

## **CORRELATING MUSIC WITH OTHER SUBJECTS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Robert Manford*

*The article focuses on how music can be correlated with other subjects in the elementary classroom. There is ample evidence that music by its very elements naturally lend itself to correlation with many subjects in the elementary classroom, including social studies, physical education, science and mathematics, visual and language arts, and dance. In this regard teachers are advised to seize the opportunity to correlate any two or more subjects with common objectives. On the other hand, teachers are cautioned that when correlating music with other subjects emphasis should be laid on musical activities (singing, playing musical instruments, composing music, listening to music) which will foster the objectives of the second subject under study.*

### *Introduction*

Correlation, in this context, means the mutual relationships between two or more school subject areas. And one of the reasons for the existence of music in any school curriculum is that it may be used so effectively to correlate almost every subject (Gelineau, 1976). In this regard the elementary classroom teacher, working with children in several areas of their studies, must seize the opportunity to correlate music with other curricular areas (Land and Vaughan, 1978). Furthermore, music (with its several elements as rhythm, rise, fall, tension, resolution, dynamics, etc) easily correlates with some aspects of art, dance, language, mathematics and social studies. Nadon - Gabrion (1984) emphasizes that children bring a variety of skills from home to school, and that prominent among them is the understanding and use of language. They also bring their rich experiences in music, movement and art. Besides, children illustrate through art media (drawing, painting, modelling, etc) their thoughts and feelings. They sing songs, speak rhythmically, walk, hop, jump, and run about freely. So elementary school teachers should give opportunities to the pupils, right from the early grades, to consolidate these experiences they have brought from home through music teaching. Once the children are allowed to translate what they already know, hear, see and feel into practice, they will, later, easily transfer the knowledge and skills to other situations (Nadon - Gabrion, 1984).

Bessom and his associates (1980), also argue that since music is universal, it should be integrated with the other courses in the "humanities". This integration and combination of courses like music drama, religion and social studies will enable

*The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.*

pupils to see relationships in various areas of human activity. In the real world, individuals do not deal with areas of knowledge discretely; there is no place in the brain marked "science", "social studies", "mathematics", and so on. Since human knowledge and human behaviours are not segmented, neither should classroom experiences, especially at the elementary level. I believe that children should be involved in learning events which stimulate the synthesizing of experiences that occur in "real life" as closely as possible, and the subject music does this naturally. When music is correlated with other subjects which have similar objectives, the learners are able to make associations that are more meaningful than the learning of discrete items of skills. In many cases, activities based on dual objectives will help the students attain the objectives more quickly because of the possibility of synthesis.

According to Mains (1994) children, especially during the early childhood years do not think and work in a compartmentalized way; for them teachers should not put artificial barriers in their programmes in the interest of uniformity. The reason is that such artificial barriers will, not only obstruct children's ability to decode their experiences but also impede their abilities to express their individuality. Consequently music, drama, dance, and art may be bound together, whenever possible, in an enjoyable experience for elementary school children. The teacher can lead the children to sing a song, dramatize the text of the song, move or dance to the song, and draw or model some of the objects of the text of the song.

### CONTENT OBJECTIVES

The following are some possible correlation between music and other subject within the elementary curriculum:

#### 1. MUSIC

Characteristics of musical tones include loudness, pitch, duration, timbre

#### SCIENCE

Characteristics of sound waves include amplitude, frequency, wave length and "shape".

2. **MUSIC**

Relation of an individual tone within a rhythm to the underlying pulse (half as long, twice as long, etc.)

**MATHEMATICS**

Numbers - twice as much half as much, quarter, or equal spacing or intervals

3. **MUSIC**

The music of a culture reflects the climate, natural resources, earth features of the environment resources,

**SOCIAL STUDIES**

The patterns of living of people of a given culture reflect the climate, natural earth features of their environment.

4. **MUSIC**

Musical art expresses ideas through the unique combination of timbres, pitches, duration.

**VISUAL ART**

Visual art expresses ideas through the unique combination of lines, shapes and colours.

**SKILLS OBJECTIVES**

It is noted that relationships between skills needed for success in different subject areas are more difficult to identify than the cognitive objectives. There is little research to indicate whether the development of one skill supports the development of another. For example, it has not been fully proved whether the finger dexterity needed for piano playing transfers to developing typing skills. However, from my experience as a music teacher some musical skills are supportive of some skills in physical education and reading as follows:

1. **MUSIC**

development of ability to move appropriately to steady and unsteady beats, rhythmic and melodic patterns, etc. and melodic patterns, etc.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

development of fundamental movements; walking, running, skipping, hopping.

2. **MUSIC**

ability to discriminate different pitches, timbres, rhythm patterns are made up of separate note values; eye movement in reading words.

**READING**

ability to discriminate consonant sounds, words are made up of series of syllables; eye movement in reading or singing.

From the above, one can easily deduce that music easily correlates with such subjects as social studies, visual and language arts, and culture. Let us now discuss how the teacher can correlate these subjects as he or she teaches music in the elementary classroom.

**STRATEGIES FOR CORRELATING MUSIC WITH SOME SUBJECT**

Music and drama may be combined in the classroom and used to illustrate some aspects of history of, say, Ghana to establish the cultural climate of certain periods, and to act out some elementary mathematical concepts such as the study of geometrical shapes, or in an English class to examine mood and rhythm in poetry. Songs might be composed using simple proverbs and poems composed in a reading class to make use of new vocabularies. In short, music can be put to use in all types of classes at all levels both to create an exciting learning environment and to provide alternate ways of studying, perceiving and experiencing a concept, form, events, and so on.

Strengthening the integration of music with other subjects, music educators have realized that music of all cultures must be studied right from the elementary school level. Through music making, people from various places with varying backgrounds come together and learn about different races and learn to tolerate each other (Dodds, 1983). Young people are eager these days to learn the culture of other people to promote international development so "world music" should be emphasized in the music classroom. An elementary music teacher can promote the

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idea through the teaching and learning of folk songs and Negro spirituals. Folk music, especially, is very effective because it usually originates from the common people of a country and, therefore, embodies their characteristic qualities and feelings (Galineau, 1976, Dodds, 1983). Folk songs and Negro spirituals reflect joys, sorrows, fears, hopes, and aspirations and other emotions which might not be discovered elsewhere. The strategy for introducing "world music" or music and social studies in the elementary school as suggested by Galineau (1976) is as follows:

When introducing music of the world, a brief historical background piece on the area will set the scene for what is to come in terms of the music. This may be followed by a broad overview of the role of music in the lives the people under study, with representative interments, songs, dances and examples of notation and tonal systems incorporated where appropriate. Information may be updated by bringing in any significant contribution of the country's composers, performers, conductors, etc (p.375).

Land and Vaughan (1978) also confirm that children's understanding of the culture of another country, for instance, will be enhanced by listening to that country's music and performing its folk songs and dances. Opportunities for children to use language arts are offered through reading song texts, writing poetry for original compositions, and taking note of descriptive words and phrases while listening to recordings of musical compositions. Singing songs involving the sequential counting process, noting metre, counting measures in phrases, and counting beats for action songs and dances provide reinforcement for mathematical concepts.

Activities which develop awareness of design and form increase the child's understanding and enjoyment of both music and art (Galineau, 1976; Nadon-Gabrion, 1984). Other musical activities which a teacher can organize in the classroom to integrate music and other subjects are as follows:

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

1. Singing songs about heroes - Kwame Nkrumah, Yaa Asantewa, etc.
2. Choosing music to depict an episode in the life of any great person of choice.
3. Studying folk music and dances of other cultures.

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## **ART & CRAFTS**

1. Illustrating stories told in music with colours.
2. Making puppets for dramatization of stories in music.
3. Drawing musical instruments and costumes of various countries under study.
4. Making various musical instruments with local materials.

## **S C I E N C E**

1. Discovering the sounds made by various objects.
2. Blowing over bottles filled with various amount of water.
3. Plucking strings of various lengths and widths.
4. Composing simple tunes about new discoveries in science.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

1. Exploring the meaning of simple musical terms (fast, slow, crescendo, binary, ternary, etc) through body movements.
2. Using rhythm instruments to accompany body movements, choosing the best instrument for the movement.
3. Performing singing games and dances.
4. Exercising to music (as in "keep fit").

## **MATHEMATICS**

1. Singing counting songs.
2. Interpreting shapes (cone, square, triangle, etc).
3. Depicting mathematical concepts in music (intervals, chords, time signatures, etc).

## **LANGUAGE ARTS**

1. Interpreting text in foreign language.
2. Explaining new words in the text of song.
3. Composing original proverbs and poems to familiar tunes.
4. Spelling words and noting punctuation marks (phrasing).
5. Relating oral speaking to music in terms of voice production and interpretation.

## **PROBLEMS**

It should be remembered that integrating or correlating music with other subject is ideal. But there are a number of problems which may mar this good idea. Some students may not like to learn songs in foreign text to start with. Unless the teacher himself learns both the pronunciation and meaning of the words and interprets the entire text meaningfully and interestingly the students will not enjoy singing such songs. According to Miller (1991) the problems associated with multicultural music in the elementary classroom are many and these include behavioural and cognitive; language and cultural; lack of enough good materials; lack of adequate funding; conflict in curriculum direction; lack of teaching time; and lack of preparation time. For example, sometimes it is difficult to find authentic, yet simple and appropriate foreign songs for teaching to young children. Another problem is being sure that correlation in music really meets the criterion of true correlation. In true correlation, the activities help to achieve the objectives in both subject areas. On the other hand if music is simply being "used" as a vehicle for the learning of the other content, then the procedure is not a correlative activity. For instance, singing songs which list the names of various colours (red, blue, green, yellow, etc) may be a fine art activity but may not help children learn music in the real sense. Rather in music correlation activities emphasis should focus on more musical activities, integrating as much as possible singing, listening, creating and playing musical instruments to emphasize the second subject area under study. In addition, for correlation to be effective in a school, there should be effective cooperation between the music department and such departments as drama, social studies, visual art and language art (Cowden and Klottman, 1991).

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

- (a) The teacher should always seize the opportunity to correlate any two or more subjects with common objectives. For instance a "theme" in a story and music might be planned as an integrated activity or experience.
- (b) In some cases, activities might be first introduced in one subject areas with "transfer" activities planned to allow the child to synthesize learning in one area by applying them to a new area. For example, after introducing the concept "the whole is made up of parts" as a study in mathematics the children could be encouraged to extend and transfer the concept by describing sounds within a rhythmic pattern using similar descriptors half as long, twice as long, etc.
- (c) In a class, some children may never choose to express their feelings verbally, but may find out an important outlet for these feelings through painting, modelling, composing a song, playing an instrument, or dancing.

*The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.*

## CONCLUSION

As the elementary classroom teacher plans musical activities for his or her students, one concern will be for furthering children's musical understanding by looking for specific musical objectives appropriate to the children's current level of achievement. A second concern will be for ways of integrating musical activities into the total curriculum in such a way that the involvement in music also furthers objectives in other subject areas. In this regard, the teacher should seize all opportunities to develop classroom activities that simultaneously support the attainment of objectives in two or more subject areas. Subjects that music naturally correlates with at the elementary level include social studies, mathematics and science, physical education, language and visual arts. In fact, the international society for Music Education (1994) sums the importance of music so far as correlation is concerned as follows:

- (a) All musical systems all over the world are worthy of studying by all peoples all over the world.
- (b) Music is best understood when introduced with world context.
- (c) Music has been proved to be of special usefulness in the solution of social and political problems in inter-ethnic and multi-ethnic societies.
- (d) Properly understanding a culture requires some understanding of its music, and appreciating a music requires some knowledge of its associated culture and society.

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