



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDES TOWARDS MUSIC AND ACHIEVEMENT

Henry N. Wanjala

Department of Music and Dance, Kenyatta University, Kenya

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 28th May, 2011
Received in revised form
19th June, 2011
Accepted 5th July, 2011
Published online 5th August, 2011

Key words:

Music,
Attitude,
Achievement,
Co-relation,
Motivation,
Aspiration.

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on attitude towards Music and achievement in primary school. The author attempted to establish the existence of the relationship between pupils' attitude towards music and achievement in their end of year music assessment. It is based on a study that sought to: identify pupils' most prevalent attitudes towards Music; establish whether pupils' attitudes towards Music were related to their achievement, and the extent to which the attitudes were correlated to achievement. Pupils' most prevalent positive attitudes were centred on the teachers' methodology or the approach they adopted in their teaching. Negative attitudes touched on the teachers' self-concept as well as their attitudes towards their efforts to learn music. Teachers' inability to play music instruments was also an issue that created negative attitude basically because of lack of adequate exposure. This paper concluded that pupils were generally sensitive to the impression the Music teacher held on their efforts towards music. Majority of the pupils were positively inclined towards Music. Findings showed that there is a positive correlation between pupils' attitude towards music and their achievement. The author recommends further research to establish existence and influence of other variables that contribute to music instruction and learning.

© Copy Right, IJCR, 2011, Academic Journals. All rights reserved

INTRODUCTION

The question of attitude in teaching and learning situations has been of great concern to social psychologists and educators. This is manifested in the rather large body of literature related to attitudes. Attitude could be viewed as the disposition or personal belief developed towards an object or experience, which reflects ones preparedness to respond to it either positively or negatively. It could also be seen as a tendency to act favourably or unfavourably in circumstances where one displays the value of an object or experience in question (Katz, 1960, Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980, and Warren, 1973). Psychological studies have shown that attitudes are fundamental to dynamics of behaviour. They largely determine what and, to some extent, how a pupil learns. Change of behaviour towards the desired end is the main concern in education and must be borne in mind by the teacher. Not only do Music teachers want pupils to know Music, but they also want them to have favourable feelings towards the subject and eventually to act in accordance with these feelings. For the purpose of this study, Music refers to all those instructional objectives prescribed in the Primary Music syllabus to be covered by Music teachers in individual classes. This also includes all the relevant music activities and experiences that the teacher utilizes in and out of class to

enhance pupils' understanding of Music Concepts as outlined by the Syllabus. Music teachers then have an important responsibility in creating and promoting positive attitude towards Music. Part of the objectives of Primary School Music Syllabus is to develop in pupils' attitudes such as appreciation of other peoples' musical preferences and abilities as well as the desire to improve one's own competence in music. The problem so far encountered has been that of Music teachers too easily forgetting the importance of inculcating these values in pupils' learning. This amounts to what Abeles (1984) refers to as "Neglect of affective domain in School". The teacher sometimes loses sight of the fact that he could in fact be the source of pupils' negative or positive attitude in learning a given topic or subject. His personality, his likes and dislikes his approach all interplay to create either a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards Music. This is likely to influence the kind of response the pupils display and what they can achieve in Music. Indeed it is this relationship that forms the central issue in this paper. In the course of pupils' learning, certain experiences may create a favourable atmosphere which in turn makes pupils like or appreciate music. Exposure given to pupils is therefore one factor that may influence their attitude. Attitudes could be acquired through the process of association. Pupils who win a trophy for the best folk song during their interclass Music Competition or during the National Music Festival, for instance, tend to gain a more positive attitude towards Music than those who do not. This

*Corresponding author: namsyule2001@yahoo.com

paper was not intended to describe the effectiveness of attitude, nor was it aimed at going in-depth on the question of what attitudes are. The major concern was whether attitude towards Music had any relationship with what pupils achieved. Achievement, according to Smith (1972), can be seen as a change of behaviour in the desired direction. In the context of this discussion, achievement could be regarded as attainment or learning outcome in an evaluation process. Specifically, the nature of achievement dealt with in this case was in form of marks attained by pupils in their end of the year Music assessment.

The major problem identified by this paper is that an observation on Music classes showed a major lack of interest and motivation in the subject on the part of both teachers and pupils. The attitude, before the introduction of Music as a teaching subject, was that teaching Music elaborately just amounted to a waste of time. Is it possible that such attitude could have a bearing on pupils' learning? In some cases Music periods were used to revise other subjects that were on the syllabus. The impression created was: Music is not so important a subject. It is evident that such a negative attitude on the part of teachers could have been passed on to pupils. With the introduction of Music as an examinable subject at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education level, there was still an apparent hangover of the attitude that Music is, after all, not a core subject and therefore not so important. A number of pupils have been given the impression that Music is for the talented and so they get involved only as far as the examination is concerned. Beyond this scope Music to them becomes an affair for the chosen few who display the aptitude. Evidence in the way grouping of subjects in secondary schools is done perhaps shows justification for the pupils thinking. The researcher was inclined to think that attitudes of this kind were bound to be reflected in pupils' learning. The basic question in this paper then is whether pupils' attitude towards Music has a relationship with their achievement.

The hypothesis of this paper is that if a pupil had a positive attitude towards Music, it would reflect positively in his achievement. This paper establishes that a study of attitudes and achievement in Music is a worthwhile venture. This study gives evidence that relationship does exist between these two variables and future research to establish further whether attitudes do in fact influence achievement should be conducted. The findings in the study serve as a guide to curriculum developers in the way of identifying the kind of objectives that would be most suitable for a Music programme. Furthermore, knowledge of pupils' attitudes towards Music will greatly assist the Music teacher in stratifying his approach to encourage those favourable attitudes that would reflect positively in achievement. The study was centred on tracing the existing attitudes and whether they were related to pupils' achievement in Music. It was not the intention of the Study to discover the effects or influence of attitude on achievement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper was based on research conducted with the main intention of establishing the relationship between attitude towards Music and achievement. The study was a simple survey and correlative research in which the author sought to

identify the most prevalent attitudes among standard seven pupils toward Music. The four schools used for this study were randomly selected from a list of 129 primary schools in Kanduyi Division, Bungoma District. The use of only four schools was justified by the fact that the Unit of analysis was to be pupils and not necessarily the schools. From each of the schools in the sample obtained, one stream of pupils was identified. A hundred and sixty-three standard seven pupils in total were involved in this study. This was done arbitrarily and there was no specific criterion in the choice of the stream. The pupils were asked to respond to written statements to register their opinion or feeling about Music as a subject. The data analyzed were obtained from Likert type of attitude rating scale, described by Summers (1970), made up of 40 statements on Music, and the pupils' scores from their end of year Music assessment. There were two sources of data for this study. One of the tools used by the researcher was the attitude rating scale which was utilized to measure their attitude towards Music on the basis of the Likert Attitude Scale Method. The principle underlying this Method is that a given statement ought to reflect several degrees of favourability. People who differ in attitude would therefore express different degrees of acceptance. These points ranged from Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, and Disagree to Strongly Disagree. The scope covered such elements as teachers' personality, methodology, exposure of pupils to Music and the teachers' attitude. The pupils were required to respond to the statements by putting a tick (√) under the relevant alternative. Pupils' average scores obtained from their report cards during the third term constituted the second form of data for this study. This was calculated by adding three scores obtained from the music tests of the three terms and dividing the sum by three. These scores enabled the researcher to work out the correlation against the attitude scores obtained from the rating scale.

RESULTS

The results of the foregoing research were tabulated for ease of analysis. A finding on the rating scale showed that pupils responded to the statements variedly according to what they felt was appropriate in their opinion about music. However, pupils' responses indicated that certain opinions were more frequent or prevalent than others.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Teachers Methodology

A scrutiny of pupils' responses led to the observation that of all the positive items, statements on Methodology or approach featured high in the ranking of pupils' choices. While no completely satisfactory explanation may be given as to why pupils responded very positively on items related to Methodology, it is evident that pupils are quite sensitive to the approach adapted by the Music teacher in his teaching. The manner in which Music ideas are passed to pupils seems to be important in relation to pupils' attitude towards Music. The use of musical instruments in teaching is evidently a popular approach to pupils. The implication of these findings is that Music teachers in schools under this study are seemingly doing a good job as far as their methodology is concerned.

Pupils' Self Evaluation

It does seem true to say that when pupils are made to feel confident and encouraged to appreciate what they have

learned, they develop positive attitude. However, confidence and appreciation can be developed through increased exposure to musical activities, among other factors.

Exposure to Music

On the question of pupils' exposure to Music, it is notable that many pupils found involvement in school musical activities to be revitalizing. 84% felt that participating in the school choir and traditional dances had enhanced their learning of music. 10% showed either lack of exposure or did not see the significance of this exposure in relation to learning music. 6% of pupils were not sure.

Aspiration in Music

A question was asked as to whether or not pupils would like to continue with Music after Standard Eight. This was a good measure of pupils' level of future aspiration. 83% of pupils indicated they wished to keep up with Music after their Primary school. It is perhaps true to say here that pupils at this level could only show positive attitude in their future aspiration in terms of what they felt about Music, their level of motivation, their progress and achievement so far. This obviously would stem from the initial ground work in Music teaching as organized by the teacher and the interest gained.

Pupils' Initiative in Music

This reflected the amount of independence and initiative pupils have in Music. 80% indicated they could practice Music even without their teachers. This again could possibly have been developed from a background of positive guidance and greatly depends on encouragement and exposure given to pupils. 8.6% of the pupils seemed to lack this independence.

Teachers' Appreciation of Music

This referred to the teachers' attitude and taste in Music. 77% of pupils seemed to think that their teachers had no bias toward any kind of Music. Thus, pupils saw their teachers as liberal enough not to be enslaved to one type of Music. Taste in Music appreciation may also have a bearing on pupils' attitude towards music, and should not be forced. If it is, it tends to elicit a negative attitude.

Pupils' View of Music as a Subject

76.1% of pupils indicated that Music was quite interesting and they understood why people thought it was an enjoyable subject. This too relates to the Motivational level and the realization of the amount of satisfaction and pleasure that one can derive from Music. The assumption here was that Music was taught under a conducive environment.

Teachers' Personality

Teachers' temperament and mood as reflected in his personality is an aspect of music teaching that was addressed in the study. 75% of pupils agreed that their teachers were pleasant and friendly. 12% did not think so. This impression was developed during the teacher-pupil interaction in class.

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

The results in the study showed that negative attitudes did not feature as prevalently as the positive ones. The following three impressions were expressed in pupils' responses.

Teacher's Self Concept

Pupils indicated the impression that some Music teachers showed off because of the Music they knew. 54% of pupils agreed with this tendency of teachers to show off. A number of pupils were not sure of their stand on this statement while others did not commit themselves on this issue. 4.2% abstained on this item. This tends to point at pupils' cautiousness in not commenting on their teacher's personal impression. Quite often pupils fear taking the risk of being noted for commenting negatively on their teachers, and this seems to account for the rather large number who were either not sure or who abstained. The point that emerges from this kind of response is that pupils tend not to be encouraged when teachers glorify themselves directly or indirectly on the basis of their knowledge. This is particularly so if it is done at the expense of the pupils' ability and desire to learn.

Pupils' Ability to play Musical Instruments

The second negative reaction displayed in pupils' responses was on pupils' ability to play Musical instrument. 38% of pupils indicated that they found it hard to play musical instruments. Surprisingly, this was balanced by 38% of pupils who did not seem to have this problem. This finding also shows 20.8% of pupils who were not sure while 1.8% abstained. It is possible to look at this interesting distribution of percentages with the crucial problem of availability of Musical instruments in mind. While some pupils may have had a chance to see and play various instruments, others may not have been so advantaged. Makobi (1985) expresses the view that playing of Musical instruments can be hard if pupils are not exposed to them. He further points out that pupils' ability in playing musical instruments could be enhanced if the music teacher himself could play at least one instrument. In his data analysis he decried the low percentage of teachers who owned or could play simple musical instruments.

Teachers Attitude towards Pupils

Although the responses did not show a significantly outstanding negative attitude, it indicated that some teachers reacted negatively towards pupils' aspiration to become good musicians. 35% of pupils saw this negative attitude in their teachers. Nevertheless, 37% thought their teachers displayed a positive attitude as far as encouragement to good musicianship was concerned.

Categorization of Pupils' Attitudes

Findings reflected in the responses indicate that a large proportion of pupils in this study were positively inclined to Music. It is notable that 95.1% of all pupils obtained a positive score. Only 4.9% scored negatively on the attitude rating scale. On the whole therefore, majority of pupils showed a positive attitude towards Music.

DISCUSSION

As revealed by the results of the foregoing research, pupils' attitude towards music were attributed to four possible elements, among others, in the teaching of Music. These were the teacher's personality, his attitude, the Methodology or approach and pupils' exposure to Musical activities. The statements on the attitude rating scale were therefore constructed with these elements in mind. This paper established that pupils responded to the statements variedly according to what they felt was appropriate in their opinion about music. However, pupils' responses indicated that certain opinions were more frequent or prevalent than others. These were categorized as positive and negative attitudes. Among the positive responses included teacher's methodology, pupils' Self evaluation, exposure to music, aspiration in Music, pupils' initiative in Music, teachers' appreciation of Music, pupils' view of Music as a subject and the teachers' personality

First, a scrutiny of pupils' responses led to the observation that of all the positive items, statements on Methodology or approach featured high in the ranking of pupils' choices. While no completely satisfactory explanation may be given as to why pupils responded very positively on items related to Methodology, it is evident that pupils are sensitive to the approach adopted by the Music teacher in his teaching. The manner in which Music ideas are passed to pupils is important in relation to pupils' attitude towards Music. The use of musical instruments in teaching is evidently a popular approach. The implication of these findings is that Music teachers in schools are seemingly doing a good job as far as their methodology is concerned.

Second, while it does seem true to say that when pupils are made to feel confident and encouraged to appreciate what they have learned, they develop positive attitude, this paper established that confidence and appreciation can be developed through increased exposure to musical activities among other factors.

Third, on the question of pupils' exposure to Music, many pupils found involvement in school musical activities revitalizing. Exposure has a bearing on what pupils achieve according to Bentley (1966) who observes that all children may have something to gain from some sort of participation in Music, from being a listener to a skilled instrumental or vocal performer or even composer.

Fourth, a good number of pupils showed a high level of future aspiration in Music. A large number of pupils wished to keep up with Music after their Primary school. It is perhaps true to say here that pupils at this level can only show positive attitude in their future aspiration in terms of what they feel about Music, their level of motivation, their progress and achievement so far. This obviously would stem from the initial ground work in Music teaching as organized by the teacher and the interest gained.

Fifth, many pupils admitted to have independence and initiative in Music. 80% indicate they could practice Music even without their teachers. This again could possibly have been developed from a background of positive guidance and greatly depends on encouragement and exposure given to pupils. Few pupils seemed to lack this independence.

Sixth, on teachers' attitude and taste in Music, most pupils seemed to think that their teachers had no bias towards any kind of Music. Thus, pupils saw their teachers as liberal enough not to be enslaved to one type of Music. Taste in Music appreciation also has a bearing on pupils' attitude towards music, and should not be forced. If it is, it tends to elicit negative attitudes. Abeles (1984) commenting on developing appreciation observes that attitudes are caught and not taught.... In fact attitudes seem to resist being affected by direct methods such as "Now you will enjoy this song". Instead students notice how others react, how the teacher acts, whether the Music seems to agree with previously held beliefs about Music and a host of other factors.

Seventh, many pupils indicated that Music was quite interesting and they understood why people thought it was an enjoyable subject. This too related to the Motivational level and the realization of the amount of satisfaction and pleasure that one can derive from Music. The assumption here is that Music is taught under a conducive environment.

Eighth, teachers' temperament and mood as reflected in his personality as an aspect of music teaching is addressed in this paper. Most pupils did agree that their teachers were pleasant and friendly. A few of them did not think so. These impressions are obviously developed during the teacher-pupil interaction in class. From the discussion on teachers' personality earlier in this paper, teachers need to be reminded that learning of Music ought to occur under pleasant. On the other hand, data analysis in the study showed that negative attitudes did not feature as prevalently as the positive ones. The following three attitudes did show up in pupils' responses: teacher's self concept, pupils' ability to play musical instruments and teacher's attitude towards pupils. First, pupils indicated the impression that some Music teachers showed off because of the Music they knew. About half of pupils agreed with this tendency of teachers to show off. A good number of pupils did not seem to be sure of their stand on this statement while others did not apparently wish to commit themselves on this issue. Some students showed cautiousness in not commenting on their teacher's personal impression. Quite often pupils fear taking the risk of being noted for commenting negatively on their teachers, and this seems to account for the rather large number who were either not sure or who abstained. The point that emerges from this kind of response is that pupils tend not to be encouraged when teachers glorify themselves directly or indirectly on the basis of their knowledge. This is particularly so if it is done at the expense of the pupils' ability and desire to learn. Second, on pupils' ability to play Musical instruments, less than half of the pupils indicated that they found it hard to play musical instruments. It is possible to attribute this to the crucial problem of availability of Musical instruments in mind. While some pupils may have had a chance to see and play various instruments, others may not have been so advantaged. This confirms the observation by the Kenya National Examination Council on limited exposure of pupils to musical instruments in Chapter 2 (p. 14) of this study. Makobi (1985) expresses the view that playing of Musical instruments can be hard if pupils are not exposed to them. He further points out that pupils' ability in playing musical instruments could be enhanced if the music teacher himself could play at least one instrument. In his data analysis he decried the low percentage of teachers who

owned or could play simple musical instruments. Third, on the teacher's attitude towards his pupils, although the responses did not show a significantly outstanding negative attitude, it did indicate that some teachers react negatively toward pupils' aspiration to become good musicians. In general, the results reflected in the responses indicated that a large proportion of pupils in this study were positively inclined to Music. More pupils showed a positive attitude towards Music. This paper shows that a relationship does exist between attitude towards Music and achievement. This was obtained through the correlation between attitude scores on the attitude rating scale administered to pupils and their achievement scores from the end of year music assessment. Although the coefficient obviously reflects a weak correlation, it nevertheless points out positively as far as attitude and achievement are concerned.

Although it may be agreeable that attitude contributes to achievement, it does seem true to say there are other factors that may influence this relationship. Perhaps this is due to the complexity associated with achievement as a concept. Martim (1980) points out that School Achievement is a Multidimensional concept that is determined by many factors. These vary from the child's social and economic background, his mental ability, and school environment that ranges from facilities to the kind of teachers present. It is indeed difficult to verify the actual attributes of achievement. However his inference points out to the fact that achievement is a function of the learner and environment. Bentley (1966), speaking on Musical Ability, supports this view by the following remarking that nature and nurture, inherited talent and development within the environment, are not entirely independent. Makobi (1985), writing on factors affecting Music Education, identifies a number of factors that may influence learning. These include teacher's uncertainty in his competence to cope with requirements of the Music Syllabus in addition to the lack of required facilities. These examples imply that attitude may be a contributory factor to achievement but it is one among many others. That attitude is related to achievement is therefore not refutable, though the statistical margin is not significantly large. This paper reveals that a relationship exists between attitude towards Music and achievement. This was obtained through the correlation between attitude scores on the attitude rating scale administered to pupils and their achievement scores from the end of year music assessment. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the correlation. Although the coefficient obviously reflects a low correlation, nevertheless, it pointed out positively in as far as attitude and achievement are concerned. In summary, the attitude rating scale which was administered to standard seven pupils was aimed at revealing the most prevalent attitudes towards Music. Through it, the researcher also aimed at establishing whether a relationship did exist between pupils' attitude towards Music and their achievement. Findings in the study can be summarized through the following points:

- a) Positive attitude toward Music is developed through first and foremost the teachers' methodology or approach.
- b) Pupils' ability to play musical instruments needs attention. The teacher should show a more exemplary attitude and ability.
- c) The attitude towards a subject is bound to determine the future aspiration of pupils in that subject. Most

pupils were enthusiastic about their future involvement in Music.

- d) Well-planned exposure of pupils to Music plays a significant role in developing pupil's attitudes.
- e) Teacher's self concept, if used as "self glorifying" in Music, could easily reflect negatively to pupils.
- f) There were more pupils who showed positive attitude toward Music than those who displayed negative attitude.
- g) Although attitude is a contributory factor in pupils' achievement, it is only but one among many.
- h) Correlation between attitude and achievement yielded a low coefficient. Nonetheless it did indicate a positive relationship between these two variables.

Conclusions

From the foregoing research and analysis of results, this paper concludes that, firstly, methodology is a crucial aspect of Music teaching if positive attitudes are to be developed. Secondly, exposure of pupils to Musical activities enhances learning of Music. Thirdly, the attitude held by pupils toward Music as a subject determines their future aspiration in Music. Fourthly, attitude is one of the many attributes of achievement. Fifthly, in the study pupils are generally positively inclined towards Music. Lastly, there is a positive correlation between pupils' attitude towards Music and their achievement although not significantly outstanding.

Recommendations

Following the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made to serve as guidelines for further research in the area of attitude and achievement in Music. The study suggests the need to carry out further research in the following areas:

1. To investigate the relationship between learning environment and achievement in Music.
2. Whether pupils' Musical ability, achievement and attitude are significantly related.
3. A replicated study on a larger scale to include other factors like age, teacher's competence, facilities and pupils musical ability.

Research of this kind may have potential significance to Music teachers, those in charge of teachers training and generally to the whole of Music teaching in future

REFERENCES

- Abeles, H. F. 1984. *Foundations of Music Education*. New York: Schirmer Books.
- Ajzen, I. and Fishbein, M. 1980. *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behaviour*. Prentice Hall, Inc., Eaglewood Cliffs NJ.O. 7632.
- Bentley, A. 1966. *Musical ability in children and its Measurement*. London, Toronto, Harrap: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd.
- Kenya National Examinations Council, 1988 and 1989. *KCPE Newsletter*. Nairobi.
- Katz, D. 1960. The functional approach to the study of attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 24, 163-204.

- Makobi, T. S. 1985. *Factors affecting Music Education in Primary Schools in Kenya*. M. Ed. Research Project, Nairobi.
- Makobi, T. S. 1985. Factors affecting Music_Education in Primary Schools in Kenya. M.Ed. Research Project, Nairobi.
- Martim, E. 1980. Academic Self Concept and the teacher perception; their relationship to pupils Grade attainment in Rural Kenya, Nairobi: Kenya.
- Summers, G. F. 1970. *Attitude Measurement*. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company.
- Smith, F. M., *et al.* 1972. *Educational Measurement for the Classroom Teacher*. (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Warren, N. 1973. *Attitudes*. UK: Penguin Books Ltd.
