012) that names of the participants are not to be captured in the work or on any data collection tool. Other ethical issues concerning how to collect qualitative data were catered for.

The author became part of the participants to collect data due to the roles that he plays in the College as a music and dance tutor and also as the choirmaster and the leader of the brass band. This process is justified as a researcher might join the participants to collect data (Driscoll, 2011). This was done during choir and brass band meetings. His role as participant-observer during data collection was hinged on the proposition of LJorgensen (1989) that *through participant observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why—at least from the standpoint of participants—things happen as they do in particular situations* p.12. Being a leader of the group, the author on two occasions joined the students to perform the brass band music during the graduation ceremony where he played the Trombone to accompany other instruments.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The students of Nusrat Jahan Ahmadiyya College of Education are made up of Muslims from different sects, Christian students from various denominations and other students from other religious backgrounds. Among these categories of students, only the Christian students rehearse with musical instruments and also perform music during their worship even though all religious groups on campus are at liberty to do so. The Christian students' groups on campus are made up of the Roman Catholic community, the Christian Teachers Fellowship (C.T.F.) and the Baptist students' fellowship. These groups normally meet in the evenings during weekdays to worship on campus and on Sundays go to their mother churches in Wa town to fellowship with them.



Catholic Students' Worship Session on Campus

Other musical activities on campus include the singing of the Ghana National Anthem and the N.J.A. College Anthem at the morning assembly on Monday mornings and other school gatherings. During the Inter-Hall and Inter-School sports and games competitions, the College's public address system is used to make announcements and also to play music to cheer up the sportsmen and the people present. The matriculation of the first years and the graduation of the students who complete the N.J.A College of Education are characterized by the performance of music. During the graduation ceremony, one indigenous ensemble leads the convocation for the procession to and recession from the ceremony. At the ceremony, the national and the college anthems are the main music that is performed. In the 2019 ceremony, the brass band joined the choir to perform these two anthems. However, at the 2021 ceremony, the choir was not formidable due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Therefore it was only the brass instruments that featured, and this was accompanied by an electronic synthesizer. The author joined the two graduands and one continuing student during the performance of the anthems where he played the Trombone to accompany them.



2021 Graduation Ceremony

One distinctive aspect of the first-year core course (Intersection of Physical Activity, Sports Music and Dance) is the provision that was made for students to study ten indigenous dances selected from various ethnic groups in Ghana. These dances are: *Bawa, Borborbor, Agbadza, Apatampa, Adowa, Bamaya, Kpanlogo, Takai, Kundum* and *Nagla*. This arrangement was made to expose students to these dances and to prepare them on how to teach them in class and in preparation for the bi-annual National Cultural Festival for basic schools in Ghana. Therefore in every second semester, the first-year students of N.J.A College of Education learn both theory and practical aspects of these ten dances and climax them with performance in groups.



2021 Year-One Students Performing *Kundum* Dance

Differentiating between the University of Cape Coast (U.C.C) Music and Dance curriculum and the one developed by other four public universities championed by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) shows that the one developed by the U.C.C. is solely elective courses for Junior High School Education students (English, Social Studies, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language and Religious and Moral Education) and Primary Education students. In the case of the curriculum developed by the other four public universities led by the U.E.W. is in two dimensions. The core courses and the elective courses. For the core courses, one of them is to be offered in the First Year Second Semester by all students while the Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and the Junior High School Education students offering the Music and Dance elective courses are to continue in Second Year Second Semester and Third Year First Semester. The elective courses are to be offered by the Junior High School Education students only.

The interview that was granted the author by the assessment officer of N.J.A College of Education was based on course selection. It was revealed that students were to select courses related to their Senior High School elective or area of specialization. This is to help them perform well in their area of specialization as they continue with the courses that they offered in Secondary School. Similar to this discourse is the proposition made by Ofori *et al* (2018) that “*stakeholders to ensure that orientations and seminars are conducted in pre-SHS and SHS to help students to choose relevant courses to be offered at the tertiary level*”. As it stands, none of the students who enrolled in the Bachelor of Education Degree in Basic Education since 2019 in N.J.A offered Music and Dance as an elective course in S.H.S. Hence none was able to select music as an area of specialization.

It was also found out that during the middle and towards the end of the semester, choir and brass band members put in a proposal for postponement of rehearsal sessions to have ample time for studies. This attitude of students is contrary to Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) cited in Arjmandnia *et al* (2012) who are of the conviction that rehearsal upgrades the mastery of skills and performance. To add to that, on the days that students do not appeal for postponement of the rehearsal sessions, only a few of them attend and normally report late and request for early closure of the session because they think that those who are not part of the group cheat them by studying while they are at the rehearsal. This notion of students makes them oblivious of the benefits of being in music groups as posited by Gadd (2013) cited in Ellis (2018) that group singing promotes good health, reduces stress and makes groups formidable. This perspective of members of the groups and the Muslim students’ perception of music made the formation of music groups on campus an arduous task.

CONCLUSION

The aim of music in the Teacher Education curriculum is to prepare teachers to teach in Ghanaian basic schools as it forms the basis of instruction in lessons in some of the subjects in basic schools and plays pragmatic roles in lesson delivery. The paper noted that the introduction of music into the Colleges of Education went through different stages due to educational reforms and policies.

It was also revealed that music in the Bachelor of Education Degree curriculum in the Colleges of Education, is different in dimension per the content and structure. While the Colleges affiliated to U.C.C have their content and structure designed solely as elective programmes, the other five public universities designed theirs as both elective and core programmes.

In N.J.A College of Education music serves as a course of study and is also used as a form of entertainment during programmes. It is performed during official programmes in the College and the students in various religious groups are at liberty to perform music during worship. However, it has been noted that students' response to music instruction is appalling. This perspective of students' response to music has a toll on the membership of students in the two main music groups on campus where only a few Christian students form the membership. This invariably affects the formation of music groups on campus.

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