
ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL MUSIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated the quality and accessibility of primary school music education. Music education is an excellent means of enhancing pupils' compositional and performance skills, which also has a direct impact on their listening abilities in classes. Strategically, music education provides opportunities for pupils to develop creative skills and the initiative for learning processes. The study discovered that primary school music education prompts the need to cope with art and builds pupils' understanding of beauty in art. Thus, the goals of teaching music in primary school are to motivate multiple pupils' development, establish a creative attitude, develop musicality, prompt talent and skill, and acquire musical knowledge. The findings of the study revealed that there is a lack of consistent quality in music education and a lack of consistency in the provision of music education. For some students, no formal music education is provided; for others, music education is fragmentary, delivered non-continuously and lacking the sequential development that is so critical for a solid grounding in music. One of the recommendations made in the paper was that it is very essential and pertinent that governments address equity and accessibility issues, such as in the provision of music education, with schools in lower income socio-economic areas.

KEYWORDS: Primary school, Music education, Quality and Accessibility.

Introduction

Inevitably, it has been observed that pupils learn in various ways. Primary school pupils are at the operational stage. Moore and Hanson (2010) reiterated that the concrete operational stage is where children think logically about objects and events, classify objects by several features, understand numbers and realise objects that can appear in different forms. It must, therefore, be emphasised that no single method of teaching can satisfy all primary school pupils. Tamakloe et al. (2005) stated that the determination of the effectiveness or suitability of a particular teaching method depends upon the purpose for which it is intended and the way it is used. The nature and structure of music lend themselves more readily to pupil-centred activities in terms of teaching and learning (Flolu and Amuah 2008; Jackman 2005). It is, therefore, important for teachers to adopt a variety of teaching methods that maximise pupils' active participation in musical activities and also meet the whole range of their learning needs in the classroom (Button, 2010).

Music teaching in primary school should prompt a need to cope with art and build an understanding of beauty in art. Cohen et al. (2010) are of the view that many skills can be learned easily through modelling rather than instruction through verbal explanation. When adopting these methods, how to sing loud and soft, for example, can be demonstrated by the teacher when discussing the concept of volume with pupils. However, there seems to be a lack of consistent quality and accessibility in music education and a lack of consistency in the provision of music education in primary schools. On the issue of quality and accessibility, it is observed that pupils tend to miss out because of a lack of provision. Mostly, this is accredited to the socio-economic background of pupils.

Concept of Primary School

A primary school is a school for the primary education of children who are five to eleven years of age. Primary education is typically the first stage of formal education, coming after preschool or kindergarten and before secondary school. As rightly observed by Umoh (2006), education helps the individual to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and emotionally by providing a suitable environment and teaching him new knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will enable him to be useful to himself and his society. Primary education takes place in primary schools. A good foundation is laid. Education at this level strengthens the learner's feet to climb the educational ladder to the zenith of academic attainment.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) states that primary education refers to education given to children aged 6 to 11 in primary schools and that the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system since the rest of the education system is built upon it.

The primary level of education is crucial to the success of other levels, so there is a need for the stakeholders to do everything possible to lay a solid foundation for its sustainability. As pointed out by Onyeagba (2006), Saidu (2008), and Sen (2010), primary education is the foundation for a child's learning on which every other level of learning depends. According to FRN (2004), in order to give the primary school focus, the goals of this level are to:

- Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability of communicate effectively;
- Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.
- Develop in the child ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.
- Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.
- Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

Concept of Primary School Music

In the lower classes of primary school, music is an ideal instrument for the powerful encouragement of positive emotions, a feeling of affiliation, togetherness, and tolerance. It can offer a powerful contribution to the growing need to encourage and build a non-violent culture among school pupils. Konkolova (2008) believes that music teaching in primary schools should prompt a need to cope with art and build an understanding of beauty in art. Thus, the goals of teaching music in primary schools are to motivate multiple pupils' development, establish a creative attitude, develop musicality, prompt talent and skill, and acquire musical knowledge. Kos (2010) mentions that music teaching syllabuses do not prepare pupils to be competent participants in musical life in contemporary society. He offers several solutions to this issue.

Firstly, Kos deems that the music profession has to develop new standards that

reflect the needs of today's pupils. Secondly, music teaching syllabuses have to be legally regulated on a state, i.e., national level. Thirdly, the teachers have to be musically competent and able to teach music programmes, and fourthly, it is necessary to raise awareness of new approaches in music teaching. McPherson (2007) observed, especially within primary schools, that general teachers without specialist training in music find it difficult to plan, record, and assess music. In the same vein, Emery (2008) observed that overworked generalist primary teachers meant that music experiences were often rushed and limited. As claimed by Letts, Elhay & Lierse (2005), there is strong evidence that the use of the primary generalist teacher to teach music is, in a large number of cases, depriving students of a quality music education. Dobrota (2010) considers that music teaching is not a privilege for only musically talented children but is meant for the whole school population. It must be a planned influence on forming the child's personality and arousing interest, needs, abilities and aesthetic relationships towards music. The subject must create active listeners, connoisseurs, and fans of music who would be able to experience music in its entirety. The role of music teaching in the lives of schoolchildren is important and represents an irreplaceable component in forming a personality as a whole.

Concept of Music Education

Since the mid-1980s, there has been an explosion of research and theoretical development within music psychology, as well as a growing interest in and cross-fertilisation with other disciplines. Music education is a supportive performing art through which confidence can be built and student engagement achieved. In general terms, there is a lack of consistent quality in music education and a lack of consistency in the provision of music education. For some students, no formal music education is provided; for others, music education is fragmentary, delivered non-continuously and lacking the sequential development that is so critical for a solid grounding in music. DEST (2005) observed that sometimes it was taught by teachers who were ill-prepared to do so. One of the main tasks of the developmental psychology of music, and one with very obvious implications for music education, lies in working out a theory or model of musical development, since school curricula and pedagogies presumably ought to be based on a view of the capabilities of pupils at different age levels.

Quality of Primary School Music Education

Prominent among the goals of the National Review of School Music Education, which reported its findings in 2005, was to investigate and make recommendations

about the current quality of music education in schools (DEST, 2005). Its report defined quality in a rather broad sense: the general standard of music education, including learning effectiveness, short-and long-term benefits, and the value of music education (DEST, 2005). This conflates what seem to be separate issues of quality, purpose, and value. In fact, what the report writes about in terms of quality is, sensibly, mostly limited to the initial part of this definition, that is, the general standard of music education, including the effectiveness of learning (DEST, 2005). The report found both areas of strength and cause for concern. It emphasised that there are some fine examples of school music programmes (DEST, 2005), with the main factors behind the success of music programmes within schools being the dedication, enthusiasm, and expertise of music teachers; the practical and enjoyable nature of the teaching programmes; the support of school principals and school executives; and endorsement of school music programmes by parents and the wider community (DEST, 2005).

One-to-one instruction in a master-apprentice setting has been the normal mode of music performance instruction for centuries, and still dominates areas whose "body of knowledge is more experience-based than evidence-based" (Gies 2019). Not only do collaborative settings broaden the scope for musical learning, they also facilitate important social learning (Christophersen 2013; Nielsen, Johansen, and Jrgensen 2018). The main explanation given by the report for the deficiencies in quality was an apparent deficiency in status, understood as the "relative position or standing of music education in the eyes of teachers, parents, students and the wider community. But overall, the conclusion of the report in relation to quality is equivocal at best and seriously critical in many respects.

Accessibility of Primary School Music Education

On the issue of accessibility, recent reports conclude that many students miss out on effective music education not just because of a lack of quality of provision but also because of a lack of equity of access (DEST, 2005). Inequities in access are partly explained by the socio-economic background of students: students from low socio-economic circumstances are often disadvantaged in access (DEST, 2005). Where some forms of music education, such as specialised instrumental training, are only available on a user-pays basis outside of the classroom, this again highlights that those who play music are those who can pay for music (DEST, 2005). Particular disparities were associated with geographic location, and especially with rural and provincial schools. Geography and the tyranny of distance hindered staffing and teaching of music in many rural and remote schools. Country and rural students are likely to miss out on music education (DEST,

2005). The National Review's findings about accessibility across states, regions, and social groups also reflected earlier findings. According to Russell-Bowie (2007), there is a substantial difference in music education opportunities and practises between schools with higher and lower populations, between those from higher and lower areas, and between rural and urban schools.

Conclusion

Students miss out on effective music education not just because of a lack of quality of provision but also because of a lack of equity in access. In general, there is a lack of consistency in quality in music education and a lack of consistency in the provision of music education. For some students, no formal music education is provided; for others, music education is fragmentary, delivered non-continuously and lacking the sequential development that is so critical for a solid grounding in music.

Recommendations

1. It is very essential and pertinent that governments address equity and accessibility issues, such as in the provision of music education, with schools in lower income socio-economic areas.
2. A suitable motivation should be used to arouse the children's interest in the new song. This is dependent upon the teacher's relationship with the class. It need not be long and involved.
3. The song should be sung several times with the teacher listening carefully to pick weak points which might need to be re-modeled. It is important for the teacher to model the song at first, but it is equally important that the teacher stop singing and concentrate on listening to the children when it is their turn to sing.

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