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# The Impact of the New Decolonization of the Music and Music Education in the Ewe Land

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**Abstract:** *Both Western music and Ewe music, as types of Indigenous knowledge, play a crucial role in music education in the Colleges of Education in Ghana. After gaining independence in 1957, Ghana started making changes to the curriculum to include African indigenous cultures and shift away from the Eurocentric colonial curriculum. Nevertheless, these attempts had only limited success, as Western-educated elites showed a preference for Western music in academic settings. This research examines how students in two Ghanaian Colleges of Education are interacting with the teaching of Ewe music to determine if they are effectively learning this aspect of their education. The research also looks at the wider effects of decolonization initiatives in music instruction among the Ewe society. Although there is a growing focus on decolonizing classroom practices, scholars' research methods often still reflect colonial thinking, which raises ethical issues. The relationship between Indigenous knowledge systems and academic frameworks puts pressure on researchers, especially those who are not Indigenous, to be more methodologically responsible. Based on a recent study of Indigenous Sámi communities in Finland, the article suggests that although achieving methodological responsibility in decolonizing research is challenging, researchers must go beyond conventional epistemic limits. To decolonize music education successfully, scholars need to reassess their research methods and think about how to decolonize the actual research process.*

**Keywords:** *Ewe Land, Music and Music Education, New Decolonization.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The movement to decolonize music education is picking up speed worldwide, as more people acknowledge the colonial violence present in music curricula, teaching methods, teacher training, and educational philosophies [3]-[6]. Despite making significant progress, many



scholars and educators still find the practical and conceptual implications of decolonization in specific contexts unclear. Furthermore, the approaches used to recognize, comprehend, and assess anti-colonial or decolonizing music education policies frequently have their roots in colonial reasoning [8]. 1. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, research is closely tied to European imperialism and colonialism. [1], questioning how scholars, especially those who are not indigenous, can ethically conduct music education research in Indigenous environments without causing harm.

The evolution of knowledge and culture is constantly changing, especially in Africa. Modern influences pose a challenge for African societies in blending indigenous knowledge and culture, especially when their values clash with traditional ones. Western scholars who are deeply rooted in Western ideologies may not have the ability to fully understand or appreciate the complexities of African culture, knowledge, and values, making them unreliable role models for African youth.

Missionary work, colonization, Western education, and modern global cultural changes have greatly played a role in the decline, division, and distancing of African traditional knowledge and cultural aspects. These factors have eroded the unified essence, principles, and comprehensive ethical foundation of traditional African culture. The Western education system has worsened this division by segregating African performing arts and intellectual foundations into distinct fields like music, dance, theater, history, philosophy, and religion, despite its many advantages. This division has resulted in the rise of independent professional artists and researchers, instead of upholding shared cultural traditions. Also, Christianity and other effects of colonization have isolated African youth from their native cultures, understanding, and beliefs, increasing their uncertainty towards these aspects.

The commercialization of African arts in contemporary society has decreased their educational, communicative, and cultural roles, turning them into simply entertainment. The increasing growth of evangelical Christian churches, along with their denial and defamation of African beliefs and thought systems, is still causing a decline in the utilization of indigenous knowledge and art forms [4].

Due to this, a large number of African young individuals are becoming more unaware of their cultural legacy, resulting in a decline in cultural identity. In order to tackle this problem, African governments and educational policymakers need to create regulations that support Indigenous African knowledge, such as history, language, religion, politics, philosophy, and science. This involves promoting cultural values like honoring authority, supporting the elderly and environment, fairness, harmony, togetherness, and peace among young people, different ethnicities, and political groups. Ethnomusicologists and other knowledgeable scholars of African culture should offer helpful information to aid in the education of African youth. This research seeks to support Ewe society by analyzing musical traditions, such as song lyrics, that hold important Ewe knowledge and cultural beliefs.



This study aims to investigate how decolonizing music and music education affect Ewe land. In particular, the research focuses on the query: How is Ewe music portrayed in the music syllabus of Colleges of Education? What are the opinions of music teachers and students regarding the curriculum for teaching Ewe music in Colleges of Education? What advantages and obstacles do music teachers see when teaching Ewe music to students? What do music educators and students think about the teaching methods of Ewe music in Colleges of Education?

## **2. RELATED WORKS**

In African tradition, musicians frequently wield influence using music, drums, and dancing. Within the Ewe communities in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, music traditions play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting Indigenous knowledge and cultural values, with artists carrying the responsibility of upholding and passing on *nunya* (knowledge), *adanu/anyansa* (wisdom), and *dekonuwo* (values, customs, and institutions) through their performances. Western cultural influences, a shortage of academic research, and the recording of Ewe (and African) Indigenous knowledge and cultural values are jeopardizing the existence of these knowledge systems, cultures, and values, placing them on the brink of extinction [1].

In many oral traditions, the creative and performing arts play a vital role in preserving and passing down indigenous knowledge and information across generations while also serving aesthetic and recreational functions. How music achieves this in certain regions, particularly in African societies, may not be clear to many Western researchers. This aspect of music's role is embedded in African cultures and plays a vital part in Indigenous learning. Certainly, the history, philosophy, and values of the Ewe people; as well as their knowledge in health, ecological, and environmental sciences; along with their educational policies, theories, and practices are all recorded, safeguarded, and passed down through methods that do not involve written records and objects. Music is one of these methods. The origins of Ewe can be uncovered through Indigenous knowledge like materials and processes used in making musical instruments, playing techniques, symbols on instruments, kinesthetic patterns, costumes, song text, and other verbal art forms. In the Ewe community, as well as in several other African cultures, music serves as the central point around which traditional customs revolve. In this study, the main focus is on Ewe musical texts and proverbs, which are highly effective in passing down indigenous knowledge and values. In addition to storing knowledge, values, and artistic traditions, musicians of the Ewe tribe use their songs and performance techniques to record, safeguard, and pass on indigenous knowledge while also depicting the historical, social, and political aspects of their culture. Ewe song texts not only hold historical value, but also demonstrate creative thinking. Ewe composers bring to life various ideas that have not existed previously, expressing them through music as possibilities rather than factual statements. In this modern era, music roles (particularly the first) and the resulting cultural values are facing a significant challenge [1].

This research aims to examine how the recent decolonization of music and music education in the Ewe region is influencing African youth and scholars, with a focus on promoting

indigenous knowledge and values through government initiatives. I, therefore, analyze evidence of traditional knowledge and values found in the different Ewe songs.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The research utilized a qualitative design to gather detailed information on the educational environments of the Colleges of Education, with a specific focus on cognitive processes and social interactions. This method enables engagement with individuals in their environment, offering internal perspectives on the researched scenarios.

Since Ewe music in Ghana has not been thoroughly studied, using a qualitative approach helped gather in-depth information by interacting with informants. Bryman [2] advocates for this approach for unexplored subjects because of the absence of existing literature.

The research employed three different techniques for gathering data: examining documents, observing without participating, and conducting semi-structured interviews. Employing various techniques enabled verification of results. Interviews allowed for asking targeted questions, rephrasing inquiries for better understanding, which led to gathering extensive information and gaining a deeper insight into the subject matter [3].

Observing the classroom provided direct insight into teaching techniques and student acquisition of knowledge [4]. Analysis of the document yielded more information, as the music syllabus had pertinent data presented in an easy-to-read layout. This approach enabled the examination of Ewe music themes in relation to Western music, combining results from interviews and observations.

Qualitative research involves organizing data into categories and identifying patterns through an inductive process of data analysis. It includes organizing, contrasting, combining, and explaining data in a structured way. Cohen et al. [5] suggest that organizing text into themes makes interpretation easier.

Interviews yielded valuable information, which was examined through transcribing recordings and identifying common patterns. Per Bryman [2], a matrix was utilized to assist in coding and categorizing, structuring raw data into initial codes prior to determining themes. The identical procedure was utilized for data from observing classrooms and analyzing content.

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#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

There is a lack of adequate representation of Ewe music in music syllabuses. There is a greater focus on Western music than Ewe music in the syllabuses. The informants believed that the music curriculum in colleges was adopted from the Western tradition, focusing mainly on Western music topics that students find challenging to comprehend due to lack of familiarity, unlike Ewe music which they are more acquainted with from their homes. One source commented, "College music programs are structured according to a European music education model, making it challenging for students to grasp as it is unfamiliar to them." It is essential to shift perspective and recognize the significance of Ewe music, incorporating it more prominently into the curriculum. The issue is that Western music has always been regarded as superior.

Another informant highlighted the numerous risks associated with the existing music curriculum in colleges, as it largely consists of content that is unfamiliar to both music teachers and students due to its foundation on Western theories [2]. The college music syllabus covers Western and Ewe music topics, with minimal emphasis on Ewe music. Students struggle to comprehend because they do not have the necessary background knowledge of Western music. Upon entering college, students possess a considerable amount of musical understanding rooted in African customs, but minimal to zero familiarity with Western music from their earlier schooling. Therefore, they are introduced to Western music for the first time in college, leading to challenges in learning and comprehending it [3]. The informants said the Primary



Teacher Diploma Course's new changes let colleges make their syllabus. This gives hope to revamp the syllabus with more Ewe music content. One source stated, "I hope to see a time when universities will have a customized curriculum that acknowledges the culture of the students and integrates it into the teacher education program, preparing students with the ability and expertise to utilize traditional songs and games from their own communities" [4]. Another source stressed the importance of a customized curriculum that focuses on traditional songs, games, storytelling, and plays to instill an appreciation for traditions, customs, and cultures in students, in order to equip them to teach music in educational settings. While acknowledging the significance of Western music in music education, he recommended adapting the music curriculum to reflect local influences [1].

Informants emphasized the ease of learning Ewe music due to students' exposure to it in their daily lives outside of school. Learning is facilitated by the familiarity of songs, dances, and games from activities at home. A student informant mentioned that the researcher finds Ewe music to be interesting to learn because the songs are simple and not complex. Making musical instruments from materials found in the local environment is simple, and creating teaching tools for Ewe music is easier compared to Western music.

Despite the minimal coverage of Ewe music in the syllabus, a informant emphasized its significance in African culture. It aids in students' understanding of culture, particularly the diverse cultures found in Africa. Gaining an understanding of how different cultures in Africa sing, dance, and utilize music in their traditional communities contributes to knowledge acquisition[7]. Another source pointed out the emphasis on Western music in the present music curriculum, which he believed to be one-sided. He recommended that music teachers introduce music that is pertinent to the local culture before exploring unfamiliar musical genres with students. Another source pointed out that the curriculum did not include subjects related to gathering, organizing, and evaluating traditional music, stories, plays, games, poems, and improving auditory abilities in Ewe music [8]. Upon reviewing the stated goals in the music syllabi of two schools, the scholar verified the lack of Ewe music representation. I observed a limited number of goals related to Ewe music. Only one of the twelve goals for College A pertained to Ewe music, as an example. College B had seven goals, but none of them were centered on Ewe music. College music syllabi should incorporate additional content related to traditional games, songs, dances, and other activities as students are most effective learners when engaged in play. Incorporating games, typically played at home, into the curriculum can help children feel more connected to the school environment. One source proposed that the college music curriculum lacks sufficient traditional music components. For instance, Northern Volta, featuring a variety of languages, boasts a rich assortment of songs and dances that trainees can learn and then share in educational settings. Traditional music activities that children participate in at home should be incorporated into the college curriculum because colleges are training students to educate primary school children. Children in lower social classes, specifically, acquire knowledge of Ewe music at home through play, blurring the distinction between home and school for them. A source pointed out that Ewe music holds the same level of significance as Western music and music from other parts of the world. Once

students become interested in Ewe music, they will probably use it as a gateway to learning different types of music.

Despite the presence of various music genres globally, Western music has psychologically dominated Africans, portraying them as opposed to it. Nevertheless, the issue at hand is locating a space for Ewe music within the global education system and acknowledging its importance in the broad global community [2]. Music instructors have demonstrated their capability to instruct Ewe music, yet the curriculum restricts their capacity to do so [9]. Some music teachers refrain from using conventional instruments because they lack knowledge, choosing instead to teach conceptually or display images of instruments [10]. Practical teaching and learning of Ewe music involves performing songs and dances, playing instruments, and attending traditional ceremonies [8].

One source mentioned a lack of interest in studying Ewe music due to her inability to execute traditional dances accurately, seeing it as a natural ability she lacked. The results showed that Ewe music is not well represented in the syllabi, as most content focuses on Western music. This corresponds with my examination of course material, indicating a lack of coverage of Ewe music in the two universities examined. In College A, Ewe music was included in 1 out of 22 topics, while in College B, it appeared in 3 out of 18 topics.

This scenario shows the extreme measures influenced by British colonizers, who depicted Ewe music as primitive, resulting in the incorporation of more Western music themes in curriculums. Said categorizes this as Orientalism, where the West enforces its dominance and beliefs on the Orient. For instance, the West forced their language onto colonized individuals, leading them to think that only English held significance, therefore marginalizing African native languages. Due to the representation of Ewe music in various indigenous languages, Africans began to perceive their music as inferior, impacted by Western education and epistemology [13]. This dominant influence led to Western epistemology being the only way to make progress and advance, resulting in its historical supremacy [14].

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In summary of my research, the researcher would like to highlight that the material covered in student preparation for music education in Ewe music is not adequately included in the syllabuses of the colleges examined. The lack of variety in college syllabuses can be attributed to the Curriculum Development Centre, which used to have exclusive control over creating syllabuses and would provide colleges with a set list of topics mostly focused on Western music.

Nevertheless, colleges of education are currently required to develop their own syllabi, so it is expected that they will incorporate additional content about Ewe music. This will involve breaking down the prevailing colonization of the minds of African music educators. I acknowledge that this change is a "vicious" cycle that requires involvement from various stakeholders in education such as curriculum planners, policy makers, politicians, teachers, etc

in order to be effectively put into practice. It is then up to the Colleges of Education and the Ministry of Education, who oversee the syllabuses and exams, to make sure that music educators display a genuine interest in Ewe music.

I believe it is essential for future studies in music education to focus on Ewe music in Ghana in order to enhance the teaching of Ewe music in Colleges of Education in the country. The research aims to enhance Ewe music education and preserve indigenous knowledge present in traditional songs, dances, games, stories, and other musical activities of various ethnic groups in Ghana for future generations.

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