



REVIEW ARTICLE

ATTITUDE FORMATION IN MUSIC INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a follow up of an earlier study carried out on the relationship between attitude towards Music education and achievement among pupils in Kenya (Wanjala, 2011) which established that there is a positive correlation between pupil's attitude towards music education and their achievement. In the major findings of the study, it was observed that attitudes were fundamental to the dynamics of behaviour and they greatly determine how learning took place in situations of music instruction. It was further pointed that in the process of learning, certain experiences may create a favourable or unfavourable atmosphere which in turn makes students either to dislike or appreciate music. On the basis of these findings the author of this paper articulates the impact of attitude formation in the learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

While teachers pre-occupy themselves with facilitation of musicianship and instructional guidance in imparting knowledge and skills, learning is dependent upon a wide range of factors that influence the learner in different ways. One of these influences is attitude formation. Attitudes are relatively enduring beliefs or options that predispose people to respond in a positive, negative or ambivalent way to a person, object or idea (Encarta, 2011). Music as a subject then becomes more vulnerable to attitude formation due to its apparent subjectivity and the emotional nature. The association of attitude and the process of teaching and learning Music is therefore of great concern to teachers because it determines the direction of sequencing experiences and conducive environment for musical expression.

Attitude Formation: Abeles (1995) points out three fundamental sociological and psychological factors through which attitudes are formed, namely Association and reinforcement; Maximization of benefits in conflicting situations, and Consistency and familiarity. In the context of this paper, these factors can be applied.

Association and reinforcement: It is natural to identify oneself with what is humanly pleasant and favourable. A student who emerges as the best soloist in the Folk song category in a music festival develops a positive attitude toward Folk Music because of its association with success.

Maximization of benefits in conflicting situations

Where there is an attitude situation that presents conflicting factors, individuals often opt for the position that maximizes their benefits. When newly admitted undergraduate students are faced with the choice of pursuing either a Bachelor of Music or a Bachelor of Education (Music) degree for their university courses, they are bound to rationalize on the availability of job opportunities and prospects of better pay for each in order to select the most ideal one.

Consistency and familiarity

People quite often cherish those things that fit what they know and understand best but they dislike those that don't. It is easier for a teacher to encourage a more positive attitude in an experience that emerges from a familiar activity. For instance, students would easily sing a melody after singing the relevant scale first, or climbing up the stairs in the case of the young learners. Students' impression towards Music may therefore reflect their liking or disliking of the Music teacher particularly in the way he/she handles music teaching.

Teacher's Personality

Students may also develop an attitude towards Music on the basis of their teacher's temperament and the general impression he creates while handling the subject. Rainbow (1978) affirms this by saying:

When a good teacher of Music leaves a school, it is by no means unusual for the Music in that school to collapse

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very soon after his departure. No other subject in the curriculum depends so heavily for its well being and status upon the personal quality of the individual teacher concerned (Rainbow, 1978:1).

A teacher who displays the characteristics of dullness and reserved mood may certainly not inspire pupils with enthusiasm needed in Music especially in expressive activities like singing. A teacher who instils fear through his projective and aggressive comments on the other hand is bound to cause gradual withdrawal of pupils from active participation in Music. This is apparently so because the pupils' freedom to express their own ideas, feelings and experiences is inhibited by the rather unfriendly impression given by the teacher. Pleasant, understanding and knowledgeable teachers are known to encourage active participation on the part of pupils, hence the reinforcement of positive attitudes in music. This would in most cases assist in implementing some of the objectives set in the Kenya music education. According to KIE (1987), pupils should be given an opportunity to express his ideas, feelings and experiences through the art of composing music and dances.

The significance of teacher's personality on attitude towards Music is rightly summarized in the following description of two well known Musicians.

Beethoven with his short temper, dominating attitude, impatience and scorn for the un-musical, would clearly have been a disastrous failure in the classroom....Haydn on the other hand, judging by accounts of his geniality, sincerity, sense of humour, and the good relation which he established with his players at Eszterhaza would almost certainly have made a fine teacher (Rainbow, 1978: 2).

Attitude and Persuasion

When Music teachers engage in the endeavour to create interest and motivating learners to appreciate Music, they are basically involving themselves in the process of persuasion. According to social scientists (Encarta, 2011), encouraging positive attitude in a learning situation is synonymous with persuasion. The teacher then should have a direct interest in knowing how to effectively engage his learner in appreciating and developing pleasant feelings about music. Persuasion is fundamentally, therefore, an integral part of teaching methodology. Consequently, if the teacher is knowledgeable, pleasant, accommodating and appreciative of his students' efforts, they are likely to embrace any change that is suggested. As Abeles (1995:170) suggests: "The association between the liked teacher and what is being taught is pleasant and therefore encourages a positive attitude."

Developing Positive Attitude

Education in early childhood experiences reveal that one of the ways of developing positive attitudes is exposing elements of musicianship to learners at the earliest age possible in their lives. Early exposure to music plays a significant role in creating inspiring moments of musical expression before the mind is crowded and clouded with other options of talents. This in many instances is created through the support of parents and siblings by engaging in musical association and

interaction, including listening to music, attending worship services, concerts and festivals. In classroom environments, pupils' impressions could also be influenced by the teacher's own attitude towards music or towards their responses (Vinackle, 1968). While it would be acceptable that for a Music lesson to be successful it should be enjoyed by the learners, the Music teacher has the responsibility of displaying enthusiasm and vitality in whatever he engages in. It is inadequate to claim the gift of musicianship if the teacher lacks the ability to project to pupils the desirable attitude towards music through his own expression. Quite often the Music teacher can also influence pupils' attitude towards music through his own taste of music.

The issue of taste in music can determine the kind of attitude people have towards certain kinds of Music. What the teacher would need to bear in mind is that taste is something that develops with exposure to some experience over time and should not be necessarily hurried. In this regard, the following is what a teacher had to say: "Sometimes I allow Music of their choice. They say why they brought it, why they like it and so on. I bring a piece of music and say why I like it.... then we talk about it" (in Witkin, 1974:123). A teacher who adopts a biased attitude towards Music performed in the class or toward pupils' favourite choices may create barriers to what should otherwise be appreciated. Quite often students tend to view their teacher's taste in pop music to be rather obsolete because of their inability to effectively capture the current trends in music. While this may be true, it would be advisable that the teacher avoids dismissing students' preferences of pop music as "trash" or "noise" because it could have a place in a class discussion. In line with this observation Abeles (1995:68) argues that "[s]tudents want Music teachers who are tolerant toward pop music in the same measure as teachers want the students to indeed give art music a fair chance." In this connection, Kenya Institute of Education (1986) points out the importance of enhancing national unity among different peoples through the music curriculum. This can be achieved by encouraging interaction between members of different ethnic communities through, appreciation, exploration and performance of and exposure to their indigenous Music.

Teacher's Approach

The teacher's approach or methodology in teaching music could yet be another aspect that influences pupils' attitudes. While it may be true that pupils respond as far as their past experience allows (Dale, 1969), the teacher needs to have an appropriate estimation of pupils' knowledge level before introducing a new musical concept. This should help to set out ways that develop a logical sequence of topics and activities which encourage pupils understanding. Spontaneous and natural music lessons seem to interest pupils' attention due to the relaxed atmosphere created. They have the tendency to encourage free interaction between pupils and the teacher, which is an effective way to develop positive attitudes towards Music. Some teachers appear quite unable to create this kind of atmosphere. Consequently, stiffness and tension prevail, making it difficult for the teacher to enhance interest in learning Music. When the teacher does not consider what the pupils already know, he hurries the process of association which is vital for introducing new learning. According to

Dale, it could be more useful to start with experiences that are well known or familiar to pupils because this allows new knowledge to take root. Exposing pupils to practical demonstration can be a useful way of enriching pupils' musical experiences. Pupils in this respect need to be given theoretical knowledge that is supported by practical experience to avoid boredom and to create interesting learning atmosphere for appreciating Music wholly. The following advice by Kenya National Examination Council to Music teachers is relevant to this kind of approach:

Teachers are once again reminded that Music is a practical subject. The best way to teach and learn Music is to put the theory learnt into practice. This not only motivates learners, but also enhances their understanding of the subject (KNEC, 1989:158).

For pupils to achieve useful music knowledge, they ought to be exposed to relevant and worthwhile musical experiences that are well planned and organized. Involvement in different musical activities in the school programme has the potential of enhancing appreciation of music. As pointed out by KIE (1986), it is arguable that Music Education is no longer mere singing as has been conceived in the past. Other than preparing pupils for the national examination, the objective of the Music syllabus is to ensure that pupils are exposed to a variety of musical activities including sight singing, participation in music festival, making and playing musical instruments, dancing, making costumes as well as music appreciation. The Kenya National Examination Council had the following observation on exposure of pupils to Music Instruments: "It is evident that pupils are still under-exposed to the rich variety of instrumentation in Kenya and may not yet be appreciating the great cultural potential which music offers" (KNEC, 1988:168). The use of such activities as participation in national Music festival, traditional dances and instrumental groups needs caution. The glory of winning the festival should not be seen as a measure of musical knowledge for all the pupils in the class or the school, since, only a few participate. They ought to be organized in such a way that other pupils who do not directly participate have something to gain or contribute, for it is through lack of participation that a negative attitude towards Music may be generated.

This is an important aspect of a teaching programme particularly if pupils' learning progress is to be monitored. The Kenyan Education system relies largely on pupils' achievement for various reasons. Some of these include the evaluation of the amount of learning that has taken place and the establishment of selection criteria. Pupils' achievement can also be used to derive information about the status of the subject and how pupils respond to it. Mwangi (1990) observes that achievement and attitudes are reciprocal to each other. He proposes that good achievers usually have positive attitudes towards a given subject. This view is also echoed by Neale (1963), in Aiken (1970), who refers to the relationship between attitude and achievement as a dynamic interaction between feelings and behaviour as observed in performance. The problem in Music teaching in Kenya today is that teachers ignore the individual pupil's intrinsic values in preference to knowledge and information. Observation in most Music classes shows a tendency to pay more attention to objectives related to accumulation of knowledge. Perhaps this is due to

the fact that the Music textbooks provide a readily available and convenient context for learning. As a result teachers tend to have the impression that testing as well as evaluating knowledge are much more direct, simpler and easier to defend than the practical activities.

CONCLUSION

In spite of shortfalls in practical involvement in Music, objectives of the Primary and Secondary School Music programme in Kenya ideally encourage a variety of learning experiences. They are prescribed to cater for knowledge and understanding, attitude and appreciation as well as motor skills. These experiences have been outlined by Bruner (1966) as Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor skills, respectively. The significance of these experiences is also pointed out by Leonhard (1972:20) who states that "... the ultimate criterion for judging success of learning [Music] lies in the kind of initiatives, [and] attitudes that are developed." Achievement will therefore only be useful in this regard if it is based on a rich background of music experiences. The teacher's quality of training then becomes most useful, for it is the Music teacher who ought to creatively expose the relevant music experiences which make pupils' achievement significantly meaningful. Music Education becomes more valuable when it is first seen as aesthetic Education, which then develops into abilities that make pupils enjoy Music with perception and discrimination. As observed by Abeles, "If there be truth in the statement 'I know what I like', there is also truth in the words 'I like what I know'" (1984:144). In this regard, the teacher must endeavour to create positive attitude for Music to be meaningful.

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