

3

A study of music education in Buddhist monasteries of Sri Lanka in the context of Viyayatana Pirivenas

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Abstract

Piriven education in Sri Lanka has a long history that began with the Anuradhapura region. The main objective of this paper was to conduct a study on the background of music education in Viyayatana Pirivenas. Phenomenological research method has been used for this study which was done under qualitative research methods. Sutrapita, Vinayapitaka, commentaries, chronicles, scholarly articles and related Buddhist books are

used as primary sources for gathering information. Later research papers, articles and books related to monastic education and piriven education have been investigated as secondary sources. This study will be a new dimension to the research field as there has not been a formal study of the music education learning approaches and its methods that have been implemented under the educational plans of Sri Lanka's Vidyatana Pirivenas.

Keywords: Music education, Vidyatana Pirivenas, Qualitative research, Phenomenological

INTRODUCTION

Pirivena education in Sri Lanka marks a big land mark in the educational history of Sri Lanka. There are large numbers of pirivenas functioned under number of kingdoms: Anuradhapura (337 BC-1055 AD), Polonnaruwa (1055 AD-1232), Dambadeniya (1220 AD-1293AD), Kurunegla (1293 AD-1341AD), Gampola (1341 AD-1408 AD) Kotte (1404 AD-1597 AD), Kandy (1469 AD-1815 AD) to present. With the development of Piriven education, there are currently three classic Piriven educational institutions. That is, Mulika pirivena, Maha pirivena and Vidyatana Pirivenas. According to this research, the association became Vidyathan pirivena. At present, there are 65 Vidyathan Pirivenas, of which 51 Vidyathan Pirivenas are conducting music education learning and teaching process under a formal education system. Music education is the study of areas that combine the learning and teaching of music. (Veerakkodi, [2015](#)). Philosophers have even pointed out that music education is very important in maintaining the balance of

cognitive, emotional and psychokinetic areas found in the educational process (Abepala, [2013](#)).

Here, the study related to the learning and teaching process of music education takes a prominent place in the educational setting of Vidyathan Pirivenas. There, the music education learning teaching methods, learning techniques, student achievement level, institutional contribution and ways to develop the music subject will be investigated in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is the correlation between existing and other studies. (Jesson, Matheson, 2011). In relation to the research, the focus was on identifying the existing local and foreign sources about the background of music education in Sri Lankan Vidyathan Pirivenas education and identifying the gap in the field of research.

Buddhist education has a long history dating back to the third century BC. As history has shown, three major Buddhist educational centers in Sri Lanka disseminated knowledge widely. They are Mahavihara (3rd century BC), Abhayagiri Temple (1st century BC) and Jetavanavihara (3rd century BC) (Mendis, 2006). In focusing on the sources that contribute directly and indirectly to the research, many works related to piriven education and music education were found.

It is said that the Buddhist education of monks was based on Viraga, just as the history of disciple monks was based on Yagahoma according to Vedic practice (Mukharji, [1947](#)). The Enlightenment from the inheritance of buddhist music to modern education research shows that education plays a very important role in the evolution of Buddhist music, through which modern education aims at human development and modern school education evaluation methods (Yan, [2015](#)). Meanwhile, wai Chung ho points out in a research article called "Challenges to values education in school music education" about the values of school music education and thus the challenges to education. The sources mentioned here are also used as sources of supplementary education. It is pointed out in the research "education and analytical study on curriculum and the learning teaching teaching process in Piriven education in Sri Lanka" (Keerthirathne, [2017](#)).

Music education is a language of human emotions. It can be defined as a medium of expression which is associated with human thoughts. "Music Is Primarily Something To Which One Listening; Is It An Art Of Audition. And We Have

Probably Heard That No Culture Is Without Music In Some Form Or Another. Music Is The Universal Language, We Are Told, The Language Of The Emotion" (Alperson, 1987).

Music education researchers have focused on formal and informal music learning in Western societies and cultures to contribute to the achievement of multiple learning styles and cultural diversity. There, Goran Folkestad has focused on formal and informal learning situations and practices in the research article "formal and informal learning situations or practices formal and informal ways of learning". Although there are local and foreign sources related to piriven education and music education, there are no sources related to music education from music education.

METHOD

In Greek means "A route that leads to the goal" (Kvale, 1996). in this respect, method in a research context is the route that guides a researcher in carrying out the research. This research is a quantitative research. The methods of literature study as well as field studies are used to collect data. Under secondary sources, books, journals and research articles related to music education and music education were used. In the field study, data is collected through formal and informal interviews, observation of the learning and teaching process and questionnaires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pirivena was the classical national educational institution of Sri Lanka. Pirivena education, monastery education, Arama education, Pansala education (Temple Education), and Vihara Education are common terms used by most of the local and foreign authors to interpret the traditional Buddhist education from the past. But, there are some scholars who believed that the term "Pirivena" implies a different meaning when compared with other terms: Arama, Pasala and Vihara (Lankananda, 1990). These Piriven are mostly unique to the island but similar to the universities found in mainland India. When the monastery education turns into a complex organizational body, the traditional educational institutions of Buddhist monks have been known as the Pirivena (Pirivena Education, 1979).

The classical national educational institution of Sri Lanka was Pirivena. With the development of Pirivena education, there are now three classical Pirivena educational institutes.

- Mulika pirivena
- Maha pirivena
- Vidyatana pirivena

Mulika Pirivena is a residential educational institution for monks from grades 1 to 5. Male lay students are also allowed to study. At the end of the five-year period, students have to appear for the final examination conducted by the examination department of Sri Lanka. The primary education student is enrolled in the Maha Pirivena to help the monks and lay students who provide general higher education access to tertiary education, including universities and colleges of education, after the A-level examination.

According to the Pirivena Education Act, a monk who has passed the examination conducted at the end of the Basic Pirivena Education Course or any other similar examination recognized by the Pirivena Board may enter the Maha Pirivena. Male lay students who complete the examinations mentioned in the preliminary provisions of the Pirivena Act can be admitted to Maha Pirivena. The third type of Pirivena is the Vidyatana Pirivena.

Pursuant to the Piriven Education Act No. 64 of 1979 and the Piriven Order No. 1 of 1980, Piriven Universities will also play a major role in fulfilling the desired goals related to education. The authority of Piriven Vidyayatana will be the Chief Executive Officer. Piriven Vidyayatana must have no less than one hundred students, and among them there must be no less than 25 student monks. The government has established the ranks and salaries related to Piriven Paravenacharya service similar to the grades of school teaching service for the qualified teachers of Piriven Vidyathans. Piriven Under the Ministry of Education, 65 Vidyathan Pirivens are functioning at present.

PIRIVEN VIDYATHANA AND MUSIC EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

There are currently 65 academic pirivenas operating in Sri Lanka's classical pirivena education sector. In 51 of those Vidyatanas, the music education and teaching process through formal education methods is implemented under 55 music subject professors. According to the nature of appointments, there are 20 graduate appointments, 13 teacher trainees, 10 diploma holders, 08 visharad, 04 G.E.C (A/L). It is shown as a percentage in Figure 1 below.

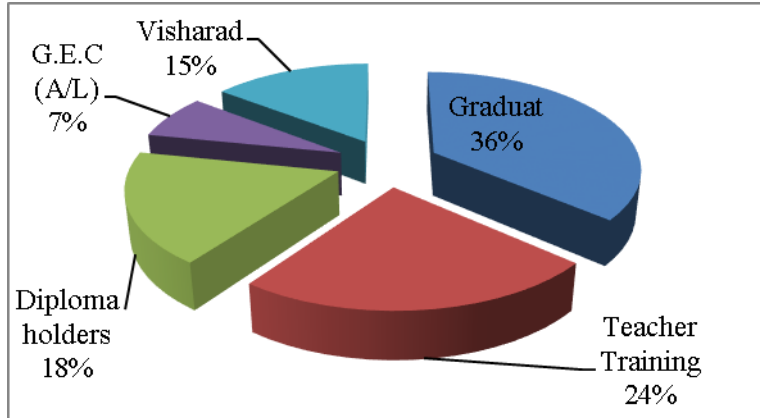


Figure 1: Source - Sample Survey 2022

Students who are studying in Vidyathan Piriven are recruited for grades 6-13. There are 2190 students studying music from grade 6 to G.E.C. in 51 Vidyatanas. The distribution of the number of students at the provincial level is shown in figure 2 below.

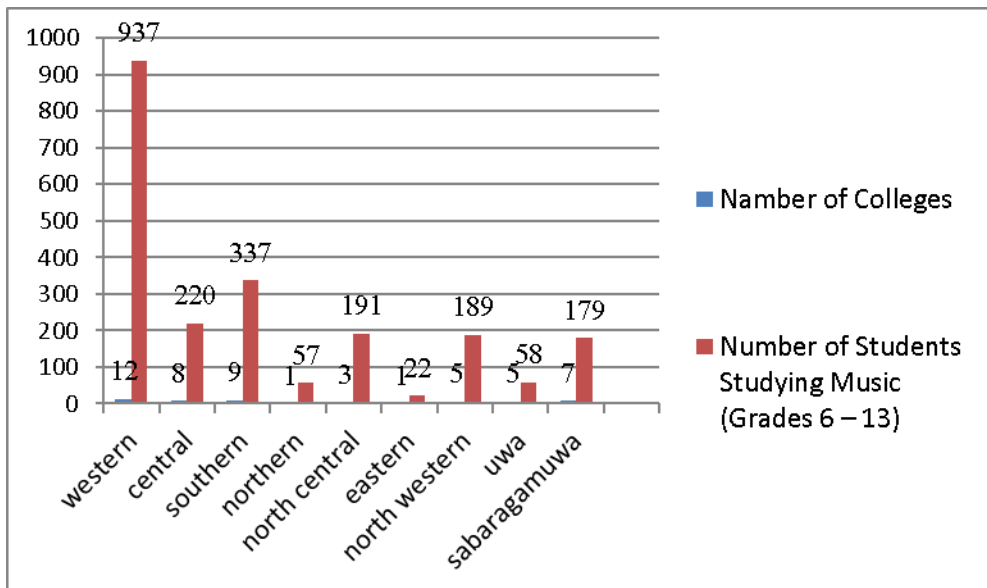


Figure 2: Source - Sample Survey 2022

The general aesthetic education learning and teaching process that operates in the Sri Lankan school system is also implemented in the aesthetic education plans of the Vidyathan Pirivens.

In the sample survey for research purposes, special attention was paid to the music education learning teaching process, student achievement, evaluation process. The study sample was 182 students studying music in grade 12 and grade 11 of Vidyathan in Western Province.

The following 3 Figures show the total number of music teachers and students studying music in Western Province Vidyathan Pirivenas.

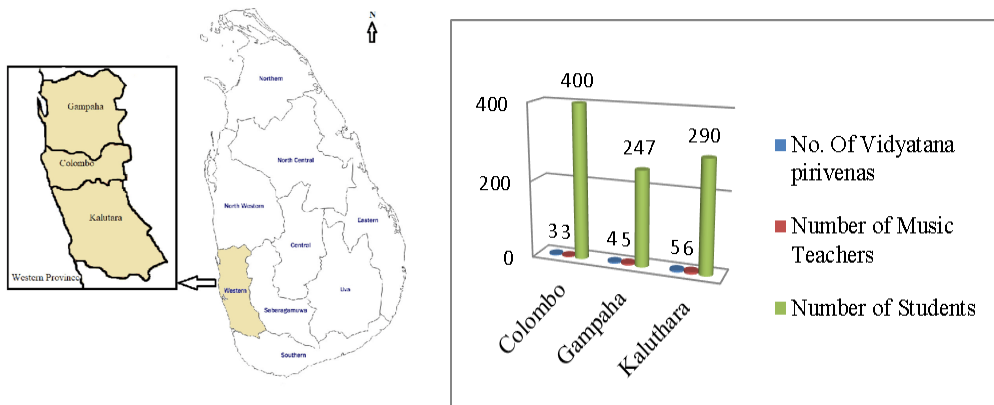
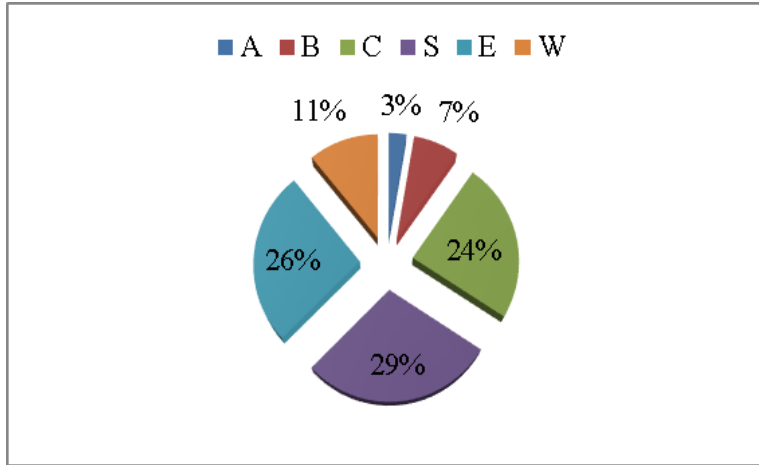


Figure 3: Source - Sample Survey 2022

In the sample survey related to the research objectives, the obstacles encountered in the learning and teaching process were revealed through interviews and participant observation. It was observed that the problems related to that are not having enough musical instruments, not having suitable classroom facilities for the learning process and not using learning techniques in the learning process.

In focusing on the student performance, according to the sample, the marks obtained in the 2022 third term examination related to the 11th grade music subject, and the percentages of the marks obtained there are given as follows.



Grade	Scale range	Interpretation
A	75 -100	Very good
B	65 – 74	Good
C	55 – 64	Satisfied
S	40 – 54	General
E	25 – 39	Weak
W	0 – 24	Very weak

Figure 4: Source - Sample Survey 2022

It was revealed that the level of student performance was average. In the investigation of the basic reasons, it was revealed that most of the teachers engaged in the learning process were untrained teachers and the problems faced by the students in their educational and family backgrounds were identified.

According to the sample, the appointment nature of the music teachers in the Western Province's universities and among them the trained teachers are shown in the following figures 5 and 6.

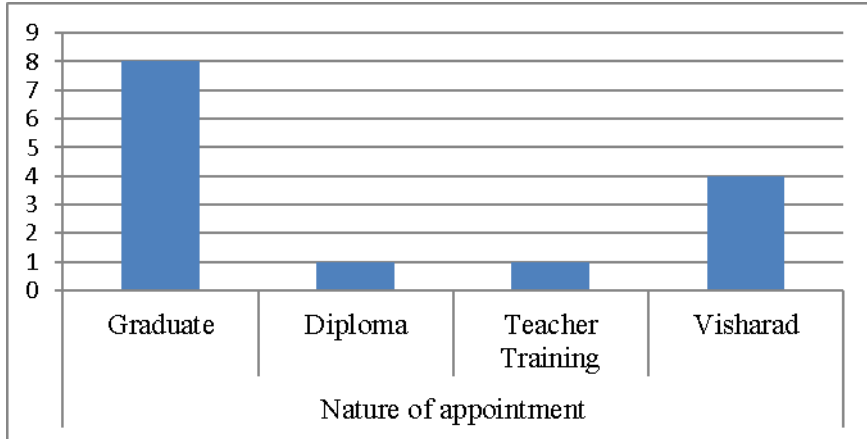


Figure 5: Source - Sample Survey 2022

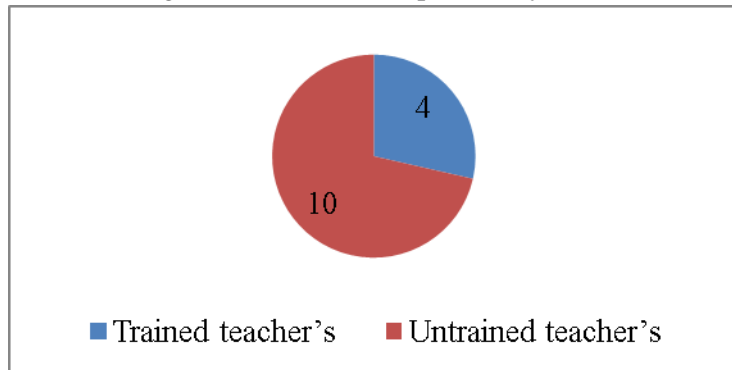


Figure 6: Source - Sample Survey 2022

In relation to the sample survey, focusing on the educational problems faced by the students, the problems faced by the students were identified as mentioned below. The data about it is shown in Figure number 7.

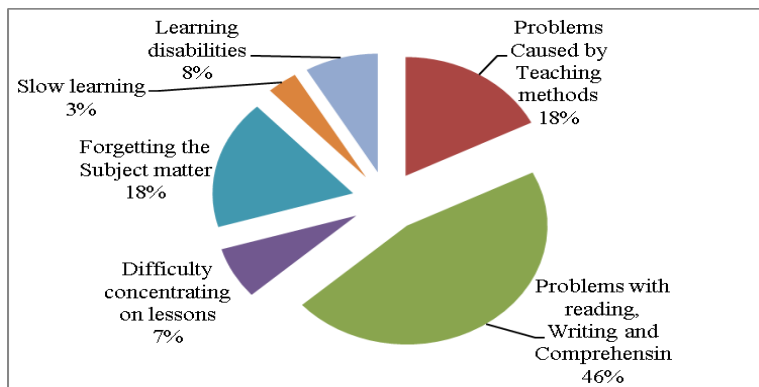


Figure 7: Source - Sample Survey 2022

In this phenomenological study, data was collected from multiple data sources. There, research data was recorded through written reports, conference discussions, direct and indirect observations as well as research questions.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of this study, it is suggested that the use of untrained music teachers as trainers who contribute to the music education learning process in universities can lead to positive development by reducing the students' learning disabilities. Especially, the majority of students who study in Vidyathan Piriven are students who face various economic, social and family related problems. Therefore, by building a pleasant learning environment for them and by providing the necessary facilities, it is helpful in raising the level of student achievement as well as in institutional development. It is hoped that this research will inspire Piriven education authorities to develop new approaches in the development of music education in the Vidyathanas Piriven Plans.

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