

## CHOOSING PERFORMING ARTS PEDAGOGY COURSES: PRE-SERVICE GENERALIST TEACHERS MOTIVATION

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**ABSTRACT:** *Performing Arts pedagogy courses have not been the choice of pre-service generalist teachers in Wesley College of Education in the city of Kumasi, Ghana between 2010/2011 and 2016/2017 academic years. At the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic year, six students selected the course as their elective for study. This study explores the motivation behind these pre-service teachers selecting the Performing Arts pedagogy courses for study. Prior engagement in the performing arts, expectation of ability to teach, and achieving good examination results emerged as the main themes from the analysis of qualitative semi-structured interview data. Findings suggest that there is a relationship between prior experiences in the performing arts and motivation to continue engagements in the arts. Further research with pre-service teachers to identify their needs, interests, abilities and background experiences in the performing arts will help teacher educators to train students to be effective practitioners in their future classrooms.*

**KEYWORDS:** Motivation, Performing Arts, Pedagogy, Pre-service Generalist Teachers, Colleges of Education, Ghana.

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### INTRODUCTION

Pre-service generalist teachers in Ghanaian Colleges of Education spend a total of three years in training. During the second year, they take pedagogy courses in all the core subjects (Mathematics, English, Integrated Science, and Environmental and Social Sciences) and also select two pedagogy courses in a particular subject area from among various subjects that are not considered as core. These non-core subjects are referred to as elective courses, suggesting that they are optional courses (Revised Syllabus for DBE Programme. (2014), University of Cape Coast). The pedagogy courses are meant to equip pre-service generalist teachers with the necessary knowledge, techniques, strategies and skills to teach during the practical teaching session of their training and also in their future classrooms after graduation.

Performing Arts (an integration of music, dance and drama) pedagogy courses are classified as elective courses. These courses had not been the choice of pre-service generalist teachers for a period spanning 7 years in Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, where this researcher practices as teacher educator. The table below presents a summary.

**Table 1. Number of pre-service generalist teachers offering Performing Arts pedagogy courses in a particular academic year in Wesley College of Education, Kumasi between 2005/2006 and 2017/2018 academic years.**

Academic Year	Number of Pre-service teachers
2005/2006	42
2006/2007	30
2007/2008	-
2008/2009	7
2009/2010	4
2010/2011	0
2011/2012	0
2012/2013	0
2013/2014	0
2014/2015	0
2015/2016	0
2016/2017	0
2017/2018	6

Data for 2007/2008 academic year could not be obtained. However, a study of the table shows that the number of students who offered the Performing Arts pedagogy courses between 2005/2006 and 2009/2010 academic years kept on reducing. Between 2010/2011 and 2016/2017 academic years, no student chose to offer the courses. However, at the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic year, 6 pre-service teachers selected the courses for study.

Considering the seven year period that the courses have not been offered, this study aims at exploring six pre-service generalist teachers motivation of selecting the Performing Arts pedagogy courses as their elective courses for study in 2017/2018 academic year. Findings of this study will inform policy and decision about recruiting students for the DBE programme. It could also be utilised to develop a rationale for future research and development of courses that meet the needs and interests of pre-service teachers.

The primary research question for this study is: What is pre-service generalist teachers' motivation for choosing performing arts pedagogy courses as elective courses for study?

The following table presents a summary of Performing Arts pedagogy courses offered in Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana.

**Table 2. Summary of Performing Arts pedagogy courses offered in Wesley College of Education, Kumasi.**

Course Code	Course Title	Semester offered	Status
PRA 221	Principles and Methods of Teaching the Performing Arts I	3	Elective/Optional
PRA 211	Principles and Methods of Teaching the Performing Arts II	4	Elective/Optional

Source: Revised Syllabus for the Diploma in Basic Education Programme, 2014, UCC.

PRA 221 is offered/studied during the first semester in the second year (3rd semester of the DBE programme) whiles PRA 211 is also offered/studied during the second semester in the second year (4th semester of the DBE programme).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A key factor in this study is motivation to study Performing Arts pedagogy courses. Pre-service teachers may encounter experiences that may either promote or prevent their engagement in the Performing Arts. Elliot and Dweck (2005) refer to the term “motivation” as the processes that initiate, guide and maintain that goal directed actions of individuals. Motivation explains the why of behaviour (Koomson et al., 2003). According to Cohen et al. (2010), Behaviorism, Expectancy theory, Needs theory, Self-perception and Self-worth, Learned helplessness, and Social theory constitute the various view of motivation which “do not necessarily conflict with each other but rather complement each other because, very often, they focus on different things” (ibid. p. 191). Expectancy theory suggests that “the learner is motivated by the anticipated gain/benefit, the likelihood of achieving the gain/benefit and the importance of the gain to the learner” (Cohen et al. 2010, p. 192). This theory explains why learners pursue and persist in the performing arts (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995) and provide insight for educators to predict student’s interests and participation choices (Lehmann et al., 2007). Taking this into consideration, the learner’s expectations of success in learning may inform the basis of his or her motivation to learn.

The Performing Arts when compared to core subjects such as English, mathematics and science in teacher education in a significant number of countries, is considered as under threat (Raitiainen, 2015; Welch & Henley, 2014; de Vries, 2013). Majority of both in-service and pre-service generalist teachers have the perception and belief that ability to teach the performing arts require specialized knowledge and skills (Stunnell, 2010; Hennessy, 2000; deVries & Albon, 2012). In a study involving four experienced and confident generalist teachers in England, Stunnell (2010) found that teaching music is the weakest area in these teachers’ practice. This perceived lack of experience, knowledge and skills in the performing arts may prevent pre-service teachers to engage in further studies or teaching the subject.

Notwithstanding, it is suggested that experiences in the Performing Arts prior to enrolling in College or University for teacher training contributes significantly to the ability to teach the arts in the primary school (Dinham, 2007). Lowe et al (2017) noted that developing skills for teaching music is built through engagement with music. Garvis (2008) also explained that developing abilities to teach require more opportunities to engage in performing arts to gain mastery of the subject which may not necessarily be obtained during pre-service teacher education, suggesting that prior positive engagements and experiences may motivate students to further engage in the Performing Arts, given the opportunity. In a study which examined first students’ musical experiences prior to entering a Bachelor of Education programme at Edith Cowan University, Lowe et al. (2017) identified that, students have a range of musical experiences which “generally reflect in their valuing of music as a discipline” (ibid. p. 324). This positive phenomenon may influence students’ further engagements in the performing arts to gain mastery in the art.

## THE METHOD

This study was conducted towards the end of the first semester of the 2017/2018 academic year in January 2018. It involved six pre-service generalist teachers who were between the ages of 20 and 23 and had enrolled in the Principles and Methods of Teaching the Performing Arts I course taught by this researcher. I discussed the aim of the study with these students with the primary purpose of seeking their consent to take part in this study. All of them volunteered to take part in the study. Other College ethical protocols were considered before I began data collection.

Data was collected by means of a semi-structured interview. As a qualitative method, a semi-structured interview enables a researcher to engage an informant “in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants’ responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p 57). There was one encounter with each respondent and each one-on-one interview lasted for approximately 50 minutes at respondent’s convenience between 15th January 2018 and 26th January, 2018. All the questions which guided the interviews were open ended and were developed from the main research question of this study. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim in Microsoft word within 24 hours and copies printed out and delivered to respondents for validation.

An inductive data analysis procedure (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) was employed to interpret the validated data. The interview transcripts were read through several times to identify connections and similarities. Patterns were then sorted to develop themes. Prior Performing Arts engagements, expectation of ability to teach, and achieving good examination results were three main apparent themes that emerged from the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Prior Performing Arts Engagements

It is evident from the data that each of the participants had had some level of engagements and experiences in the Performing Arts prior to gaining admission to college and enrolling in the performing arts pedagogy course. Examining the opinions expressed in participants’ own voice, provides interesting insights and gives tangible perspectives and opinions of the pre-service teachers. In view of this, I have presented some quotations rather than summarising all the opinions shared. The following quotes reflect the participants’ prior experiences in the performing arts.

**Respondent 1:** *I have been singing in the tenor part in my community’s church choir since age 18. I took inspiration from my mother who still sings in the soprano part. I really love singing which has even become my hobby.*

**Respondent 2:** *I first played the supporting drum in an ‘Adowa’ Music and Dance performance during a schools’ cultural festival when I was in primary class 6. I developed passion for playing drums since then and it has become part of my life.*

**Respondent 3:** *Joining the choir or the brass band was compulsory for those of us who chose music as a subject in the senior high school and although I did not like the idea, participation*

*in the school's choir as a music student was non-negotiable. But I believe that I have now developed a strong love and interest in the art. I sing the bass part in the College choir. I am also the part leader.*

**Respondent 4:** *I have always been with my father from my infancy during rehearsals and performances during social events. He owns a 'Kete' music and dance ensemble which usually performs at various functions. I mastered the playing of the master drum when I was 11 years old and now I am able to lead the group during rehearsals and performances.*

**Respondent 5:** *Listening to rhythms and blues is part of my life. I became conscious of this type of music during an entertainment programme in senior high school. I have also developed the passion for listening to other types such as the traditional highlife and English hymns.*

**Respondent 6:** *I became a member of my church's brass band ensemble when I was in the junior high school and learned how to play the trumpet in the leading part.*

According to Bandura (1997), peoples' beliefs in their abilities influence the course of actions they choose to pursue. Ross (1994) noted that confidence in ability to perform actions that aid student learning constitutes a characteristic that predicts students' outcome. Participants' narrations as presented above reveals that prior experiences and skills in the Performing Arts trigger the will for further engagements in the art whenever an opportunity is provided. According to Cogdill (2014), "having a strong music self-concept is a crucial component as to persist in music" (p. 2). The quotes demonstrate participants' perspectives and opinions of their ability to further engage effectively in the Performing Arts. The assumptions throughout the interviews suggest participants' self-confidence of achieving further performance goals without much constraint. This constitutes a belief which is leading them to continue their involvement in the Performing Arts in a formal setting.

According to Collins (2016, p. 4), "effective arts education could be delivered if the pre-service teachers entered their courses with a sufficient level of...personal arts skills and experience". They expressed confidence and also have the conviction that they will be able to learn the performing arts pedagogy course effectively to build better competencies without encountering many obstacles and challenges since they have prior experiences in music and dance arts.

### **Expectation of Ability to Teach**

While they reported of encouraging levels of engagement with the Performing Arts, they believe that further content knowledge and pedagogical skills will position them at a better level to engage professionally with the subject in the classroom as teachers. Participants' perspectives of their teaching abilities and expectation of ability to teach as reflected through their voices is presented below.

**Respondent 1:** *With the least opportunity, I assist the junior choir handler to teach hymns and other songs during junior choir practices and I believe I can do it better after going through the courses. (He was referring to the performing arts pedagogy courses).*

**Respondent 2:** *I organised and taught some members of my class how to play the Adowa drums which we presented during last week's ending entertainment show at the assembly hall. I can easily guide my future students to play to accompany our traditional dances.*

**Respondent 3:** *I have developed the habit of learning in advance, songs that will be taught at choir practices so that I can lead those who are members in my singing part to learn whenever we meet for practices.*

**Respondent 4:** *Now I am able to lead the group during rehearsals and performances. I teach new members who join the group how to play the various supporting drums. College and university students usually visit my father as guest mentees and I help him to guide these students how to play some rhythms on drums.*

**Respondent 5:** *The listening skills I have developed so far can help me to provide music listening experiences for students. I believe this can help them to develop critical listening skills.*

**Respondent 6:** *Now I lead all members who play the brass in the leading part during rehearsals. I guide and teach them how to produce accurate and good sounds during performances. In fact, I usually observe children engaging in music and dance activities in their play and have seen how much they enjoy such activities. I believe that gaining more knowledge, I will be able to help such children enjoy music and dance better.*

The above quotations reveal participants' level of teaching competencies and beliefs in their ability to teach the Performing Arts based on prior experiences. They value the Performing Arts and believe that "they will be successful with it in their future" (Cogdill, 2007, p. 2). As identified by Russell-Bowie (2013), confidence is an important principle of successful teaching. Thorn and Brasche (2015, p. 199) state, "if students have an expectation that they will enjoy teaching music, they are more likely to engage in the practice with optimism and confidence. Pre-service teacher participants' opinions reveal their ability in teaching aspects of the Performing Arts and an assumption of their ability and confidence to teach in their future classrooms. Their preconceptions of ability to teach would have been formed by their prior informal learning in the performing arts.

Guskey (2002, p. 382) noted that "what attracts teachers to professional development is their belief that it will expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth and enhance their effectiveness with students". This aligns with Lummis and Morris's (2014) research finding which suggests that "pre-service teachers need opportunities to develop skills and knowledge through the explicit teaching of arts content integrated with pedagogy" (p. 13). Pre-service teacher participants of this research expect to build further competences which will enable them to teach effectively by enrolling in the Performing Arts courses. In their opinion, the prior experiences they have acquired so far will help them through their studies which will consequently have positive impact on their teaching after graduation to cause the desired effect on their students in Performing Arts lessons.

### **Good Examination Result**

Quotes reflecting participants' opinions on achieving good examination result:

**Respondent 1:** *Sometimes, I am able to respond to examination questions because of experiences I have gained and not necessarily on what I have read. Combining reading and experiences is going to help me perform better at the end of semester examination.*

**Respondent 2:** *The experiences I have will help me to write even if I forget what I have read during examination. I even prefer applying practical experiences to answer theoretical examination questions. I am more comfortable with that strategy.*

**Respondent 3:** *I normally do better whenever I apply practical experiences to write examinations. In fact, it is one of the reasons why I chose this course. I believe my experience in singing will serve as a strong base for me to do better in this course.*

**Respondent 4:** *I have a great passion for playing drums in an ensemble and I enjoy doing that. I am able to give a good account of anything I enjoy doing. So, I strongly believe that I will do better and achieve a very good result from the end of semester examination.*

**Respondent 5:** *These courses combine both theory and practice, and I prefer writing an examination based on such courses. As you know, time to study all the registered courses before writing the end of semester examinations is always inadequate so it really helps to have practical experience in an area that you can apply in taking examinations.*

**Respondent 6:** *I always do better in an examination which considers practical application and since this course combines both theory and practice, I hope to achieve a very good result in the end of semester examination.*

As noted by Cogdill (2014), students considering themselves as good performing artists are not enough. They must have the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to perform well (Lehmann et al., 2007). The above quotations reveal participants' experiences in writing an examinations based on their prior learning. In their opinions, application of recall of past experiences in writing an examination is very helpful to them. They believe and have the confidence that the prior practical experiences they have had in the Performing Arts will aid them in writing examinations based on the art to achieve good results.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I believe that this study, which aimed at exploring pre-service primary school teachers' motivation for choosing Performing Arts pedagogy courses for study, will make a significant contribution to factors that encourage students to enroll on particular courses during their teacher training. Findings of this research suggest that if pre-service teachers are provided with courses and opportunities to choose complementary courses that meet their needs, interests, abilities and background experiences, they have the conviction of being transformed into becoming very effective practitioners in their classrooms. It is also obvious from the study that prior experiences in particular activities before enrolling in teacher training, motivate pre-service teachers to continue to engage in acts that align with those gained experiences during their pre-service education.

The nature of the Performing Arts requires teachers who have the practical experiences to be able to provide learning experiences for primary school students. Pre-service teachers with such experiences should be identified and encouraged to select the Performing Arts courses as their electives for study.

In Rohwer and Warren's (2004) view, continued research with pre-service teachers help teacher educators to train students to be more effective teachers. Further research which

employs larger sample sizes about pre-service generalist teachers' motivation for choosing and studying Performing Arts courses needs to be conducted to better understand their needs, interests, abilities and background experiences in order to devise appropriate strategies to provide quality education for them.

I agree with Collins (2016, p. 17) that “ultimately the students that our pre-service teachers will be educating in the decades to come deserve the highest quality education we can help them provide”. Indeed, we can actually do better to improve Performing Arts education in the Colleges of Education in general and in the primary schools in particular.

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