European Journal of Education and Pedagogy
www.ej-edu.org

Effect of Aural Tests on Choice of Music as a Study Subject by Muslim Students in Mombasa County, Kenya

Sumba B. Shitambasi

ABSTRACT

Music education has a global acceptance as it helps improve and promote/ develop creativity and language skills among students. However, among the Muslim community, excessive instrumental music is not given prominence. This comes from the Hadiths by the prophet Muhammad that forbid music. In Kenya, the coastal region is mostly comprised of the Muslim community who hardly choose to pursue Music subject. This prompted this study that evaluated the effect of the inclusion of the aural tests in the curriculum on the choice of Music as a study subject by Muslim students in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study used a survey research design. The sample population consisted of 27 participants as follows: 2 music teachers, 8 students, 8 parents, 1 Kenya Institute Curriculum Development Officer at the national level, 1 Quality Assurance and Standard Officer and 7 career masters. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, which was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Findings show that there were negative perception aural tests (listening and notating non-Islamic music) due to religious requirement as well as ignorance that led to Muslim students dropping Music subject. In conclusion, despite the knowledge of the Muslim parents at the coast region of Kenya on their children choice of Music as a stud subject, they do not influence them from dropping it at senior secondary. The teaching by Prophet Muhamad against Music and its propagation by the Imams and other Muslim leaders at the coast of Kenya led to most Muslim sponsored schools in Kenya to disadvantage against choosing Music subject as a career path. The study recommends that priority should be given to Islamic content in music studies and encouraging Muslim communities in Kenya to embrace music as a career subject.

Keywords: Aural Test, Mombasa, Music Curriculum, Music Education, Muslim.

Published Online: July 20, 2021

ISSN: 2736-4534

DOI :10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.3.134

Sumba B. Shitambasi*
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.
(e-mail: shitambasi26@gmail.com bshitambasi@mmust.ac.ke)

****Corresponding Author***

I. Introduction

The heart of all good music-making and performance lies in listening [1]. Developing good aural skills is an important component of any music education. It is the ability to hear how music works that help students with all aspects of their music-making and learning [2]. According to [3], aural testing (ear training) is a skill by which musicians learn to identify, solely by hearing, pitches, intervals, melody, chords, rhythms, and other basic elements of music. Moreover, the application of this skill is analogous to taking dictation in written/spoken language. As a process, ear training is, in essence, the inverse of sight-singing, the latter being analogous to reading a written text aloud without prior opportunity to review the material [4]. Ear training is typically a component of formal musical training.

According to [5], aural skills are an essential ingredient in music performance ability. A number of researches have shown that aural experience is the central core of musicianship [6]-[8]. Muslims embrace aural skills over instrumentation in music [9]. There is a long leaving history of revelation (tanzil) that gives a high degree of religious values to the exact words used by God through Gabriel to speak to Muhammed [10]. Furthermore, the revelation was aural, and transmission has continued to take place in aural mode.

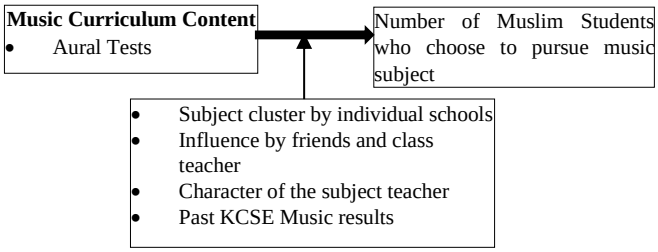
Student of music must participate in aural tests to establish skill levels and understanding of music. Aural tests are therefore administered from the instrument [11]. These are carefully graded from basic recognition of rhythm and memory of short phrases to tests demanding well-developed aural perception and discrimination. However, Islamic religion does not permit the use of instruments in performance according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammed, yet the teaching of the aural test is done by the use of musical instruments [12]. Thus, the study investigated whether the inclusion of aural tests in the curriculum

discouraged Muslim students from opting for music in Mombasa County, Kenya.

II. Problem Statement

Globally, it is a rare occurrence for Muslim students to pursue Music subject as a career subject. Music is forbidden regarding the playing of musical instruments, singing and dancing. This comes from the Hadiths by the prophet Muhammad that forbid music. In Kenya, the coastal region is mostly comprised of the Muslim community who seldom choose Music subject as an examinable subject and a future career path. In this case, following the strict doctrine of prophet Muhammad over music, Muslim students participating in an aural test that requires singing or chanting musical lyrics or rhythm, becomes *Haram* (forbidden) and punishable. The aural test violates the laws of Islam and the prophet's decree; Muslim students might not pursue music as a course because of strict adherence to prophets' decree. Besides, there always is a perception that music taught in classrooms is of no value to Muslims because it is not applicable in their reverence services.

III. Conceptual Framework



IV. Materials and Methods

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. Data were obtained from a sample rather than the entire population. The study area was Mombasa County; focusing on Muslim sponsored secondary schools offering Music subject. The target population consisted of all students in secondary schools in Mombasa County currently taking or once took music subject. According to the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QASO), Mombasa County, there are forty-four (44) secondary schools in the county having a total of twenty thousand and five (20,005) students. Out of the forty-four (44) schools, twenty-eight (28) are Muslim community-sponsored while sixteen (16) are non-Muslim community sponsored. At the time of the study, there was only one school offering Music subject and had a population of eighty-seven (87) music students: form one forty-four (44) students, form two twenty-one (21) students, form three– ten (10) students and form four–twelve (12) students. The accessible population consisted of Muslim students in Mombasa County who once took music as a subject and dropped it. They were only eight (8) students, three (3) music teachers, one (1) Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) officer, county QASO and career masters.

Sample size determination was conducted through purposive sampling that selected all the form 3 and 4 Muslim students who took music at junior secondary and dropped it at senior secondary; they were 9 in total, the 3 music teachers in the county, the KICD officer at the national level and QASO at the county level were selected all through purposive sampling. 9 parents to form 3 and 4 Muslim students who dropped music were also purposively selected. 30% of career masters from the Muslim community-sponsored schools were part of the sample.

Data collection was carried out using questionnaires, and interviews. Besides, content analysis was used to get the data from KNEC annual reports, KCSE past papers and examination schedule documents. The equipment included a tape recorder and a camera. Validity was attained through questionnaires test-retest to check whether they generated the intended data as per the study objectives. Reliability was achieved through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82 thus data reliability was assured in this study. Quantitative data were analysed using a statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) Version 25.0 and presented in tabular form. Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and presented in a narration format.

V. Results

The researcher investigated whether the parents of the students knew about their secondary school-going students who previously partook in Music subject in junior secondary and dropped it at junior secondary. Fig. 1 showed that 87% of the parents knew about their students had taken Music subject at junior secondary and dropped at senior secondary.

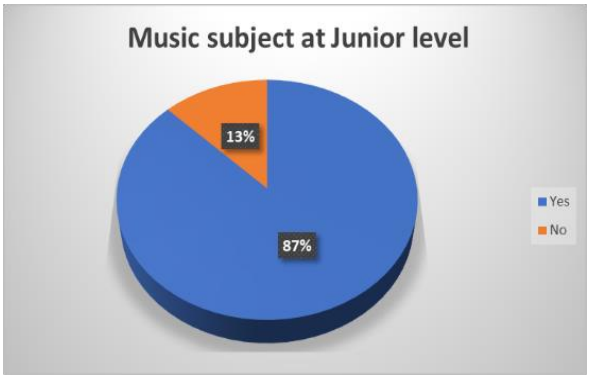


Fig. 1. Knowledge by parents about their students taking Music subject at Junior Secondary.

The research delved to establish the influence of the aural test on the choice of music by Muslim students. Table 1 illustrates the findings.

The results in Table 1 showed that students learning aural tests were of value to their future life as Muslim which was supported by approximately half of the Muslim parents/guardians (50.0%). It was established that Muslim students (37.5%0 never found it hard to answer aural tests question's because melodies used in aural tests seem to be far from Islamic music. Western style harmonic used in cadences could not be hardly followed by 37.5% of Muslim studentsMoreover, it was established that it was not difficult for a Muslim student to learn aural test topic because facilities used e.g., upright pianos were never owned and learnt by Muslims as indicated by approximately half of the respondents (50.0%).

TABLE I: AURAL TEST ON CHOICE OF MUSIC SUBJECT BY MUSLIM STUDENTS

Aural Test	Strong Agree or Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Learning aural tests is of no value to the future life of a Muslim student	37.5%	12.5%	50.0%
A Muslim student finds it hard to answer aural tests question's because melodies used in aural tests seem to be far from Islamic music	37.5%	25.0%	37.5%
The harmonic Western-style passages used in cadences can hardly be followed by a Muslim student because Islamic music is never in such harmonic form	25.0%	37.5%	37.5%
It is so difficult for a Muslim to learn aural test topics because facilities used e.g., upright pianos are never owned and learnt by Muslims	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%

The researcher computed the Kruskal-Wallis H test to determine the differences between the influence of aural test in secondary schools' music curriculum on the choice of music subject by Muslim students according to Muslim parental/guardian knowledge of child's previous engagement in music subject.

TABLE II: KRUSKAL-WALLIS H TEST ON AURAL TEST ON CHOICE OF MUSIC SUBJECT BY MUSLIM STUDENTS

Test Statistics[a,b]

Variables	Kruskal-Wallis H	Df	Asymp. Sig.
Learning aural tests is of no value to the future life of a Muslim student	.914	1	.339
A Muslim student finds it hard to answer aural tests question's because melodies used in aural tests seem to be far from Islamic music	1.333	1	.248
The harmonic Western-style passages used in cadences can hardly be followed by a Muslim student because Islamic music is never in such harmonic form	1.333	1	.248
It is so difficult for a Muslim to learn aural test topics because facilities used e.g., upright pianos are never owned and learnt by Muslims	.914	1	.339

a. Kruskal Wallis Test.
b. Grouping Variable: Are you aware that your son/daughter used to take music subject and has dropped it?

The results in Table II shows that there were no statistically significant differences between learning aural tests is of no value to the future life of a Muslim student, $H(1) = .914$, $p > .05$; a Muslim student finds it hard to answer aural tests question's because melodies used in aural tests seem to be far from Islamic music, $H(1) = 1.333$, $p > .05$; the harmonic western-style passages used in cadences can hardly be followed by a Muslim student because Islamic is never in such harmonic form, $H(1) = 1.333$, $p > .05$; and that it is so difficult for a Muslim to learn aural test topics because facilities used e.g. upright pianos are never owned and learnt by Muslims, $H(1) = .914$, $p > .05$.

The study showed that there were statistical differences between parental knowledge of the child having taken Music subject at junior secondary school and participation in aural tests. This was occasioned by lack of statistical significance between them. Therefore, the results showed that parental knowledge of a child choice of Music subject at junior secondary did not influence the student from dropping it at senior secondary. This came out of the outstanding differences concerning aural tests perception between Muslim and non-Muslim students in the target school. The Muslim students do not like choosing Music study subject at senior level because of the hadiths by the Prophet Muhammad and the propagation of the message against Music among the Muslim global community [13]. This strict rule was born out of songs that have been condemned due to the reason in relation to the costume depiction that they expose them. However, according to [1], [2], the heart of all good music-making and performance lies in listening, which helps students with all aspects of music-making and learning.

Lack of appreciation of Music subject in most Muslim sponsored public secondary school in Kenya has contributed to poor performance in aural as the years go by [14]. Aural test in Music study subject is a test that provides an equal measure to all the students regardless of their religion or religious affiliation. This is an area that is supposed to be focused on by [1] promoting Islamic content in music studies and [2] encouraging Muslim communities in Kenya to embrace music as a career subject. The performance (instrumentation) of music, which has had serious condemnation by the teaching of the Prophet, could be moderated by the Islamic leadership to incorporate the applicable ones.

VI. CONCLUSION

Despite the knowledge of the Muslim parents at the coast region of Kenya on their children choice of Music as a stud subject, they do not influence them from dropping it at senior secondary. The teaching by Prophet Muhamad against Music and its propagation by the Imams and other Muslim leaders at the coast of Kenya led to most Muslim sponsored schools in Kenya to disadvantage against choosing Music subject as a career path.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

Aural testing is critical for musicianship and must be designed to fit into Islamic culture that is acceptable to them. Promoting Islamic content in music studies and encouraging Muslim communities in Kenya to embrace music as a career subject should be given priority in Kenya. The performance on instruments of music, which has had serious condemnation by the teaching of the Prophet, could be moderated by the Islamic leadership to incorporate the applicable ones.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, my gratitude goes to the Almighty for the gift of life and strength making this study a success. I acknowledge my team leader – Mr Paul Kem – for his dedication and technical contribution to this study. I recognise my family for their understanding and support. Finally, I recognise Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology for believing in me and granting me the opportunity to advance my Music education at the institution.

REFERENCES

[1] Wilkinson, I. G. (2013). Let there be music: Making a case for using music in schools to enhance relationships and readiness for learning. Canadian Music Educator, 55(1), 28-31.
[2] Green, L. (2017). Music, informal learning and the school: A new classroom pedagogy. Routledge.
[3] Cleland, K. D., & Dobrea-Grindahl, M. (2013). Developing Musicianship Through Aural Skills: A Holistic Approach to Sight Singing and Ear Training. Routledge.
[4] Jenkins, D. J. (2012). The Impact of Sight on The Process of Teaching and Learning Aural Skills (Doctoral dissertation, Radford University).
[5] Bidelman, G. M., Hutka, S., & Moreno, S. (2013). Tone language speakers and musicians share enhanced perceptual and cognitive abilities for musical pitch: evidence for bidirectionality between the domains of language and music. PloS one, 8(4), e60676.
[6] Koga, M., &Nogami, J. (2012). Developing an Awareness of CORE BALANCE in Music Performance. The American Music Teacher, 62(1), 24.
[7] Mapaya, M. G. (2016). University-based music training and current South African musical praxis: Notes and tones. *African Studies Quarterly*, *16*(2), 47-67.
[8] Bennett, H. S. (2017). On becoming a rock musician. Columbia University Press.
[9] Breen, M. E., & Fitzroy, A. B. (2018, July). T1M: Short Talks 1-Language. In 15th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition 10th triennial conference of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music (Vol. 59, No. 3, p. 51).
[10] Bowen, J. R., & Bowen, J. R. (2012). A new anthropology of Islam. Cambridge University Press.
[11] Baker, D., & Green, L. (2013). Ear playing and aural development in the instrumental lesson: Results from a "case-control" experiment. Research Studies in Music Education, 35(2), 141-159.
[12] Muhamad, N., Leong, V. S., & Mizerski, D. (2016). Consumer knowledge and religious rulings on products. Journal of Islamic Marketing.
[13] Cameron, D., Potter, K., Wiggins, G., & Pearce, M. (2017). Perception of rhythmic similarity is asymmetrical, and is influenced by musical training, expressive performance, and musical context. Timing & Time Perception, 5(3-4), 211-227.
[14] Kihoro, M. F. (2016). Differentiated Approaches to Aural Acuity Development: A Case of a Secondary School in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Dr Sumba Shitambasi was born at Madero Green Village in the then Lubao Sub-location Kakamega.He received his basic education at Bukhaywa Primary School. He further studied at Chavakali HighSchool and proceeded to Advance at St. Mary's Yala. He initially trained as a DiplomaTeacherof Music and pursued the subject at Kenyatta University. Dr Sumba holds a PhD degree in Music, Makerere University. In addition, he has successfully undergone the British music examination series by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (London) under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, up to the final grade.

While teaching at Kabarnet, he was sponsored for a piano technology course (Repair and Tuning of Pianos) at music Wiebach, Forum Staglitz, Berlin (Germany). He has taught music at Matare Secondary School (Kuria), Itierio High School (Kisii), Kabarnet High School (Baringo) and Butere Girls High School. He established an Institute of music at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Kakamega, where he teaches the subject.

A unique quality about Dr Sumba is his ownership of more than one hundred musical instruments and being able to at least play each, almost well.