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Early Childhood Music Education in Kenya: Between Broad National Policies and Local Realities

ELIZABETH ANDANG'O and JOHN MUGO

Abstract: The historical development of early childhood music education (ECE) in Kenya reveals the challenging circumstances under which it has, and continues, to progress. Poverty remains the most formidable hindrance to the success of this area of education. Multiculturalism, the mosaic that defines Kenya's rich heritage, also demands ingenuity from policymakers in formulating sound guiding principles that are inclusive of the diverse cultures inherent in the country. The key to addressing the challenges of ECE lies in strengthening the tripartite relationship between policy makers who are the authors of the current broad policies, the curriculum designers, and the teachers who implement the curriculum. Deliberate networking of their ideas and activities provides a way forward in propelling music education in early childhood.

Keywords: curriculum, multicultural, policies, poverty

Located in the eastern most region of Africa, Kenya has an estimated population of thirty-four million people, more than 50 percent of whom are children under eighteen years of age. After achieving independence from Britain in 1963, Kenya witnessed massive growth in the education sector. However, this

growth has been disproportionate across the different sectors of early childhood education (ECE), primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Although primary education received the most focus in terms of policymaking, deliberate financial investment targeted higher education; however, this trend is reversing. Kenya now has free (although not compulsory) primary education for eight years and offers another four years of secondary education that remains unaffordable for the poor majority. An additional four years of university education remains extremely competitive, expensive, and attainable for fewer than 10 percent of those completing secondary education.

Current policies influencing young children are largely shaped by inequities between the poor and the rich, urban and rural communities, and agriculturally based and pastoralist-nomadic communities. Estimates indicate that greater than 50 percent of Kenyans are living below the poverty line. A majority of those live in rural areas or urban slums. Enrollment in ECE for the children in this category remains low, and government efforts to make ECE accessible remain inadequate. In some rural areas, schools are far from home and traveling such distances poses threats to young children. In such cases, children remain at home and join school when they are of a reasonable age. Similarly, ECE for

nomadic communities remains elusive. Mobile schools and feeding programs in these areas mainly target children in primary school. However, the reality of poverty in the country—which results in the engagement of the child in the adult domain, especially in terms of child labor—continues to be a challenge. Some children start school late because they have to stay home and watch over younger siblings while parents and older siblings work; some end up not going to school at all. It has been claimed, however, that this situation has improved since the introduction of universal primary education in 2003 (Government of Kenya 2006c).

In this article, we discuss policies in ECE and the place of music, and contrast broad policies in which music is denied prominence and local realities in which music is an integral part of instruction. Building on the challenges of poverty already set forth, we consider the local context and effects of multiculturalism on ECE and the development of ECE policies and the current status, and make recommendations for enacting policies to promote music practice in ECE.

Lived Realities: The Local Context

One Country, Many Cultures

Kenya is a multicultural and multiethnic country with over forty-two

indigenous ethnic communities coexisting within its borders. In addition, a significant percentage of nonindigenous people live in the country, adding their influence to its culture (Musau 2002). Each of the forty-two communities has a distinct language and way of life. Although some of these communities share certain similarities in language, cultural beliefs, and cultural practices, each is recognized as a distinct entity that contributes to the variety of cultures that define Kenya. Most of the multicultural population, featuring Kenyan ethnic diversity as well as immigrants from other parts of Africa and the world, is concentrated in urban areas, especially in major towns. In such environments, children have the opportunity to experience a variety of cultures by bonding and interacting with others from different ethnic groups and races.

The differences in the diverse urban population and the smaller, more homogeneous rural population are reflected in the language of instruction in each location type. To cater to instruction in early childhood education (ECE) centers in the multicultural urban areas, a choice must be made between two Kenyan languages: Kiswahili, the national language, which is expected to foster national unity; or English, the official language used in offices and schools (Government of Kenya 2005c). In most rural areas, the respective single ethnic languages spoken by the majority population constitute the medium of instruction in ECE up to third grade.

This diversity in the languages of Kenya is reflected in the country's music as well. Akuno (2005) and Zake (1986) observe that song is the characteristic medium of musical expression in Kenya, playing an important role in the lives of the people from birth until death. All Kenyan communities have songs marking the human life cycle—for birth (including lullabies), circumcision (or alternative puberty rites among those who do not practice circumcision), marriage, war, work, death and funeral, and many others describing virtually every life activity. Although they share this permeating musical presence in daily life, one finds diversity in the music of

each ethnic group in terms of rhythm, scales, melodic structure, and style of performance. Different communities use different instruments to accompany their songs, whereas others do not use instruments; dance, a vital accompaniment to song in Kenya (Zake), also varies in style among communities.

Each of the diverse cultural characteristics that define the Kenyan population was considered in the development of the main curriculum and is reflected in the various languages of instruction required for different localities. However, poor documentation of songs has limited the use of this music in ECE, barring cross-cultural sharing and presenting a real threat to the maintenance of an important cultural repertoire. As the communities transition from the oral tradition to the written, we need to engage in rigorous documentation.

Traditional Views on Childhood, Education, and Music Education

Within most African communities, including Kenya, children constituted an integral section of society for various reasons:

- They ensured continuity of humanity.
- They contributed to the economic development of the family and society by providing labor, especially in communities in which agriculture, fishing, or pastoralist activity was the key means to livelihood.
- They guaranteed that their parents were cared for in their old age.

Children belonged to the community, and “issues of training and discipline were handled by adults, regardless of whether or not they were kin” (Kipkorir 1987, 52). The entire community, whose aim was to prepare the child for life as an adult, participated in the education process. Through this informal education process, boys trained to become men and girls trained for motherhood and homemaking. Young children performed simple chores and spent much of their day at play. Play mainly involved imitation of adult roles, which children both directly pursued in dramatic portrayals of specific models and indirectly

received through the enculturation of everyday community life.

Omibiyi-Obidike (cited in Akuno 2005) categorized two stages of traditional music education shared by communities throughout Africa. The first is the music education every child received, beginning from birth and continuing until death. The aim of this education was to “integrate individuals into their culture” and incorporate them into the musical components of communal life (12). This education also socialized individuals into their community, thereby giving them their distinct identity as part of the cultural group. Music in early childhood was incorporated into daily play activities in the form of singing games and songs on nature or animals, particularly those with peculiar habits, such as the wily hare, greedy hyena, or slow tortoise. Girls also imitated their mothers, rocking dolls while singing to them. Chants were another popular feature in childhood play and provided opportunities for improvisation because those performing them always strove to add new lines to them to make them longer.

The second stage of music education was professional and, therefore, more exclusively provided to those who were talented or showed a certain inclination toward music. A talented child, from about the age of eight or slightly older, was guided through the intricacies of learning and performing on an instrument by a family member. It is worth noting that professional training in instrument playing was largely a male domain because of cultural beliefs that prohibited women from playing or sometimes even handling certain musical instruments. Additionally, girls' domestic duties left hardly enough time for learning an instrument (Agak 1998). Most girls, nevertheless, built their musical repertoire through songs taught to them by their mothers.

Current Situation for Childhood Education and Music Education

Statistics indicate that by 2005, there was only 35 percent enrollment into ECE centers in all of Kenya, with a depressingly lower percentage (9 percent) in the arid and semiarid regions

of the country (Government of Kenya 2005b). The reality of this dismal situation was reflected on August 27, 2007, when one of the main stories on the Kenya Television Network News featured education officials visiting a home in one of the nomadic communities to compel a parent to send her youngest child to school. The parent was adamant that, with all the child's siblings in school, there was no one to herd the animals. Although the government continues to stiffen penalties against parents who deny their children educational opportunities, these problems are not easy to eliminate.

Today, views on childhood have changed little. Although children are still considered important to the continuation of humanity by virtue of both being born and taking responsibility for aging parents, they do not contribute much to the economic development of their families during their years in school. Since the inception of formal education, the role of the community in child rearing was largely passed on to the school environment (Akuno 2005). Peers at school have replaced the peers children grew up with in the community, altering the pattern of socialization. This change has impacted education considerably, particularly the first years of schooling when many children need to adjust to the new environment. The role of education has also changed from enculturation and a continuity between home and learning environments into monocultural or homogeneous community building to prepare for life and work within a global community, often requiring a great deal of adaptation on the part of the learner.

One of the greatest challenges facing music education in Kenya today is its institutionalization. Traditional music of a multicultural society must now be studied, in all its diversity, within the formal education system, presenting a daunting task for teacher preparation. Many teachers openly confess their lack of knowledge of traditional Kenyan music, having experienced a music education heavily skewed toward Western European music, a situation brought about by the missionaries during the

colonial era (Agak 2005; Akuno 2005; Digolo 2005). In ECE, this influence is particularly evident. Thus, although music is integral at this stage of education (Mwaura 1980), the teaching of it relies heavily on Western European singing games and folk songs, especially in urban areas. Rural areas are also gradually moving away from traditional Kenyan music to English music.

Scholars have "thrown a spanner [wrench]" into the works of traditional

has been watered down. So, although society maintains traditional views of the child's role in sustaining it, the loss of traditional musical practices and repertoire to support such a role represents a nationwide dilemma.

Venues for Musical Experiences

Four venues that shape Kenyan children's musical education today include the home, the church, music festivals, and school. Home musical experiences

Current policies influencing young children are largely shaped by inequities between the poor and the rich, urban and rural communities, and agriculturally based and pastoralist-nomadic communities.

music education with their argument that the study of traditional Kenyan music outside of its natural context is a misrepresentation of its true meaning (Njoora 2005). However, because it is not possible to recreate activities associated with this music, Njoora suggests a way out of the impasse through "mental recreation of the events associated with the music" and deliberate attempts to represent the music as closely as possible to its original function (46).

Kenyan music education shares more than repertoire with the Western world—advocacy for music as a subject area is also needed, propelled by the deeply situated view of child as future provider. Music education must now compete with other disciplines in the school curriculum that offer much more lucrative promise as professions. With few opportunities for career diversification in Kenya (Akuno 2005), music education faces stiff competition from other disciplines. As a result, in ECE, music is largely used to teach concepts in other disciplines. Its relegation to the periphery of education is a sure testimony that the role it played in traditional society

in most urban areas include singing, listening to prerecorded music (available at most retail supermarkets), and watching musical shows on television. Singing with family members is, however, a dying art; technologically generated music has become a convenient way of keeping children occupied in the absence of busy parents. This trend may be less prevalent in rural areas, but it is permeating there too with the fairly easy accessibility of radio in most regions in Kenya. The impact of these developments on music education is double-edged: the availability of technologically generated music ensures that children are constantly exposed to music; therefore, they build their musical skills. However, the loss of singing together at home suggests erosion of Kenyan culture by the disappearance of one of its most profound mediums of cultural identity and expression—traditional songs. This is especially the case because most of the prerecorded music has Western roots. Another danger of reliance on music produced for mass audiences is the difficulty of controlling the textual subject matter, often morally

compromised and, therefore, a negative influence on children's socialization.

The church also plays a key role in music education in Kenya. Eighty percent of Kenyans are nominal Christians, attending church services at least once a week. Parents consider the church a safe haven for their children, shielding them from many negative practices. Recently, churches have invested considerably in music, buying instruments and providing myriad opportunities for performance. Children participate in these activities and, through them, build artistic skills in music, dance, and drama. Some of the music performed in church now forms part of the repertoire of ECE music sessions. This development, however, needs to be addressed with caution because there are instances in which parents subscribing to different religious beliefs have raised concerns regarding its performance in public or private schools with no specific religious affiliations.

The Kenya Music Festival, an annual event since 1926 (Akuno 2005), is arguably the most popular musical event in educational institutions in the country. It provides an avenue for children at all levels of education to present music, dance, and elocution (including public speaking and singing) on a competitive basis and includes issues addressing social injustice in its program topics. These include children's rights to education and a life free of violence, warnings about drug abuse, and issues surrounding HIV/AIDS and child labor. Teachers compose music or choral verses on these issues and train the children to perform and present the programs at the festival. In this sense, music education has continued to play the role of socialization. This is a strong rationale for its continued existence in the school curriculum at all levels of education.

Although private ECE centers have been participating for a long time, public ECE centers only recently took an active role in the event following a directive from the city education office. Most performances by children at this stage constitute singing games in two categories: Western and African. In comparison to an in-school musical performance, par-

ticipation in such a competitive festival requires much more preparation time from the teachers and considerable funds have to be spent for costumes and materials. The willingness to invest extensive time and monetary resources in music performance speaks to its importance to those involved and provides a significant rationale for continued support. ECE center participants also perform in other arts areas, most notably the recitation of solo or choral verses, either composed by the teacher or prescribed as a set piece in the festival program. More recently, ECE center participants performed at the annual drama festival, a separate event from the music festival. These are all important avenues for developing the child artist. Their visibility helps to ensure that music remains in the school curriculum.

The school, the last avenue considered here, is the place in which all of these musical experiences are brought together. At school, the teacher holds great sway on the child's subsequent musical experiences. The process of music education is greatly determined by teachers' preferences and inclinations toward music. It is important for teachers to provide many opportunities for children to express their varied musical abilities, nurtured by the different avenues through which they gain access to music.

These experiences should complement Kenya's rich cultural heritage, to which children are entitled, rather than replace it. Ethnic songs that have enriched the child's play over time should not be pushed to the periphery because they may soon disappear, paving the way for "modernism": prerecorded Western music and religious songs. Negative attitudes toward traditional music should be examined and challenged. Akuno (2005) proposes the theory of functionalism as the most appropriate means of viewing African music. The theory states that "meaning in music should be derived from the role it plays in the life of those who make it" (160). The meaning of cultural music should, therefore, be derived from its role as a socialization agent. Curriculum developers at the National Center for Early

Childhood Education (NACECE) and ECE teacher educators should engage teacher candidates in the discussion on attitudes toward traditional music and the extensive analysis of the benefits of using this music in education.

Educational Policies for Early Childhood Music

Principles: Partnership and Decentralization

Much has happened since the inception of ECE in Kenya in the 1940s, when Kenya was a British colony. First, Kenyan education was provided according to four distinct curricula: European, Asian, Arabic, and African. Akuno (2005) and Agak (2005) note that the first three curricula accommodated the music of their respective cultures, whereas in the African curriculum, "learners was subjected to Sunday school songs, church hymns and Western folksongs" (Akuno, 17) and were not permitted to sing their own traditional music. This is because Kenyan and African music was associated with heathen practices and, therefore, its performance was discouraged at all costs. Later attempts to reintroduce it into the curriculum bore little fruit, chiefly because of the approach used in this venture.

After Kenya's independence in 1963, ECE became accessible to many more children (NACECE 1987) when the newly constituted government realized the magnitude of providing education to its citizens and coined the motto "Harambee," meaning "pooling together" (Mwaura 1980). Kenyans heeded this call and came together within their local communities to build ECE centers.

The government formulated key policies governing ECE between 1972 and 2002. They were formulated as a result of findings from an experimental project, the Pre-school Education Project, jointly sponsored by the government and the Bernard van Leer Foundation of The Hague, The Netherlands (NACECE 1987). This project was carried out in a bid to formulate an intervention program to improve the quality of pre-school education and advise on strategies for government participation in this

level of education. The project focused on two key areas: development of ECE curricula and training of teachers.

Following the completion of the project in 1982, the first national seminar on ECE was held in Malindi, Kenya, and two key recommendations were made, namely, dissemination of the findings of the project countrywide and establishment of an NACECE to advise the government on the modalities and logistics of such an endeavor. A second national seminar was held in 1987, and a third regional one in 2002, with representations from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. These forums mainly addressed the empowerment of parents and the community, who would eventually run 70 percent of the preschools and make decisions on curriculum issues. This was in line with the government strategy of “pooling together” its citizens to attain national developmental goals.

The impact of these forums is significant. Two key policies, which came from the recommendations of the first two forums, still govern ECE in Kenya to date:

- Provision of ECE through partnership among the government, parents, and local communities and partnership among relevant government ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, Planning and others
- Decentralization of preschool education services, including training, within the framework of district centers for ECE (DICECE; Kenya Institute of Education [KIE] 2002)

The first policy issue regarding partnership has largely influenced the development of ECE. Unusually, ECE is funded by the local authorities and features a strong partnership with the community, different from the primary and secondary school levels, which are run and funded solely by the central government through the Ministry of Education. Based on the second policy of decentralization, NACECE was established in 1984 and thereafter ECE services were decentralized to the districts. NACECE would act as “the main link among all the district centers, develop curricula and coordinate training of teachers at the DICECE

levels” (NACECE 1987, 58–59). The main task of NACECE was to build the capacities of the districts to enact their own context and culturally relevant curricula and training of teachers, as well as monitor quality of these processes.

The 1972–82 preschool education project and the three subsequent seminars summarize the genesis of ECE in Kenya. The outcomes of the project and the seminars have remained the cornerstones of ECE in Kenya to date, particularly in the areas of curriculum development and teacher training. However, the impact of these processes on music education is not documented.

Curricular Issues

The formal ECE curriculum. The KIE is the curriculum developer for the Ministry of Education. It develops curricula for all levels of education in Kenya excluding universities. The ECE curriculum developed by KIE represents the government’s approved practice in ECE and is used in all public and the majority of private preschools. On a smaller scale, two alternative curricula have been in use in some schools for many years: the kindergarten headmistresses association (KHA) curriculum and the Montessori curriculum. Although aspects of the KIE curriculum can be found within them, the government recently issued a directive that the three curricula be harmonized to ensure a uniform ECE experience for Kenyan children (confidential interview with curriculum developer, pers. comm.).

The KIE (Government of Kenya 2001) ECE curriculum is designed to be adaptable to the diverse cultural, geographical, and musical conditions existing in the different regions of the country. The key aspects of this curriculum are the use of localized raw materials to design learning materials. For instance, in an area in which trees are plentiful, materials such as shapes used for counting should be fashioned out of wood. Localization also applies to the language of instruction because Kenya is a multiethnic and multicultural country. As noted earlier, children in urban areas are taught in either English

or Kiswahili, whereas in rural areas, the local language is used as the medium of instruction. Localization also applies to learning resources including storybooks, poems, and songs in terms of the language in which they are written and their source. They should be authentic to the community from which they are drawn and written in the native language of their origin.

The curriculum strongly advocates for learning through play because play is the basic way a child makes sense of reality (Manani 1993). Following this framework, the curriculum advocates for activity-based learning. This approach allows for the child to learn by doing and experimenting, rather than through didactic methods (Mwaura 1980). Thus, children trained using this curriculum should engage in activities such as counting tangible objects, forming shapes and numbers, or engaging in song and movement.

Learning activities in ECE. The KIE ECE curriculum specifies the following learning activities for children: (a) language, (b) outdoor and physical activities, (c) music and movement, (d) environmental activities, and (e) creative activities. Music and movement activities, as stated in the curriculum preamble, are important to enhancing learning (Government of Kenya 2001). Such areas of learning through music as identified in the curriculum are the following: (a) socialization, through which the child is integrated into the (school) community; (b) appreciation of music and culture of other communities; (c) development of self-expression; and (d) communication skills.

Objectives of music and movement are listed, and include the following: (a) relaxation and enjoyment, (b) appreciation of other cultures and international consciousness, (c) creation of the child’s own songs and movement, and (d) early appreciation of music as a foundation for subsequent musical development. Music and movement is adequately described in the curriculum guideline document, which also contains a sample of music skills, activities, and materials for children between ages three and six years old. Such skills include singing,

dancing or movement, making rhythm, listening, and playing musical instruments. Materials to be used include sticks, drums, shakers, piano, guitar, pitch pipe, CD players, and costumes.

Adequate guidelines for the teaching of music and movement in ECE are also strongly featured in this document. The descriptions of skills to be developed, activities children should engage in, and materials to be used in the learning process reflect deep understanding of

music education practice in light of the curriculum requirements and the Service Standard Guidelines may lead to some answers on how to bridge this gap.

Holistic learning. Primos (1998) observes that “holism” has no simple definition and ultimately describes it as an attitude or frame of mind that governs one’s way of thinking. The alternative to a holistic approach is reductionism, in which one studies constituent parts and is less

and further other educational goals (Government of Kenya 2005a). Primos (1998) supports this view through her inclusion of integrated studies among holistic activities, postulating that the connection of music with other areas of knowledge opens up opportunities for connections and relationships between disciplines.

Integrated studies are a widely practiced phenomenon in ECE in Kenya. However, the connections are usually one-sided because although music is used to teach other activity areas, the converse, using other activity areas to teach music education, is not usually considered (although it actually does take place, such as when children are taught poetry, which aids in rhythmic development). Because music education as a discipline is taught only once a week, the extent to which musical skills are acquired in integrated studies is arguable but can be supported by the notion that in “doing,” the children “become”; thus, in singing, they become better singers, whether the singing is done to achieve musical or other goals.

Other researchers, such as Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995), view holistic education more broadly. Such an education, according to them, addresses all areas of a child’s development, whether intellectual, emotional, physical, or spiritual. This does not contradict Primos (1998), nor does it, in a general sense, contradict the practice in Kenyan ECE centers. It merely draws our attention to education as being for the benefit of the whole child.

The policies governing the aforementioned stance are passive in nature, accepting the status quo. In this case, local realities may provide clues to policy reform, inasmuch as traditional Kenyan children’s music, with its characteristic spontaneity, provides infinite opportunities for child involvement. Such music making yields holistic learning because children sing, move, and respond to music from diverse cultures. The NACECE curriculum should, therefore, stress such music benefits for a holistic music education.

A child-centered methodology. A child-centered approach to learning is fea-

Multicultural music education should be regarded as an avenue for understanding the way of life of other cultures within and outside of Kenya.

music education as a learning experience. Furthermore, these guidelines take into consideration cultural issues and direct learning along multicultural lines. However, the practice of music and movement in ECEs falls far short of the curriculum requirements. This indicates a gap that needs to be addressed to bridge the distance between requirements and practice.

Teaching Approaches

Published in 2006, the booklet ECE Service Standard Guidelines “operationalize[s] the National ECD (Early Childhood Development) Policy Framework . . . to provide quality accessible and equitable ECD services for young children” (Government of Kenya 2006c, vi). Four approaches to educational activities in ECE included in the booklet are “holistic learning, child-centered teaching/learning, learning through play . . . and use of the language of the catchment area before gradual introduction of other languages” (Government of Kenya 2006b, 15). Application of these broad statements to the music education practice as described in the ECE curriculum should result in rich musical experiences in school. An analysis of

concerned with the overall influences of education (or any intervention in a scientific experiment). The learning approach in music education provided in the ECE Service Standard Guidelines takes a holistic learning stance (Government of Kenya 2006b), which is in line with both the indigenous societal use of music in everyday life and Akuno’s (2005) promotion of music’s function as a key to understanding African music. Holistic music education should begin with the teacher’s attention to the contributing and resultant factors; music education should be treated as a discipline through which a child receives an all-encompassing education.

An investigation into the use of music in Kenyan ECEs reveals that most teachers reported that they teach music all the time (Andang’o 2007). This statement, viewed from the perspective of a specialist music educator using the reductionist theory to break down music education into Western music components (such as rhythmic patterns and melodic contours), appears to simplify music education. However, on further reflection, the teacher who responds thus views music from a holistic perspective when she uses it to introduce lessons, change from one activity to another, count, develop language skills,

tured in the official ECE curriculum and although the definition of *child-centeredness* does not directly match that advocated by the discovery-based Montessori method (Essa 2003), there are elements that do match with culturally sensitive local practices. Teachers using the curriculum are expected to give children many opportunities to learn by discovery. Historically, children seldom interacted with adults except in the evening at the fireside as supper was cooking. Then, stories were told both before supper to keep little ones awake until the meal and after supper when they got their lesson for the day through a story. At such times, a child might have discovered that fire burns when he or she insisted on touching a hot pot. Such learning through discovery was acceptable, and parents applied it to the extent that it did not result in serious consequences. The use of song to teach moral lessons also allowed for discovery because children used the self-initiated repetition of these learned melodic and narrative cultural artifacts as resources for pondering textual content. Older children discovered much about nature as they ran errands for their parents or herded livestock.

Music in ECE should be taught with the same approach of allowing children to discover. Young children discover the potential in their voices and in their bodies as they respond to musical cues and discover various ways of singing and moving to music. These are effective ways of developing rhythmic sensibilities and self-knowledge. As they engage in a song requiring them to take a lead part, children can discover their leadership skills or other aspects of their characters that may not be visible during other learning activities. This is also a great way for teachers to understand the children they teach, so as to know how to better address their individual needs.

Marsh and Young (2006) observe that, musically speaking, a difference exists between teacher-centered and child-centered learning. The response of the children to the learning situation is more productive if child centered. This approach to teaching and learning is recommended in the ECE Service Standard Guidelines

(Government of Kenya 2006b) but is seldom followed in most ECEs in Kenya, particularly in music education. In music and movement sessions enacted in the field, there is little evidence of a child-centered approach to learning singing games and dances, the usual musical activities. Teachers frequently take the lead roles, occasionally delegating to children (usually the same children), but there is a lot more that could happen. Culturally, adults are seen as leaders for the young; this perspective may be the reason for the preponderance of teacher-centered instruction.

The current structure of music and movement sessions in ECE, in which the entire school, both children and teachers, forms a big circle and performs music and movement activities, is a great tool for socialization but somewhat restrictive for applications of the child-centered approach. This arrangement during performances suggests local cultural influence because communal music activities in traditional society were the norm. Alternatively, this large-scale arrangement could also stem from less child-centered teacher preparation or teachers' tendencies to act in the dominating role. To remedy the situation, teachers can divide the group and give each subgroup a different activity, which can then be rotated among the subgroups intermittently. They can also develop song leaders by encouraging the children to act as soloists in call and response songs. Such strategies would create an atmosphere that encourages discovery by the children.

Learning through play. In some cultures, both children and adults engage in play, although of different varieties and separately (Mans et al. 2003). According to Manani (1993), play is a vital activity in which children learn what no one can teach them. He also defines the roles of play in the child's life as a means of cultivating (a) the survival instinct through coping with the environment; (b) physical development through muscular strength and coordination; (c) cognitive development through acquisition of new concepts; (d) communication through language development; and (e)

socialization through learning to share. Defined this way, play becomes a means to holistic development.

Most children's songs from Kenya, as is the case regionally and even globally, present seemingly limitless opportunities for play. Akuno (2005) classified children's songs from Kenya into six categories. The first included activity or action songs, which involve activity centered around community social roles. Such songs are therefore gender-specific to some extent. Agak (cited in Mans et al. 2003) concurred with this and provides an example of a song, "Dayo Luongi" from the Luo community of Kenya, which is about winnowing millet. Girls, who are culturally expected to participate in such an activity, perform the song. Action songs also serve as educational media because they ridicule vice and commend virtue (Akuno). As children engage in such songs, they understand not only the implicit structural form of music, but also social roles and moral issues through play.

The second category Akuno (2005) designated was singing games. These songs place equal emphasis on song and play because both activities are of equal weight in the performance. Activities such as clapping, stone passing, or embodiment of movement (such as the writhing of a python or the action of weaving a basket) encompass the most common types in this genre (Akuno; Mans et al. 2003). The nature of the songs as intensified speech endears them to children, yet they also contain much in the way of education such as creativity, physical development, social development, and performance skills, among other attributes.

The third category is fable songs, which are incorporated into folktales or fables. Most of them center on victims and their captors. They are typically performed in the evening, around the fireside. They are usually long and serve as educational tools in addition to enhancing imagination. The fourth category is learning songs. These songs usually describe animals, birds, plants, and other phenomena in the child's environment. They are intended to teach facts about the child's world.

Cradlesongs, to praise a baby, make up the fifth category, and the last category is lullabies, to lull a child to sleep. These last two categories are sung to children but are also used to introduce babies to music. Another genre of children's music is the chant. Found in most cultures, chants provide opportunities for children to develop rhythmic sensibilities and creativity through imaginatively playing with sounds and rhymes and adding original lines to the existing material.

Children's music as depicted earlier provides a rich avenue for learning through play. Mans et al. (2003) cited the cognitive benefits as one reason learning through play should be adopted, a position already stated by Manani (1993). During play, according to Mans et al., children make music deliberately. They also have to know the rules of the game and abide by them. The multiple ways of performance as they sing, move, and coordinate with each other are challenging, thereby contributing to cognitive development. Artistry is another important characteristic learned through (musical) play. Children display high levels of skill in their performances that can be translated into effective and meaningful arts education (Mans et al.).

Despite these demonstrated possibilities for learning through play, the practice in Kenyan ECE indicates that this richness has not been captured in education, a situation echoed by Mans et al. (2003), in reference to Namibia, Ghana, and Kenya. According to them, teachers choose to teach more global, popular, or classical genres of music in a bid to cater to the multicultural population of their schools. They argue that play in music allows children to explore their own and other cultural forms. Kenyan teachers, in our experience, also tend to justify the exclusion of Kenyan traditional music for the same reason. A reorientation of ECE teachers into the benefits of Kenyan traditional children's songs would provide a solution to the problem. The most effective time to supply this reorientation would be in the course of their training sessions.

Revisiting Key Issues

Music from many cultures should be considered to give the child a variety of musical experiences. In Kenya, the multicultural setting provides a background ready for such experiences. Yet, this has not been explored as it should be. Multicultural music education should be regarded as an avenue for understanding the way of life of other cultures within and outside of Kenya.

Furthermore, many practices in music education cut across cultures globally. Inevitably, global influences have infiltrated local music educational practices, such as the language in which music is performed. In Kenya, English songs and games have been popular in ECE since its inception. Aspects of Western culture that form the textual basis of the music and styles of moving to the music are also acquired in the process of performance. This is gratifying to the music educator, who constantly seeks opportunities for holism in music education. This holism is necessary because urbanization and globalization are real phenomena in the twenty-first century, and few homogeneous groups will be found in any one geographical region. Interculturalism and multiculturalism are, therefore, providing many opportunities for holism in music education.

One of the most profound policy issues that directly affect music education is the language of instruction in the preschools that aim to cater to multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism. As discussed earlier, multiculturalism and uniculturalism in different parts of the country have influenced not only language policy in ECE but also the entire system of socialization at this level of education. This difference in the use of language, between the urban and the rural on one hand and between different regions on the other, matches the choice and range of music. Although nursery rhymes in English and Western instrumentation are a common feature of the urban centers, ethnic melodies, dance, movement, and the use of traditional instruments are widely used in the rural areas. However, with growing media influence and improved exchange between rural and urban areas, the use of indigenous music in ECE is rapidly eroding.

This poses a real threat to "promotion of Kenyan culture," one of the national goals of education (KIE 2003, 27). It also makes void the efforts already made by NACECE to collate materials (songs, stories, rhymes, and sayings) from twenty-three of the forty-two ethnic groups for use in ECE (KIE 2002). These materials are rarely used. Curriculum developers validated this finding by citing examples of private schools in some rural areas in which parents insist on English as the language of instruction for their children. Subsequently, NACECE is strongly considering translating the materials to English to enable more teachers to use them. This language policy may lead to certain deficiencies: urban children may entirely miss out on the experience of singing in Kenyan languages, whereas parents in rural areas, in which these languages are spoken and whose heritage is richly represented in children's songs, may completely abandon the use of such ethnic songs. Policymakers should take time to reconsider the role of each of the three languages (vernacular, English, and Kiswahili) for Kenyans. As King'ei (2002) postulates, parents and teachers must view multilingualism and multiculturalism as assets rather than liabilities to development and assign bigger roles to African languages, cultures, and music in ECE.

In summary, from the analysis of approaches to music education in light of curricula requirements, it is evident that the local realities point to current policy reform needed to bring Kenyan ECE music education more closely aligned with the key issues: (a) the need for a more specific policy to guide teaching of music and (b) the significance of including multiculturalism and creativity in music teacher training. We offer specific recommendations in the following section.

Recommendations

Harmonization of Roles between Ministry of Education, Local Authorities, and Community

Good policies, such as partnership and decentralization, have not been as

effective in providing a framework for ECE in Kenya as they were intended. This has been discussed in many forums (see KIE 2002) and it is clear that the main drawback to their realization lies in the lack of clear guidelines on the roles of the central government, local authorities, and the local community in the management and sustainability of ECEs. Without streamlining the responsibilities of these stakeholders in the process of ECE, gains in teaching, training, and all other activities will continue to be compromised. The government should look into this matter with expediency for ECE to move forward in realizing educational goals.

Strengthening of Teacher-Training Program

There is a gap between teacher preparation and the expectations stated in the curricula for training ECE teachers (Government of Kenya 2005a, 2006a). To realize the stated objectives of music education, it is paramount to invest more human and material resources in teacher training, especially in building rudimentary musicianship competencies. At the two existing levels of training (certificate and diploma), there is need for at least two weekly sessions for music and movement, despite time constraints because of much subject matter. Most teachers attending the training have had little or no previous experience with music; thus, they need basic skills of music reading, writing, and performance. They need to learn how to use localized materials to construct simple musical instruments and how to strategically select appropriate music resources for ages two to six years. This is the only way music could assume a central place in enriching early childhood learning experiences. The most cost effective way to train teachers in music is to network with universities that have existing music programs; they could provide staff to train the teachers in basic music knowledge.

Emphasis on Language Heritage and Music in Multiculturalism

Language of instruction in preschools is certainly becoming more and more

standardized as the pressures of the education system catch up with the preschool. However, the multicultural approach to learning should be emphasized and entrenched into policy to guard the development of native Kenyan languages in particular. Versatility in speaking different languages and exposure to ethnic children's songs must be seen as an asset and duly used for this benefit, rather than perceived as an obstacle to learning for Kenyan children. Research in this area is needed to provide convincing evidence to stakeholders.

Provision of Appropriate Resources for Music Teaching

Both the training syllabi for certificate and diploma ECE teachers developed at NACECE indicate that children are supposed to learn to play simple music instruments. Indeed, simple instruments are an asset in cultivating appreciation for music as well as developing rhythmic and coordination skills. However, little, if any, evidence of use of instruments is seen in classrooms. Most rooms in ECE centers do not possess any music instruments, even those made from localized materials. Teachers cite lack of time to make the instruments as the main hindrance. To ensure that children benefit from rich musical experiences, the part of NACECE curriculum that advocates for use of localized learning materials and resources needs strengthening to entrench the practice of instrument construction and the use of the constructed instruments in the existing music and movement sessions.

Documentation of Local Music Teaching Materials

The localized materials collected at NACECE lie idle because they are only in text form, without any musical notation. This renders them inaccessible to teachers who do not know the songs. A project to notate the music started but was never realized. Notation of the music is important for long-term preservation and access by musically literate people, but it would still be inaccessible to the majority of ECE teachers, who cannot read music. For the teachers' immediate use, the music should be audio recorded. To meet the urgent need

to preserve children's heritage for posterity, documentation of stories, sayings, songs, and rhymes among the forty-two cultures must be treated as a priority.

Conclusion

In Kenya, early childhood music education is an integral part of the fabric of society. However, because music has always held a utilitarian rather than educational function in Kenyan culture, teachers and policymakers have difficulty regarding music and movement as a discipline, a problem experienced in many countries globally (Campbell and Scott-Kassner 1995). This view of music has hampered effective enactment of the curriculum and impeded the progress of music education on a national scale. However, there is hope that, with new practices such as the one implemented in 2007 requiring ECE centers to participate in the annual Kenya Music Festival and the National Drama Festival, the arts will constitute the vital lifeblood of ECE (Kilonzi 1998).

Most teachers appreciate some musical training, which the government should take seriously. Too many opportunities for developing young musicians are lost because teachers with limited knowledge and untapped sensitivity fail to be with the children (Custodero 2005) in their discovery of music. They also unknowingly suppress children's musical development by limiting opportunities for self-discovery and experimentation in music. With a musical background for the teachers, a written tradition may complement the oral tradition that has served Kenya well but faces challenges, especially regarding the storage of its rich traditions.

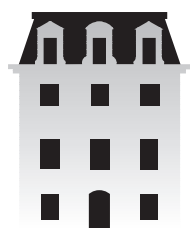
Finally, at policy level, basic life issues are the main impediments to the realization of ECE, including music. Although it is a matter of concern to have an ECE music policy, it would be irrational to lay focus on this, when fewer than 40 percent of the children in Kenya are enrolled in ECE programs. The government and the people of Kenya must squarely address poverty, cultural dynamics, and the right of every child to education to truly represent the beauty and promise that Kenya holds for upcoming generations.

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