



Fostering Music and Childhood Education in Pankshin Central of Plateau State Nigeria: Towards Aesthetic Symbiotic Fusion That Engenders Holistic Learning.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated music and childhood education in Pankshin central of Pankshin LGA of Plateau State: Towards an aesthetic symbiotic fusion that engenders holistic learning. Two null hypothesis guided the study. Quasi-experimental research design was adopted for the study. The population for the research work was 160 children from all Early Childhood Care Education Development Centres (ECCEDC) in Pankshin central and the sample size consisted of 4 ECCEDC with 38 children were sampled using purposive and simple random sampling method. The instrument for data collection was two lesson plans using “planning my day” Reggio Emilia method on numeracy and literacy for the experimental and control groups. The two schools for experimental group were exposed to Reggio Emilia method of holistic learning for the two learning concepts - numeracy and literacy, for a given period of lesson for the day, while participants in the control group received no treatment. The instruments were face-validated by three experts. A reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained using Cronbach’s Alpha method. Data was analysed using Analysis of Covariance to compare two weeks practicum observations and learning outcome of the treatment on the children. There was significant main effect of treatment on holistic learning approach with music on learning outcome, assimilation of simple commands and behaviour of the experimental and control groups. The hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study reveal that music enhances holistic teaching and learning, and when properly employed serves as the best teaching method for pre-schoolers. The result revealed an unprecedented level of achievement of assimilation by those the method was applied to against those not applied. The paper concluded by proffering among others that all schools should adopt music in teaching all learning domains of child development at pre-school levels in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

There are some disciplines or areas of study that generate more understanding and are result-oriented when the contents are fully synthesized with the fabrics of another discipline. Music and childhood education have things in common. Education at any level is aimed at transmitting knowledge, values, attitudes and skills to develop a critical and innovative mind for human and national development through instruction in theory and practice of teaching. This art of transmitting and acquiring knowledge that forms the ethos of every individual starts at early stages of childhood. This is anchored by developing a good holistic learning. According to Bappah-Aliyu (2017:4) "Early childhood education lays the foundation for smooth transition to levels of education". It should be noted that at the early years, children are very active mentally, emotionally, and physically and have the desire and natural curiosity to learn. It is, therefore, very pertinent to adopt proactive and stimulating learning strategies and methodologies that could encourage them in developing life-long holistic attitude towards learning. That strategy can only be achieved through fusing music with various teaching methods. This is because it is believed that when a concept is rendered or mastered with the aid of music, it has a higher rate of retention in the memory of the learner. The Reggio Emilia approach supported this assertion.

The Reggio Emilia approach to learning is an educational philosophy and pedagogy which focuses on preschool and primary school education. This approach is a child-centered and constructivist self-guided curriculum that uses self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments. This methodology has two principles, namely: Principle of Holistic Learning and Principles of Critical Thinking (thinking outside the box). The Principle of Holistic Learning is a philosophical rather than a rigid 'system' Mohammed (2017). This paper focused on the holistic approach to both teaching and learning based on the principle of learning by doing. It requires that children have some control over the direction of their learning; that they must be able to learn through the experiences of touching, moving, seeing, listening, and hearing; they must have ways and opportunities to express themselves. Based on Reggio Emilia holistic principle, it is believed that music would provide the best method of instruction that would encompass a holistic learning in any given domain when properly used. This can be achieved by singing those materials that are taught them as they are shown and demonstrated to them.

Concept of Holistic Learning Development

Holistic approaches to child development and learning has to do with connectedness of mind, body, and spirit. When early childhood care professionals take a holistic approach in teaching and learning of children, they pay

attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of children's learning.

A Holistic approach is important in teaching and learning of 21st Century children. It allows the professionals to assess the child as an individual, and understand what they have not been able to achieve by looking at how the developmental areas link up and how progress in one area can affect progress in another area. For instance, a child can sing a song of number 1 with a demonstration of one finger pointing to some objects (physical), which leads to greater independence and increased self-esteem (emotional). This approach allows early learning, and childcare professionals to plan for future activities involving the child, which will help in their overall learning and development and wellbeing.

Holistic learning approach helps children acquire all developmental domain of learning simultaneously. It motivates children to learn about a subject in greater depth. It also instils curiosity and allows children to learn naturally and creatively. Twinkle (2002) refers to five aspects of Holistic Development in Early Childhood Care Education, as follows: Physical, Emotional, Social, Spiritual, and Intellectual. Holistic development in ECCE allows Professionals take an activity that a child enjoys, such as Music and turn it into a learning opportunity.

Early Childhood Education

Education is one important aspect of life that cannot be jeopardized or played with. For it to be meaningfully and adequately imparted, it has to start from the lower level of early childhood education. Okafor (2019) opines that early childhood education is a vital process in every individual child's development and environmental management. It is an important way of imparting the necessary ethos and pathos in the life of children from early stage to be morally sound and operate well within the society they live. The child is helped to attain the development of his potentials and maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason and to achieve his perfect self-fulfilment.

This perhaps is the reason childhood education is referred to as "an instrument par excellence (FRN, 2004)." Early childhood education is the manure that fertilizes other levels of education in human life when applied well. It has been found to be crucial for satisfactory adult development. It is very useful to the holistic development of a child. The childhood education starts from cradle. Jean Piaget's theory of Cognitive Development states that catching children young with quality education remains a veritable tool for lifelong development. Therefore, the method of instruction at this stage is very essential to the achievement of the stated objectives of early childhood education. The National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) stated that early childcare

development and education (ECCE) is the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from 0 – 4 years in a crèche or nursery. The purpose is to: effect a smooth transition from the home to the school, prepare the child for the primary level of education, provide adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work, inculcate in the children the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music, and the use of toys, etc., develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit, stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits, Teach the child rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc., through play.

Government having known the importance of music and children's learning, stated it clearly in the purpose of early childhood care education, but it is very unfortunate that in most childhood care centres, the children are handled with the old and conventional method/approach towards learning. It is stated that children are to learn rudiments of numbers (numeracy), and letters (literacy skills), but this does not require the caregivers and teachers to start teaching the children all forms of Mathematics and English language without proper censored methodology. This stage is rather a period of holistic development involving playing and learning through activities that involve music.

Music and children's learning

Music plays a lot of role in the learning and development of children. It impacts greatly on their social, psychological and moral upbringing. This is a fact most people are oblivious of, but it is true. Imen (2020) sees music as sounds that have been organized by using rhythm, melody and harmony. The author stated that rhythm is the way the musical sounds and silences are put together in a sequence. Children absorb facts easily when they are presented by means of music.

Music obviously plays much role in the life of the children which later defines their outlook in life and much more in their social, psychological and spiritual lives. But the perception of most people, if not all the persons such as parents, childhood educators, general public, and so on, on music as solely for entertainment has brought about the non-harnessing of music to help the children develop...(Esimone & Ojukwu 2014:39).

Music ignites all areas of a child's development and improves reading skills acquisition including intellectual, social, emotional, motor, language, and overall literacy development. Introducing the concept of holistic learning to children through music appears to facilitate

learning outcome in all learning developmental domain, thus, laying a strong foundation of education in the child. Music appears to be the best thing to enhance children's concepts assimilation and also spur their interest towards learning. As a communication art, Adetunji (2008) had observed that "music education can be regarded as the acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes in music selected, directed, and evaluated by the school on the basis of the society, ability and interest of the learners to enable him to be useful to himself and the society (p. 440)".

This study is also based on the postulations by Ekpo (2008:29) that "The beat of the melodies he (the child) listens to inspires him to move and it follows singing alternatively. Auditory habit in relation to music begins to form. What the child hears or sees at this time forms the foundation of its education later in life". Going further, he opines that:

Researches have proven that young children in a good musical environment acquire knowledge better than children who grew up in environment that provides inadequate musical experiences. Where children listen to songs that are well rendered or instrumental music recital, ordinarily... promotes all the processes of musical development in children (ibid. p30)

At childhood level of education, assimilation of simple commands is guided by a holistic teaching and learning approach in which children are not being taught a single developmental domain at a given period of lesson. In the lesson presented which the domain is physical development with the topic "child's growth and development" the curriculum indicator are control body parts, jump, clap and bend. The children learn all the objectives alongside with other developmental domains such as cognitive domain and emotional domain. An example of this is children's ability to assimilate simple commands from the caregiver to jump up, clap, bend and sing is based on capability of cognitive development. That ability of comprehending, eye coordination, and speaking at the same time are called holistic learning. Secondly, the ability of a child to assimilate simple command means that the child is emotionally balanced. The child does not cry, traumatize or feel unhappy, thus, assimilation of simple command through holistic teaching and learning is taking place. As a result, the child develops and has smooth transition to other levels of education in future. On the other hand, holistic method of instruction is a form of positive behavioural approach that can be used with preschool level of education. Through this approach, children are taught the behaviours that are positive and the ones that are negative. The use of holistic learning approach focuses on the child's positive behaviours such as social habits and health

habits, for example, salutation, respecting the feelings of others, compassion, taking care of others, honesty, empathy among other social behaviours. This implies that holistic learning approach is a behavioural strategy that allows children to learn academically and at the same time develop good behaviour towards life in future. UNESCO-IBE (2022) refers to holistic learning as a learning approach that activates the learner's intellect, emotions, imagination and body coordination for more effective and comprehensive learning. Isidienu (2017:230) opines that "A child today is a man tomorrow. In other words, a new born baby will eventually become an adult; however what a child becomes today is what the society will reap tomorrow." Therefore, a child should be taught the right things today in a proper way that would be consolidated in him for life. In the same vein, Jowitt (2018:45 – 46) also shared the view that "It cannot be denied that responsiveness to music, along with language, religious beliefs, and technical inventiveness, is a higher attribute of the human race, distinguishing the human race from animals; and the performance of music features in the early childhood development of every human society of which we possess any records".

In pursuance of the purposes of the Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE), as stated in the National Policy on Education, (2013) this study examined the impact of music towards achieving a holistic development in childhood care education in Pankshin, Plateau State.

Statement of the Problem

There has been a growing concern that the Nigerian child is having a disproportionate growth. Attributes such as music which engenders aesthetic and holistic growth continues to dwindle. Children and young person's continue to appear in antisocial activities and vices leading to unknown. There is urgent need to investigate if music enhances holistic developments of children in early childhood centres in Pankshin central of Plateau state. Unfortunately, majority of ECCDE centres do not adopt the music method because the Care-givers and parents consider it a waste of time and resources. Consequent upon this, the study compares the learning outcome, behaviours and assimilation of simple command levels of children in two different schools that adopted music method of instruction, and another two schools that did not adopt music method of instruction. The schools are located in Pankshin community of Plateau State, the location of the study. The 4 ECCEDC were previously used for practicum observation for two weeks by the researchers and ECCE students of Federal College of Education Pankshin, Plateau State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for the study is to determine the impact of music in childhood education in Pankshin central of

Plateau State towards an aesthetic symbiotic fusion that engenders holistic learning. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. determine the relationship between music and children's holistic learning outcome in childhood education.
2. determine the impact of music towards holistic learning on children's behaviour.
3. determine the impact of music on holistic learning towards children's assimilation of simple commands.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis below was tested at $P < 0.05$ level of significance.

HO1: There is no significant main effect of treatment on the holistic learning outcome of children in ECCD centres on literacy development.

HO2: There is no significant moderating effect on the holistic learning of children in ECCD centres on numeracy development.

METHOD

Quasi-experimental research design examines whether there is a causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. Quasi-experiments are a subtype of non-experiments that attempt to mimic randomised, true experiments in rigor and experimental structure but lack random assignment (Rogers and Revesz: 2020:133). This study was carried out in Pankshin central of Pankshin Local Government of Plateau State with the population of 160 children from all ECCD Centres in Pankshin central. A sample of 38 children was drawn from the population by selecting all the pre-primary school children from the four schools which were randomly selected. The population was stratified into two groups: Two ECCD centres that adopted music approach and two ECCD centres that did not. The two centres that adopted were the only schools within the study area that have been adopting music method, therefore they were selected, while the other two were randomly selected. The researchers developed two lesson plans, one on numeracy and the other on literacy. The evaluation assessment was based on observation of learning outcome, behaviour and assimilation of simple commands by the children which was conducted by the researchers with caregivers as research assistants in the centres as the teaching and learning activities where taking place in groups. The researchers and caregivers assess the children's learning outcome, behaviours and assimilation of simple commands. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts and a reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha method. The data were analysed using Analysis

of Covariance (ANCOVA) to compare the differential effectiveness of the treatments and the previous practicum observation results of the children.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one;

There is no significant mean effect of literacy development on the treatment of holistic learning outcome of children in ECCD centres: to test this hypothesis, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to analyse the holistic learning outcome, using two weeks practicum observation reports as covariates to find out if the experimental differences were significant. The result obtained was tested at 0.05 significant levels as presented in table 1 below.

Table 1

Variable of Consideration	Experimental group	Control group	Mean	Sig
Covariates	56.6	40	56.6	.000
Learning outcome	91.7	40	91.7	.000
Behaviour	90	60	50.2	.000
Assimilation of simple commands	87	40	60.5	.000

Table 1 shows clearly that children in ECCE centres that adopted music as method of instruction acquire sound holistic development and learning as 91.7% of the children have good learning outcome in literacy, 90% in good behaviour and 87% in assimilation of simple commands. While those in ECCE centres that do not adopt music as method of instruction with 40% in assimilation of simple commands which indicates that introducing concept of literacy to the children without the use of music appears not the best method.

Hypothesis two:

There is no significant main effect of treatment on numeracy development of children in ECCD centres: to

Table 2

Variable of consideration	Experimental group	Control group	Mean	Sig.
Covariates	37.7		2.86	.000
Learning outcome	85	60	2.60	.001
Behaviour	90	64	2.85	.000
Assimilation of simple commands	90	50	3.12	.121

The result in table 2 showed that there was significant mean difference across the three basic variables tested between the experimental group and control group on learning outcome, behaviour and assimilation of simple commands based on planning my

Data Analysis

ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was used as the statistical tool for the study. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to compare the differential effectiveness of the treatment.

Table 1: there is no significant mean difference on holistic learning on literacy with music across the three basic variables tested between the experimental group and control group on learning outcome, behaviour and assimilation of simple commands based on planning my day on literacy f holistic development in childhood education.

test this hypothesis, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to analyse the holistic learning outcome, using a practicum observation reports as covariates to find out if the experimental differences were significant. The result obtained was tested at 0.05 significant levels as presented in table 2, below.

Data Analysis

ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was used as the statistical tool for the study. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to compare the differential effectiveness of the treatments.

day on numeracy of holistic development in childhood education.

Analysis in Table 2 reveals that children in ECCE centres that adopted music as a mode of instruction shows the high rate of learning outcome, good behaviour and assimilation of simple commands

in a holistic teaching and learning with music on concept of numeracy. On the other hand children in ECCE centres that did not adopt music approach show some level of good learning outcome, good behaviour and some good level of assimilation of simple commands in teaching and learning of holistic development in concept of numeracy but not equate with the children in the ECCE centres that adopted music as a method of instruction.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the three variables tested, namely: learning outcome, behaviour and assimilation of simple commands at the level of holistic development through music as a mode of instruction at early childhood education, it was clearly shown that music if adopted and applied well in teaching of concepts such as numeracy, literacy, emotional development among other developmental skills will enhance learning as well as playing into learning as recommended for the early childhood education by Federal Republic of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education.

The finding in null hypothesis 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between music and holistic learning on literacy and development of children in early childhood education level. This is not surprising as the finding is consistent with the views of Ekpo (2008) who postulated that "With the major opportunities music provides the child for self-involvement and personally initiated activities, it is an effective way for the individual to become acquainted with his unique musical abilities, his ways of solving musical problems creatively". Adetunji (2018:440) furthermore observed that, "music in itself is the communication of the culture and practices of certain group by means of songs and other practices". Thus, music remains the best medium of communication to children and get their interest and in turn a learning goal is achieved. The finding of the study is also in line with the view of Esimone and Ojukwu (2014) as they affirmed that "importance and benefits of music transcend its entertainment objective". The authors said that music is said to be a universal language of the soul, and as such can achieve more vital issues than ordinary words or other subjects can ever achieve, they stated that its role in early childhood education in social, psychological and spiritual development of children surpasses what mere words can explain. Also, null hypothesis 2 states that there is no significant mean effect of treatment on numeracy development of children in ECCED centres. The result showed that there was significant effect of holistic learning through music on numeracy development of children in ECCED centres based on the three moderating variables namely: learning outcome, behaviour and assimilation of simple commands.

Thus, it is a well-established fact that music is a good medium of instruction in the early childhood care education level for holistic learning and development in

the ethos and pathos that make up human (children) development for a successful transition to other educational levels.

Educational implications of the study

Music as a method of instruction, which involves holistic learning and development with play inclusive in early childhood care education gives the child the opportunity to express his/her inner feelings and at the same time make connections with the ethos and pathos of educational learning. The use of music as a method in early childhood education makes for easy learning of concepts in a holistic learning and development manner.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A holistic learning and development at early childhood education stage prepares the child for sound development because it gives every individual child opportunity of acquiring all the developmental skills in a certain domain of development.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- The government and proprietors of ECCE centres should ensure the employment of qualified early childhood professionals who are properly trained in the right pedagogy for teaching at that level of education.
- The government and proprietors of ECCE centres are to create awareness to parents and teachers that using music as a mode of instruction does not destroy the values of education at that level, rather it fosters and adds great impetus to teaching and learning.
- All ECCE centres should adopt the use of music as a means of instructions for early childhood education
- Teachers at this level are expected to have formal music background to enable them perform better in this regard
- It is also advised that ECCE/Music combination in Colleges of Education and Universities would be a welcome development in order to equip students with relevant knowledge to perform better when employed in an ECCE centre as teachers.

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