

DEVELOPING A MUSIC CURRICULUM FOR NURSERY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The first four years of a child's life are very crucial to a child's musical growth. The young Child interprets his intellectual world through his uses of body movement and the imitation of sound. It has been observed that some children are able to hum beautiful melodies recognizable to adults without necessarily speaking for the first time. As a result of his limited vocabulary at this age, musical expression through rhythmic movement and through singing about objects and events becomes his best vehicle for communicating his thought.

In view of the above, music should become an integral part of every area of the curriculum. This paper will concentrate on the influence of the home in musical development of the child. Music curriculum for nursery education will be emphasized. The problems of developing a music curriculum for nursery education will also be discussed. Suggested solutions to the problems will be proffered,

INTRODUCTION:

Music! Yes that word rings a bell! When music is mentioned, certain sensations of joy and upliftment are felt. It is the food of the body as well as the spirit. Music is an aesthetic art of combining or putting together sounds that please the ear. Music according to Hornby (1948) is "the art of making combinations of sounds; the sounds or compositions so made; written or printed signs representing these sounds." Gelman (1980) defines music as "expression in sound" or the expression of thought and feeling in an aesthetic form."

Music has been styled the greatest on the arts. All sound is music. In other words music is made up of sound, and the more regulated and closely garnered the sound, the better is the music. Music fills a basic human desire in that it satisfies the need to comprehend total beauty that man hears. Music contributes to the all round development of man. Writing on the importance of music in education, Nye, and Nye (1970) said; "school music qualifies as an educational subject whenever it provides with clarity more of what the learner needs than he is able to absorb informally from his environment."

The origin of music must be looked for in natural causes. The elements of all music exist around as in the singing of the birds, sighing of the leaves, rolling of the thunder, falling of the rain and even the croaking of the frogs. The bent of man's mind in all ages has been to imitate this voice of nature, and in this way music had its origin ages and ages ago. Talvitie in Tudor (1979) expressed his view on music by saying "of all the arts, music has always been nearest to the hearts of Americans and the most expressive of their essential needs, fears and motivation." Ellington in Tudor (1979) expressing his views on music said "Music is music and that is it if it sounds good, it is good music and it depends on who's listening how good it sounds," Dylan in Tudor (1979) went on to say "It's all music, no more, no less."

Curriculum on the other hand is defined by Onwuka (1981) as "a structures series of intended learning experiences. It embraces purposeful experiences provided and directed by educational institution to achieve predetermined goals. Experiences outside the classroom are now part of the curriculum. What used to be referred to as extra-curriculum now forms part of curriculum. Defining curriculum, Eze (1985) said; "The central idea is that curriculum connotes all the desirable experiences that the pupils have, that are formally planned by the school, whether they are done inside or outside the school." It is important to note that the school is being built by the society for the purpose of transmitting its culture. -The school and the society live in symbiosis, the school should reflect and teach the values of the society while the society supports the school to realise this noble objective.

Curriculum development according to Audrey and Nicholls (1978) is "the planning of learning

opportunities intended to bring about certain changes in pupils and the assessment of the extent to which these changes have taken place." Music contributes in no small way to all-round development of the child. It helps in the realization of his physical, social, emotional, aesthetic and intellectual potentialities. Children grow by moving their bodies and reacting to sound, music provides fascinating opportunities for them to do this in creative ways. In view of the above, music should become an integral part of every area of the curriculum. Developing a music curriculum for nursery education in Nigeria is therefore a sound foundation for bringing up an all-round individual.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOME IN THE MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD.

Most children from birth to age three are educated at home. The mother or the nurse as the case may be takes individual and special care of the child. She influences the child in a very big way without releasing it. Her words, her playful gestures accompanied by rhythmic sayings, and her singing, give the child its first impressions of music. During the first year of life the child absorbs music impressions from its home environment. The beat of melodies it is listening to inspires it more and it follows singing attentively. It has been observed that singing and rhythmic response do not take place at one fixed time of the day but occasionally as natural opportunities occur. However it is helpful when the mother or nurse hums to it often throughout the day. Discussing the role of the home in the musical development of the child Nketia (1974) explained that the African mother signs to her child and introduces him to many aspects of his music right from the cradle. He went on to explain the fact that the mother trains the child to become aware of rhythm and movement by rocking him to music, by singing to him in nonsense syllables imitative of drum rhythms. When the child is old enough to sing, he sings with his mother and learns to imitate drum rhythms by rote. As soon as he can control his arm, he is allowed to tap rhythms, possibly on a toy drum. Participation in children's games and stories incorporating songs enables him to learn to sing in the style of his culture, just as he learns to speak his language. Stressing the above. Egblewogbe in Nketia (1974) said; "His experience, even at this early age is not confined to children's songs, for African mothers often carry their children on their backs to public ceremonies, rites, and traditional dance arenas, where they are exposed to music performed by adult groups. Sometimes the mothers even dance with their children on their backs until the children are old enough to take part in the dancing by themselves."¹¹

Writing on the role of the home in the musical development of the child, Nye and Nye(1970) said, :From the age of 12 to 26 months the child begins to speak; he begins to imitate syllables, intonation, and the pitch of tunes. With frequent attempts and much repetition his accuracy develops gradually. He sometimes signs a motive from small melodies, he can sing the end of a phrase of hum without words." The influence of the home in musical development of the child has also been emphasized when Tracey in Nketia (.1974) said; "Among the chopi, a father will take his seven or eight year boy and sit him between his knees while he plays. The boy will hold the two beaters with his arms well-flexed and pliant while the father claps his hands over his son's and continues to *play* in the usual way." The above method however is to give the child the "feel" of the instrument, so that after a few months he can play any note and learn to play simple runs and rhythms.

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It is important to note the fact that a beautiful song that possesses emotional values and describes experiences meaningful to children has universal appeal. These aesthetic, emotional and cultural qualities point towards this song's possible use for adding interest, meaning, and enjoyment to other areas of the curriculum. Expressing her views on the use of music as an invaluable instrument for effective teaching in schools, Ommekwe, (1994) said :The role of music in education can be shown in the fact that music co-relates with other school subjects. In fact, music could be regarded as a subject of subjects. Through music, very difficult subjects could be watered down to the level of the people involved, be they primary school pupils, students in the secondary schools or students of tertiary institutions.

When developing a curriculum for nursery education it should be noted that attention span of the nursery

child is Very short and so music could be used to capture this attention. It is true that many children are growing up deficient in experiences basic to their optimum musical development, and that the first four years of a child's life are just as crucial, if not more so to his musical growth in attitudes, appreciations and understanding as they are to his intellectual development. In fact, the two cannot be separated since the young child naturally interprets his intellectual world through his use of body movement and the imitation of sounds.

In view of the above, the following areas of music have been developed for the nursery child. *Rhythm*: Rhythm is an element common to music art, dance, poetry and architecture. Nursery rhymes are very important elements for nursery education, more so when these rhythms are set to music. Rhythm can be expressed in the dance, in music, in poetry, and in art. Instrumental accompaniments can be created for body movement. Rhythmic instrument should be used at this early stage of the child to help her develop a sound sense of rhythm. These instruments should include the body, empty cans that could be provided by the school. When this sound sense of rhythm is developed in the nursery school, the child is now well equipped with an invaluable element of music. Rhythmic activities expressed during physical education encourage group planning, teamwork and individual expression. These enhance training for citizenship. Folk dances and rhythmic activities are characteristic of many countries. Folk dancing is enhanced greatly when songs are sung and social graces are expressed in their native tongue.

A feeling of the rhythmic flow in singing improves reading ability. Choral recitation is a combination of rhythm, speaking and singing. Rhythmic activities can bring relaxation through a classroom day.

Melody/Singing: To inculcate the spirit of patriotism in the nursery child, patriotic songs should be included in the curricular of nursery schools. These patriotic songs inspire good citizenship, regard for one's country and emulation of great national figures. Songs which inspire worldwide regard for other people should be included in the nursery curriculum. These songs of our own people broaden appreciation of our own country. When this spirit of patriotism is being imbibed by the child at that nursery age, she now grows up proud of her country and ready to work for the good of that country. Good singing improves speech and diction. Words which the child could not naturally have been able to pronounce can be pronounced easily while singing. Writing on the importance of songs in education, Nye and Nye (1970) said "Many songs enhance the study of all periods of history. These songs relate to heroes or great historic events." The technique of good singing is carried over to good reading. Expressive singing is emotional experience that broadens personality and dulls undesirable inhibitions. Also Leonhard and House in Onyiuke (1990) said "Music instruction should be concentrated at the nursery school through the primary grades; if delayed beyond that stage, the child may never attain his/her potential in music."

It is generally acknowledged that young children grasp some concepts and acquire some skills faster and more easily than do older children or adults. This is certainly true of language acquisition and appears to be true of the learning of music. Referring to Brener's (1962) interpretation of Piaget's theory of concept formation. Leonhard and House (1972) write that there seems to be a critical stage beyond which a child can never realize his potential in certain abilities. That critical stage for developing of musicianship and aesthetic sensitivity appears to occur very early - probably before the age of nine.

CORRELATION OF MUSIC WITH THE OTHER SUBJECTS; IN THE .NURSERY CURRICULUM:

Music correlates with the other subjects of the nursery curriculum. In physical education for instance, the action song or singing game has long been a part of physical educational emphasizing the role of music in physical education, Onwuekwe (1994) said :Music could be used far effective teaching of certain topics in Physical and Health Education. This is seen front from the song title 'here we go round the mango tree, early in the morning". This is the way we wash our face, chew our stick, wash our body, comb our hair e.t.c early in the morning Singing games and dances are activities considered to be in die areas both of music and physical education. Music can be created for a known dance. Dance can be created for known MUSIC. BASIC UNDERSTANDING of note values and time signatures comes from

body response.

Music correlates with Art in the sense that appropriate recordings stimulate creative art. Songs can be illustrated by children's drawings. Song creation *can* be inspired by pictures. Pictures can motivate listening to descriptive music. The making and decorating of simple musical instruments in the area of arts and crafts. Some ideas can be expressed in several media: arts, music, dance, creative dramatics and writing. Both art and music can be analysed in terms of rhythm, balance, contrast and other aesthetic elements they have in common.

Language Arts is not left out in this correlation with music. Poetry and music are closely related, meters, phrases, word rhythms and melody rhythms are often similar or identical. Appropriate recording can be employed to stimulate creative writings. Poetry can be composed; music can be written to make songs based on this poetry; poetry can be composed for melodies. Some song interpretations can be developed into creative dramatizations. There are many books to read about music, instruments and musicians. Music can be composed and recordings can be selected for use with dramatizations, plays and other entertaining shows. Many songs, operatic and symphonic works are based upon literature and drama. Reading and singing words of songs can be an experience in the process of improving comprehension, pronunciation and enunciation. Music can be selected that relate to children's literature. Music, dance, and language are communicative arts. Both music and language arts are concerned with listening, performing, reading and writing.

The correlation of music and mathematics cannot be over-emphasized. Music can be used to teach the concept of numbers to the nursery and primary school children. It could be used for teaching of the multiplication table, for addition as well as subtraction as expressed in the song 'ten green bottles are hanging on the wall'. The number of days in each month of the year could be taught effectively as evidenced by the song 'thirty days have September d: s: d. The study of beats, note values, and time signatures relates to the understanding of number concepts.

Music plays an invaluable role in effective teaching and learning of social studies. Music helps in understanding of ideals, religions, and traditions of contemporary and past civilizations, cultures, nations, and times. It reveals mankind's common likenesses, differences and concerns. It describes the geographical and climatic conditions of various countries. A typical example is seen from the fact that music can effectively teach the railway system of Nigeria. Music aids in teaching history and patriotism through study of appropriate music and composers. It is a unifying factor and morale builder; it aids personality development; it can relieve tensions and alleviate fatigue. Dances, instrumental compositions, songs, and music plays can be created by children in connection with units of work in social studies. Children can make musical instruments and costumes to portray the life of people of the past and present; they can study these people through songs and recorded music. If one goes on with the litany of what music can do, a whole book cannot exhaust the points,

THE PROBLEM OF DEVELOPING A MUSIC CURRICULUM FOR NURSERY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:

It is said that a child learns from the known to the unknown. In other words, it is logical that the study of any unit of work should begin with what children know from their own experience, thus the accepted order of learning proceeds from the 'here, now and known¹ to the 'there, far away, and unknown¹.

A pertinent question here is which music is 'the known' and which music is 'the unknown' for the Nigeria child? Right from birth, most Nigerian young children are bombarded daily by a world of sound and different types and forms of music through television, radio, performing groups in the community, movies, recordings and many other forms of music. Many Nigerian children are brought up in towns other than their own and they are opportuned to visit their native homes once in a year, or once in two, three, four or five years as the case may be. They never have no opportunity to listen to the indigenous music of their people not to talk of watching the indigenous musicians perform. When the child hears his indigenous music for the first time he is either excited or biased at what he hears depending on the child's

temperament. To this child therefore which is the 'known' if not the foreign music he has grown up with. His own indigenous music becomes the 'unknown'. This is one of the problems that militate against developing a music curriculum for nursery education Nigeria.

Another problem that militated against developing a music curricular for nursery education in Nigeria is the attitude of the government towards music. Music is being lumped together with Fine and Applied Arts, and Drama as the Creative Arts. As a result of the above when music curricula are being planned at the nursery, primary and secondary school levels a Fine and Applied Arts together could be asked to draw up the curriculum for the Creative Arts. One wonders how effective an Arts teacher would be in drawing up a music curriculum.

Nigeria is developing country and many educators do not seem to understand the importance of music in the all-round development of man and so at the nursery and primary levels of our educational system, music is treated as mere class singing.

The society tends to look down on music and regards music as a subject for the drop-outs and the never-do-wells. Since the society determines what should be in the curricular of its school, this negative attitude constitutes a great problem to developing a music curriculum for nursery education in Nigeria.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has discussed the importance of developing a music curriculum for nursery education in Nigeria. The influence of the home in the musical development of the child has been discussed. Music curriculum for nursery education has been highlighted under rhythm, melody/singing and the correlation of music with the other subjects in the nursery curriculum.

Problems that militate against developing a music curriculum for nursery education in Nigeria have been pointed out. Implication of the above to the music teacher therefore is that the music teacher interpretes the curriculum. The music teacher provides an environment conducive for the optimum learning of musical expression. Careful planning and preparation are necessary if spontaneous on the part of the teacher is essential.

Based on the problems militating against developing a music curriculum for nursery education in Nigeria, the following recommendations have been proffered.

We should make our own indigenous music "the known" by seeing to it that our own indigenous music is being emphasized in the music curriculum of the nursery school. The government should invite music experts whenever music curriculum is to be planned or revised in Nigeria. The attitude of the society should change towards music by encouraging their children who are talented in music and not to force them to other professions they have neither interest nor ability. Nigerians should realise the fact that music is a universal language both for the body as well as the spirit. If we neglect music how do we communicate effectively with our creator?

With a better disposition towards music Nigeria is sure to produce intellectually, physically, morally, socially and emotionally balanced individuals who would contribute meaningfully to national stability.

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