

The Use of Music to Enhance Diversity in the Pre-School Learning Environment

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Abstract:- The purpose of the study was to find out how music can be used to enhance diversity in the pre-school learning environment in the AfigyaKwabre North District in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The researcher used qualitative method approach in conjunction with interpretivists' paradigm and implemented the case study strategy. The instruments used were interview, observation and Ghanaian pre-school creative Arts curriculum. Purposive sampling technique was used to select sixteen participants (ten pupils, five teachers, and one early childhood coordinator). The schools were conveniently selected. The study revealed that diverse music in the pre-school learning environment aids better understanding of diverse cultures, and removes unbiased thinking among children. It was also revealed that pre-school children are actively engaged in learning new musical works to discover musical ideas. The study concluded that pre-school children appreciate the differences among themselves and share their commonalities when they learn music from different ethnic backgrounds. It was recommended that music education in the pre-school learning environment should not be one sided rather select from diverse musical cultures in the pre-school setting. The study also recommended that learning of music from diverse ethnic cultures enables pre-school children to explore new concepts. The study suggested that pre-school teachers should not exhaust the early childhood music curriculum with western and contemporary music materials, and leave no space for Ghanaian children's cradle songs. Opportunities should be given to pre-school children to study concepts and accept unfamiliar music and sounds.

Keywords:- Commonalities, Curriculum, Diverse, Interpretivist and Multicultural.

I. INTRODUCTION

Children certainly have interest in music and movement. From this inborn appreciation, the joy of music can be spread all over the world. Music is full of wisdom, values and cultural norms and other abilities like learning languages, learning dances, and understanding people are cultured through the use of multicultural music from diverse ethnic cultures (Pellegrini, 2010). It is believed that, pre-school children come from diverse ethnic backgrounds with different cultures but the music-making in the schools in the AfigyaKwabre North District is one sided (Akan, specifically Asante Twi), that goes to the detriment of children from other cultural backgrounds. Hernandez (2001) stresses that diverse music in the pre-school education is not envisioned solely for

lesser groups but can be advantageous for all pre-school children.

As Ghana growing to become more diverse, pre-school children will need diverse music experience necessary to grow well in the social learning environment. Some pre-school teachers are anxious or fearful to teach styles of music that they do not like. Also, because of pre-school teacher's poor music background, they do not want to teach unfamiliar music to pre-school children and because of that have resulted to only singing and dancing. Many of these pre-school teachers do not have the needed resources available for the teaching of diverse music (Kelly & Weelden, 2004).

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Akuno (2005) expresses that songs are distinctive medium of musical expression playing a major role in the children's lives. For example, communities all over the world have songs marking the life cycle events such as birth songs like lullabies, circumcision marriage, war, work, death and funeral songs, and many others describing life activity and this assertion is supported by Zake (1986). In Ghana, parents involve in music-making through singing of songs such as lullabies to calm children and in literacy activities more often with children.

Learning music from diverse cultures can help pre-school teachers to think about music from a variety of ethnic cultures. Teachers should balance it with western art music and African traditional music, which should historically and traditionally serve as basic of pre-school music programme. Multicultural music exposes pre-school children to the art form of music that is its elements, forms and genres as they relate to human expression. Multicultural music seeks to enlighten pre-school children with the roles that music has played throughout time and across cultures. Music is the language for understanding cultural heritage, identifying one's roots, and voicing out of our emotions and desires.

Pre-school children develop appreciation for differences among themselves and enjoy the similarities they share when they learn music from diverse musical cultures. Music provides more avenues for other learners to share in the uniqueness. It further introduces pre-school children to variety of musical sounds and techniques performed on music instruments and with the voice. Learning music within two different contexts, is an approach to instruction that will enable pre-school children to become familiar with global music. Music is a worldwide language and also a fundamental to any culture of the world. Music has been used as recreation/entertainment, communication, education, inspiration, and inculcate in learners a sense of social and communal understanding. Children are born with natural

musical aptitude which varies from one child to another child (Custodero, et al, 2003). For example, rhyme, rhythm, song and movement have historically been used as powerful teaching tools that have infused the values, mores and customs of cultures and societies. Music universally reduces mental fatigue, calms tension, and focuses thinking, and greatly influences creativity and sensitivity. Listening to music also arouses the release of endorphins which are produced in the brain to relieve pain and produce a euphoric state. Since simply makes learning easy and fun, Music forms a natural bridge to literacy development, music builds self-esteem and creates a sense of oneness and teamwork and also encourages an exciting learning environment full of rich language and feeling. It is obvious that pre-school teachers can achieve far greater success in teaching through the strategic use of multicultural music.

Many scholars based on all the significance of multicultural music to the pre-school children have documented this evidence and validated its use within pre-school learning environment. In the pre-school setting, music is perceived as places where children sing and dance.

Quesada and Volk (1997) generally express that multicultural music is using music from other ethnic communities. Multicultural music is using or incorporating music from diverse ethnic backgrounds in pre-school classrooms. Many scholars attest to the fact that learners would be able to fit in a diverse society when multicultural music is used in the pre-school classroom (Banks, 1991; Saldana and Waxman, 1997; Volk, 1993). Carolin (2006) states that this kind of music education should bring unity among pre-school children. Multicultural music education has no definite definition, this kind of music did not indicate who this type of education was best suited for, or how diverse music be used in the pre-school classroom, general classroom or the music classroom.

Blair and Kondo (2008):

in order for pre-school teachers to link musical understanding and implement all-inclusive music education in the classroom, they must first embrace our own musical culture and recognise what pupils do and do not know about music.

Pre-school children always say the truth about what they like and do not like but they may not be able to express what they comprehend or understand. Blair and Kondo (2008) suggest that learning in music of our identifiable culture helps us to identify known musical instruments. Listening to unaccustomed varieties of music, while doing unvarying musical activities in the classroom is an example of copying.

Goodkin (1994) states that multicultural music education exist to open avenues for pre-school children to perceive and observe the overall qualities all cultures transmit through music. Nick (2010) proposes that music teachers should be contented with a culture before teaching it. Page (2010) expresses that pre-school teachers should do more search to narrate the histories or stories behind the

music they teach. It is the responsibility of every pre-school teacher to use music resources outside of classroom. They should be able to use the materials as honestly as possible to show respect for the culture being taught. Pre-school teachers are to ensure that children compare the new idea or knowledge to familiar ones.

The social significance of music education in the pre-school classroom include the progress of diverse cultural consciousness, and acceptance. It creates better understanding of diverse peoples. Diverse music in pre-school learning environment enable learners to think critically and rationally. It removes partial thinking, and can also help in eliminating chauvinistic taught (Fung, 1995). Multicultural music is needed for the betterment of music rudiments. Diverse musical cultures can give pre-school children opportunities to learn musical concepts and rudiments that will enhance their aural skills, critical thinking skills, and increase tolerance of non-musical sounds. Fung (1995) is of the view that multicultural music can help pre-school children develop perception of familiar music. Blair and Kondo (2008) recommended that learners are encouraged to learn multicultural music because they offer opportunities for learners to discover a wealth of rich musical works.

Pre-school children are very active when they are involved in learning new musical ideas. Children frequently find differences and similarities with their own music and within themselves as players. Blair and Kondo (2008) assert that “exploring music from diverse cultures are important and valuable because of the bridges of understanding it creates among peoples and because of the increasing world of sound that enhances our musical lives” (p.54).

Performing music of diverse cultures in the pre-school learning environment, we pave ways to display varying music experiences permitting all children to recognise and share commonalities in the society. Reed (2009) states that we should create awareness of music education by coming out with unify curriculum that allows learners identify their commonalities. There is also the need to use music from diverse cultures to gain universal understand. To be well rounded, pre-school children need to gain universal understanding of multicultural music education. More knowledge about diverse ethnic music and even musics within Ghanaian cultures can open pre-school children's thinking of humanity across the globe and will help deepening political understanding and global relations. Teaching multicultural music can enable music education stay focus. The need for the inclusion of multicultural music education in the pre-school music curriculum is for the aesthetic experiences. Children should be introduced to multicultural music in order to be able to identify their differences and similarities among themselves.

In actual fact, making music, performing music or creating music from different cultures will lead to new aesthetic experiences for pre-schoolers in the pre-school learning environment. The essential significance of music from cultures desires to be valued by pre-school children. There are a number of instructions people has to be knowledgeable of and understand fully any given musical

genre. Reimer (2007) shares that, “there is agreement that the greater the knowledge one has about the culture, and the prospects and rules of its music, the greater the understanding, or perception of meaning, that music will be” (p.3).

Kelly and Weelden (2004) express that one of the problems multicultural music education is facing is that pre-school teachers are not abreast with musical cultures in their classrooms and those in the community. I believe that identification of culture is the first thing teachers must know before embracing diverse music education in the pre-school classroom. Many pre-school teachers are also too biased on cultural differences and finds it difficult meeting the desires of diverse groups in their classrooms.

These differences can be of gender, social class, religion, age, or even language. Some pre-school teachers are confident and competent to handle music children dislike. Many of these pre-school teachers do not have available music resources in the schools to teach diverse music (Kelly & Weelden, 2004).

Blair and Kondo (2008) state that, if the context of music from the cultural experience of the learners is removed from the curriculum, it will be difficult for the pre-schoolers to relate well to the new experience. They trust that learners benefit from our teaching practices. These researchers also believed that learners should be encouraged by the teachers to put into practice what they know about music and how they process it because it will help them to relate earlier practices and new knowledge. Pre-school teachers will find it difficult to present authentic music from other musical cultures. Elliot (1989) declares that multicultural music education is realize when it is authentic but Blair and Kondo (2008) highly oppose by Elliot assertion that the representations of global music’s are not achievable because of factors such as socio-cultural context of the classrooms and there sources available for used by the teachers to enhance effective teaching and learning.

Many music scholars have deliberated on the significance of learning music and suggested that, if multicultural music education becomes the main focus of the pre-school classroom music and art for its own sake will be lost.

The constructivist paradigms of Jean Piaget and Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner are critical to the framing of this inquiry. Their collective research and theories on human learning in early childhood lend significant insight and direction to the complexities and mystifications of both the teaching and learning procedures of pre-school children. Piaget stated that children absorb most naturally and excellently when their teachers or other authorities allow and inspire them to interact with their surroundings, manipulate it to their needs and dispositions and trial with it and question it (all within the scope and limits of the developmental stage of growth they had achieved). Piaget thought that the most vital role of the pre-school teacher was to recognise pre-children's development and organise and provide opportunities for such exploration and discovery (Abrahams, 2005). Gardner (2004)

records in his musical intelligence theory that some of the pre-school children are imbued with talents in a lot of activities but because of their levels of assimilation the talents are hidden and it is musical activities that can unveil these intelligences.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted qualitative approach with interpretivist’s viewpoint and employed a case study research design. The aim of a qualitative study is to have better understanding of a phenomenon. The researcher was committed to the naturalistic position and to the interpretive view of human experience. In this research, the interpretation suggests the use of an interpretivist approach. Interpretivist and qualitative research approaches helps researchers to get experiences and views of participants for non-numerical data (Voegtler, Spaulding and Katherine, 2006:21). The choice of this paradigm to guide my study was based on the idea and explanation of Rug and Petre as cited in Kusi (2012) that qualitative research permits the researcher to examine the abilities and views of participants and attempts to understand a phenomenon and its difficulty in a particular socio- cultural context or perspective through meaningful conversation between the researcher and participants. Purposive sampling was adopted by the researcher based on the purpose and the objectives of the study. This was done with the permission of the District Education Directorate and the Proprietor of the selected private school. The selected pre-schools were; Tetrem D/A Schools, Owusu Kokor Preparatory School, Boaman Roman Catholic School, Soko District Authority School Kyekyewere Methodist School. These pre-schools were chosen because of their population heterogeneity, willingness of schools and convenience.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Participants shared that multicultural music in the pre-school aid deeper understanding of people from diverse cultures and removes biased thinking. It also help in removing racist thinking in the pre-school classroom. This type of inclusion brings togetherness in the pre-school learning environment. As reverberated by Saldana and Waxman (1997) multicultural music enables pre-school children to function in a diverse ethnic society. Carolin (2006) is of the view that, multicultural music education should unite pre-school children both inside and outside their classroom.

Pre-school teachers must have knowledge of their own musical cultures and acknowledge what learners do and do not know about music before they can bridge multicultural music in the pre-school music classroom (Blair and Kondo 2008). The above assertion by Blair and Kondo (2008) is a fact. No teacher will accept new challenges easily or accept particular music outside their culture because most of the pre-school teachers in the Offinso Municipality are not natives or part of their culture. Blair and Kondo (2008) urges pre-school teachers to use familiar music materials of their own to facilitate learning music. Listening to unfamiliar musical types during classroom musical activities is an example of borrowing.

A participant confessed that she has been using different songs from diverse cultures in her class. She stated that it was not easy at first but with time pupils coped with and this is supported by Dong and Goodkin (1994) provides support to pre-school teachers as they use music from other cultures. Goodkin urges teachers also to use musical instruments from the various categories of musical instruments.

Pre-school teachers always want to know more about a culture before accepting to teach and this was confirmed by the municipal early childhood coordinator during face-to-face interview with the researcher. Page (2010) is of the view that pre-school teachers should tell the histories and stories behind the music they are teaching. Page also acknowledges the use of resources outside of the required textbooks and classroom. Pre-school teachers present it as reliably as possible, show admiration for culture being taught and make learners compare the new experience to the one they are conversant with.

The study revealed that through the use of music of other ethnic backgrounds, pre-school children are actively engaged in learning new musical works to discover musical ideas. Learning of music from diverse ethnic cultures enables pre-school children to explore new concepts. The inclusion of multicultural music can give pupils opportunities to study concepts and increase tolerance of unfamiliar music and sounds. According to Fung (1995), multicultural music can aid pre-school children develop a more sensitive perception of familiar music. Blair and Kondo (2008) state that, pupils should study diverse music because they offer a wealth of rich musical works for pupils to discover.

A participant reported that she actively engages pupils in learning new musical ideas and in doing that they often identify similarities with their music and the music of others. Blair and Kondo (2008) opine that discovering music from diverse ethnic cultures are critical and valued because of the connections of understanding it creates among people and the growing world of sound that enhances our musical lives (p.54). Performing and learning music of diverse cultures allow pre-school children to identify and understand changes as well as how they feel.

It will help them become aware of music education by proposing a curriculum that will allow all pre-school children to recognize themselves (Reed 2009). Learning music of diverse cultures permits pre-school children to gain universal understanding. Music is a shared responsibility across the sphere. Pre-school children need to have global understanding in order to be well rounded. Understanding of diverse musical cultures and within Ghanaian cultures can open learner's knowledge of humanity. This will enable them to intensify political understanding and global relations. Kelly and Weelden (2004) express that the use of multicultural music in the pre-school curriculum needs to bridge the gap between what people practice in school and what they do and learning at home. This will help multicultural music education to stay focus.

Multicultural Music Education would become irrelevant to learners lives if pre-school education did not accept

countless musical genres and those that are important or vital to pre-school children in classroom. There is a justification for the inclusion of diverse music in pre-school curriculum. So, making music or creating music from diverse cultures will lead learners to new artistic experiences. The basic significance of music from musical cultures needs to be valued and respected by pre-school children and teachers. Even though many assert that music should be a universal language, this assertion to the researcher is completely not correct. People has to be well-informed of the rules of any kind of music in order to fully understand of its use.

Reimer (2007) states that:

There is agreement that the greater the knowledge one has about the culture and the expectations and the rules of its music, the greater the understanding, or the perception of meaning, that music may be (p.3).

It was echoed by participants that they use music from diverse cultures in the pre-school classroom to learn language and other subjects in the curriculum. It is true that music used in the pre-school classroom helps learners to learn language and other subjects like Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science and so on. Music is a language with great appeal. Pre-school children are entranced by the music in their environments into the outside cultures.

Music according to Kolb (1996) cited in Sullivan (2016) serves as a best instrument for assisting young children with the interwoven facets of language; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Pre-school teachers revealed that if children do not speak other languages apart from their native language it makes things very difficult when new songs from other ethnic backgrounds are introduced.

The coordinator expressed the challenge that pre-school teachers always think of their cultures other than those cultures present in pre-school learning classroom. Even when I was in the classroom, it was a challenge to break out from the native language because that was the focus. Kelly and Weelden (2004) express that one of the problems multicultural music education is that pre-school teachers have not identified the diverse ethnic culture in pre-school classroom which I think is something every music or generalists teacher must do to embrace multicultural music education. Yes, it is true that breaking cultures in the pre-school classroom is not easy but with music it is possible.

It is also true that pre-school teachers always focused on ethnic differences in Ghanaian communities rather than taking good care of diverse ethnic groups in their classrooms. I think this situation can be of social class, age, religion, gender or language. It was clear during data collection that many pre-school teachers do not have teaching and learning resources to teach music and this makes it difficult for pre-school children to make meaningful relations to the new experiences. It was also evident by the participants that some pre-school teachers are nervous to teach musical genres that they do not like or do not consider themselves experts of or confidence to teach. Multicultural music in the pre-school learning environment needs a lot of planning in order to

make learning manageable for all the different cultures living in the Municipality.

One participant honestly expressed the challenge of making diverse music significant to the pupils:

To the researcher, it would be difficult to learn songs from diverse ethnic cultures. The challenge is making multicultural music important to children. It is easy to teach or handle songs in pupil's native language (Asante Twi) because such songs are available in the communities where the schools are located.

Another challenge, to some of the participants was how to make associates with some of the materials. The pre-school children must have a cause for learning a specific material. The children must recognize that these materials will come up again as they progress to the next level in their educational pursuit. It is significant to recognize pre-school children's uniqueness when selecting or choosing and teaching songs of diverse cultures. The use of music, motion pictures and musical symbols appeal to diversity of pre-school children which sustain their attention and interest.

The study revealed that, there are many lessons for pre-schoolers to learn from the songs that they enjoy from diverse ethnic cultures in the classroom. Nketia (1999) opines that the study of music in the community helps children to identify who they are and learn more of how music works in the classroom. Participants indicated that children learn about dance types, costumes, and songs, rhythmic patterns of instruments, events and occasions.

It also links the schools and the communities especially during the inter-schools music and cultural festivals. Some of these lessons which the participants mentioned were cultural, historical, and social, such as obedience to authority, respect for others, faithfulness, truthfulness, hard work, unity, kindness, humility, caring and so on just as Nketia (1999) opines that African traditional songs create more impact through their texts rather than their melodies. This is because the texts literally carry all the aspects of the particular culture, ranging from the sound culture and language to history, moral values, norms, belief system, attitudes, knowledge, religion and the like.

Okantah (2000) is of the view that culture is the state of scholarly growth of people in a geographical area. The participants indicated that their children learn these cultural lessons through performances. They learn how to greet, how to dress, drumming and dancing, the language they speak, manners, and many other cultural values. Greene (1995) discovers that Aretha Franklin's songs provides strength, values, identity, culture, and an ability to mould the self, creating new avenues for socially accepted behaviour.

A participant revealed that making diverse music in the pre-school classroom was very challenging but with time children were able to respond well. Interestingly, pre-school teachers even have difficulty incorporating music to pupils. Ghanaian pre-school children do not understand their history

and this is an example of social and cognitive challenges from using diverse music in the pre-school setting. This is only one example of a social as well as cognitive difficulty that arises from learning diverse music in the pre-school setting. Participants revealed their challenge of teaching and learning music and the identifying the culture from where the music originates.

It was also echoed by the early childhood coordinator that teaching music from diverse cultures may create unpleasant situation which can affect learners of diverse backgrounds. This confirms Campbell's (2002) assertion that teachers perceive that their learners will misread them and may think that teaching multicultural music as a reflection of them being biased. In fact, pre-school teachers and music educators have to identify the scope of globalisation and take good measures to do away with unbiased practices associated with pedagogy (Beck, 2002).

Four pre-school teachers expressed that learning music from diverse ethnic cultures enables pupils to have enhanced appreciation of own cultural values and norms. They also appreciate themselves when they take part in multicultural music in the pre-school classroom. Learning music from diverse cultures help pre-school children to personally grow and develop socially, spiritually, and physically, childre do not only learn their own cultural norms but also learn practices and responsibilities of their cultures (Agawu, 2003). Joseph (2011) states that understanding cross-cultural music instills a culture of open-mindedness among pre-school children.

Participants revealed that pre-school children learn diverse music using auditory senses. This is regarded as the most routine method of learning music in the pre-school classroom. Learning music from other cultures expands learners language and communication skills. It enables learners decode and learn new sounds, increases attentiveness, and enlarges pupils' thinking capabilities (Senders and Davidson, 2000).

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Music education should unveil the intrinsically diverse nature of pre-school music. Pre-school teachers are encouraged to do away with biased thinking in the pre-school classrooms. Pre-school children are also encouraged to explore or learn new things or concepts to develop the foundational skills in music. It is recommended that gaining insight on diverse ethnic music and music within Ghanaian domain can open up pre-school children's views of humanity worldwide level. Pre-school teachers are to blend diverse music to develop the necessary skills among pre-school children.

Pre-school teachers are to make connections with some musical materials or resources to enable pupils identify their musical potentials. In order to enhance multicultural music in the pre-school classrooms pre-school teachers need to initially overcome their fears associated with teaching the subject matter. Pre-school teachers should collaborate with expert musicians outside the school to gain knowledge as a means to understand cultural diversity and guide their pupils

in learning this diversity from musical themes. Pre-school teachers are encouraged to use pointing instruments to track rhythmic flows that are written on marker/chalkboards as a way to strengthen neural traces that are formed among multicultural music learners.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The study established that children acquire appreciation for differences among themselves and enjoy the values they share when they learn music from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It was also evident that music used in the pre-school classroom enables pre-school pupils to learn language and other subjects like English, Mathematics science and so on.

It was established that the use of music from diverse cultures helps eradicate bias thinking from pre-school classrooms. Diverse music in the pre-school classroom enables pupils to develop some basic music concepts. Performing music from diverse cultures provides opportunities to learners to experience varying music and also allowing all pre-school children to identify and understand differences as well as shared aims. Multicultural diversity of music can help by offering flexible pre-school curriculum that allows all pre-school children to recognize themselves. It also helps pre-school children to gain a global perception. Auditory senses can be strengthened not only with kinesthetic moves but also with visual cues.

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