

# AN IDEAL MUSIC TEACHER: WHAT THE LITERATURE INDICATES

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*Teaching is very complex because teaching behaviours are varied and involving. Besides, both parents and the entire public are more interested in the work of the teacher than that of any profession. For that reason, it has been very difficult to determine what characteristics constitute ideal teaching. However the literature review undertaken in this paper indicates some common characteristics which contribute to ideal teaching, irrespective of the area. But the music teacher, because of the very nature of the subject (music), should first and foremost be prepared to teach music to all the children in the school and relate well to the other staff in the school and the entire community. Besides, he/she should be able to:*

- (i) know his music and be able to teach music at the various grades,*
- (ii) involve himself with the musical activities in the community,*
- (iii) use all types of music in teaching and be able to use a variety of teaching strategies, (singing, playing musical instruments, listening, composing, reading etc) in one, single lesson,*
- (iv) work hard and always strive to improve upon the teaching to enable his students to achieve positive results.*

## **Introduction**

There has not been consensus on what constitutes successful teaching and for that matter an ideal teacher. Successful teaching or ideal teaching is very complex and cannot be easily determined with accuracy. However, available research reports indicate that there are certain qualities which lend themselves to successful or ideal teaching. First and foremost an ideal teacher, of any subject, must love the subject he teaches as well as those he teaches. In this direction, the ideal teacher needs to play multiple and varied roles which require intelligence, dedication, devotion, patience, integrity and morality (Odamtten, 1995). Again, an ideal teacher is the one who is able to get his students to master the content of what he teaches and goes further to train them (the students) to perform well as good citizens, as responsible workers who are useful in the homes, communities, and countries (Douglas, 1964). The music teacher is, therefore, perceived as knowing the music, knowing how to teach it, and having love and patience for those he teaches.

### **The Role Of The Ideal Music Teacher**

The most important role or function of the ideal music teacher is that he virtually teaches the whole school and serves as community agent. In this direction the ideal teacher should be capable of teaching music in the classroom, directing the school choirs and bands, and organizing the various school musical activities.

The music teacher, as community agent, should be able to perform several of the following tasks:

- (a) conducting choral groups in and outside the school,
- (b) conducting instrumental groups in and outside the school,
- (c) performing on special occasions before parents,
- (d) performing as a guest soloist in the community,
- (e) performing with other musicians in the community,
- (f) performing as an organist or choirmaster in the community church (Bessom, 1980).

To be able to perform the above tasks, the ideal music teacher should possess adequate elements of personality marked by human understanding, tolerance, friendliness, dedication, flexibility, organisational ability, creativity, and clarity of thought, apart from a very high sense of musicianship (Bessom, 1980; Odamtten, 1995).

### **The Music Teacher In The School**

The ideal music teacher is the one who is able to serve the whole school so far as musical activities are concerned. He should be able to relate and link the musical activities in the school with the community. He should ensure that he spends approximately one third of his life enriching and influencing the musical growth and development of all the people (both students and staff) in the school. More importantly the ideal music teacher must be sure that each child in the school fully enjoys music through the various activities (singing, playing musical instruments, composing music, conducting, listening to music, attending concerts, etc.) in accordance with each child's capabilities and interests. The teacher must show in words and deeds that he is really committed to the following "Bill of Rights in Music" (adapted from the Music Educators National Conference, 1951; 52):

- (a) Every child in the school is given the opportunity to experience music with other children in the school (class singing, assembly singing etc.),
- (b) Every child in the school is given the opportunity to make music through proper guidance and instruction in singing, playing available musical instruments alone and with others,
- (c) Every child in the school is given the opportunity to grow in musical knowledge, musical skills, musical appreciation and musical initiative.

## **The Music Teacher And His Classroom**

How perfect or successful musician a teacher may be, it is in the classroom that he is expected to exhibit most of his qualities. The ideal teacher must know his subject very well and know how to teach it at the various levels, depending upon his own qualifications, background and interest. In teaching, the ideal teacher of music uses different strategies including singing, playing musical instruments, composing, improvising, listening, conducting, and reading using various types of music. In this regard the ideal teacher caters for the interests, capabilities and the learning styles of the students (Ohio Department of Education, 1982; Odamttten, 1995; Regelski, 1981).

Even though ideal teachers might differ in personality and style of teaching, common thread that characterizes effective teaching include strong belief in the value of music and music education, and devotion to classroom teaching which yield positive results. Ideal music teachers are sincere in the classroom by being humorous yet business-like because they expect their students to enjoy and "learn" music as well in their classroom. Brand (1994) sums this assertion thus:

...their classroom might be fun and exciting places to be, the musical content of their classes and rehearsals is serious business. All great teachers have a special commitment to their students. Master music teachers never underrate the musical ability to their students. Always expecting the best, demanding more, pushing students further; these teachers are great precisely because of their ability of challenge and inspire their students. In return, master music teachers earn the admiration and respect of their students (p. 23).

## **The Ideal Teacher And His Students, Colleagues And Head**

By the very nature of music which calls for strong socialization, the music teacher is to be affable and cooperate with everybody in the school. First and foremost the music teacher should be able to maintain higher standards in all his professional endeavours. He should work cooperatively with his head by teaching effectively and wholeheartedly responding to suggestions to improve instruction from the administrator and/or his representative. On the other hand, the music teacher should keep the administration informed of his need in carrying out the task of music teaching (Leonhard and House, 1972).

The ideal music teacher should, again, keep good working conditions with his other colleagues some of whom may be able to assist him to do his work more effectively. Lastly, the music teacher should foster effective relations with all the students in the school by means of conversational attitudes, cooperative school enterprises (such as classroom teaching, rehearsals, concerts) and other social gatherings of students, parents and other school or teachers. In all these, the music teacher must be respectful and reputable as required by the teaching profession. Leonhard and House (1972) give the following advice to teachers in their relationship, especially with students:

A teacher can never successfully be "one of the boys". Certain distinctions always go with differences in ages, sex, and professional expertness. A teacher, therefore, is addressed differently, maintains accepted standard of language and dress, and avoids special attachments with students. These things are necessary in the role of the teacher (p. 349).

### **The Music Teacher And His Community**

With the rising cost of education and concern of the community about the lowering standards of education generally, there is greater need for cooperation between the school and the community. For that matter, an ideal music teacher should foster closer relationship with his community by understanding the musical needs of the community, and by keeping the community informed about the school's music programmes.

The teacher must establish partnership between the school music programmes and all music ensembles, private music teachers, music industry, churches, choral and instrumental groups, the press, the radio and television (Bessom, 1969). To sum up the importance of community and school relationship in music education, Bessom and his associates list the purpose of public relations in music education as follows:

1. interpret the what, why and how of the music program to the community,
2. foster an awareness of the place of music in general education and of aesthetic experience as an integral part of human activity,
3. obtain the public's interest in the music education program,
4. develop the community's confidence in the work being done and extend this confidence into support for continuing and improving the music program, thus promoting the concept of community partnership in the educational process, and
5. evaluate the music program in terms of community needs.

### **Conclusion**

It can be seen from the previous paragraphs that becoming an ideal music teacher cannot be achieved overnight. It needs persistence, dedication, enthusiasm and readiness to learn new things about music, children, and teaching. In fact an ideal music teacher is the one who continually strives to become a better teacher each day through seeking feedback from students, colleagues and attending workshops, seminars and other professional pursuits.

In all these endeavours the ideal teacher has in mind his subject (music), the students and the art of teaching more effectively. Ideal music teachers always obtain great pleasure and satisfaction from their teaching and students as well as the positive results they achieve. According to Brand (1990), such ideal music teachers distinguish themselves from other teachers thus:

Master music teachers work harder than most of their colleagues, but they also obtain greater pleasure and satisfaction from their teaching and students. Such special teachers are proud of their many accomplishments, are confident

in their abilities, and treasure their consummate musical and teaching skills. Master music teachers have glorious mission: they revel in their day-to-day work with children and adolescents and delight in their students many musical accomplishments... Their students are, indeed, fortunate - and our profession is the better for master music teachers' idealism and teaching artistry (p.25).

It is very rare or impossible for any music teacher to meet all the qualities of the ideal or master teacher as enumerated in this paper. It is possible however, that most music teachers who are really dedicated can grow and develop towards the attainments of most of the qualities expected of an ideal music teacher. It should be emphasized that since our societies continue to change, develop and improve, teachers are also expected to develop and change in consonance with the dictates of the societies. In this regard teachers are expected to work harder and aspire towards becoming ideal professionals in the real sense. Teachers are, therefore, advised to do their work with the following commonly accepted myths about teachers and teaching in mind:

- MYTH 1                      Good teachers are calm, unflappable, always even tempered. They never loose their "cool", never show strong emotions.
- MYTH 2                      Good Teachers have no biases or prejudices, Blacks, Whites, Chicanos, dumb kids, smart kids, girls, boys all look alike to a Good Teacher. Good teachers are neither racists nor sexists.
- MYTH 3                      Good teachers can and do hide their real feelings from students.
- MYTH 4                      Good teachers have the same degree of acceptance for all students. They never have "favourites."
- MYTH 5                      Good teachers provide a learning environment that is exciting, stimulating, and free, yet quiet and orderly at all times.
- MYTH 6                      Good teachers, above all, are consistent. They never vary, show partiality, forget, feel high or low, or make mistakes.
- MYTH 7                      Good teachers support each other, present a "united front" to the students regardless of personal feelings, values, or convictions (p.22).

### **Implication For Music Teachers**

Finally, as a result of the importance of music, as evidenced by the literature review, it can be realised that music teachers have greater responsibilities than their counterparts in other subject areas. The implication, therefore, is that (music teachers at all levels primary, secondary or tertiary) should aim at teaching music aesthetically (laying emphasis on the expressive qualities of music). In this country where there is lack of foreign musical

instruments like the piano, organ, trumpet, violin and so on, teachers should teach music through singing and playing of available local instruments like drums, bells and bamboo pipes. The teacher, especially at the elementary level, can lead his pupils to use available materials like beads, strings, inner tyre tubes, bottles, nails, cans, sticks, rubber bands, etc. to make classroom musical instruments like shakers, triangles, castanets, and drums. The teacher can use these instruments to teach various musical concepts, apart from using them to accompany known songs. The concepts include note values, accents, imitation, repetition, variation, binary, and dynamics (louder, softer, faster, slower etc.).

In short an ideal music teacher should love music and teaching and always remember that:

- (a) Music must be taught to all the children in the school (via singing, playing musical instruments, listening, composing, improvisation and movement) as each child will find satisfaction and success in one or more varied activities of music.
- (b) Music lessons should lay emphasis on the expressive qualities of the particular music under study.
- (c) Music of all types must be taught, especially as children develop or advance. This will enable the children to increase their understanding and enjoyment of music in its various forms, and also music and cultures of peoples outside their own culture.

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