

# CHAPTER 19

## EFFECT OF VOCAL MUSIC ON LEARNING AMONG PUPILS IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN IKOT EKPENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE

Johnson James Akpakpan, Mary Johnson Akpakpan & Peremodoere Ayebatonye-Fatayi

### Abstract

This study aimed to explore the effects of vocal music on learning among pupils in selected primary schools in *the Ikot Ekpene* Local Government Area. Also, to discover how vocal music influences the emotional, social, physiological and cognitive development of children. The methodology used for the study includes the questionnaire developed to elicit information on the performance of the pupils from the teachers. Participants consisted of One hundred and Fifty (150) pupils from the five primary schools with pupils from primary three, (age bracket Six to Seven years old). Two groups were involved – the experimental and the control groups. Each class in each school was divided into two groups (Group A: Experimental) and (Group B: Control). Achievement tests were also conducted on the pupils to determine the rate of assimilations and retention of learned materials with vocal music as a teaching aid and learned materials without vocal music as a teaching aid. It was discovered that the children's performances and the rate of assimilation and retention ability on learned materials with vocal music as a teaching aid in the Experimental groups were higher than the performances and the assimilation and retention ability on learned materials without vocal music as a teaching aid in the Control groups. In conclusion, the study recommends that the use of vocal music as instructional material in learning in childhood is important. Therefore, teaching music as well as other subjects with vocal music should be incorporated into educating children.

**Keywords:** Effect, Vocal music, Learning and Pupils.

---

### Introduction

Research has shown that music has unique effects on learning and attitude. Music is therefore a potent medium which can bring dramatic changes both positively and negatively in humans. It is noteworthy that the earliest stages of learning for young people are the most important, for it is at this stage, that the fundamentals of learning are instilled into a child. Therefore, dramatic effects

on the future of a child's learning can be enhanced, if learning at this stage is cautiously done. Incidentally, music can make learning easier for a young child by incorporating music lessons into a child's normal activities. According to Bower, 1994 "music instruction can improve a child's spatial intelligence for a long time perhaps permanently" (p.143).

Furthermore, if one is asked about the meaning of music. One could sum up that music is multidisciplinary; therefore, music is science, mathematics, history, physical education/medicine and foreign languages. Besides the aforementioned, music is art because it evokes feelings and emotions. Judging from the above it is worthy of note that the study of music can encompass the study of so many disciplines. For instance, children who have music as an integral part of their learning also acquire critical thinking needed in today's workforce. According to Akin 2005, "Children in band develop higher cognitive skills and increased ability to analyse and evaluate information. They also learn about teamwork and conflict/resolution skills required for success in the modern workplace while enjoying the healthy, positive participation of band with friends" (p.10).

As earlier mentioned, music is a very powerful tool and its importance to other subjects is as diverse as history and mathematics. For some learners, music can be a gateway to knowledge; the mood of a song may communicate more clearly than words. The study of rhythm can help students understand fractions, and the study of the science of a musical instrument can lead to an understanding of vibration mood in physics.

Admittedly, the use of music as instructional material in learning during childhood is important as a foundation for learning other subjects in humanities and sciences. For instance, in natural science songs like:

Early to bed and early to rise

That's the way to be happy and bright" were used.

There were also songs like the mulberry-bush:

This is the way we wash our clothes, wash our clothes, wash our clothes,

This is the way we wash our clothes, wash our clothes, early in the morning.

This is the way we comb our hair, we comb our hair, we comb our hair,

This is the way we comb our hair, Early in the morning.

Also, there is a mnemonic in song form for remembering the number of days in each month of the year, and it goes thus: Thirty days hath September, April, June and November, All the rest have thirty-one, excepting February alone, which has twenty eight days, or twenty-nine days in a leap year. Odunuga. (2009). She adds, "Music can be used by teachers to aid memorization of poems and rhymes. It is also used to teach addition and subtraction e.g. ten green bottles, thirty days hath September. (p.10).

Vocal music which is music performed with the human voice seems the most natural aspect of music. It dwells within two domains although both are interwoven into one. These domains are the sonic and the verbal domains. It is therefore imperative that the propagation of vocal music can have immense usefulness within the educational setting. Research has disclosed that various types of vocal music aid in teaching and learning. Therefore, folk music, traditional music and hymns for example are useful sources of music to be used as an aid to teaching in the class, especially in calming hyperactive children. The point here is that no lesson learnt by using vocal music as instructional material, even when it serves as mere entertainment was useless, this is because music is integral to life activities.

### **Statements of the Problem**

The negative attitude of the government, curriculum planners, school management, teachers and pupils toward the full absorption of vocal music in particular and music, in general, is alarming. This stems from the fact that the importance of vocal music is not fully realized by such teachers, school management and the general public. This ugly trend emanates from the fact that so much credence is placed on the study of science and other science-related disciplines to the total relegation of music and other humanistic-related disciplines. Studies have shown that music is one of the most important agents that enhances teaching and learning in all facets of human endeavour. Unfortunately, vocal music in Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria in general is not given its due currency in our educational system. Furthermore, a critical study of the level of employment of vocal music in our primary school and its effects on teaching and learning could lead to a proper analysis of the situation thus, giving way to succinct suggestions and recommendations for the adequate employment of vocal music for extraction of its potentialities.

Globally, the importance of music is pronounced, no wonder in the most civilized world the inclusion of music in the school curriculum is always almost an issue of legislation. Sometimes, in the earliest level of education, the suitability and the importance of music are always an embodiment of the child's acts. According to Idamoyibo (2021),

The essential role music plays in the development of children in elementary schools and higher institutions were the reason why the great philosopher who influenced educational policies in the world made music one of the core subjects in schools. Okonkwo and Ikemerike in Idamoyibo affirm that Aristotle the great philosopher regarded music as an indispensable factor in education because it is capable of arousing the mental faculties, the reason why the medieval universities also valued it and placed it in the quadrivium, aimed at grooming the mental faculties of the child and increasing his/her intellectual capability.

In support of this, Stansell (2005) summarizes that music aids in the development of the following:

- (1) The intellectual potential of language, study habits, reading, mathematics, fact-memorizing, visual and aural memory;
- (2) The emotional potential of getting along with others, moving, creating, interacting with grace and sensitivity, expressing emotion and relieving stress;
- (3) Spiritual potential of hearing and trusting the 'inner voice'; and caretaker potential, that is, capturing joy with the infant, music embracing you both, sharing dance/ song. Sharing love, and singing life' song (p.18)

Stansell (2005) also went further to state thus:

Like close sisters, music and language help each other in the process of learning, with human expression, as a common goal. Interconnections between the musical and linguistic areas enable music to assist in learning vocabulary and phrases, which tasks are governed by linguistic intelligence (p.21).

To throw more light on this, Sellnow and Sellnow in Elijah et al (2018) said thus:

The effect of music on memory retention is quite (sic) powerful. Certain types(genres) of music are known to activate the left and right parts of the brain, which maximizes learning and aids retention. Knowing which genre of music to listen to while learning, studying or preparing for a test can help you improve your retention of the information and gain more success in test results. Music communicates different types of messages through the combination of lyrics and sound (p.67).

In line with the above Collins in Idamoyibo (2021) states that:

Music literally 'lights up' the brain like no other human activity and that neuroscience has proven that some activities such as reading or solving mathematical problems use discrete areas of the brain, while listening and creating music engage multiple areas of the brain simultaneously or in complex, interrelated and amazingly fast sequences. He further states that: 'I was struck at how quickly music processing occurs in the brain. When listening to music with both children and adults, it only takes one or two bars for feet to start tapping or hands to start clapping. The human brain responds to music stimuli very fast and the fast manner it processes in the brain accounts for the reason why one who stammers can sing fluently

without the negative effect of his/her speech impairment. Music in schools plays a significant role in enabling pupils with a speech impairment to develop communication skills faster (p.34 & 35).

Also, Vidal (2012) asserts thus: “Aural skills and mental development are simultaneously promoted through alertness to sounds, patterns, counts and sights, names of personalities events, places, things, animals and situation” (p.295 & 296). According to Akpakpan J.& Akpakpan, M (2022) “Music has long been recognised as a powerful tool that functions in human social, religious, political and recreational activities. Its significant role in imparting education and moral values to the growing children cannot be underestimated” (p.182). They also went further to state that “Music can also inculcate moral values of hard work, honesty, unity, values, discipline and peaceful coexistence to the children” (p.183)

To throw more light on the above, the National Association for Music Education (MENC) 2007 writes as follows:

The study of music contributes in important ways to the quality of every student's life. Through singing, playing instruments, and composing, students can express themselves creatively, while knowledge of notation and performance traditions enables them to learn new music independently throughout their lives (MENC 2007).

MENC notes also that:

Skills in analysis, evaluation and synthesis are important because they enable students to recognize and pursue excellence in their musical experiences and to understand and enrich their environment. Because music is an integral part of human history, the ability to listen with understanding is essential if students are to gain a broad cultural and historical perspective. The adult life of every student is enriched by the skills, knowledge, and habits acquired in the study of music (MENC 2007).

Furthermore, and as stated earlier, the importance of music in education has strongly shown the marked need for its inclusion in most school curricula and this can be traced back to ancient Greece. Okafor (2005) elucidates the importance of music to mankind by quoting Plato thus: Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten imparting graces. (p.242). Again, some people out of ignorance and lack of awareness have often been asking questions such as: 'why teach music as part of the school curriculum? Is it not an extracurricular activity? Leffard (2005) answered these questions vividly thus:

Music is an academic subject with its own special body of knowledge, skills, and unique way of knowing and thinking. Musical intelligence is one of seven different human bits of intelligence that need to be developed and nurtured. Music offers unique opportunities for creativity and self-expression. Music enables students to develop skills such as abstract thinking, problem-solving, self-discipline, and teamwork. Music can be integrated into other subjects in the curriculum, and content from other subjects may integrate into the study of music (p.13).

According to Burgo in Akpakpan (2018) “because music has so much to do with the moulding of the character, it is necessary that we teach it to our youth” (p.47). Tufts in Akpakpan (2018) adds that “we are only beginning to learn that the right kind of music and singing taught to children while they are young has the power to change the course and destiny of their life” (p.47).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study sets to explore:

1. Why vocal music should be used as an aid to learning among pupils in primary schools
2. The effect of vocal music on teaching and learning in primary schools in *Ikot Ekpene* Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State.
3. The assessment of the performance of pupils that used music as an aid to their learning.

### **Method**

This study was designed to use the experimental research method but to gather information from the teachers and pupils, the survey method was also incorporated. The experimental and control groups were used for the study. Post-tests were administered to both groups to determine the rate of assimilation and retention of learning materials that were taught with vocal music as an aid, and without vocal music as an aid respectively. Five primary schools were selected with pupils from primary three, (age bracket six to seven years old). Also, issues on gender were not considered. A random sampling technique was used in selecting the five (5) schools in the Study area. Thirty (30) pupils were selected from each of the classes. In all the schools, seventy-five (75) pupils were assigned to the experimental and control group respectively.

### **Participants.**

Participants consisted of One hundred and Fifty (150) pupils from the five primary schools with pupils from primary three, (age bracket Six to Seven years old). All participants were pupils of the St. Saviour African Schools, Government School 1, Holy Child International nursery/primary,

Elizabeth Memorial Nursery/Primary and *Ememobong* Nursery/Primary School all in *Ikot Ekpene* Local Government Area. Two groups were involved – the experimental and the control groups. Each class in each school was divided into two groups (Group A Experimental) and (Group B Control). Achievement tests were also conducted on the pupils to determine the rate of assimilations and retention of learned materials with vocal music as a teaching aid and learned materials without vocal music as a teaching aid.

### **Instrumentation**

The major instrument for this study was the questionnaire. The questions were drawn to elicit information about the effect of vocal music on learning in selected primary schools in *Ikot Ekpene* Local Government Area of *Akwa Ibom* State. Instructions were provided on how to respond to the items. Respondents were expected to express their opinions regarding each item by ticking the opinions that favoured their judgement.

### **Procedures**

After selecting the schools for the study, the researchers visited the schools and requested the head teachers for permission to use their schools for the study. The questionnaire was administered to both teachers and pupils to elicit information about the effect of vocal music on learning among pupils. Achievement tests were also conducted on the pupils to determine the rate of assimilations and retention of learned materials with vocal music as a teaching aid and learned materials without vocal music as a teaching aid and this was done after five (5) days of the initial teaching. The classroom teachers were employed to help in creating a conducive atmosphere for the test administration.

### **Results**

#### **The Experiment**

Each class in each school was subdivided into two groups consisting of fifteen (15) pupils. The Control and experimental group were taught and tested differently. The results were analysed for this study.

#### **The Result of the First (1<sup>st</sup>) Test Is Shown Below**

90-100 = outstanding

70 -90 = Excellent

60 – 69 = Good

40 – 59 = Fair

0 – 39 = Fail

**Table 1**

S/N	SCHOOLS	CONTROL GROUP				
		90-100	70-90	60-69	40-59	0-39
1.	St. Saviour African School	0	2	4	6	3
2.	Government School 1	1	1	3	5	5
3.	Holy Child Int'l pri. School	0	2	5	7	1
4.	Elizabeth Memorial Pri. school	2	1	2	5	5
5.	<i>Ememobong</i> Primary School	0	1	3	6	5
Total		3	7	17	29	19
	Total Number of pupils in the control group	75	75	75	75	75
	Average Percentage%	4%	9%	22%	39%	25%

The above table shows the total number of pupils in the control groups and the results of the 1<sup>st</sup> test given

**TABLE 2**

S/N	SCHOOLS	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP				
		90-100	70-90	60-69	40-59	0-39
1.	St. Saviour African School	5	5	4	1	0
2.	Government School 1	3	6	3	2	1
3.	Holy Child Int'l pri. School	4	3	5	3	0
4.	Elizabeth Memorial Pri. school	2	4	4	3	2
5.	<i>Ememobong</i> Primary School	5	6	4	0	0
Total		19	24	20	9	3
	Total Number of pupils in the Experimental group	75	75	75	75	75
	Average Percentage%	25%	32%	27%	12%	4%

The table above indicates the total number of pupils in the experimental groups and the result of the 1<sup>st</sup> test given.

### **Discussion of Findings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Experiment**

The above tables show that:

- (1) In the control group, three (3) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 90 and 100 marks constituting 4% while nineteen (19) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 90 and 100 marks constituting 25% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (2) In the control group, seven (7) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 70 and 90 marks constituting 9% while twenty-four (24) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 70 and 90 marks constituting 32% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (3) In the control group, seventeen (17) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 60 and 69 marks constituting 22% While twenty (20) out of seventy-five pupils scored between 60 and 69 marks constituting 27% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (4) In the control group, twenty-nine (29) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 40 and 59 marks constituting 39% while nine (9) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 40 and 59 marks constituting 12% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (5) In the control group, nineteen (19) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 0 and 39 marks constituting 25% while three (3) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 0 and 39 marks constituting 4% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.

### **Experiment 2**

For effective results, it was considered more appropriate to interchange the groups used in the first lesson, that is, an experimental group for the control group and a control group for the experimental group. Pupils that were in the control group in the first lesson were moved to the experimental group and vice versa to test their intelligence quotient (IQ) and the rate of assimilation and retention.

### **The Results of The 2<sup>nd</sup> Test Is Shown Below:**

90 - 100 = Outstanding

70 - 90 = Excellent

60 - 69 = Good

40 - 59 = Fair

0 - 39 = Fail

**TABLE 3**

S/N	SCHOOLS	CONTROL GROUP				
		90-100	70-90	60-69	40-59	0-39
1.	St. Saviour African School	2	1	5	4	3
2.	Government School 1	1	1	2	7	4
3.	Holy Child Int'l pri. School	0	3	4	5	3
4.	Elizabeth Memorial Pri. school	1	2	2	4	6
5.	<i>Ememobong</i> Primary School	1	1	2	4	6
Total		5	8	15	26	21
	Total Number of pupils in the control group	75	75	75	75	75
	Average Percentage%	7%	11%	20%	35%	28%

The above table indicates the total number of pupils in the control group and the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> test.

**TABLE 4**

S/N	SCHOOLS	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP				
		90-100	70-90	60-69	40-59	0-39
1.	St. Saviour African School	3	6	4	2	0
2.	Government School 1	3	7	3	1	1
3.	Holy Child Int'l pri. School	4	3	5	2	1
4.	Elizabeth Memorial Pri. school	2	4	4	3	2
5.	<i>Ememobong</i> Primary School	3	6	3	3	0
Total		15	26	19	11	4
	Total Number of pupils in the Experimental group	75	75	75	75	75
	Average Percentage%	20%	35%	25%	15%	5%

The above table indicates the total number of pupils in the experimental group and the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> test.

## Discussion of Findings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Experiment

The above tables show that:

- (1) In the control group, five (5) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 90 and 100 marks constituting 7% while fifteen (15) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 90 and 100 marks constituting 20% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (2) In the control group, eight (8) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 70 and 90 marks constituting 11% while twenty-six (26) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 70 and 90 marks constituting 35% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (3) In the control group, fifteen (15) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 60 and 69 marks constituting 20% While nineteen (19) out of seventy-five pupils scored between 60 and 69 marks constituting 25% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (4) In the control group, twenty-six (26) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 40 and 59 marks constituting 35% while eleven (11) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 40 and 59 marks constituting 15% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.
- (5) In the control group, twenty-one (21) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 0 and 39 marks constituting 28% while four (4) out of seventy-five (75) pupils scored between 0 and 39 marks constituting 5% in the experimental group. The groups did better when taught with vocal music as an aid to teaching.

## Findings

This study has shown that vocal music is one of the aids that are capable of enhancing teaching and learning. The application of vocal music in teaching and learning is therefore vital. Moreover, this research work has revealed that vocal music can assist each child in realizing his or her intellectual ability. And through the use of vocal music children can learn easily without mental stress. This study has also shown that the earliest stages of learning among young people are the most important, for it is at this stage that the fundamentals of learning are instilled into the child. Failure to develop proper learning ability in the primary school years is likely to affect the child's learning negatively later in life.

## Conclusion

Music is a veritable tool in all human endeavours. More so, vocal music, because of its textual connotation, has an added advantage in this regard. On the other hand, the importance of music in the educational setting and particularly in the training of infants is enormous. However, this research work has accorded the researchers the opportunity to explore the depth at which vocal

music is employed as a teaching aid in primary schools in *Akwa Ibom* State. It has also provided the researchers with data and evidence that vocal music is a tool in the enhancement of pupils' assimilation and retention in primary schools.

Through this research, it has been observed that if the subject matter in most difficult subjects is set to music, pupils in primary schools will thereafter have a higher degree of assimilation and retention. This can also be enhanced, if this subject matter is set to very catchy or appealing tunes. Furthermore, the effects of vocal music in the classroom have suggested progress in all areas, including social, physical, mental and emotional domains. It also provides an alternative method of learning in which pupils can be creative and free to design their way of learning by exploring and developing their style of learning. As a result of this, pupils seem to internalize, rather than memorize information.

### Recommendations

For the potentialities of vocal music as an aid to teaching and learning to be realized, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should set up outlets in institutions and the ministry of education to train teachers in primary schools on how to use vocal music in teaching to enhance learning, assimilation and retention among learners.
2. Audio/visual teaching materials such as recordings of the aspects of the lessons that incorporate music should be made to enhance learning among pupils.
3. Teachers should be made aware of positive effects, which may not only enhance classrooms' learning but with other positive effects benefiting education.

### References

- Akin, J. (2005). *Music makes a difference: Resource guide to educational research*. (<http://pages.sbcglobal.net/galemon/portfolio/ufoc2005/music/documents/worthenletter.htm>).
- Akpakpan, J. & Akpakpan, M. (2018). 'Mbopo institution and music in the cultivation of moral values in Ibibio society, Nigeria' *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(5), 46-56.
- Akpakpan, J. & Akpakpan, M. (2022). Rejuvenating and preserving Ibibio cultural ethos in children's moonlight play songs through the mass media'. *Journal of the Association of Nigerian Musicologists*, 16(1), 182-195.
- Bower, B. (1994). *Turning up young brains'* 27 August. ([http://www.reversespins.com/effects\\_of\\_music.html](http://www.reversespins.com/effects_of_music.html)).
- Elijah, O. O., Ojiji, O. O. & Dodo, T. M. (2018). Effect of music genre on memory. *Social Sciences Journal of Policy Review and Development Strategies |SSJPRDS*, 5(1), 66-77.
- Idamoyibo, I. O. (2021). *Music, how relevant is it to spirits, humans and national developments*U

84<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lectures of Delta State University Abraka. Abraka: University Printing Press.

Leffard, Ann. (2005). *Philosophy of music education at Holley-Navarre Primary School*.  
<http://www.santarosa.k12.fl.us/hnp/specialarea/music.htm>

Odunuga, A. F. (2009). Introduction to the study of music. Lagos: Right-Time Services Limited.

Okafor, R. C. (2005). *Music in Nigerian society*. Enugu: New Generation Books.

Stansell, J.W. (2005). *'The use of music for learning languages'*. Urbana, University of Illinois.

Vidal, A. O. (2012). Essays on the Yoruba musicology (history, theory and practice). In F. Adedeji (Ed.). (289-296). Ile-Ife: IMEF African Music Publishers.

*The National Association for Music Education (MENC) (2007)*.  
(<http://www.menc.org/publication/books/prek12st.html>.)