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ARTICLE

Girl child education and enrollment drive: The role of traditional music and dance

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Eva Akosua Ebeli

Review

Girl child education and enrollment drive: The role of traditional music and dance

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The study is set out from an intervention perspective using music and dance as a vehicle for enhancing the enrollment drive and retention of girls in basic schools. It was a qualitative research under the auspices of “Ghana Wins” project that involved pupils, parents and teachers of New Winneba Municipal Assembly Primary and Junior High School to deepen their understanding on how Music and Dance has the potency of attracting children to school. Through the concept of interculturalism in music the study highlights the challenges of girl-child education in Ghana and documents the needed information, materials and guides that may help teachers in basic schools to intercede appropriately. Data were sourced by interview and participant observation. Findings of the paper provide assistance for both specialist and non-specialist music teachers at the basic level to integrate their lessons with Music and Dance for optimum sustenance of interest in school among pupils.

Key words: Music, dance, New Winneba, enrollment, Ghana Wins, interculturalism, girl child.

INTRODUCTION

The project “Ghana Wins”: Ghanaian Institute for the Future of Teaching and Education (GIFTED) programme is a collaboration project of New York University; University of Education, Winneba and the Mujeres por Africa Foundation, Spain, to help solve issues pertaining to education in Ghana. As the World Bank recognizes the important role institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations play in meeting the challenges of development and welcomes the opportunity to work with civil society (World Bank, 2010), GIFTED programme has been important to address across Ghana the social, communal, economic and educative needs of the citizenry. The first cohort of the GIFTED team targeted various barriers impeding education of girls in Ghana and

how they could be curbed. The New Winneba Municipal Assembly Primary and Junior High School was part of the schools identified to have low enrollment of girls in Winneba municipality, Central Region of Ghana. It became obvious from statistics that there are more school going children in the community who are still not in school. New Winneba Municipal Assembly Primary and Junior High School is located at Winneba- Agona Swedru Road. Donated by the Millennium Challenge Account; Ghana Programme, the school can boast of modern facilities required of any school-well furnished classrooms, rest rooms, water, light, recreational ground, marching band and above all dedicated teaching staff for all classes. Despite this conducive atmosphere, enrollment

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of girls in the school had been very low prior to emergence of the GIFTED programme. From basic one to basic nine, girls were only 54 out of 264 representing about 20.4% of the total population of the school. Music and dance, integrated with other reading activities became the spring board for driving girls of school going age in the area, and who were not in school, to enroll to go to school.

Through the effort of the Ghana government since 1992, basic school is free and compulsory coupled with improved facilities and infrastructure. Indeed, the programme has seen tremendous increase in the enrollment of both sexes across Ghana. These are some kind of positive changes in Ghana schools. In spite of all these facilities and improved learning environment and infusion of financial assistance, the situation at New Winneba was different. Therefore, the GIFTED fellows¹ selected music, dance and reading activities whether they could attract girls in the community to the school. Leskova-Zelenkovska and Islam (2015) ascertain what music can do in education and state:

the ability of music is, it reach [sic] deeply into the emotions of humans very easily. In recent decades music making is an inevitable tool in the interdisciplinary connections in the scientific areas of different nature. [...]. Of course, this is due to the fact that music is non-invasive, safe and motivating tool experienced through simultaneous activation of a certain number of regions in the brain. When a musical input enters our central nervous system via the auditory nerve, most of the input goes to the brain for processing. But some of it heads straight to motor nerves in our spinal cord. Our brain is primed early on to respond to and process music (Leskova-Zelenkovska and Islam, 2015, p.354).

Human beings therefore respond to music due to its potency of affecting emotions and this proves the viability of using traditional music and dance to increase enrollment in schools. The study sought to find out why girls were not in school until the implementation of the GIFTED project. It also assesses how music and dance could be used to boost enrollment of girls in the schools.

RELATED LITERATURE

Girl-child and education

The girl-child is a female offspring who has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years to become a young adult. It is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescent stages of development. The girl-child is amenable and tries building her personality traits physically and in character and so the child at this period is totally under the care of the adults who may be her parents or guardians. She depends on these adults and other significant people to model her behaviour as she

goes through the period of development. Fisho-Orideji (2001) and Ibrahim (2004) are of the view that the girl child develops her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments within the period and progresses to the peak at the young adult stage.

Generally, girls and women are marginalized and usually do not have decision making power of their own. Bass (2004) states that "an adolescent girl is married without her consent and becomes pregnant long before her body and emotional/psychological feelings are mature or ready for it. Half of the total sexual assaults in the world are committed against girl children (Guttman, 2009). Alabi et al. (2014) comment on discrimination against women and the girl child and address:

the legacy of injustice against the girl child has continued in some parts of the world especially in African and Asian countries. Female feticide, female infanticide, sexual abuse, marginalization in terms of nutrition, health care and education, violence against women and bias against women in all spheres of life including social, political, economic and religious spheres are common norm in today's world (p. 394).

The dimensions of the problems of the girl child are vast and so in many parts of the world, girls lag behind in terms of education and their general wellbeing.

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) identify three types of education to include informal, non-formal, and formal education. They define informal education as 'the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment'. This type of education is not planned but acquired through the growth of the child. They continue to give the difference between informal education and non-formal education and state:

Non-formal education is 'any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children'. A major difference between these two processes rests with the deliberate instructional and programmatic emphases present in non-formal education but absent in informal education (p.8).

Charmes (1998) defines formal education as, "It is a planned and systematic training given in an institution of learning. The programme is organized, planned and systematically implemented". So in practice, informal and non-formal education is less systematic but in formal education situation, the classroom reflects not only the stated curriculum of the teacher and the school but also the more subtle informal learning associated with how the classroom is organized, the rules by which it operates, and the knowledge transmitted among peers. Education prepares a person, especially a girl child, to fit properly

¹ Professionals selected to implement the programme

into the web of social interaction and equally enhance better performance in the social roles in the society. With adequate education, a girl-child is enlightened on health and national issues; a better way of bringing up her children; make informed decisions about her future and protect herself from trafficking (Ogundipe, 2007).

Formal education is the order of the day for job placement and the general total development of the child. It will train the girl-child therefore to acquire the appropriate and adequate, skills and attitudes and values, known as cognitive, psychomotor and affective behaviours to be able to function optimally as a citizen. These behaviours are the focus of training individuals in institutions of learning. In a situation where the girl child vehemently fails to attend school, it becomes crucial to address it and find the right antidote to it. In terms of formal education, which is the focus of this discussion, they are found in crèche, nursery or early childhood (0 to 5 years), primary (6 to 12 years) and secondary school (12 to 18 years).

To train a girl child properly to play an adult role as she grows, it is imperative that education is very important to develop her mind, intellect and skills will be in place. This will enable her contribute meaningfully to society she finds herself.

Relevance of music and dance

The arts of which Music is part are a powerful tool of communication. They relate easily to aspects of almost every subject or topic. The production of musical sound from the singing of traditional songs, the production of sound from the accompanying instruments, and the dance movements transmit something which carries messages (Ebeli, 2015). Music is a powerful tool in expressing thoughts people nurture in mind, how they feel, their norms and values, and how they generally live (Manford, 2007). Music, Dance and Drama are inseparable in an African society since these subjects complement each other in enforcing ethical behaviour and moral values. This assertion reinforces the idea behind the new Creative Arts Syllabus for Basic Schools in Ghana which integrates Music, Dance and Drama for the Music component of the subject. In fact, the nature of the subject Music, with the varied subdivisions of it including singing, playing different musical instruments, dancing, acting and conducting enables each learner to participate easily in at least one or two subdivisions with some feeling of satisfaction and success. A pupil could therefore identify his/her potential which can create a feeling of fulfillment.

From another angle in dance, we may say that people are able to reinforce cultural unity and distinguish themselves from other cultures. For school going children, dance offers them the opportunity for constant physical exercise structured to music. A psychological support is thus provided for pupils, performers and their colleagues

who serve as audience to explore their capabilities without anxiety. Dance is noted to relieve one of emotional tension, release surplus energy, release one from physical discomfort (as in physiotherapy) and encourages social patterns and values (Manford, 2007). Recognizing the potential of body movement to enhance mental alertness, Ablordey (2013) declares that, it is a known fact that physical fitness is a means of increasing mental sharpness and reducing stress culminating to attaining overall health and well-being. In an earlier study Kovalik and Oslen (2002) theorized that higher brain functions develop from movement. These researchers assert that the entire front half of the brain is devoted to organizing action such as physical and mental actions. It is inferred that movement is fundamental to the very existence of the brain and this is crucial in developing cognitive skills in the school going child. Manford (2007, p.5) makes no mistake in suggesting that "all individuals must partake in dancing of some sort." It is clear that music and dance is a potential mechanism to directly influence not only the ability of children to think and learn, but also a source of motivation to help children socialize and take personal decisions in line with their career choices.

Impact of music and dance

For its impact, it is obvious that Music and Dance is a vital tool for attracting and retaining school enrollment. It can help to overcome inhibitions where body movement is concerned. In the course of learning, the shy children express themselves without realizing it. Successes in Music and Dance for those who are unsuccessful elsewhere relieve tensions, free from frustrations, resulting in better balance and often times in better all-round achievement. The all-inclusive philosophy (Nzewi, 2003) informing the modest vocal range of African songs which makes them devoid of stress make participation comfortable.

Furthermore, nothing unites a group more completely than experience in Music and Dance. It is a strong binding force that can be used in school not only to cater for many anti social problems of pupils but also improve their language and reading abilities.

Like Feld and Fox (1994) state, "Musically structured song texts, performances, and musically structured kinesics forms such as dance exemplify and expand the poetic and metalinguistic functions of language". The thoughts of Manford (1996, p.32) that "nothing contributes more to the reading programme than the reinforcement it receives through music phrasing" are reflected in the positive impact music exerts in the learning attitudes of girls.

Conceptual framework

Despite the challenge pupils face in learning music of



Figure. 1. Some of the girls performing a traditional dance at a school durbar.

another culture, the resource person and the GIFTED fellows adopted an intercultural approach, taking cognizance of the fact that monocultural stance of teaching traditional dances could be narrow, separatist and myopic (Kwami et al., 2003). The approach is a comparative one that admits the possibility of systematic musical study. Although teachers might not have proficiency in other musical cultures, it is possible to introduce pupils to significant Ghanaian indigenous musical cultures. Indigenous African music is largely socially bound and often embraces the process of enculturation (Sloboda, 1986). Possibly by the assistance of a resource person, the author assumed the position of a mediator between the school and the community by making a conscious decision to first acquire the music knowledge which would be disseminated to the learners (Ebeli, 2012). Music and dance in this instance was used as a means to attract pupils to the school. Hence, formal classroom musical procedures were not followed. Pupils were therefore taught or guided to employ improvisatory processes to become more musically creative.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was situated within the context of a school, but not as part of a structured music course (Folkestad, 1998). It followed a qualitative collective case-study design (Stake, 1994) using a naturalistic approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Naturalistic inquiry is characterized by research in natural settings (rather than in laboratories). In line with this research method, the investigator studies real-world situations, recognizes the existence of multiple constructed realities and reports in a case study mode. The realities of social lives of the respondents were recorded in a notebook as well as on a tape recorder and analyzed inductively. This was done for one and a half years.

In all, 23 respondents were used for the study. This was made up

of 15 girls between the ages of eight and fourteen (8-14) who were new entrants in the school. They were purposively selected because they were the girls who availed themselves to be used for the music and dance programme. 5 parents were also sampled through the snowball sampling technique whereas 3 teachers were randomly selected and used to begin the study. The main purpose of the study was to acknowledge the magnetic force of Music and Dance in increasing school enrollment and to produce information and guidelines to both professional and non-professional teachers at the basic level of education. Data collection techniques consisted of interviews and participant observation. Specific procedures included individual interviews with each pupil during the first meeting time. The author's role as a mentor was to supervise a smooth execution of activities planned by the GIFTED fellows to achieve the goals in the school. As a music scholar, my role paved the way for me to serve as an active participant observer and a researcher on the field. This helped to eliminate reactivity in the behaviour of participants of the project.

Data collection process

Pupils were introduced to the first task as they were made to learn to sing *apatampa*² songs with a resource person providing background instrumental music (Figure 1). Drums were procured for the school with the assistance of the project team. Soon the sound of instruments in the school attracted adult inhabitants and children who came peeping through the windows of the performance room to observe for themselves a novelty, something impressive they have never heard since the establishment of the school. For about three months attention was focused on learning the performance of traditional Music and Dance while funding in the form of feeding was made available by the GIFTED project. Indigenous African music education includes the training of drummers and dancers (Nketia, 1974, 1975) because the mechanics of learning to play musical instruments and aesthetic, social and spiritual factors are connected with the acquisition of musical skills (Bebey, 1974). Therefore pupils were gradually introduced to performance skills

² Female traditional musical type among the Fante of Ghana.

including singing, instruments playing and dancing. The texts of the songs were used phonetically to improve their reading skills in the fourth month as an additional activity which ran alternatively with drumming and dancing. Both activities continued to attract and sustain the interest of the girls.

Through the intercultural approach, the girls had learned to perform four Ghanaian traditional dances (*apatampa*, *ɔmpɛ*, *adowa* and *gota*) drawn from the Central, Ashanti and Volta regions of Ghana. These dances, a sketch of drama and poetry recitals were exhibited with colourful costume at a grand durbar at the school premises on April 16, 2014. This was in line with suggestions from Nzewi (2003) that such projects must be presented to an audience – traditional, school or any other.

An egalitarian principle that welcomes everybody to derive personal enrichment and joy through participation in choruses prevails in Ghanaian music. By the end of the third month in September, 2013 enrollment of girls had recorded 50% growth. The project was executed over a period of twelve (12) months which was life changing for the girls in the school.

FINDINGS

Throughout history music and dance as a subject has provided pleasure, enjoyment and self esteem to humanity. In Ghana, music and dance is inevitable during festivals, rituals, religious and social functions, and then school programmes because of the important role it plays in the lives of the individuals and that of the society as a whole. The introduction of traditional music and dance at New Winneba Basic School had been an exciting achievement. Notably, the virtuosity with which the master drummer, the female pupil cantor and the girls in their dance invented new rhythms and skills was found to be a powerful source of encouragement to other participants who tried to emulate such skills by constantly rehearsing and performing. Also, the creation of dance and dramatic movements became a source of delight for the girls even after instructional hours.

The findings of this study are viewed from three perspectives. The first looks at why girls were not in school until the GIFTED project. Responses from some parents, girls and teachers indicate that poverty is a major setback to the education of the girl child. Most of the girls were found to lack adequate food, clothing/school uniforms, footwear and basic needs of a pupil. Sponsorship for education was a big challenge resulting in apathy if not lack of motivation to enroll in a school. Many of the girls were earlier engaged in economic activities to assist parents cater for the family. Observations from some respondents suggested that peer pressure was a force to reckon with while unsteady parental responsibility was a hindrance to education. Some parents have the habit of sending their wards to live with relatives who sometimes bring them back for obvious reasons. One may argue that there is free education policy in Ghana and may wonder why over 50% of children in the community had not enrolled in the basic school.

Responses solicited pointed to activities and influence of the GIFTED programme in the school. To most of the

respondents the amusement in the music and dance performances and the opportunity given to all girls to belong and express themselves musically was a motivating factor. To one of the older girls the friendly atmosphere created by the GIFTED fellows and mentor moved her and wanted to be like them. The third angle of the findings which considered the sustained interest of the girls to remain in school was obviously conditioned by these factors enumerated in this paragraph. This buttresses Miyoshi's (1999) belief that "learning does not advance by trial and error; it begins by motivating the learner". Music can then provide an additional motivation to learn as it appears to enable children with communication difficulties to feel comfortable and relaxed; thus their engagement in learning is increased (Wigram and Gold, 2006). This is possible to be used as a leverage to assist pupils build up word-recognition vocabulary of high frequency word and improve their reading skills consequently.

The Music and Dance approach with which the GIFTED fellows adopted their enrollment drive took into consideration the perspective of the pupils as a focus for stimulating their interest in learning and expression. Miyoshi (1999)'s assertion that the Suzuki method is a good example for motivating learners as the essence of the method is in its clever encouragement of motivation. This method has a starting point that prepares familiar music for the children and develops the children's interest. In line with the Suzuki method to teaching music, the GIFTED fellows who are both teachers in the school started the programme with a musical type called *ɔmpɛ*³, familiar to the learner which employs the use of small sized instruments as a foundation activity. *Adowa*⁴, was the next activity. Findings indicate that learners spent more time learning Adowa dance movements and rhythmic patterns of supporting drums than learning *ɔmpɛ*.

It is deduced from the study that teachers at the Basic level have a duty to provide opportunities for learners to express themselves in dance which grows directly from personal movement expression. Observations from Russel (1965) and Ablordey (2013) indicate that Dance definitely has a place at the primary school. Movement as dance is inherent in any kind of growth activity on the basis that the act of growing is movement. Hence as children go through stages of growth, movement in dance should be made available in the educational process. More so, evidence from Kovaild and Oslen (2002) indicate that each person's capacity to master new information while retaining old knowledge is improved by biological changes in the brain brought on by new activity. This provides enough reasons for teachers to integrate movement (Music and Dance) into learning activities that activate multiple parts of the brain to enhance learning. Moreover, how the sense of words and thoughts are

³ music of the Effutu of Winneba

⁴ a musical genre of the Ashanti tradition

Table 1. Cumulative enrollment of girls in New Winneba Basic School.

Period	Number on roll	Difference	Growth rate
June 2013	54	0	0%
July 2013	64	10	18.5%
September 2013	80	16	25%
December 2013	86	6	7.5%
January 2014	112	26	30.2%
May 2014	118	6	5.3%
June 2014	123	5	4.2%
Total		69	127.7%

carried along are highlighted in Music. Consequently, vocabulary was increased, words came to life through musical experience, and enunciation was improved. It was therefore observed that comprehension of thought came through the messages of song while sense of sound and discrimination close to phonetics was developed.

One year after the GIFTED project faced out, enrollment kept increasing, more especially at the kindergarten level. Although the GIFTED project was not able to absorb all the children into the classroom, more than 100% percent growth was achieved in attracting girls into the classroom as shown in Table 1. The reason for the consistent increase might have been the implementation process of music and dance activities adopted by the teachers after the GIFTED programme. Teachers of the school were encouraged to learn some basic skills in music and dance to enable them integrate some musical activities in their lessons.

DISCUSSION

Implications for the teacher

The learner's environment is an important aspect in education. A congenial welcoming environment is bound to attract and retain learners than an unfriendly hostile ambience. Teachers are therefore required to lace their lessons with musical activities to create an interesting environment. Teachers must allow children to experience musical concepts rather than sessions or watching video recordings of performances. The proliferation of ICT in schools has made available computers and projectors in some schools. Technology therefore comes handy to facilitate music learning. The expertise of a local resource person can be sought to teach pupils while the teacher learns for future music lessons. Where instruments are not available, learners should be encouraged to construct drums using empty tins as drum shells and plastic sheets as membranes. In view of this schools should endeavour to procure at least a set of three drums of varied pitches to serve all-purposes since such excuses should not

deprive learners their right to enjoy school experience.

Indeed Music and Dance should be taught to all children in the school as each child will find satisfaction and success in one or two of the varied musical activities. Teachers should also remember that Music teaching should lay emphasis on the expressive qualities of the particular music under study. Hence all music classes should be action-oriented through singing, playing musical instruments, composing, improvising or listening and reacting through dancing to what is being listened to. Above all, teachers must bring their resourcefulness to play in music lessons by making available all kinds of music and music of different cultures. This will help increase the children's understanding and enjoyment of music in its various forms, and also help them gain greater awareness of the peoples of the world.

Conclusion

Follow-ups were made after the completion of the project through to the 18th month. It became clear that Music and Dance is a potential avenue for encouraging children of school going age to attend school, although there are other motivating factors put in place by the Ghana government such as the School Feeding programme and the FCUBE policy which culminates with the provision of free school uniforms. The school under study was not a beneficiary of the School Feeding programme but the use of music and dance became powerful to drive them to the school as it recorded a growth rate of 127.7% after the execution of the programme. Inclusion and systematic implementation of intercultural indigenous music from the major cultures across Ghana in the curriculum will be necessary to sustain girls in the school. The implication of this research indicates clearly that schools and teachers are to be provided with the necessary instruments and logistics to employ all resources to teach music and dance and make musical activities visible in their schools. Since the use of the music and dance coupled with some supports in the form of provision of food for the girls by the GIFTED fellows was able to attract the girls to the school, it is imperative to suggest that the government of

Ghana considers the New Winneba basic schools as a beneficiary of the school feeding programme. Indeed, if the facilities are good and the teachers are making the conscious effort to include music and dance in their curricular activities, what will be left is the alleviation of the economic hardships which can be done through the school feeding programme. It is recommended that other capable nongovernmental organizations and corporate bodies who become aware of this situation should not relent in their effort to raise support for the girls of New Winneba Community.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest

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