The Role of Musical Art Education in Enhancing School Attractiveness for Primary School Dropout

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ABSTRACT

With recent survey from the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), that more than 13 million Nigerian children are now out of school thus making Nigeria the only country with the highest number of out of school children in the world. Several factors such as Boko Haram insurgency and bad economy have been said to contribute to the increased dropout of pupils however, another factor mostly not given attention to, is the lack of attractiveness of educational related activities in primary schools which also contributed to pupils staying away from schools. Results indicated that not every student does the same thing at the same time. More so, it is important to stimulate individual strengths and reforming musical arts education to reflect contemporary music practice will not only engage pupils’ interest, but also assist in raising the status of music in the school curriculum by demonstrating its relevancy. Therefore, this paper adopted an empirical research methodology to ascertain how musical art education can be used to enhance school attractiveness for primary school pupils to reduce the number of dropouts at that level of education.

Keywords: Musical Art, Education, School Dropout, School Attractiveness

INTRODUCTION

Music is an important subject as compared to every other subjects being taught in school. Because of its importance to a child cognitive development, music is said to be basic to education [1]. He further added that music has penetrating powers that strike a common chord in the hearts of all human-beings despite their geographical space. Music deepens understanding, and not limited by space or distance as it is referred to be an international language, a universal language. It is part of life and is crucial for preparing Nigerian youths for the future. The nation cannot afford to deprive youths the invaluable experiences of school music. All learning and education are important so also is musical learning via music education. Education in general is the totality of knowledge, skills, competences or quality of characters gained or acquired by one through instructions. It is widely regarded as a veritable instrument for social change and national development. Education has various definitions and interpretations when viewed as a process, product or a discipline in relation to expressions made by various authors. [2], defined education as a means by which an individual is helped to acquire civilization of the past, so that he may be able to take a meaningful place in the civilization of the present. Education therefore, can be said to be the reformation of an individual’s beliefs, values, needs, attitudes, behaviour, habits, skills and knowledge. Corroborating, Uyanwune [3], viewed education as “learning and to learn is to educate or to inform”. It involves teaching and learning. Music education is an art that helps to enrich human life, empower people and thereby raise human well-being. It is the art of imparting knowledge to the youths. Joining this parade, Omibiye-Obidike in Onyiuke [4] noted that “Music education is a comprehensive education geared towards a functional and artistic career in the society. It contributes to all round
development of the individual. Agreeing with the above view, [5] opined that a proper music education in our schools will help our youths to become powerful instruments for national consciousness and integration. Experiences in the arts offer many intrinsic and extrinsic benefits to elementary children. Intrinsic benefits include opportunities to develop creativity and imagination, and to experience joy, beauty, and wonder. The arts also present occasions to make the ordinary special, to enrich the quality of our lives, and to develop effective ways of expressing thoughts, knowledge, and feelings. There is also evidence of extrinsic benefits, as learning in, about, and through the arts contributes to increased engagement in learning in other subject areas, and to the development of students' self-confidence, social skills, and metacognition. Among such arts is musical art which is act of exploring, improvising and creating with sound including singing and chanting [6,7,8]. For example, singing and dramatic plays serve the child first as a means of learning about the society of which he is part, and secondly as a means of developing the sense of power consummation and accomplishment through his/her feelings of participation and sense of identification. Of such example of a musical art are musical games which help children build and hold considerable cultural capital in their communities and demonstrate a cultural literacy, a feel for negotiating the rules and conventions in a range of musics [9]. This is why Marsh [8] explored the musical play of children at school and recommends that teachers use playground singing games and chants that involve the interrelated elements of melody, rhythm, text and movement to build their creativity. This affirms that musical games in the life of the child coupled with other music related activities are important to develop inherent forms of intelligence that can be advanced: emotional, musical, bodily motor and spatial intelligence which contribute to the total well being of the child. While researchers, teachers, and neuroscientists agree that a child’s brain needs to be stimulated in a variety of ways to foster development, carefully designed studies are required to understand how the brain functions and to provide helpful evidence-based strategies for improving instruction. Existing brain research suggests that experiences in the arts—particularly extended musical experiences—contribute to a fully functioning brain and body. The research also suggests that we have a responsibility to provide rich arts teaching for all students. It is not the case that arts instruction should be concentrated on the so-called talented, as it is far more likely that experience, rather than genetics or brain structure, breeds accomplished artists.

Intrinsic Benefits of the Arts Education

Eisner [10] describes imagination as “the engine of cultural and social progress” (p. 12). Experiences in the arts nurture imagination and creativity, both hallmarks of great thinkers and leaders: Many prominent scientists and inventors are also active in the arts [11]. But art doesn’t benefit only the artist. The arts are beneficial not only to those who create art but also to those who experience those creations. Great works of art inspire, and the process of art-making can do the same. When a student writes a haiku poem, choreographs a dance, sketches a landscape, builds sets for a theatre performance, or improvises a piece of music with peers, the student has a chance to imagine, wonder, create, and learn. The arts provide daily opportunities for beauty and joy for individuals in schools and in communities around the globe. Studies in, about, and through the arts help students lead fulfilled lives. Students who lack arts
experiences in their schooling will emerge undernourished by the end of their education. By contrast, those students whose schooling includes the arts will benefit throughout their lives, in a multitude of ways, by the intrinsic benefits that the arts bring to the quality of our lives.

Arts Education and Child Development

There is mounting evidence that experiences in the arts develop self-confidence of a child. Researchers report, for example, that arts learning foster co-operative, focused behaviour, problem-solving, and the development of fair-minded citizens [12]. Others claim that arts learning develop a sense of connection with others [13,14]. Studies also show a positive relationship between studies in the arts and benefits for at-risk students [Flohr 15], including a reduced risk of violent behaviour and significant improvements in self-esteem [16]. Burton and her colleagues found significant links between rich in-school arts programs and the creative, cognitive, and personal competencies needed for academic success. The results showed that students in “high-arts” groups performed better than those in the “low-arts” groups on measures of creativity, fluency, originality, and elaboration [17]. The high-arts students were more co-operative, more willing to display learning publicly, and more likely to think of themselves as competent in the other academic subjects. These capacities were developed through elementary arts experiences, including intra-curricular (learning in, about, and through the arts), extra-curricular (such as school musicals), and community and school-based arts partnerships. The researchers conceptualized the arts competencies, such as the interweaving of intuitive, practical, and logical modes of thought, as “habits of mind” [18]. Burton [17] found that these habits of mind were accompanied by increased ability to exercise imagination, express thoughts and ideas, and take risks. As a result of the positive outcomes of arts education, they called for the arts to become curriculum partners with other subject disciplines, contributing in rich and complex ways to the learning process as a whole.

Musical Arts Education and Academic Achievement

In a study conducted in Georgia involving over 600,000 students, it was found that in those school districts where the arts were a priority, students had higher test scores, were more likely to graduate with college diplomas, and were less likely to drop out from high school [19]. In another study which examined the effects of music learning on performance in other subject areas. The study was designed to determine the effect of music classes on academic achievement in mathematics and languages. At the end of a three-year study, researchers found that students who had five music classes per week, rather than the more common one or two classes, performed as well as their peers in mathematics and better than their peers in language. This result is even more impressive when one considers that the extra time devoted to music classes was created by shaving off instructional time in mathematics and language. It is also of note that these results did not occur until three years had passed.

One of the few carefully conducted empirical studies linking academic achievement and dance was carried out by researchers from DePaul University and the 3D Group in Berkeley, California [20]. The Basic Reading Through Dance program is a 20-session program for first grade students, designed to help students improve reading skills in such areas as phoneme segmentation. Using an experimental design, the researchers determined that, in fact, the students who
few studies that focus on dance. The authors claim that dance has considerable potential in developing the whole child as it gives a form for ideas to be internalized through experience [21], and can be used with students at all stages of development to expand on meaning, which in turn, might enhance both memory and reading comprehension.

Role of Musical Art Education in Creating School Attractiveness

To make schools attractive enough for primary school pupils, musical arts should be incorporated into primary school academic curricula. Among the components of musical art to be incorporated include;

1. Musical Games

Children learn a lot through musical games. According to [22], they derive some of the benefit during the period they engage in games which help them to carry it along to adulthood. Games with rules involve some measure of competition and adherence to procedures and time limits. In effect, playing musical games together as children exposes them to share a common purpose, thereby improving their social lives. Songs chosen for these games should be cultural songs to help promote and inculcate the cultural values of that community into the children because, this is the most vital period of their lives in terms of their cognitive development as such, what they hear in school should have some similarities with what they experience at home. This will in turn allow the child to accept and imbibe the cultural heritage of his/her community. However, If a split occurs between what children experience in school and what they experience in their community, a dissonance may result, and students may find it difficult to relate what they learn in school to those things that are more meaningful to them [23]. This difference in what the child experiences at home/community with what he/she experiences in school can somewhat make the child confused and thus losing interest in school related activities as they are strange to him/her thereby can lead to dropping out of school. The following songs will engage student in musical games activities. For example:
Song 1: Kpukpumkpu Ogene

Call: Kpukpumkpu ogene
Kpukpumkpu ogene
Onye ga ekpu ogene?
Ada ga ekpu ogene
Obi ga ekpu ogene

Response: Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene

English Translation

Kpukpumkpu ogene,
Who would crouch/
dance through the ogene
Ada it is your turn
Obi it is your turn.

Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene
Ogene, ogene
Song 2: Okereke Okereke Dududu Yaya

Call: Okereke Okereke
Okereke Okereke
Kwenu oga na eje
O ga n'eje,

Response: Dududu yaya
Dududu yaya
O ga n' eje ngwo
O ga n'eje ngwo.

English Translation

Let us agree that we shall be moving,
Dududu yaya
We shall be moving, ngwo.
AKPANKOLO KPANKOLO

Song 3: Akpankolo Kpankolo

Call: Akpankolo  
Akpankolo  
Udo muo  
Etukwuo  
Etukwuo  
Onye omalu

Response: Kpankolo  
Kpankolo  
Ogene  
Ayoo  
Ayoo  
Dughu, yagha yagha yagha dughu yaaaa

English Translation

Akpankolo  
Akpankolo  
My pot  
Stooping down  
A person that fails will go

kpankolo  
kpankolo  
Ogene  
Ayoo  
Dughu yagha yagha yagha dughu yaaa.
ONYE ENENA ANYA N'AZU

Call: Onye enena anya n'azu
Response: Mmonwu anyi na a ga n'ilo.
Call: Onye enena anya n'azu
Response: Mmonwu anyi na a ga n'ilo
Call: Onye nee anya n'azu
Response: Mmonwu anyi ga apia ya utali

Song 4: Onye Enena Anya N'azu
Don't turn to look back,
Any person that looks back

English Translation
Our masquerade is moving outside (2x)
will be flogged by the masquerade.
Song 5: Onye ga Agba Egwu
Call: Onye ga agba egwu  Response: I yaaa ga agba egwu I ya
Ada ga agba egwu                   I yaaa ga agba egwu I ya
O bu ifele n’eme gi?            
O bu ifele umu okorobia?
I ga agba egwu, I ga agba egwu  I ga agba egwu e ewo
Ekwensu lapu ya                  ka o naa Ka o naa be di ya
Ekwensu lapu ya                  ka o naa Ka o naa be di ya

English Translation
Who will dance                     I yaaa, will dance I ya
Ada will dance                     I yaaa, will dance I ya
Are you ashamed of dancing?       Are you going to dance - e ewo.
Are you ashamed of boys?           To go to her husband place. (x2)
Are your going to dance,
are your going to dance,
Devil leave her
Musical theatre, a long-standing and effective extra-curricular activity in many elementary schools, encompasses all of the fine and performing arts. Experiences in elementary musical theatre have been found to encourage students learn to trust one another, take risks, become part of a larger community, learn to interact more effectively with their peers, form a deeper and more sophisticated sense of creative identity, and gain ownership over the creative process and product. Here, just like the musical games, the musical theatre should projects performances that are culturally rooted to the community where the child is from. The musical theatre becomes the easiest platform to instill the basic cultural values of the community in the child. Since the children will be the characters in the performance, performances promoting the basic cultural values should be encouraged. Research shows that these benefits last a lifetime and yet elementary teachers are faced with a lack of time, support, and resources for musical theatre opportunities—especially in schools facing socio-economic challenges. The following songs will engage student in musical theatre activities. For example:

**EZE NNUNU**

NWAMARA, A.O

[Musical notation image]
SONG 1: EZE NNUNU

Igbo                                      English translation
Nwata erikwalam eh!                      My Child do not eat me
Adighi erimeri eh!                       I am not to be eaten
Abum eze nnunu eh!                       I am king of the bird
Adighi erimeri eh!                       I am not to be eaten
Asi namu nwereńku eh! (x2)              If that I still have my wing (x2)
Felie fekulu chukwu (x2)                 I will fly up to God (x2)
Mgbe miri mara nnunu eh!                When the rain falls on the bird
Aru n’ aju ya oyi eh!                   It makes the body cold
Erikwalam kparanuma (x2)                Do not eat me (x2)

SONG 2: EKWORO NWUNYE DIM

Igbo                                      Response
Oh! Nwamuo ka’m koro gi                  i-ni-ne (x2)
Nwunye dim di njo                        i-ni-ne
M’ gara kurum mmiri n’enyeye nwa        i-ni-ne
Osi mu kwuoya ugwo mmiri, mmiri nwa     i-ni-ne
Osi mu je n’ Ogbà churu iyi puta         i-ni-ne
M si ya ejighi taa eje n’Ogbà lotsa      i-ni-ne
Ka ma gini?                              i-ni-ne
Eze ogba,                                i-ni-ne
Mmiri sere amuma la n’eluigwu            i-ni-ne
Mmiri sere amuma ka onwa na eti         i-ni-ne
Ewo! Nnenwa ndo                          i-ni-ne (x2)
Ndo, ndo, ndo                            i-ni-ne
Oh! Nwamuo, nwamu, nwamuo               i-ni-ne
Biko nuru n’olum                         i-ni-ne

English translation
Oh! The spirit child let me tell you my story i-ni-ne (x2)
My co-wife is bad                         i-ni-ne
I went and took water from her pot        i-ni-ne
To feed my child                          I-ni-ne
She became enraged and asked that I should replace the water that I took for my child. I-ni-ne
She asked me to fetch the water from the deity stream, i-ni-ne
I told her the stream is forbidden today i-ni-ne
But why the deity stream?                i-ni-ne
The water that falls heavy with thunder   i-ni-ne
The water that strikes lightening when the moon is shining at night i-ni-ne
E-wo! Baby’s mother sorry                 i-ni-ne (x2)
Sorry, sorry, sorry                       i-ni-ne
Oh! Spirit child, spirit child, spirit child i-ni-ne
EKWORO NWUNYE DI

Allegretto

Arr. by Onyedum

Oh! nwa - mo ka'm ko - ro gi i - ni ne Nwu - nye dim di n -

jo i - ni ne m - gara ku - ru'm miri'm ne - ye nwa i - ni ne, o - si mu

kwo ya - ugo - wo mi - ri, mi - ri Nwa i - ni - ne, m - si ya o - chue m'o gba'o si - me - e chun'o

gba i - ni - ne, ka - ma gi - ni? i - ni - ne, E - ze o - gba, i - ni - ne, m - mi ri

se re ma na ma la n'i - e - lu'i - gouv, i - ni - ne, m - mi ri se re amuma k'o nwa - n'i -
ti, i - ni - ne E - wo! N - ne nwa'n - do, i - ni - ne E - wo! N - ne nwa'n -
do, i - ni - ne. Do - do, i - ni - ne, do - do do, i - ni - ne Oh! na - mmo, nwa mmo,

- nwa mmo, nwa mmo bi - ko, nu - ru n'o - lum, i - ni - ne
The focus of this musical theater play is to pass a message of pain and agony to the audience. Song number two (2) is talking about the ill treatment that was meted out on a junior wife by the co-wife. A man married two wives, and one day, the junior wife took water from the co-wife’s pot to feed her child. The co-wife became enraged by the act, and in order to punish her, she demanded that the junior wife should go to a particular far stream which she would pass through the land of the spirit. On her way, she was accosted by the spirits, and she explained why she went to fetch water there. This song serves as a vehicle for thought and ignites actions of the musical theater play. Involving student in musical theater performance will not only improve their musical knowledge but it will ignite their sense of morals on how to show compassion to one another and be kind. Engaging student in musical activities will enhance attractiveness that will reduce the rate of dropout in school.

CONCLUSION
There are many ways to bring the arts into the classroom on a daily basis. It is clear that there are compelling reasons to nurture arts education in the elementary years. And it is also clear that there is no single approach best suited for all pupils; what is required is a multiplicity of approaches because children differ from one another and, consequently, often learn in profoundly differing ways, even within the arts. More so, cultural and regional characteristics will somewhat influence the type and nature of music to be used thus flexibility in approaches to teaching and learning will be required, in order to maximize opportunities for children to thrive in their communities. Finally, musical arts education must include learning in, about, and through the music, and these different approaches require differing levels of resources and expertise.

REFERENCES