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PERCEPTION OF PRE – SCHOOL TEACHERS ON ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE LEARNING OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION (ECDE) LEARNERS IN PUBLIC PRE – SCHOOLS IN MUHORONI SUB COUNTY, KENYA.

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Abstract
Kenya's education policy lays emphasis on ECDE qualification as a basis for admission into primary school. The basic education curriculum has Music and Movement as one of the subjects being taught at the ECDE level. The objectives of the study were to determine the perception of pre – school teachers on the role of Music in the development of cognitive and social skills among ECDE learners. Data was collected from 4 education officers and 114 pre-school teachers who were teaching in 97 different schools. Results of this study showed that participation in Music improved social skills, team work and confidence building of ECDE learners. It was also found that participation in Music improved acquisition of cognitive skills such as communication, language, reading and arithmetic. It was recommended that each school management should create forums during which parents and teachers share their experiences, fears and expectations with regard to Music lessons in schools.

Key Words: Music, Music and Movement, Songs and Early Childhood Education.

Introduction

Being sensitive to sound and music aids in teaching young learners to identify machines like cars, planes, and motor cycles by name. Similarly, ECDE learners can identify people or animals by their names when they are sound sensitive. Songs have been employed in transmitting messages and education of the young and the old from the early ages.

Wai-Yum (2003) studied the problems the early childhood teachers experienced in the process of top-down curriculum reform intended to include sound sensitivity as a method of teaching at a local kindergarten in Hong Kong. The purpose of the study was to reveal the lived experience of the real people in real context. It was found that the teachers experienced many problems. One of the problems was that teachers had to fulfill too many tasks for the implementation of the curriculum and they did not have adequate time to finish those tasks mainly because they were overburdened by heavy – workload. Surprisingly, the administrators did not know much about the things to implement. It followed that the teachers had a problem of lack of support and encouragement from the administrators and parents in the implementation of Music.

Odongo (2007) carried out a comparative qualitative study on teachers' perceptions in their use of sound as a medium for enhancing development in all early childhood domains/areas (e.g., cognitive, communication, physical/motor, social-emotional and self help or life skills). Eight early childhood teachers, four drawn from Kenya and four from the United States, responded to open ended interview questions about their experiences of teaching and using sound in their classrooms and personal preparation for use of sound in teaching young children. Results revealed existence of strategies used to teach music, the role of music in early childhood curricula, instructional strategies used including singing and movement and use of musical instruments. Additionally, similarities and differences in the use of Music at early childhood level were revealed.

From the foregoing Music appears to be important in the teaching of learners at ECDE level that should not be ignored in Kenya or any other country.

Statement of the Problem

Kenya's education policy (Republic of Kenya, 2013) lays emphasis on ECDE as a basis for entry into primary education and provides a curriculum which has Music and Movement as one of the subjects to be taught and expected method of instruction to learners. However, entrants to primary education in Muhoroni Sub County hardly possess communication, numeracy, sound identification, or drawing skills. Many parents of pre-school learners in the sub-county do not like seeing their children spending time in school singing (Muhoroni Sub County Education Office, 2013).

One of the interesting reactions of many parents in Muhoroni Sub County whose children are going through ECDE level is their disapproval of time taken by their children singing while in school. To them, this is a waste of time. On the other hand, academic literature across the globe documents benefits of Music in the school curriculum. In view of the documented benefits in using Music as method of teaching the Early Childhood learners, it would be interesting to investigate the opinion of pre-teachers with regard to using Music as a method of teaching at the ECDE level. This study was intended to assess the

perception of pre-school teachers on the role of Music in the learning of ECDE learners in public pre – schools in Muhoroni Sub County.

Research Objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives

1. To determine the perception of pre – school teachers on the role of Musicin cognitive development of ECDE learners in public pre – schools.
2. To establish the perception of pre – school teachers on the role of Music development of social skills among ECDE learners in public pre – schools.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design which used both qualitative and quantitative data in order to find the solution to what was being studied. The area of study was Muhoroni Sub County in Kisumu County, Kenya. Data was collected in the months of October and November 2014 from 4 education officers and 114 pre-school teachers who were teaching in 97 different schools.

Literature Review

Teaching children requires enthusiasm emanating deep from the heart of a teacher so that whatever has been taught is effectively deposited in the heart of the child. Several methods have been applied to deliver lessons to children in Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs), but one method has proved effective and popular; that is Music. Music reality lies at the heart of the pre – school tradition. Songs have been employed in transmitting educational messages to the young and the old from the early ages of known history. It is also believed that music helps develop social and cognitive skills like memory, language, reasoning, logic and arithmetic.

Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga (1999) analyzed American data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey to ascertain the relationship between involvement in arts and academic success. The main findings showed that students involved in school-based arts programs demonstrated increased creativity, lower dropout rates, increased social skills, and higher academic achievement. They also found that students from low socio-economic backgrounds who were involved in many artistic activities fared better on selected academic indicators than students from similar socio-economic backgrounds who were not involved in the arts.

A longitudinal study carried out in the United State of America among five- to seven-year-old children by Schlaug, Norton, Overy, & Winner (2005) demonstrated that music training in children results in long-term enhancement of visual–spatial, verbal, and mathematical performance. The researchers further observed that cognitive and brain effects from instrumental music training can be found in domains such as fine motor and melodic discrimination that are closely related to instrumental music training.

Holland (2011) investigated young children's perception of melodic construction in Winconsin (USA). It was aimed at finding clues about their (children's) broader cognitive development in non-musical domains. Following Jeanne Bamberger's example of musical-perceptual tasks with Montessori bells, four children aged three to six were presented with a melodic construction task and asked to create a representation of their work. Analysis of data revealed common themes with varied results of eagerness or hesitancy to participate, whether bells were moved or played, exploration of bells, internalization of rhythm, cognitive readiness for melodic construction, and role of visual representation.

Wright *et al* (2006) conducted a study in Canada to evaluate community-based afterschool arts programs (combination of theatre, visual, music and media arts) on a low-income population in Ontario. The study sought to find out whether participants would demonstrate regular and sustained attendance and whether the program would have an impact on their academic and psychosocial functioning and cognitive development. This was a longitudinal comparative study involving 183 participants aged 9 to 15 years of age from low-income communities. Results of the study indicated that structured arts programs provide an opportunity for youth to develop important communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and teamwork skills.

Kim, Wigram and Gold (2008) investigated the effects of improvisational music therapy on joint attention behaviours in pre-school children with autism in Korea using 25 ECDE learners (aged 1 to 5 years old) selected from different learning centres. Randomized controlled trial (Maryland Scale 5) methodology was used for the study, and pervasive developmental disorder, behavior inventory, a structured toy play assessment measuring non-verbal social communication skills and video techniques

were used for data collection. The findings were that joint attention skills and pro-social behaviours were found to be improving through the improvisational therapy.

Esimone, Onuora-Oguno, & Ojukwu (2014) used qualitative methods to analyse the opinions of parents, pre-school teachers, and pre-school managers on the value of singing in the learners of ECDE pupils in 6 kindergartens in Lagos, Nigeria. They enquired on the aspects of songs which predominantly arouse emotional feelings, create bonding, and encourage feelings of self esteem. It was found that songs help crying children to get happy and relaxed and it makes a child to learn easily and simply. The researchers noted that every child is created with the ability to understand the language of music. They concluded that music has a greater means through which the foundational knowledge about life should be transmitted to the growing child.

In South Africa, Horn (2009) investigated the use of music and related activities as part of an intervention strategy to improve reading skills, such as phonics, of learners who have reading difficulties. A sample of 14 grade 2 learners was interviewed. The researcher found that a wellplanne dintervention method and learning strategy through music activities may be used to develop the reading skills in learners who have reading difficulties.

Further, Andang'o (2012) sought to examine musical contexts as bridge-builders in early childhood music education in Kenya. This was a descriptive survey which employed interview method for data collection. The study covered music in 3 contexts, namely school, places of worship and homes. Four children, all between 7 and 8 years old, were interviewed concerning their performance in music in school, at home, and in the place of worship, to determine: what musical activities they engaged in within these contexts; whether these activities overlapped within the different situations; and in what ways the overlap promoted the children's musical development. The study found that children often sing at home the songs that they are taught in school, and sometimes even listen to songs that they (children) upload from the internet via their cell phones.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study was derived from Gardner's (1999) theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI), which states that intelligence is a bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture Gardner (1999) sees intelligences as potentials, possibly neural ones, that may or may not be activated depending upon the values of a culture, the opportunities available in that culture, and the personal decisions made by individuals and/or their families, teachers, and other members of the society.

Gardner (1999) identified eight human intelligences, each one having certain core operations-capacities that seem central to intelligence, for example, as phonemic discriminations would be to linguistic intelligence or mental calculations of numbers would be to logical-mathematical intelligences. He believes these capacities are likely to be mediated by specific neural mechanisms and triggered by relevant internal or external types of information.

The eight human intelligences identified by Gardner (1999) are verbal-linguistic intelligence(word smart" or book smart), mathematical-logical intelligence(math smart or logic smart), visual-spatial intelligence (art smart or picture smart), intrapersonal intelligence (self smart or introspection smart), bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (body smart or movement smart), interpersonal (people smart or group smart), naturalist intelligence (nature smart or environment smart), and musical-rhythmic intelligence (music smart or sound smart).

Gardner (1999) states that in the area of intelligence, no two people have exactly the same intelligences, nor in the same combination, and that understanding and valuing these uniqueness and differences and utilizing them for the benefit of society is of utmost importance. He states, in fact, that taking human differences seriously lies at the heart of Multiple Intelligence Theory.

According to both Montessori (1995) and Gardner (1999), the interaction of nature and nurture plays a significant role in the development of human capabilities. With respect to genetic heritability, Montessori observes that the origins of development lie within the individual and that children seem to possess what she calls natural tendencies.

Gardner (1999), too, emphasizes the importance of the environment on the development of human capabilities. Gardner (1999) believes that the "smarter" the environment and the more powerful the interventions and resources, the more competent individuals will become and the less important will be their particular genetic inheritance. He asserts that even individuals who seem gifted in a specific intelligence will accomplish little if they are not exposed to resources and materials that support that intelligence.

The two intelligences that were adopted by this study are musical intelligence and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; two most imported methods that have been adopted by pre- school instructors for lesson delivery to ECDE learners.

Results and Discussions

The first objective was to determine the perception of pre-school teachers on the role of songs in cognitive development of ECDE learners in public pre – schools. This objective was tested by measuring the perceptions on three on tones, that is; ringing bells, vibrations and beats.

Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement to the statement that tones like ringing bells help ECDE learners to learn about time and meals. Results are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Ringing Bells Help to Learn about Time and Meals

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	7.0	7.0	7.0
	Disagree	2	1.8	1.8	8.8
	Undecided	2	1.8	1.8	10.5
	Agree	35	30.7	30.7	41.2
	Strongly Agree	67	58.8	58.8	100.0
	Total	114	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 above indicates that 89.5% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement that tones like ringing bells help ECDE learners to learn about time and meals while 8.8% disagreed.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that vibrations like thunder, seldom teach ECDE about weather. Findings are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Relationship between Vibrations and Learning about Weather

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	6.1	6.1	6.1
	Disagree	23	20.2	20.2	26.3
	Undecided	4	3.5	3.5	29.8
	Agree	38	33.3	33.3	63.2
	Strongly Agree	42	36.8	36.8	100.0
	Total	114	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 illustrates that 70.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement that vibrations like thunder seldom teach ECDE learners about weather. Those who disagreed with the statement formed 29.9% of the respondents.

Perception of the teachers was sought on the statement that beats in music often make ECDE learners to know about occasions and scenes. Responses obtained are as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Beats in Music and Knowledge about Occasions and Scenes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	2.6	2.6	2.6
	Disagree	22	19.3	19.3	21.9
	Undecided	7	6.1	6.1	28.1
	Agree	48	42.1	42.1	70.2
	Strongly Agree	34	29.8	29.8	100.0
	Total	114	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 3, 42.1% of the respondents agreed that beats in music often make ECDE learners to know about occasions and scenes; 29.8% of the respondents strongly agreed; 19.3% disagreed; 6.1% of the respondents were undecided on whether beats in music often make ECDE learners to know about occasions and scenes, while 2.6% strongly disagreed. Significant to note is the fact that 71.9% of the respondents agreed that beats in music make ECDE learners know about occasions and scenes.

The findings of this study agree with results of researches conducted by Schlaug, Norton, Overy, & Winner (2005),Horn (2009), Holland (2011) and Esimone, Onuora-Oguno, & Ojukwu (2014). The researchers seem to be in agreement that Music is important in the learning process of learners at different stages in the learning process. Music is important for cognitive development of learners to enhance their understanding verbal, mathematical skills and general readiness for cognitive activities.

The second objective of the study was to establish the perception of pre – school teachers on the role of Music development of social skills among ECDE learners in public pre – schools. This objective was tested by measuring the perceptions on three items namely; social development, team work and confidence building.

When the respondents were asked to state the level of their agreement to the statement that singing helps in the social development of ECDE learners, the researcher was able to obtain responses as is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Relationship between Singing and Social Development of ECDE Learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	3.5	3.5	3.5
	Disagree	6	5.3	5.3	8.8
	Undecided	3	2.6	2.6	11.4
	Agree	33	28.9	28.9	40.4
	Strongly Agree	68	59.6	59.6	100.0
	Total	114	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 above illustrates that 59.6% strongly agreed that singing helps in the social development of ECDE learners; 28.9% agreed; 5.3% disagreed; 3.5% strongly disagreed, while 2.6% of the respondents were undecided on whether singing helps in the social development of ECDE learners. This finding indicates that over 88% of the respondents were of the opinion that singing helps in the social development of ECDE learners.

As to the statement that singing does not assist ECDE learners to work in teams, the responses that the researcher obtained are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Singing and Team Work of ECDE Learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	55	48.2	48.2	48.2
	Disagree	32	28.1	28.1	76.3
	Undecided	4	3.5	3.5	79.8
	Agree	11	9.6	9.6	89.5
	Strongly Agree	12	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	114	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 above illustrates that 48.2% strongly disagreed that singing does not assist ECDE learners to work in teams; 28.1% disagreed; 10.5% strongly agreed; 9.6% agreed, and 3.5% were undecided as to whether singing does not assist ECDE learners to work in teams or assists ECDE learners to work in teams. Significant to note is the fact that 76.3% of the respondents disagreed that singing does not assist ECDE learners to work in teams. Thus, they were of the opinion that singing assists learners to develop team work among ECDE learners.

The respondents were asked to state the level of their agreement to the statement that by participating in singing exercises, ECDE learners are able to build self confidence. Table 6 illustrates the findings that the researcher obtained.

Table 6: Participation in Singing Exercises and Confidence Building of ECDE Learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	5.3	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	3	2.6	2.6	7.9
	Undecided	1	.9	.9	8.8
	Agree	43	37.7	37.7	46.5
	Strongly Agree	61	53.5	53.5	100.0
	Total	114	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 indicates that 53.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that by participating in singing exercises, ECDE learners are able to build confidence; 37.7% agreed; 5.3% strongly disagreed; 2.6% disagreed, and 0.9% of the respondents could not decide whether by participating in singing exercise, ECDE learners are able or not able to build confidence. Important to note is the fact that 91% of the respondents agreed that by participating in singing exercise, ECDE learners are able to build confidence.

The findings of this study corroborate results of a study by Lobo & Winsler (2006) which examined the effects of an eight-week instructional program in creative dance and movement on the social competence of low-income preschool children. The researchers found significant greater positive gains over time in the children's social competence. Both internalizing and externalizing behavior problems were managed better by the experimental group compared with the control group. The findings indicated that a curriculum of dance and creative movement would have positive effects on enhancing social competence and improving behavior among preschool learners.

Other researchers such as Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga (1999), Wright et al (2006) and Kim, Wigram and Gold (2008) found music is instrumental in the development of social skills among learners. It has now been established that music helps learners to develop important communication, cooperation, conflict resolution and team work skills. Other benefits that research has found to be associated with music include enhancing creativity, self confidence and retention of learners in school.

In terms of qualitative data obtained from interviews conducted with zonal education officers, they described the confidence level of the ECDE teachers in administering songs and singing for the learning of ECDE learners, and the most representative comment was:
"*Pre-school teachers often enjoy teaching learners with many types of songs, especially traditional songs. Many teachers approve teaching using songs although other teachers feel it is a waste of time" (QA 7, QA4).*

Further, the key informants were asked to state effectiveness of music and movement for instruction in pre-schools, and the most representative comment was:
"It is very effective as learners always remember message in the song and dance. Dancing is encouraged as an instruction method for ECDE learners" (QA1, QA3).

Conclusions

What has been established through research is that music is important for enhancing social and cognitive skills of learners.Since participation in singing and art exercises have potential to improve social development, team work and confidence building of ECDE learners, pre-school educators should create adequate singing sessions for the young learners. These exercises can be in class or outside class activities. Music should be carefully incorporated in the school curriculum to acquiring learning cognitive skills such as communication, language, reading and arithmetic. Owing to the fact that some parents have negative opinions about their pre-school children singing while in school, they should be sensitized on the benefits of singing. It is possible that the negative opinion among parents is due to ignorance with regard to Music in schools. It is possible that what they do not want is the manner in which Music is incorporated and implemented in the curriculum. To overcome this, each school management should create forums during which the parents and teachers share their experiences, fears and expectations with regard to Music lessons in schools.

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