



## **The Role of Kabarak University in the Development of the Music Industry in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Music in Kenya since 2000 has been neglected in the education system. After the implementation of the 8-4-4 system of education (8 years in primary school, 4 years in high school and 4 years in university), music was not made a compulsory and examinable subject in primary school while in Secondary School and university levels, it is an elective and examinable subject. This has hindered the development of the music industry in that very few people have background information on the subject. Moreover, according to Mindoti (2010), the Development of Music as an academic discipline in Kenya may suffer a set-back due to schools putting more focus on what will improve their overall mean score. Furthermore, very few universities offer music as a course. This is a very serious problem at hand that if it is not dealt with will lead to the poor standards of music education in Kenya. Interviewing and administering Questionnaires were used in data collection in this paper. Descriptive statistics method of analysis was used because it summarised the information collected and described how the music schools in Kenya specifically, The School of Music and Performing Arts (SMPA) in Kabarak University, could assist in producing professional musicians and fill the ever widening gap in the music industry. Gifted students in music who suggested the way forward in developing their talents were also identified and interviewed. Furthermore, questionnaires were interviewed and administered to music students in Kabarak University who are pursuing music as a full time course or as a short course. Focus was on the students pursuing music in the university but did not pursue it in either primary or secondary school in order to find out how the university is helping in inspiring young people talented in musical arts to pursue music in order to nurture their talent and in turn to develop the music industry in Kenya.

**Key words:** Music, Kabarak University, Culture, Lecturers, Students, Music Industry, Kenya

### **Introduction**

This paper identifies the role of Kabarak University in the development of the music industry in Kenya. It was also aimed at finding the benefits that students get from the university while learning music and the challenges they face so as to address those challenges and maintain or improve the standards they have set so as to be one of the best Music school not only in East African but in Africa and the World. Moreover, to also ensure that the university plays a key role in the development of the music industry in Kenya by offering quality service to music students who come to the university to study music.

### **Background to Study**

Kabarak University is located in Nakuru County. Its environment is serene and conducive for learn. It is made of seven magnificent schools. Moreover, it is an ISO certified university by the series of 9001:2015. Out of the seven schools making up Kabarak University, close attention was paid to the School of Music and performing arts which was established in the year 2016. By the time of the study, the school was made up of sixty-five students, including certificate, diploma, bachelors, masters and Ph.D. students. Kabarak University has an important role to play in the development of the music industry in Kenya. The quality of the services, the quality of the facilities and the quality of the



equipment the school offer is very important because it determines the kind of musicians the school will produce that will in turn enable Kabarak University to play a key role in the development of the music industry in Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The overall objectives of the study

- To identify the benefits that music students get while studying in the School of Music and Performing Arts (SMPA) Kabarak University.
- To identify the challenges that music students are facing while studying in SMPA Kabarak University.
- To identify ways in which Kabarak University can address the challenges that students are facing while learning in SMPA and maintain or improve standards they have already set so as to make the learning of music more effective and beneficial in the development of the music industry in Kenya.

### **Methods**

The study was a prospective cross-sectional study conducted using interviews and self-administered questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in such a way that students gave their honest opinions about the research. Open ended questionnaires were issued randomly to the participants they were restricted to share their opinion.

### **Results**

A total of 7 respondents participated in the study, three lecturers and four students. Among the people interviewed four were male and three were female.

Out of the seven participants, two of them learnt about SMPA from a lecturer in the school, two of them learnt about SMPA from a friend, one of them learnt about SMPA from the Kabarak Website, one of them learnt about the school from their choir teacher and the other learnt about SMPA from her music teacher.

Out of the three lecturers one of the lecturers chose to teach in SMPA because the great respect they have from the equipment the school has, another lecturer chose to teach in SMPA because it is a newly established institution that has potential, while the other lecturer chose to teach in SMPA because there was a need in the school and the arrangement provided suited his needs.

Out of the four students, one of the students chose to study in SMPA because they were influenced by their music teacher who greatly benefitted from studying in SMPA while the three other students chose to study in SMPA because of the good facilities, good resources and conducive learning environment in the school. All of the four students chose to study music because of the passion and talent they have for music.

Two of the lecturers chose to teach music because they have a passion for music and teaching while the other lecturer chose to lecture music because of the potential growth and its seriousness in embracing new digital technology. One of students has benefitted from SMPA in that their sight reading, interpersonal skills and vocal techniques have been improved, another said of having benefitted from the good facility while the other has benefitted from the classes. Other students have benefitted from SMPA in that they get to interact with great minds and it helps them teach younger musicians proper music practice and qualified staff who focus a lot on performance. Two of the lectures say that the students have benefitted from SMPA from the good facilities, good equipment and well educated and



experienced lectures while the other lecturer says that the students benefitted from SMPA because they are being trained to pursue a profession of their choice in the music industry.

One of the challenges that a student faces is travelling logistics, in that he schools in Nakuru and works part-time in Nairobi. Another student has a challenge in that they find it difficult to access some instruments for which they would like to pursue as a second instrument and that some instruments are not enough. For example, Saxophones. Another student felt that some of the lecturers are not open mind to some of the ideas that the students had which he thought are helpful to the growth of the school and the other student felt that the schedules are over tight.

Two of the lectures felt that the reading culture in the school is not good since most students find it hard to read without supervision and the other lecture felt that some students have a challenge with completing payment of school fees and that some instruments and individual tuition teachers are not enough. See table 1

**Table 1**

Reading culture	Inadequate teachers and instruments and trouble completing fee payment
2	1

One of the students felt that the timetabling should done in such a way that is favour the students who are working so that they do not miss any class. Another student felt that in future, some ensemble should be optional. One other student felt that the school should organise for recitals outside school where by the student can be paid so that they can get exposure, while another student felt that the school should make the timetable a bit more flexible as they find it overwhelming.

Two of the lectures felt that the reading culture in the school needs to be addressed in that the students are taught how to read on their own without supervision while another lecture felt that the school should set up a kitty to support the needy student who have trouble with completing payment of school fees. Another lecturer felt that the school listens, loves, shares and prays. See Table 2 below.

**Table 2**

Reading Culture	Setting up kitty	Listen, love, share and pray
2	1	1

Three of the students felt that the school should come up with a better system of availing instruments to them, while one of the three also felt that there should be better availing of the WIFI resources, as the other student felt that the school should keep on making the school facility readily available to the students.

Two of the lectures felt that the school should maintain the good facility and good equipment while the other lecturer felt that the school should link up with other universities offering the same course.

All of the four students said that they would recommend a friend to come and study in SMPA because of the good facilities, good equipment, good lectures who bring out the best in the students.

All three lecturer said they would recommend a fellow lecturer to teach in SMPA because of the good teaching environment, good facilities and good equipment. However, out of the three, one of the



lecturer felt that he could not also recommend a friend to teach in SMPA because the administration bureaucracies are pretty ancient for part time lecturers, as the policies favour the university more.

Out of the five who filled the questionnaires, four of the participants said that marketing and advertisement would encourage young and upcoming musician to pursue music while one of the participants said that those who have the talent should study it because it pays.

### **Discussion**

This paper elicited a greater response from male students than female students, not that they are the greater population but rather they were available within the limited time frame. The study notes that a great percentage of the students and lecturers have a positive attitude towards SMPA and believe that it has a lot of potential and room for growth and improvement. The students and lecturers highly appreciate and value the good facilities, equipment and working and learning environment that the school offers. The students have benefited from these resources and facilities greatly. For example, they have been able to interact with Prof. Kimberley Carballo who is a lecturer at Jacob's School of Music, Indiana University, who runs the online performance class. Moreover, they have been able to interact with a student from Jacob's School of Music namely Eddie Baraka a voice major and clarinet minor student. Through this interaction the students were able to compare notes with Eddie and learn a few tips on how to make the practise time productive, thus, resulting to a fruitful performance in their performance unit. However, there are certain challenges raised by the students and lecturers which need to be addressed in order to ensure that the school provides quality and wholesome education not only in East Africa but in Africa and the world.

Among some of the challenges aired out were: poor reading culture among the students, inaccessibility and inadequate number of instruments especially bass and woodwind instruments, inflexibility of the timetable for those who are working, some lecturers not being open-minded to some of the ideas that the students have that can improve the school and lack of exposure of the students to performing outside school. Addressing these issues will ensure that the school produces qualified musicians who will contribute in the development of the music industry in Kenya. Thus Kabarak will play a role in the development of the music industry in Kenya.

### **Conclusion**

Kabarak University has an important role to play in development of the music industry in Kenya by ensuring it provides quality and wholesome service to those who seek to pursue music. SMPA has a lot of potential that needs to be exploited since it is a new and upcoming school of music. The school has been well established with good facilities, good equipment and a serene environment for studying. However, it should not stop there. The school should seek to address the issues raised and maintain the standards they have set for the institution so to be one of the most exemplary schools of music in Kenya, Africa and the world.

### **Recommendations**

The study highlighted certain concerns which need to be addressed. For the case of the needy students who have a hard time completing payment of school fees, it was suggested by one of the lecturers that they should put a kitty for them so that their studies will not be interrupted due to failure of completing to pay school fees. In regard to the issue of poor reading culture, students can be motivated to reading by setting up reading clubs or giving student assignment to read a certain book and make a summary of the book which will be graded and contribute to their overall grade. In the case of inadequate instruments, the school can organise a fundraising concert whereby the money collected from the tickets sold can be used to buy instruments that are not available in the school. Moreover, in the case of



inaccessibility of instruments, the school can involve the student in coming up with an effective system where by the students can readily access the instruments and at the same time the instruments to be well taken care of. In regard to lack of exposure, the school can link up with other universities such as Kenyatta University and hold a recital outside the school premises for example during an Easter recital in one of the well-known churches in Nairobi Central Business District. Finally, apart from addressing the issues raised, the school should maintain the good standards they have set in order to ensure that the offers quality education in biblical perspective.

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