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**ASSESSING MUSIC AND DANCE CULTURE FOR CHILDREN PSYCHOLOGY IN LEARNING PROCESS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN OGUN STATE**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*The study sought to assessing music and dance culture for children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils in Ogun State. It is a non-experimental study, which involves the use of a simply survey research design where questionnaires were used to acquire necessary data for the research work. Population comprises of all primary school in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State. Random sampling technique was used to select 10 Primary schools teachers in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State, 20 teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of 200 as sample for study. Two (2) research hypotheses were raised and tested in this study. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and data collected were analyzed using chi-square statistical tool. The research findings revealed that overall child functioning is positively affected by music and dance activities. This effect is most convincingly demonstrated with regard to cognitive functioning. Specifically positive effects have been found on enhancement of cognitive task performance, such as concentration and special task performance, on academic performance, and music as a facilitator of cognitive processes. Therefore, it is highly recommended that mass music and dance experiencing activities, in which all pupils are enabled to express themselves freely, should be provided for daily school programme, government should make the music and dance programme a fully-fledged subject in the primary school curriculum. It should not be taken as an alternative to any other subject in the primary school curriculum.*

***Keywords****:* Music, Dance Culture, Children, Psychology, Learning Process

**Introduction**

Our culture to a large extent depends on children participating and learning in musical and dance activities. Booth (2004) states that “We want our children to grow into adulthood with arts-enhanced lives, engaging fully in the world’s activities with their aesthetic, cognitive, physical and emotional strengths – entwining these life processes as often as possible” (p. 9). The Performing Arts show young children how to learn by providing them with activities which enables and inspires them to want to learn. It is noted in the literature (Charadia, 1995), that children in the early years of education learn most effectively through actively participating in experiences in music, drama and dance, with the encouragement and support of their classmates and teachers.

Culture plays a vital role in a child’s perception and appreciation of music. The manner in which a child is introduced to the first sound of music makes a significant impact in the life of the child.Not only do children participating in art grow cognitively, but they grow emotionally and socially. According to Carol Korn-Bursztyn, "High quality early childhood programs place a premium on activities that encourage, rather than hinder, the development of imagination in children". The present research shows how necessary it is for the educational system, especially in the primary school years, to adopt reforms and present new ways of instruction, in order to contribute effectively to the holistic development of students’ personalities (Mason, 2011). More than ever, there is an urgent need nowadays for educational practices that build on students’ already acquired knowledge and motor experiences in order to enhance their creativity and help them progress within a context of joy, satisfaction and fun. Such a context is especially important for music and dance teaching, since it gives students the chance to participate in more effective terms that will foster their social, emotional, psychomotor and cognitive skills and promote their willingness to learn and participate actively.

Children’s early experience with dance and music provides them with daily learning and play opportunities aimed at enhancing their cognitive and social development, which allows their minds to properly develop as they learn and grow together (Sylva et al., 2007). High quality childcare and education enhances children’s development because they are engaging in stimulating and cognitively facilitating activities (Sylva et al., 2007).Dance and music can help younger children develop a better memory when they use the creative movement and imaginative process (Sacha & Russ, 2006). The process of children’s memory reconciliation is similar to the process of applying the name of the dance step to the novel step, and this is where the use of play as a teaching tool might be most beneficial (Sacha & Russ, 2006). The play used in the dance class setting is similar to gestures, as it incorporates whole-body movements in an imaginative manner. In this way, play that incorporates dance and creative movement may help younger children learn better (Sacha & Russ, 2006).

Research suggests that children who engage in activities such as dance and music have been shown to be developmentally more advanced and to be better able to focus in school than children who are not engaged in the arts (Sylva et al., 2007). Creative dance is defined as the interpretation of a child’s ideas, feelings, and sensory impressions expressed symbolically in movement forms through unique uses of his or her body (Lobo & Winsler, 2006). Children who have opportunities for creative movement are better able to successfully negotiate interpersonal conflicts and are less likely to act out with others, both during preschool and at home (Lobo & Winsler, 2006).

Dance and music allow children the opportunity to take part in a fun and exciting activity that generally stimulates behaviors associated with positive self-expression, muscle development, regulation of motions, heightened communication skills, heightened memory, greater coping mechanism, and opportunities for imagination and creativity that children without dance instruction. It is important for children to be able to engage in activities that will stimulate their brain and give them the tools they need to succeed later in life (Hadders-Algra, 2005). At four years of age, a typically developing child will be able to run, jump, climb stairs with alternating feet, throw a ball overhand, trace a straight line, and use scissors (Hadders-Algra, 2005). As children grow older, they need more opportunities to play, exercise both fine and gross motor skills, and appropriately express their emotions (Hadders-Algra, 2005).

Childhood development has always been a major topic when studying psychology of learning. This makes sense because the brain develops from the time a child is conceived to the time that child has reached around the age of twenty-seven. The fine and performing arts have a strong influence on the development of children and young teenagers. When people are surrounded by art, whether it is music, visual art, dance and creative movement, or even theater, their brain stimulation is running at a much higher pace. This allows people to express emotion, grow in their cognitive abilities, and learn to channel in on their focus. Thus, by incorporating art into the lives of young children, society is helping to enhance their neurological development, social development, along with academic development and success.

Throughout the course of history, human beings have always utilized music as a medium to comment upon life experiences. Great epic stories such as Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey have been transmitted down to us through songs. Children are no exception and they can learn and adopt this in their normal process of development. Greenberg (1979) opines that music contributes in no small way to the development of the child. The Nigerian child shares musical experiences with his/her mother when as a child, strapped behind his/her mother’s back, they have actively participated in social gatherings, festivals and ceremonies. Music traditions in sub-Saharan African cultures start from the home. Stressing this methodological imperative, Nketia (1974) explains that the African mother sings to her child and introduces him or her to music right from the cradle. In the rural African environment children participate in peer group traditional music learning. This typical African methodological approach must be exploited in the planning and delivery of school.

Primary education as referred to in the document is education given in an institution for children normally between the ages of 6 to ± 11 years old. Since the primary school is the foundation on which the rest of the educational system is built upon, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in its National Policy on Education (NPE 1981) has included music as one of the core subjects in the school curriculum. This policy was devised to cultivate and develop an interest among primary school pupils in the cultural arts embedded in performance experiences such as music, dance and drama practices. In addition, Oehrle and Emeka (2003) noted that music is among the most common and most widely available cultural expressions in Africa. In fact, Meki Nzewi puts it more succinctly when he wrote: In the African sense, learning is an interactive performance experience, while performance is never-ending learning experience.

The environment in which children first encounter formal education needs to be strategically placed in music education programmes such that will bridge the ‘home and ‘school divide. Emeka (1994) notes that children in growing up and playing together generally improve their language and number skills by playing musical and rhythmic games while doing household chores or running errands. Their knowledge of history is also enhanced by listening to and participating in the telling of folk tales and in the recitation of rhythms. These arguments reinforce the view that there is reason to re-visit African traditional paradigms to determine norms for effective childhood education. According to Kentel & Dobson (2007), the most inventive learning takes place on the playing ground and has to incorporate movement. Meaning, in order to stimulate creativity and allow for mind-body connections to occur, teachers need to look past the conventions of desks, paper and pens in their educational strategies. This is similar to how music and dance can help to support students learning.

Music can have many social psychological impacts and meanings for people at different periods of their development (North & Hargreaves, 2008). It can be a mother’s lullaby, an artist’s exploration and expression, a performer’s dream and profession, a listener’s passion and leisure, a social setting’s ambience and a signiﬁer of ritual. Music is a resource of considerable intellectual, artistic, cultural, technological, and economical breadth and depth. It is the art of arranging sounds in time, so as to produce a continuous, unified, and evocative composition, as through melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre. It is a vocal or instrumental sound possessing a degree of melody, harmony, or rhythm.Music is culture oriented and as part of African lives, there are many cultural needs of music education.

Music is a means for self expression that allows students to connect with themselves and others, transform the environment of learning through arts integration products, provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of students, provide new challenges for students already considered successful, and connect learning experiences to the world of real work. Most importantly, educators maintain that music can reach a number of students who are not being reached and in ways that students are not otherwise being reached (Fiske, 2002). Therefore, music in the early years of a child acts as a foundation upon which future learning rests. Early interaction through music influences positively the life of a child and prepares the child to bond emotionally and intellectually with others. In this way, enduring attitudes regarding the joy of music and sharing are developed [Position statement on early childhood education, 1-3 <www.menc.org/information/perk12/echild. html>].

In contrast, Dance is a means of expression or communication in which one moves rhythmically, usually to music, using prescribed or improvised steps and gestures. In dance you leap or skip about excitedly, or move slowly and deliberately.Dance is a multidimensional experience that contributes dramatically to children’s growth. It educates children in a way that combines feelings and emotions with fundamental motor skills (Sanderson, 1988). Dance has the ability and flexibility to support student learning in a progressive fashion. Dance curriculum allows for exploration and awareness of social justice issues, it encourages and enhances critical and creative thinking, and it encourages student autonomy. According to Giguere (2005), there are five categories dance falls under: physical, social, emotional, cultural, and historical. If dance can explore all of these categories, imagine the opportunities for supportive teaching and multidisciplinary engagement.

Dance has been shown to increase critical and creative thinking abilities. Dance has proven to affect students’ self-concepts—positively. There are many positive implications for utilizing dance as a more holistic approach to teaching to include the themes of increased engagement, engaged critical thinking and creativity, and enhanced self-concept. Other reasons include, but are not limited to: dance acts as a scaffold to the content, utilizing other modes of learning helps students find ways to transfer knowledge across other content areas more easily, it can provide a venue for funds of knowledge, using dance is a way to switch things up for students, and it may help students have a more positive attitude toward the original content.Instrumental studies demonstrating that dance can impact and even facilitate learning in other subject areas (math, reading, science, social studies) abound. Most of these studies are qualitative, if not simply anecdotal, primarily because quantitative studies of the instrumental value of dance are difficult to validate.

Children’s early experience with dance and music provides them with daily learning and play opportunities aimed at enhancing their cognitive and social development, which allows their minds to properly develop as they learn and grow together (Sylva et al., 2007). High quality childcare and education enhances children’s development because they are engaging in stimulating and cognitively facilitating activities (Sylva et al., 2007).“Music is universal and can open wonderful doors to the education of children” (Behar, 2000).Music does not simply encourage active learning in students; it also motivates them to become creative and productive. Increasing the students’ motivation in the classroom through music is extremely important, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Dance provides a variety of motor skills, promotes co-operation, leadership and critical thinking, and creates the appropriate environment supporting the uniqueness of every child (Davis, 1995). Children in Nigeria – as generally in all African cultural contexts – participate in rich heritage of musical traditions from an early age. Although the nature and forms of such participation may be changing with time, the rich repertoires of musical tradition and skilled performances that ensue from their community musical practices could have beneficial effects on their learning and development if these were appropriately acknowledged and utilised within their schooling. Meanwhile, music seems to have an inherent potential for contributing towards improved reading efficacy, considering its natural connection to children’s everyday spontaneous performance-related activities.There is no doubt that music plays vital role in the education of children from birth to five years of age. Music interventions are often said to have an inﬂuence on motor, language, social, cognitive, and academic abilities (Strait et al., 2010).

Music may play an important role in meeting a child’s educational needs as it provides a means of self-expression, giving the child an outlet for feelings and emotions. Music, aside from being a source of enjoyment, is also a means of communication with others (Suthers and Niland, 2007). Music may expose the child to challenges and multi-sensory experiences which enhance learning abilities and encourage cognitive development.Dance and music can help younger children develop a better memory when they use the creative movement and imaginative process. The process of children’s memory reconciliation is similar to the process of applying the name of the dance step to the novel step, and this is where the use of play as a teaching tool might be most beneficial. The play used in the dance class setting is similar to gestures, as it incorporates whole-body movements in an imaginative manner. In this way, play that incorporates dance and creative movement may help younger children learn better. Research suggests that children who engage in activities such as dance and music have been shown to be developmentally more advanced and to be better able to focus in school than children who are not engaged in the arts (Sylva et al., 2007). Creative dance is defined as the interpretation of a child’s ideas, feelings, and sensory impressions expressed symbolically in movement forms through unique uses of his or her body (Lobo & Winsler, 2006). Children who have opportunities for creative movement are better able to successfully negotiate interpersonal conflicts and are less likely to act out with others, both during preschool and at home (Lobo & Winsler, 2006).

Dance classes allow children the opportunity to take part in a fun and exciting activity that generally stimulates behaviors associated with positive self-expression, muscle development, regulation of emotions, heightened communication skills, heightened memory, greater coping mechanism, and opportunities for imagination and creativity that children without dance instruction. It is important for children to be able to engage in activities that will stimulate their brain and give them the tools they need to succeed later in life (Hadders-Algra, 2005). At four years of age, a typically developing child will be able to run, jump, climb stairs with alternating feet, throw a ball overhand, trace a straight line, and use scissors (Hadders-Algra, 2005). As children grow older, they need more opportunities to play, exercise both fine and gross motor skills, and appropriately express their emotions (Hadders-Algra, 2005).

Dance and music are arts disciplines through which children investigate ideas and exhibit opinions about their known and unknown world. The Performing Arts make an effective contribution to the personal and social development of children. The Performing Arts provide an interesting way for teaching young children the values which many adults believe are vital in today’s society. Through the Arts children are able to develop social competencies. Participation in the Arts motivates and enhances young children’s desire to learn. The Arts have an important role in inspiring and improving the whole school environment.Basedontheliterature(includingBloomfield & Child, 2000; Jensen, 2002; Swartz, 2004), the Performing Arts are seen as important to the growth of young children physically, emotionally, cognitively, spiritually and socially.

As the importance of the classroom setting has grown and evolved over time, teachers now have an opportunity and obligation to enrich and promote learning further than before. There are several approaches to teaching through which a teacher can positively affect the productivity, behavior, and motivation of students. One of the specific strategies now commonly used to supplement and enhance student learning is the use of music and dance. Research indicates that music and dance plays an important role in culture and is a strong influence on today’s youth. Music is used to create desired moods, foster enjoyment of movement and dance, boost energy, increase happiness, bring back powerful memories, and help relaxation and focus. Furthermore, researches have shown that dance may be one of the most effective ways to teach other content areas. Whether as part of a more holistic teaching approach, a way to engage and/or enhance critical thinking, an outlet for artistic expression and creativity (as well as exercise), an influence on self-concept, or as a means for enhancing student engagement, dance and music does not only assist students and teachers in providing a new gateway for learning, but it can also become a strong attraction for the community outside of school.

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the research is to assessing music and dance culture for children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils in Ogun State

**Research Questions / Hypotheses**

1. Music will not significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils.
2. Dance culture will not significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils.

**Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all primary school in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State. Random sampling technique was used to select 10Primary schools teachers in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State, 20 teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of 200 as sample for study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. Section contained information on demographic data of the respondents while section B contained items on the main title of study. The instrument was given to experts in primary education for construct and content validation. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed chi-square statistical tool.

**Presentation of Data Analysis and Results**

HYPOTHESIS 1: Music will not significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Respondents** | **Level of significance** | **Total number** | **X2** | **Degree of freedom** | **T-value** |
| Agree | 710 | **0.05** | **200** | **100.0** | **0.05** | **9.49** |
| Disagree | 290 |

In the table, the chi-square calculated value (X2=100.00) is greater than the critical value 9.49 at 4 degree of freedom and alpha level of 0.05. This implies that the hypothesis which says music will not significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupilswas rejected. The findings indicates that music will significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils.

HYPOTHESIS 2:Dance culture will not significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Respondents** | **Level of significance** | **Total number** | **X2** | **Degree of freedom** | **T-value** |
| Agree | 822 | **0.05** | **100** | **292.82** | **0.05** | **9.49** |
| Disagree | 178 |

From the chi-square contingency in table 2b, the calculated value, (X2 = 292.82) at degree of freedom of 4 and 0.05 level of significance is greater than the table value of 9.49 as a result of this, the null hypothesis which states that Dance culture will not significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils was rejected. Therefore, dance culture will significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils.

## Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings, hypothesis one revealed that music will significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils. This finding is in line with Greenberg (1979) opines that music contributes in no small way to the development of the child. In the rural African environment children participate in peer group traditional music learning. This typical African methodological approach must be exploited in the planning and delivery of school.

Research hypothesis two revealed that dance culture will significantly influence the children psychology in learning process among primary school pupils. The finding corroborates to that of Giguere (2005), there are five categories dance falls under: physical, social, emotional, cultural, and historical. If dance can explore all of these categories, imagine the opportunities for supportive teaching and multidisciplinary engagement. Dance provides a variety of motor skills, promotes co-operation, leadership and critical thinking, and creates the appropriate environment supporting the uniqueness of every child.

**Conclusions**

Our review of the literature warrants the conclusion that overall child functioning is positively affected by music and dance activities. This effect is most convincingly demonstrated with regard to cognitive functioning. Specifically positive effects have been found on enhancement of cognitive task performance, such as concentration and special task performance, on academic performance, and music as a facilitator of cognitive processes. Such despite the fact that, as Levitin (2006) shows so eloquently in his treatise “This is your brain on music”, music evolved in human’s evolutionary history because it promotes cognitive development. Or to put it differently, the function of music for the child brain is that it prepares the brain for a number of cognitive and social activities (Cosmides & Tooby, 1989).

**Recommendations**

1. Mass music and dance experiencing activities, in which all pupils are enabled to express themselves freely, should be provided for daily school programme.
2. The government should make the music and dance programme a fully-fledged subject in the primary school curriculum. It should not be taken as an alternative to any other subject in the primary school curriculum.
3. Music teachers should be posted by the government to primary schools to ensure that music is being taught by teachers trained for that purpose.
4. The government should equip the schools with musical facilities and instruments. Equipping the primary schools with adequate musical instruments will not only boost the morale of teachers and pupils but will also enhance the effective teaching and learning.
5. Realizing the importance of music and dance, the government should make sure that when reviewing the primary school curriculum, music and dance specialists should be involved to make their valuable input.
6. The Nigerian government should provide adequate funds for infrastructure, equipment, musical instruments, qualified staff, and other facilities that will enhance music education at all levels.
7. The teacher should bear in mind that all children differ in intelligence, aptitude, interests, temperament, age, and social and religious backgrounds when instructing them; and thus make use of strategy that will carry all the pupils along in the learning processsuch as the use of music and dance method.
8. A good teacher is expected to inspire and stimulate his/her pupils and not merely to communicate a subject matter to them. The popular maxim ‘telling is no teaching and listening is no learning’ serves as a pointer to what the teacher should actually do when faced with teaching.
9. Workshops and seminars should be organized for music teachers from time to time to help them update their knowledge, and thereby improve their methods of teaching as well as expand their horizon in different areas of music.
10. Music education specialist should visit the schools from time to time to supervise the teachers. The aim of supervision however should not be fault finding but improvement in the teaching and learning process.

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