

CHAPTER SIX

THE PLACE OF FOLK MUSIC IN SOME DEVELOPMENTAL AREAS OF CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract

A Child is either raised well or spoilt. Like the good book (Bible) said: "Train up a child in the way he should go, when he grows up, he shall not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). A lot of effort goes into the raising of a child, especially when they are in their early childhood. Many parents struggle so much in raising their children which most of the time cause them aches and frustration, especially when it had to do with acquiring the mother tongue, culture, and so on; but, when music is utilized in the raising of such a child in this areas, the result is always positive, easy and simple. Folk songs have so much part to play in the raising of a child, aside from the mother tongue and culture; in some developmental aspects of the child such as social, moral and emotional development. Many parents and caregivers are very ignorant of this fact. Hence this paper is set to show the possibility of folk songs in inducing language, social, moral and emotional development in children in early childhood.

Keywords: Early childhood, Music education, Folk music, Developmental areas of children.

Introduction

When issues concerning children are raised, everyone knows, that's an important subject. It is so because children occupy a very important and crucial place in life and society. They are the future of our world, the future of our generation and future leaders of our great nations. This was the reason why Esimone, (2012) noted: "Few things in life inspire more joy and excitement than the miracle of a newborn baby. And whether that child fulfils his or her vast potential is largely in the hands of the family, the community and the country into which that child is born. The early years of life are very crucial" (p.1).

Children are very important and the most important investment for wise parents; most of it all is the way they are raised. Unfortunately, today most children can not speak their mother tongue. They are at a loss when it comes to their culture simply because of the way they were raised. Most people feel culture is not important and mother tongue is unnecessary, but deep down in their hearts, they know they are lying to themselves and their children; because these children will one day grow up to ask questions about who they are, where they come from and why they were not introduced to where they belong growing up. At that juncture, such parents will realise at last the bitter truth they refused to tell themselves when there was time. This is so because such actions have often led to an identity crisis in children, it has led to a cultural crisis in them and has caused ardent enmity between parents and children. Because of this, how important it is, therefore, to draw the attention of the world to the understanding of the great asset folk music can be, in bridging this gap in the life of our children and in helping to give them a sound developmental

boost, in the most crucial areas of their lives. This paper will take the library and literature method.

Review of Related Literature

Early Childhood

Early childhood could be described as a stage from infancy to five years of age. It can be referred to as the formation age. It can also be referred to as the age before formal schooling. It is a time when children learn about their world primarily through the magical process of play (Levinowitz 1998 Internet source). And Moog and Gordon in Levinowitz (1998) believe 'it is a period of rapid change and development and the most critical period in a child's musical growth and has been identified in the literature as the "music babbles" stage. Gordon in Levinowitz (1998) also believed early childhood is identified, as the period of developmental music aptitude in children, through which their musical acumen is enhanced'. To this, Esimone (2012) asserts:

A child's needs at this period are different from those of older school children because early childhood sees the greatest growth and development in the life of a child. It is a time when the brain of the children develops most rapidly and almost at its fullest. A time when talking, walking, running, experimenting, self-esteem, the vision of the world, moral, social and emotional foundations are established. It is the time that witnesses the fastest growth of the children's developmental lives (p. 11).

Early childhood is indeed a very important and crucial time in the life of a child. Whatever happens to a child at this stage of life often have a lasting impact, and so does any knowledge imbibed. Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud in Thompson (2009) believed that early experiences of life shape one's personality for an entire lifetime; and psychological problems that might occur in adulthood may have their origin in traumatic experiences; stressing the importance of this stage in the life of children. This also goes to say that whatever children are taught at this stage sticks and impresses a lasting impact in their lives. In other words, children at this stage, despite their age need to be educated.

Education in early childhood

The word education has enjoyed a wide range of definitions from the years and scholars gone by. Brembeck (1971) defines education as "a device by which men and women take what others before them have learnt to the next generation" (p. 287). Ukeje (1979) believes it is "a means by which human beings acquire the civilisation of the past, are enabled both to take part in the civilisation of the present, and make the civilisation of the future" (p.372). Mbanugo (1999) says 'it is a multi-faceted concept which here simply refers to learning or intellectual attainment' (p. 236). Akinbote (2008) noted it is 'the process by which the community seeks to open its life to all the individuals within it to enable them to take their part in it' (p. 8). Akande (2002) asserts 'it is the cornerstone of any nation that contributes to its development (p.26). Akumah (2004) noted 'it is the process of discipline through training and study in the acquisition of skills and knowledge (p. 202). However, To Okafor (1992), Education is viewed thus: "A process of acculturation through which the individual is helped to attain the development of his potentials, and the maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment" (p. 40).

Onuora-Oguno (2009) in supporting Okafor above asserts: "Education has been portrayed by many sociologists and educationists to be an experience that bothers on the people's culture, and which through learning processes prepares an individual for adult life in his particular society" (p.

73). The above definitions point to the fact that knowledge can be obtained by being educated which can either be formal or informal. By formal, it means the knowledge that takes place in an educational institution whether private or government. And by informal, it entails that which is passed on from generation to generation orally, and not in any educational institution; it could be by the family members or by the community at large. And it is this informal form of knowledge acquisition that is best for educating children in early childhood, especially in the acquisition of mother tongue, culture and so on. And it is also important to note here that, the easiest and simplest way of passing across this knowledge to children is through music.

Music as the Simplest and Easiest Way of Teaching Children

Music is one important subject that can never be relegated to the background because it appeals to all and sundry, be it unborn babies, born babies, children or adults. Everyone enjoys the sound of music. And like education, music has enjoyed many definitions. Blacking (1973) defined music as a 'humanly organised sound' (p.57). Elliot (1995) sees it as a 'diverse human practice of construction of aural temporal patterns for primary values of enjoyment, self-growth and self-knowledge (p. 128).

Music is a gift from God. It is a sound that has the capability and power to bring tears, sorrow, joy and happiness to the innermost part of man. Through it, we express our joys for things that are real to us and our longings for the things that might be. To these facts, Esimone (2009) noted: "Many things tend to influence life and reveal clear changes in character, and music is so effective and very prominent at such. It goes beyond organised sound that pleases the ear to penetrate the innermost being of man, to cause a conspicuous change in the attitudes of man" (p. 1).

Almost all, humans view music as solely for entertainment because anytime there is any kind of occasion, music must be involved. It is an obvious fact that music is used for entertainment but, it is not solely for entertainment. Music does more in the life of a man than entertainment. It is for relaxation, for therapy and most of all, it is a great instrument in the early learning of children. Everyone who deals with children knows they love music and one would wonder why to bother kids with learning when they have all the time in the world to learn when they grow up. Esimone, (2012) has an accurate answer for such question when she noted that:

When children are nurtured and cared for as should be in their earliest years, especially with music; they are more likely to grow healthily, develop full thinking capability, language, emotional and social skills that are very useful for their total well-being. Also, when they are in school, their prospect for excellent performance is guaranteed. When they are adolescents, they are likely to have greater self-esteem and a greater chance of becoming creative and productive members of society (p. 1).

However, the definition of music transcends nations, cultures and traditions. As such, Africans view music more deeply than any nation in the world. Just as Ibekwe (2009) pointed out: "Music in the African context can be summarized as human intent expressed into action, either to communicate ideas, portray the culture, symbolize events, socialize people, stimulate emotion and other related functions" (p. 182).

To buttress the point above, Nketia in Ajewole (2010) observed that: "People were not educated merely for music; rather, music was a basis for educating the members of the community and

music serves as a means of teaching the norms and values of the society by which individuals are accepted as good members of the society” (p. 17).

Children love music. They turn everything to music and every toy into a musical instrument. Even as babies, they understand the nuances of music. They giggle as their parents or caregivers sing for them. They pay attention to everything around them that music is involved with, and when they are crying for food, the only way of calming them down is through the tool of the singing voice. When they are toddlers and in kindergarten, the only means through which knowledge could be passed across to them so easily and very fast, is not through our usual rote way of teaching and learning, but by turning that knowledge into music. Hence, when parents and caregivers who understand the importance of language, social, emotional, psychological and cultural development of a child, deem it right to have the children acquire such, they know the best way for such knowledge to be acquired is through music.

Music is a natural and important part of young children's growth and development. Children can engage in musical activities on many levels of life and as a matter of fact, their interaction with music positively affects the quality of all areas of their lives.

Folk Music and Developmental Areas of Children - Social, Emotional, Moral, Cultural and Language Development

Folk music is the music of a people, a community or a nation that tells of their lifestyle, culture and beliefs; and which in essence defines who they are. It is passed down orally from generation to generation and it always reveals the culture of the people. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2000) says it is “music in the traditional style of a country or community; a music that is based on their belief” (p. 458). The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music (2007) further defined folk music thus:

Folk music is a term covering folk songs and folk dances. Folk songs are songs of unknown authorship passed orally from generation to generation, sung without accompaniment and often found invariants (of words and tunes) in different parts of a country (or in different countries). Folk-songs were generally found among the country-dwellers, but with the increase of urbanisation and industrialisation, they spread to towns and factories (p. 267).

The above definition shows folk music is found in all the countries of the world. It is folk music that identifies and defines a people. In other words, folk music reveals the culture, language, moral, social and emotional lifestyle of a people, community and nation. Hence the importance of folk music in the upbringing of children can never be over-emphasized. In the African context, especially in Nigeria where there are so many communities and ethnic groups because of her multi diversified nature, folk music is one of the ways children are taught their culture, language, way of life and even social and emotional make-up because, in everything that is done, music is involved. It is part of the communal life of the people. In Nigeria for example, music is always present in huge quantities and varieties; in fact, it is part of the rhythm of life. Emeka in Obielozie (2006) rightly observed when he said “especially in sub-Saharan Africa, at any time of night or day, somewhere, some music is sounding” (p. 27).

To this Obielozie (2006) further asserts: “The environment in which African music functions or is performed is very elastic – homes and squares, shrines and fields, life-rites, work, worship, national ceremonies, play and recreation, festivals, funerals, conflict, love, homeland and

diasporas” (p. 27). In line with the above, Nnamani (2004) observed that:

Men and women have made music, they have sung it and danced it, used it in solemn rituals and in light-hearted entertainments, people have also listened to it in fields and forests, in temples, in bars, concert halls and opera houses. They have made music not only with their voices but by adapting natural objects, banging them, scrapping and blowing, just to generate collective emotion (p. 93).

All the above is pointing out the fact that every activity in the life of Africans especially in Nigeria is characterized by music. In this same way, their children are brought up which help shape the life of the children in their culture, language, social, moral and emotional lives. As Ugwuegbu (1992) stated, “A child starts learning by observing the adults, does whatever they do. In the absence of the adult, the tendency is for the child to try to imitate what the adults did and finally he starts to participate in such an activity” (p. 12).

When a child is born like in Nigeria, from birth to approximately two years of age, a child stays with the mother to be weaned and taught. At this period, the child is the mothers' companion and vice versa; the first thing the child learns is the mother's voice most times through singing her folk songs. This is so even when the child is hungry because only songs can calm a hungry child. When the mother is doing the house chores, she is singing for the child, almost everything she does revolves around the singing voice. When the mother is not available, the siblings and other members of the family are there, to calm the child and make him relax when stressed out. With this much singing which often is a lullaby, the child is learning. Learning both the song, how to sing it and the knowledge attached to it. In supporting this point, Okafor (2005) noted:

Music is central to many of the activities of life in our traditional society because music is integral to life activities. The music that was learnt in childhood is important as a foundation for learning other things to come – art, craft, science, human relations and social practices. It was a system that worked and worked very well. It was a system that was wholly utilitarian – everything it contained was useful for life in the environment and for the mastery of the environment in which the child must move, live and have his being (p. 225).

Onyiube (2005) then asserts:

Nature and humans provide the different sounds, musical and non-musical, inherent in the environment into which a child is born. This sound conditions the child's reflexes and persists as the child grows and begins to discriminate between the sounds. The wind whistling through trees, sounds of birds, animals, humans or man-made objects all affect the child's consciousness. They learn to develop the ability to learn a language from their environment. The ability to learn in any field is not only inherited but is also the product of the environment. Hence the African environment was a beautiful ground for music acquisition even for the children (p. 1).

Music and our environment are very important in shaping the lives of children. Taking a look at the listed developmental areas of children one after another, the following is considered.

Language and Cultural Development

When parents, siblings, and caregivers make music to children, especially folk music, which are most times more than a lullaby, they easily develop the speaking ability in their mother tongue. A child who is used to hearing only the mother tongue in the home, spoken and sung all the time in the whole environment he is living, will join the family in the spoken language; and through observation and understanding of the performed songs, his culture is being transmitted to him. Everyone who has stayed with children knows they love music; and anything taught them with music, despite their age easily sticks, as Paget (2006:5) observed "music can do 60% of the teaching work in about 5% of the time". Mothers whose desire is to see their children know and learn their mother tongue and culture must start from birth and through folk music so that by the time their children grow, they would not find it difficult to adjust and live as they have been taught.

Moral and Emotional Development

The moral attitude of children in our days is so awkward that one most times wonders what the future generations will turn to. This is because parents especially mothers decided to sacrifice their God-given responsibility to their children on the altar of money and class, hence leaving their children at a very tender age to nannies who care less than for their money. These children, instead of bonding and learning to be emotionally attached to their family as well as learn to control their emotions through their mother, are left with the knowledge of a visiting nanny who will later leave them in due time. What do we expect, miracles don't happen on a platter of gold, a strong foundation and sacrifice is a pre-requisite for great kids to be around. This applies to bringing up children morally sound. The teaching of moral values can be accomplished through singing folk songs which makes children understand their culture and way of life. This is a great fact because music transcends barriers and goes to the heart. A song will outlive all the sermons in the memory. This is why Onyiuke (2006) said:

From the childhood stage of development, the child learns to develop his moral attributes to live harmoniously with his fellow men. In school, the child learns songs that teach morals like songs that emphasize respect for elders, the dignity of labour, kindness to all, hard work, cleanliness and many others. Here learning comes naturally and does not need to be memorised with stress (p. 59).

Social Development

When children are made to sing and dance with their siblings and fellow children, even though they are small; it helps them release themselves from their shells of shyness and introverted lifestyle and helps them make friends with fellow children irrespective of who they are, what they are and where they come from. Music has this capability. This should be if the mother and siblings have been singing their folk songs regularly for the child to know what is obtainable in his environment. Music is sincerely the only tool that can help children develop fast, easily and adjust to their environment. The importance of folk songs in the developmental areas of the lives of children can never be overemphasized. Children learn very fast, and when their culture and lifestyle are passed down to them in their early childhood, through folk music, they would not be able to forget it easily even if they leave their environment in the future.

Although the title of this paper is generalised, it is important to note here, that this is what is obtainable in Nigeria, and the researchers believed, this is also very possible all over the world. The reason is that every country in the world is an embodiment of culture and if the people in each

nation believe so much in their values and culture, then, they must need to have it preserved, and one of the ways is through their folk songs performed regularly to their children in early childhood.

Igbo Folk Songs for Children

The Igbos are one of the three major ethnic groups and tribes in Nigeria, who are very rich in culture made available majorly through music. All activities carried out in Igbo land is accompanied by music. Their lives and everything they do revolves around the performance of music from cradle to grave. And music remains their easiest means of training their little children in early childhood because it is proven to be the simplest and stress-free means of informal training. The following folk songs are performed to children to help them learn their cultural values and ways of life and develop language, socially, emotionally and morally. All the folk songs have deep meanings to help guide the child to be a good and responsible personality in society. The songs are symbolic which children understand later after they are at least five years of age. The following are some of the songs alongside their English interpretation/translation.

Tata mechie onu nwantiti

Tata mechie onu nwantiti, akwa adighi nma n'obube,
Ochi kacha nma n'ochichi, chiaram chiaram nwantiti.

English Interpretation

Baby stop crying a little bit, crying is not good at all, but laughter is always good, so, laugh and laugh and laugh. This song teaches the child the danger of too much crying, ranging from being sad, fast ageing and some unnecessary sicknesses that come with unhappiness; but with laughter, comes joy, happiness and sound health, so please keep laughing, it is healthy.

Akwukwo n'ato Uto

Akwukwo n'ato uto, (2x) Ona'ra ahu na nmuta,
Onye nwere nkasi obi, Oga amuta akwukwo,
M'oburu kwa ma nne gi ma nna gi nwe ego,(2x)
Buru akpa n'isi n'agba oso, gbaba n'ulo akwukwo,
Achirim ochi hahahahaa nwe ego (2x)

English Interpretation (Hard work and diligence are very important)

This song is teaching the child the importance of hard work, especially with his studies. Telling the child that studies are very good but it is most times very difficult and demands financial buoyancy, but if both parents are buoyant enough; he can study to any level and then reap the fruits of his studies, which is having wealth which comes by working. Nsopuru Amaka

Nwa nnem nta, nwa nnem nta, sopuru papa gi, sopuru mama gi
Nwannem nta, nwanem nta, sopuru onye toro gi, sopuru ikwunibe gi
Maka na nsopuru amaka, makana nsopuru adika,
Ngozi di ya, ihe oma di ya,
Nna gi gagozi o, Nne g igagozi o, Ikwun'ibe
gagozi o, Onye obula g'ahu gi n'anya.
Nwa nnem nta nwanem nta inunu oooooooooo

English Interpretation (Respect is very important and good)

My younger siblings, respect your parents, respect your elders and respect every body. Because

respect is very good, it is very important. There are blessings attached to it and there are good things that come with it. Your father will bless you, your mother will bless you, your relatives will bless you and everybody will love you. My younger siblings please obey.

Conclusion

These are some of the very many folk songs with which the Igbos use in teaching their children morals, social, emotional and language acquisitions and their culture, which in essence help in their development. It is obvious that inherent in every nation is folk music which parents can use to bring up their children, especially in the areas mentioned above; but because most parents are very ignorant of the importance and great benefit that folk songs can bring in the life of their children, that is why they are not tapping into this great fountain; and that's the reason for this paper. It is believed that everyone who will have access to this paper and applies the knowledge in their family and community will enjoy the benefits inherent in it.

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