

## EXAMINING THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD: A FOCUS ON THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER.

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### ABSTRACT

Music education is very important in the development of children. It helps children to develop culturally, physically, socially as they learn to sing and dance with other children, and respond to different rhythms. Music also contributes to language development. Music plays a critical role in the growth and development of a child. The main advantage of Music education is how it can be used in different subjects in the school curriculum. As such it can actually be used as a teaching tool. Music contributes to the development of all domains of development in a child. Such domains include the cognitive, physical, social and emotional domains. A variety of methods have to be used in the learning and teaching of music. The teaching and learning of music demand a child-centred approach, since music learning is practical by its nature. The paper assesses the applicability of Kinaesthetic, Tactile, Interactive, Auditory and Direct experience approaches in the learning and teaching of music. The paper also examines the role of the teacher and the school in the teaching and learning of music in children's early stages of development. The paper analyzes the Zimbabwean ECD syllabus in terms of how it attempts to provide for the kinaesthetic, tactile, interactive, auditory and direct experience approach in the teaching and learning of Music and Dance at ECD level.

**Key words:** Domains of development; Music education; kinaesthetic, tactile; interactive; auditory; direct experience.

## **Introduction**

Music education forms a crucial part in the growth and development of a child. Music touches on all domains of development in a child from a very tender age. These include the cognitive, physical, social and emotional domains. Hence, it is of paramount importance to assess the suitability of music learning and teaching methods. The purpose of this paper is to assess the applicability of Kinaesthetic, Tactile, Interactive, Auditory and Direct experience music learning and teaching ways. The paper also examines the role of the teacher and the school in the teaching and learning of music in children's early stages of development. The last part of the paper examines the ECD syllabus in Zimbabwe within the context of how it attempts to provide for the kinaesthetic, tactile, interactive, auditory and direct experience approach in the teaching and learning of Music and Dance at ECD level. The following key terms are defined; ECD and music.

## **Definition of terms**

Early Childhood Development (ECD) may be defined as the various changes that occur for humans physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally from birth to eight years ([http: Universal class.com](http://Universalclass.com), 2014). According to WHO (2014) Early Childhood Development is the period from prenatal development to eight years of age. What a child experiences during the early years sets a critical foundation for the entire life course. Therefore ECD can be viewed as a set of concepts and facts that explain or describe the development processes and changes that take place in a child from prenatal to eight years of age.

According to The Free Dictionary (2014) music 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. Music can be defined as sounds that are sung by voices or played on musical instruments, written or printed symbol showing how music should be played or sung. Thus music can be described as the science or art of ordering tones and sounds in succession, in combination and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity. Music therefore deals with the organisation of sounds, from people or instruments.

### **The role of music in teaching and learning**

Research has shown that music learning and teaching support all learning of concepts in all other subjects within the ECD curriculum. Music enhances skills that children and facilitates language development and the acquisition of mathematics and science concepts in ECD children. Music learning and teaching can be defined as the order in which sequential objectives are introduced in a curriculum to accomplish a comprehensive objective or goal (WHO.int/ii/en/). Music learning and teaching ways according to Hobart and Frankel (1995) is a technique that provides methods for teaching essential audition skills and identify a range of objectives and areas developed through music. These areas include the following; physical, social and moral, emotional, intellectual, language, aesthetic, spiritual and sensory.

Kinaesthetic approach to music is the human body's ability to express itself through movement and dance. Children who have a predominantly kinaesthetic style of learning are thought to be discovery learners. They have realisation through doing, rather than thinking before initiating action. Gardner (1993) in Theory of Multiple Intelligences describes them as children who have body movement, eye and hand coordination and manual capabilities. He also notes that they are good dancers, demonstrators and sports people. According to Gardener (1993) the preferred

learning styles have to include physical experience, movement, touch and feel. On the other hand, Dalcroze the propounder of Kinaesthetic refers to it as Eurhythmics which means musical expression through movement. Dalcroze believed that only when children's muscles and motor skills were developed could they be properly equipped to interpret and understand musical concepts. He sought the connection between instincts for pitch and movement, time and energy, dynamics and space, music and character, and finally music temperament and the art of dancing (<http://Dalcrozeusa.org/www.dalcrozeusa.org/ii/scholarship>).

Orff also believes that movement is an indispensable aid for developing music skills or concepts. Movement in the Orff approach begins with elementary movement, untrained natural actions common to all children such as walking, running and jumping. According to Dalcroze children must be trained early to listen in order for them to appreciate music using both their minds and bodies. To develop music in relation to movement, the sounds taa, taa, taa, taa are introduced before musical signs. Children can then make movements in time to the sound. Children are asked to imitate the fathers' steps. The emphasis is on teaching from the known to the unknown. As such, it is important to introduce sounds and rhythm in the mother tongue. This can be through the use of traditional dance songs and there has to be an integration of music with other subjects. For example, in a Social Science lesson, the teacher may introduce body parts through a song or rhyme, for example '*Chibata mabvi chauya*'. This is a game played by children whilst holding their knees.

The Kinaesthetic approach is very much applicable in the ECD classes in that it is practical, involving many aspects in one. For ECD-A and ECD-B children, they can listen to sound and clap at the same time. The children can walk, run, jump or hop in time to music. For grade ones, they could skip, jump. Dodge, count or dance while

singing a song or reciting a rhyme. Kinaesthetic develops children's body awareness, basic loco-motor skills, co-ordinated movement with the use of sound. Kinaesthetic styles also help to develop balance when children walk along a straight line or string on the floor or ground. Game skills, for example, ball skills are developed as children in grade two throw to rhythm, thus development of movement in time to rhythm. Kinesthetic activities help the child relate his/her body and limbs to other objects and to the ground and to others. Children gain confidence as they are actively involved in physical activities, and self expression and self realization in aural skills of memorization, reciting, listening and singing.

On the other hand it has to be noted that music, rhythm and movement go naturally together in the development of motor skills. The development of kinaesthetic skills contributes to the total development of the child cognitively, emotionally, socially and physically.

Tactile learning and teaching style has a lot in common with the kinaesthetic learning and teaching style. In tactile learning and teaching, children learn by touching and manipulating objects. They often learn inductively, tend towards psychomotor over abstract thinking. Tactile learners prefer personal connections to topics; they benefit from demonstrations and learn by using fine motor skills. They have to handle and experiment with concrete learning materials.

The teacher's role in tactile learning is to stimulate the child's sense of touch and feel, and make him/her aware of the qualities of different substances in the environment. The teacher has to provide for exploration through the sense of touch. Exploration through the sense of touch helps children to form concepts in the

environment. Children also gain emotional satisfaction from clay modelling, paper mash, squeezing and other tactile experience as they listen to music.

In tactile learning, the teacher has to provide a rich environment with varied materials of different texture and size, for children to touch, feel and play with. A wide variety of musical tools have to be provided for children to touch and feel and play. Children can try to make their own tools. Examples of musical tools they can play with or try to make are castanets, maraca, drums, triangles, symbols and tambourines. These are tools that can be used in the percussion band. The activities in tactile learning help the children to develop the skills of touch, grasp, and reach manipulation. The child will coordinate the use of hands, fingers and sight in order to manipulate objects in the environment (Hutton, 2013). These are the zero to ECD-A infants who are developing their sensory motor skills. The tactile approach is child-centred and as such child sized musical tools have to be provided. The child has to be given the opportunity to choose the toy he/she wants to play with. The caregiver can provide music or sounds, for example tape, and lullabies and the children have to respond in their own way. As noted by Hobart and Frankel (1995) children should be given an opportunity to respond in their own way since every child is born with the ability to respond to a sense of rhythm.

The Stanford School of Medicine defines interactive learning as that which actively engages the student in wrestling with the material as lectures are changed into discussion, and student and teacher become partners in the journey of knowledge acquisition (<http://med.stanford.edu/smili/interactive-learning>). Reverman (2014) defines interactive learning as a pedagogical model that encourages students to be part of the lesson instead of passive observers, quietly sitting at a desk taking notes or memorizing information: Students interact with material, each other and the

teacher in an active way. It is learner-centred and encourages imagination and strengthens the student's critical thinking and problem solving skills (<http://ehow.com/interactive-learning-definition.html>). Its use in learning and teaching offers an opportunity to share experiences and it can serve as an introduction to music from diverse cultures. It is a non-competitive activity which helps to be relationships. Children have to learn to share, take turns and to have consideration for others. To facilitate interactive music learning, the teacher and pupils have to arrange group activities and role playing activities in class. There should be use of serious games that immerse children in virtual worlds by means of role playing and community interactive games. The use of computers and associated technology are an essential part of the teaching and learning. Such technology includes online media, smartphones, tablets, laptops among others. These activities would suit well grades two and three children. Learning can be enhanced by field trips and games. According to Gee (2003) games have the ability to teach ill-defined problem solving skills, elicit creativity, and develop leadership, collaboration, and other valuable interpersonal skills.

Auditory learners prefer listening and taking notes. They listen to patterns and follow oral directions and can use the oral language effectively. Singing develops expressive language, articulation, vocabulary, diction, and expressive use of the voice. Music develops listening skills and heightens the feeling for language. The use of discussion, dialogue, debate helps the auditory learner to participate. Playing musical instruments of different sounds and playing tapes or disc players will help the children learn. Radio and video lessons are also important and have to be used for teaching and learning purposes. Memorization, phonics, oral reading, listening to stories and cooperative learning groups enhance auditory learning. Practical

activities may include listening to sounds from the environment. These could be sounds from animals and birds and have the children imitating the sounds.

Direct experience learning as defined by Anderson, Boud and Cohen in Foley (1996) is a process in which the experience of the learner occupies central place in all consideration of teaching and learning and this experience may comprise earlier events in the life of the learner, current events, or those arising from the learner's participation in activities implemented by teachers and facilitators. In respect direct learning Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993) identified a set of assumptions about direct experience learning which are important in teaching and learning. For them learning from experience is premised on the following assumptions: Experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for, learning; Learners actively construct their own experience; Learning is a holistic process; Learning is socially and culturally constructed; and that learning is influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs.

### **Implications for the teacher and the school**

These assumptions have a variety of implications to the teacher at ECD level. The teacher has to create the environment that will make the children experience certain activities that contribute to their development. This can be done by using the child-centred approach in teaching. Such methods have to focus on hands-on experience with the child being an active participant. Other activities may include discovery learning and exploratory approaches in which the child is directly involved. Group activities also encourage participation. During music lessons children have to be afforded the opportunity to play with different instruments and make their own musical instruments.



If the different skills noted above are to be developed, children have to be exposed to music in other curriculum areas at the earliest stages of their learning. There is therefore need for integration of subjects in which music plays a major role. One way of doing it is to use music as an introduction and conclusion to any lesson. Even the lesson development stages can be punctuated by activities that involve music and movement in order to capture the interest and enthusiasm of the children at a tender age. The Zimbabwe Early Childhood Development (ECD) syllabus identifies five major curriculum areas. These are Expressive Arts, Language Arts, Mathematics and Science, Social Sciences, and Technology. These five curriculum areas are broken into further manageable curriculum areas. Music and Dance, Movement, and Art and Craft fall under Expressive Arts. Curriculum Development Unit (2012) in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Syllabus focuses on key concepts that have to be developed, objectives to be achieved, suggested activities and suggested learning areas and materials. The key concepts that have to be developed in Music and Dance include sound, rhythm, melody, musical instruments, entertainment and music and culture. From the different concepts that have to be developed in music and dance, it can be noted that most of them focus on the purpose that music serves in the development of children. Apart from being a source of entertainment, music incorporates cultures and values. Music therefore provides a platform for people to express different cultural values, sharing experiences, and develop an appreciation of other people's practices.

A close look at the suggested activities the Zimbabwe ECD syllabus suggests that the child is the centre of learning. Such learning involves playing instruments, moving to rhythm, listening to rhythm, clapping to rhythm, playing notes on instruments, playing instruments and dancing to songs and singing. Music by its

nature involves the child, and thereby promotes learning through play. Furthermore, the learning areas and materials suggested demand for a collective effort between the school and parents. Such efforts will assist in the provision of resources for the different learning areas at ECD level. These learning areas can include different musical instruments, technology play centre and outdoor play areas.

From the areas covered by the ECD syllabus, it can be observed that the syllabus has gone beyond providing guidelines what is expected to be covered. The work is so detailed as it provides the teacher with the objectives to be achieved and the activities to be covered. It is therefore a lesson plan in its own right. This provides standardisation of the teaching and learning of Music at ECD level. The different activities in the syllabus cater for the kinaesthetic, tactile, interactive, auditory and direct experience approaches advocated for in ECD.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that kinaesthetic, tactile, interactive, auditory and direct experience are approaches that are applicable to ECD classes. Their application goes beyond their use in one subject, but advocates for an integrated approach where music becomes vital in the teaching of other subjects at ECD level. While the teacher has to play an important role in guiding children in their learning, there is need for a collective effort between teachers, school heads and the community. The teaching and learning of Music and Dance can be very demanding in terms of resources if there is no support from all stakeholders.

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