

MUSICAL ARTS EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A STUDY OF PRE-SCHOOLS IN OSHIMILI SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, DELTA STATE

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Abstract

This paper focuses on musical arts education in early childhood education in ten pre-schools in Oshimili South Local Government Area, Delta State. The problem is; are children being exposed to music in the pre-schools' environment? To what extents are the preschoolers exposed to music? The study investigates the musical arts in early childhood education in the pre-schools in Oshimili South Local Government Area, Delta State. The paper is a survey; the target population comprises the pupils and teachers. The paper employs primary data sources; this involves an oral interview and secondary sources, including books, journals, and the internet for data. It is observed that the pupils are thrilled by music and enjoy learning with music. This paper concludes that as preschoolers are being exposed to music early in life, they may express an interest in musical arts education and recommend an upgrade in equipment and facilities to be of standard with the latest models.

Keywords: Musical Arts Education, Early childhood Education.

Introduction

Music and singing play vital roles in our culture, as music is present in every aspect of our lives from birth to death. Music is an integral part of our everyday experiences. Even from birth, adults instinctively use music to soothe and calm children, express love and joy to children, and engage and interact with children. As infants, children recognise the melody of a song long before they understand words. Just like my daughter Sochi who recently discovered the words of the songs she knew while she was a little child. Bright Horizons asserts that:

Preschoolers enjoy singing just to be singing. They are not conscious about their ability, and most are to let their voices roar. They like songs that repeat words and melodies, use rhythms with a specific beat and ask them to do things. Pre-school children enjoy nursery rhymes and songs about familiar things like toys, animals, play activities and people. They also like fingerplays and nonsense rhymes with or without musical accompaniment. (Brighthorizons.com Accessed May 5, 2020).

Esimone and Ojukwu (2014) state that “music obviously plays much role in the life of the children which later defines their outlook in life” (p. 39). In line with the above, Bright Horizon opines, “most young school-age children are intrigued by kids singing along songs that involve counting, spelling or remembering a sequence of events. School-age children begin expressing

their likes and dislikes of different types of music. They may express an interest in music education such as music lessons for kids.” (Brighthorizons.com Accessed May 5, 2020). The place of music in the life of children cannot be overemphasised as it can influence the life of the children positively. Esimone in Esimone (2015) affirms that "music is embedded with a strong power to transform, influence, and affect the lives of people all over the world irrespective of their position, colour, race, or gender. It unarguably enjoys the place of the most influential form of arts" (p. 166). In agreement with the above submissions, as children are being exposed to music, they are most likely to show interest in music education as they progress later in life. As written in the Bible, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (proverbs 22:6). In what ways can music in early childhood influence the children's interest in musical arts? Are children being exposed to music in the pre-schools' environment? To what extents are the preschoolers exposed to music? On this premise, the paper investigates musical arts in early childhood education in Pre-schools in Oshimili South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Conceptual Understanding of the Terms

Musical Arts education

Musical arts education means much more than playing or listening to it. Singing, rapping, and producing musicals are also part of musical arts. In addition, the musical arts education includes composing music, reading music and analysing, arranging, notating, and creating music. (Eric, J. n. p). Einar in Modeme (2014) points out that "musical education deals not only with music and musical arts education but also deals with basic democratic rights. It deals with the responsibility one generation has towards the next. It also deals with people living together in local communities and in the global world" (p. 163). Musical arts education comprises music performances in different categories, as it deals with the writing of music, interpreting of music, singing, sight-singing, musical arts drama, instrumental music, dance music and others.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education encompasses all forms of education, both formal and informal, provided to young children up to approximately 8 years of age. This education is fundamental to the development of a child and can significantly shape the later years of an individual's life. (<http://www.early-childhood-education-degree.com> Accessed May 7, 2020). Early childhood education is a broad term used to describe any type of educational program that serves children in their pre-school years before they are old enough to enter kindergarten. Early childhood education may consist of any number of activities and experiences designed to aid in the cognitive and social development of preschoolers before they enter elementary school. (<http://www.preschoolteacher.org> Accessed May 7, 2020).

Esimone & Umezina in Esimone (2015) opine that:

It is a system through which children are made to acquire knowledge which will stir up the spirit of creativity, acquisition of skills and enquiry in them, and at the same time understand who they are and what is expected of them. In other words, it is a means through which the system of life which they are expected to live is inculcated in them (p.167).

Early childhood education is a preparatory ground through which the preschooler acquires the essential foundation for further transformation aided by the three domains of learning; cognitive (knowledge, mental), affective (emotions), and psychomotor (skills). The preschooler is also exposed to develop socially at this stage.

Learning Environment

Learners in a richly equipped environment have chances of high levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem, self-motivation and as a primary means of transformative force, welcoming the preschoolers in an environment where they can feel excited to learn. It is essential for the development and well-being of preschoolers and society at large. In support of this, Modeme in Modeme (2014) opines that the learning environment in which a student learns is a strong determinant of students' interest and academic achievement'' (p. 163). According to (Anekwe, 2004; Chukwu, 2003; and Maduewesi, 2001), A conducive learning environment in Modeme (2014) is referred to the setting, physical and conceptual methods, media and technology needed to convey information and guide learners' study. The learning environment includes the space and how planned and unplanned activities and the people who are present. In her contribution, Osego, also in Modeme (2014), states that a learning environment consists of all those physical-sensory elements such as lighting, colour, sound, space, furniture that characterised the place in which a student is expected to learn. Anekwe in Modeme (2014) further diversifies the definition of the learning environment as thus:

- The complete makeup of the parts of the home or centre and outdoors used for caring for children. The learning environment includes the space and how it is arranged and finished, routines, material and equipment, planned and unplanned activities, and the present people.
- The place and setting where learning occurs; is not limited to a physical classroom but includes the characteristics of the setting.
- All variables are involved in the physical, social and psychological context of learning.
- The classroom's instructional, interpersonal, and physical characteristics may influence student performance.
- The physical or virtual setting in which learning takes place.
- An environment that instigates the education of the involved learners.

Benefits and Impacts of Music in Early Childhood Education

Music plays vast vital roles in the over well-being of a growing child as it has to do with the formative years. It is a developmental stage where the child needs to be exposed to music. Scholars have shown research demonstrating the various benefits of music in learning, which seems to increase interest by using musical elements in early childhood education. Okafor in Esimone (2015) asserts:

Plato recommended music as an instrument by which early training (the redirection of the soul) is to be affected. Plato believed strongly that music exercises had much influence upon emotion and man's character. Aristotle was and philosopher who emphasised the inclusion of music in learning. The chief objective in teaching music was to develop the power of appreciation and to influence the formation of character. Aristotle believed that music was the most imitative of all the arts: music can imitate virile, orderly and noble things, which would not turn him into a good citizen but also assist him in freeing himself of his pent up feeling (p.169).

Music in early childhood provides the basis for an interest in future music participation and learning. Sims in Erin points out:

Research makes it clear that playing music during nap time or in the background during dramatic play is not sufficient for many of the benefits of music to accrue. Those are fine ways to expose children to a variety of music and should be used to do so, from classical to music jazz to world music.... But it is through participation, including singing, to listen perceptively, learning how sounds can be expressive, that children develop the beginning skills, knowledge and attitudes that will facilitate future music participation and study (n. p).

Music facilitates acquaintance to music education from early childhood through quality exposure. Leviowitz in Esimone (2015) holds that:

It is a time when children learn about their world primarily through the magical process of play. The substance of play in very young children is usually comprised of the environmental objects and experiences to which they have been exposed. If the music environment is sufficiently rich, there will be a continuous and ever richer spiral of exposure to new musical elements followed by the child's playful experimentation with these elements (p. 168).

The frequent and quality of time given to listening to the music of all times may lead to developing interest and acquiring some musical abilities in children. Ekpo in Esimone (2014) agrees that "there is no doubt that children are inclined to be more interested in music and possess more positive attitudes towards an appreciation for music when they are brought up in homes in which there is regular singing, in which various types and quality of music are heard, performed, discussed and enjoyed, and most importantly, in which they are guided and encouraged to respond or participate" (p. 67). Steinhoff (2016) also expresses that "the regular dose of listening to classical music may not result in sudden ability improvement, although it positively impacts the child's rhythm, movement, and social and listening skills in the long run. (<https://novakdjovicfoundation.org> Accessed May 7, 2020).

Another vital area in music that impacts early childhood education is the mental development of the children. It helps the body and mind of the child to be coordinated. When children are singing, dancing and clapping to the music, they are developing their motor skills. An internet source states that "music instruction appears to accelerate brain development in young children, particularly in the area of the brain responsible for processing sound, language development, speech perception and reading skills, according to initial results of a five-year study by USC neuroscientists June 20, 2016. In Esimone's viewpoint, music is a way of learning and a means through which children's memory could be developed. Music is an all-important tool that is very relevant in the intellectual development of children. Davies in Esimone (2014) further states that:

The effect of music on the brain and thinking are demonstrable, and research has shown that during an electro-encephalo-gram (EEG), music can change brain waves and make the brain more receptive to hearing. Music connects the functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain so that they can work together and makes learning quick and easy. Brain function is increased when listening to music, and studies have shown that music promotes more complex thinking. It can make connections between emotions, thinking and learning. (p. 68).

Music expands memory and assists in developing crucial language skills. It also exerts a multiplier effect on reasoning skills, especially on spatial reasoning-an effect that has been demonstrated experimentally. Music also reinforces such logical and perceptual ideas as beginning and ending, cause and effect, sequence and balance, harmony and dissonance, as well as arithmetic concepts such as number, enumeration and timing (start the music: A report from the early music childhood summit. www.menc.org/resources/view/start-the-music-a-report-form-the-early-childhood Accessed May 13, 2020).

Music also assists children to develop a better understanding of themselves and the world and support academic achievement. For instance, preschoolers' mathematical skills can be developed through singing games that involve counting, multiplications, and others. Apart from that, music gives children the chance of acquiring speaking, reading and writing skills. According to Steinhoff (2016), research undertaken by a team of researchers in the 1990s showed that:

The exposure to music from early childhood onwards helps the child to speak more clearly, develop a larger vocabulary, aid strengthen social and emotional skills. The psychologist Howard Gardner already argued in 1983 that music intelligence is as important as logical and emotional intelligence. This is because music has the ability to strengthen the connection between the body and brain to work together as a team. For instance, when dancing and moving to music, children develop better motor skills, whereas singing along to a song helps them to practise their singing voice. In general, the exposure to music supports children in their development process to learn the sound of tones and words (www.novakdjokovicfoundation.org Accessed May 14, 2020).

The Role Musical Arts Play in Early Childhood Education on the Pre-schoolers in Oshimili South Local Government Area, Delta State

Musical arts education plays a pivotal role in the overall development of the preschooler. As the preschooler is constantly engaged musically to learn, there is the likelihood of being influenced by musical arts later in life. Early exposure to musical arts builds up the child mentally, emotionally, skilfully and socially; as the preschoolers through music participate in rhymes, sports, clapping, touching parts of their body, jumping, dancing along with the teacher as well as learn such as alphabets, numbers, singing and dancing, demonstrating as they are learning, they are being formed all around. Preschoolers are propelled and motivated to learn through music; they are always super excited when they learn with music. As the preschoolers demonstrate while learning, they hardly forget what they have learnt. Musical arts attract the attention of preschoolers to be focused on the lesson about to be or being taught. It can also cause the preschoolers to unconsciously practice what they have learnt, meaning that learning has occurred. The preschoolers' teachers noted that one or two preschoolers in the class show special interest in music. A teacher identified her daughter as one who picked interest in music right from her pre-school and scored the highest mark in her time and still maintains an interest in music and has exhibited it in the church where she sings.

Methodology

The design of this study involves the use of questionnaires and interview with teachers. It also applies the participant observation method for data collection. The coverage of this study is carried out in ten (10) schools that have pre-school sections in Oshimili South Local Government Area, Delta State. A descriptive design was used in this study with a population of ten (10) pre-

school teachers. The instrument used was analysed with percentages. $X/N \times 100/1$, X stands for the number of responses, N stands for the number of respondents, while 100 stands for the percentage and 1 stands for constant.

The Pre-Schools Used for Sample

The pre-schools used for this study include the following:

- Graceville International Schools. Asaba.
- Greniel Nursery and Primary School. Asaba.
- Marble Hills Nursery and Primary School. Akwaebulu.
- Start Right Model hall. Asaba.
- Treasure International School, Okwe.
- Lucia Group of Schools. Okwe.
- Heroic Kids School. Asaba.
- Binita International School, Asaba.
- Goshen Nursery and Primary School, Okwe.
- Prime International School, Asaba.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The area of study was ten (10) pre-schools in Oshimili South Local Government Area, Delta State. Teachers answered the questionnaire containing ten (10) research questions with response options. The interview questions consist of five (5) open-ended responses answered by the same teachers. The ten (10) preschooler teachers are all female.

Question 1

Are the children exposed to music in a pre-school's environment?

Table 1
Teachers' Response

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	10	100%
No	-	0%
Total	10	100%

From table 1 above, it is observed that the 10 (100%) respondents indicated that preschoolers are exposed to music in the school environment.

Question 2

Is music used to teach the preschooler during lessons?

Table 2
Teachers' Response

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	10	100%
No	-	0%
Total	10	100%

Table 2 shows all (100%) respondents signified that music is being used to the preschooler during lessons.

Question 3

Do the preschoolers show any special sign of interest while teaching with music?

Table 3**Teachers' Response**

Table 3 shows that 100% of the respondents indicated that preschoolers exhibit special interest while being taught music.

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	10	100%
No	-	0%
Total	10	100%

Question 4

Is there any child who has shown any special interest in music?

Table 4**Teachers' Response**

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	10	80%
No	2	20%
Total	10	100%

From table 4 above, 80% of the respondents signified that some preschoolers show interest in music, while 20% signified No. Implying that majority of the preschoolers can be influenced by musical arts.

Question 5

Is music used in all the lessons taught?

Table 5

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	-	0%
No	10	100%
Total	10	100%

Table 5 above shows that all the respondents indicated music is not used in all the lessons taught.

Question 6

Are there any extracurricular activities where music is used?

Table 6

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	10	100%
No	-	0%
Total	10	100%

From the table above, it is clear that there are extracurricular activities where music is being used.

Question 7

How do preschoolers feel when being taught with music?

Table 7

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Excited	10	100%
Dull	-	0%
Indifferent	-	0%
Total	10	100%

Table 7 above indicated that 100% of the respondents agreed that the preschoolers are excited when being taught with music.

Question 8

How do preschoolers feel when being taught without music?

Table 8

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Excited	-	0%
Dull	10	100%
Indifferent	-	0%
Total	10	100%

Table 8 indicated that all (100%) respondents signified that the preschoolers are dull when taught without music.

Question 9

Are there instructional materials used to teach the preschooler?

Table 9

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	10	100%
No	-	0%
Total	10	100%

From the above table 9, it is shown that the preschoolers are being taught through instructional materials.

Question 10

Does music employed during lessons aid the preschoolers’ cognitive, affective, psychomotor and social development?

Table 10

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	10	100%
No	-	0%
Total	10	100%

From table 10 above, it is agreed that with the use of music during lessons, the preschoolers' three (3) domains of learning: cognitive, affective and psychomotor, and social development, are being developed.

Interview Research Question for teachers

Question 1. Are children being exposed to music in the pre-school's environment?

It is observed in all the schools studied that the preschoolers are exposed to music; the preschoolers are engaged with music in virtually all the lessons taught them. Music is used from the start of the day to the end of the school hour. Music is used to attract the preschoolers to get settled for lessons after break time. Music is also used to teach during learning processes.

Question 2. In what areas is music applied to teach the preschooler?

All the teachers in this study stated that music is applied when teaching alphabets: sounds of a letter so that the preschoolers can understand and retain memory. Music is used for rhymes as a subject. It is also used to teach numbers, days of the week, months of the year and even to pray before eating.

Question 3. What are the equipment/ instructional materials used to teach?

The teachers all mentioned similar equipment and instructional materials used to teach such as; Television, DVD player, disk, projector, laptop, cassettes, picture chats, and whiteboard.

Question 4. What are the activities and experiences employed to develop the three (3) domains of learning?

The whole teachers cited similar activities and experiences employed to aid the preschoolers in developing in the three (3) domains of learning; cognitive, affective and psychomotor, and social development; singing/memorising sounds of letters so preschoolers can retain memory. When preschoolers are learning through music such as alphabets, numbers, rhymes, sports, jumping, dancing to music beats, clapping, singing and dancing, demonstrating what they are being taught, they engaged in the three-domain of learning. Other activities where music is used include; circle time – seating every Wednesday and Friday, Sports activities, Project – career, orientation and others.

Question 5. To what extent are the preschoolers exposed to music?

It can be stated that music revolves around the everyday learning experiences of preschoolers. The preschoolers are engaged with music during the learning processes; learning of alphabets, spellings and words, counting of numbers, games, sports activities, and many others. One of the teachers hinted that her daughter started showing interest in music and even scored the highest marks on music as a subject from her pre-school days.

Findings

It is observed that the preschoolers in this study are exposed to music in almost all the lessons taught. It is discovered that music is applied when teaching alphabets; Sounds of letters, rhymes, numbers, days of the week, Months of the year. In all the schools used for the sample, the equipment and instructional materials used to teach preschoolers are similar, namely, Television, DVD player, projector, laptop, cassettes, picture chats, disk and white board. The preschoolers' teachers hint that the pupils show significant interest to learn while teaching with music but

conversely act differently as the preschoolers tend to be dull and lack excitement to learn without music. Music is used every day of the week, particularly after break time to quieten the preschoolers to settle down for the next lesson. The activities and experiences employed to aid the preschoolers in the three (3) domains of learning: cognitive, affective and psychomotor, and social development, entails; singing/memorising sounds of letters so preschoolers can understand to retain memory. When preschoolers learn through music such as alphabets, numbers, rhymes, sports, jumping, dancing to music beats, singing and dancing, demonstrating what they are being taught, they engage in the three-domain of learning. Other activities where music is used include; circle time – seating round every Wednesday and Friday, Sports activities, Project – career, orientation etc.

Conclusion

The roles and the impacts of music in early childhood education cannot be neglected as researchers have shown that the early years of childhood are critical to learning to unscramble the tones of music and build up a mental organisation system to memorise the music. Implying like language development, preschoolers develop their musical skills through memorising and imitating rhythms, tones of songs such as clapping to a beat and singing in tune. This paper has shown how many factors propel the ability of preschoolers to develop musical skills. Besides this, sufficient stimulation such as a high qualitative musical environment and exposure to music and musical play is necessary to aid preschoolers to turn their potential into a reality. It is important to note that parents play the most crucial role in the musical development of their kids. From home, children are first exposed to music by way of singing, clapping, playing instruments, and others. Homes where children are exposed and encouraged to music, are prone to be addicted positively to music. Ekpo in Esimone (2014) hints that “the musical understanding, skills, attitudes and appreciations possessed by parents or concerned adults have pronounced influence upon the musical interest and growth of the child” (p. 67). Steinhoff (2016) highlights that researchers have pointed out that children whose families are more musically oriented are considerably more developed in their musical behaviour than children who experience a less musically oriented environment. Research done by Kelley and Sutton-Smith explain this situation well with clear examples: the two researchers developed case studies that followed the early childhood years of three girls whose families had different musical backgrounds. While the parents of the first girl were professional musicians, the parents of the second girl practised music from a non-professional background. Finally, the third girls' parents made the least musically oriented choices due to their non-musical background. The researchers' findings suggest a significant difference between the two families who exposed their girls to a varying degree of music and the family who did not integrate musical education at all. They concluded that a rich musical environment at home fosters a child's musical ability.

Recommendation

It is imperative to introduce high qualitative musical environments for preschoolers since this is the critical period of growth and development in their musical skills and understanding, as it is applicable in other areas of learning. Upgrade in equipment and facilities are overly essential to be of standard with the latest models. Parents should encourage and support their children who show interest in or traces of musical skills. The schools need to improve upon their learning environment to improve and promote academic performance and preschoolers' engagement.

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