

The use of Song and Movement to Create a Multicultural Curriculum for Early Childhood Music Education in Kenya

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Abstract

Early childhood musical development has gained research prominence in recent years. Researchers and early years' educators, in response to findings that musicality begins before birth, are continually seeking ways to tap the undeveloped musical potential inherent in young children. The influence of nature and nurture in child and musical development and the extent to which each influences growth also continue to invite more investigation. A credit to ~social anthr012olgg)', .culture..as an aspect of nurture is now regarded as a key determinant in the whole growth process. Furthermore, with increasing global integration, multicultural .sm has become a living reality in its different contexts. It is especially a reality in music educational settings, where teachers are faced with myriad challenges and opportunities to explore diverse musics for the purpose of societal cohesion. This research considered both early childhood musical development and multiculturalism, with the aim of creating a curriculum addressing both developmental stages and multiculturalism in early childhood, for the purpose of developing children's musicality and finding ways in which it could be applied to their education. Research procedures included a descriptive investigation and a quasi experiment. Descriptive investigations, carried out on preschool teachers (n=130) from 21 Day Nursery schools in Nairobi, were applied to examine musical activities in preschools, as well as teachers' experiences in instructing children in music and movement activities, and the use of music in other learning activities. The quasi experiment involved examining the viability of multicultural Kenyan music as part of the existing repertoire children perform, and exploring ways in which it could be incorporated into a curriculum for early childhood education. Children from 3 preschools (n=78) underwent an intervention based on the objective of teaching multicultural musical activities, and through them, experiencing the various elements of music as well as the delineated meanings of music, both of which could be applied to other learning activities. Key findings revealed that new forms ptchildr.e~c have evolved in playground activities as a result of the dynamism of culture. It was also found that despite the passage of time, older music forms still existed. Teachers were found to have an understanding of the difference between the use of music to achieve extramusical goals and the teaching of music to gain a deeper understanding of it as a discipline. However, the study found that there was a necessity to develop education in music further, both for its own sake and in order to use it more effectively in early childhood education. Finally, the study found that children had a positive response to multicultural music. It was therefore proposed that more variety of interactive multicultural music be introduced in preschools, accompanied with a variety of musical activities.

Keywords: Song and Movement, Multicultural Curriculum, Early Childhood Music Education, Kenya

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