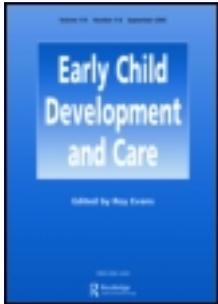


This article was downloaded by: [INASP - Kenya]

On: 18 April 2013, At: 00:18

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Early Child Development and Care

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gecd20>

### Synchronising pedagogy and musical experiences in early childhood: addressing challenges in preschool music education in Kenya

Elizabeth A. Andang'o <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

Version of record first published: 04 Aug 2009.

To cite this article: Elizabeth A. Andang'o (2009): Synchronising pedagogy and musical experiences in early childhood: addressing challenges in preschool music education in Kenya, *Early Child Development and Care*, 179:6, 807-821

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03004430902944148>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## Synchronising pedagogy and musical experiences in early childhood: addressing challenges in preschool music education in Kenya

Elizabeth A. Andang'o\*

*Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya*

*(Received 20 December 2008; final version received 1 March 2009)*

This paper examines pedagogy in early childhood music education and the resultant learning experiences in music for children in Kenyan preschools. Two important principles proposed for the synchronisation of teaching and learning in early childhood music education are cultural relevance and developmental appropriateness. These terms are operationalised to suit the Kenyan context. The study described here examined pedagogical practices and children's musical activities from both cultural and psychological perspectives, based on the rationale that music education should be both culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate. Results suggested that little planning was carried out prior to musical activities, and that the activities did not always benefit all the children. The results of this study may be applicable to early childhood music education in a significant number of Kenyan preschools, since the majority of preschool teachers are trained using the same curriculum countrywide, hence their approach to music education is bound to have many commonalities.

**Keywords:** developmentally appropriate practice; musical activities; identities; culture; multicultural music

### Background

Kenya, the world's 47th largest country, is located in East Africa. In terms of ethnic composition, the country is multilingual, comprising about 42 native ethnic communities and another 20 or so other races and nationalities. This diversity results in a total of about 62 languages spoken in the country (Gordon, 2005). Following the obvious need to have a common language for communication, soon after independence in 1963, the Government adopted English as the official language (Musau, 2002). Introduced into the country during the colonial era, English has gained prominence in the country and is used in school and at workplaces, as well as for general communication particularly in most urban areas. The other language commonly spoken in the country is Kiswahili, an indigenous African language. It is Kenya's national language, used for cross-ethnic communication and for wider communication in East and Central Africa (Musau, 2002). It is also important for day-to-day communication between the country's administration and the citizenry in areas where English is not prominently spoken, such as in most rural parts of Kenya.

---

\*Email: [betsango@yahoo.com](mailto:betsango@yahoo.com)

The music of Kenya's peoples is as diverse as the indigenous cultures of its origins. This music is culture-specific with lyrics in the local dialects, addressing issues of communal concern (Akuno, 2005). The musical instruments used to accompany the music are also culturally unique and significant to the practising community. Senoga-Zake (1986) and Akuno (2005) both note that Kenya has a strong song tradition, with each ethnic community having songs to be used in various contexts. Furthermore, there are songs for every age group, right from early childhood into middle childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. These songs fulfil social functions, and are therefore labelled according to their role. Some examples include work songs, sung during joint activities like harvesting food in the farm; praise songs where an individual in the community receives recognition through song, after a worthy feat; sacred songs performed during solemn moments such as when a community experiences a calamity like famine; and ceremonial songs for occasions like the birth of a child, or marriage ceremonies. Children's songs are also a prominent category of indigenous music repertoire. Historically, each community had lullabies; singing games which required the children to perform a game as they sang; chants, which were a tool for learning social graces; and activity songs, which required the performance of some action as one sang. Akuno (2005) notes that children's songs have lots of similarities not only across Kenyan cultures, but worldwide as well. However, as will be seen in the following section, this music no longer features strongly in Kenyan society.

### **A brief history of music education in Kenya**

The pre-independence period in Kenya saw the advent of Christianity through the efforts of missionaries from various western countries. The missionaries used formal education as the main platform for introducing Christianity. Although music was brought into schools at this time, the learning and playing of indigenous instruments and the singing of indigenous songs was discouraged (Odwar, 2005). Singing of hymns translated into indigenous Kenyan languages was instead encouraged, as they were a tool for evangelism. When the colonial settlers took over the control of education from the missionaries from about 1911, there were attempts to reintroduce African culture into education. However, both teachers and pupils had by this time come to the conclusion that their own songs, dances and customs contradicted the tenets of Christianity. They therefore refused to learn this music (Odwar, 2005). Efforts to reintroduce indigenous music into education from early childhood into tertiary education are, however, still ongoing to date, through the influence of music educators and the government, against the persistent notion that indigenous music contradicts some Christian principles (Digolo, 2003).

### **Early childhood education in Kenya**

Early childhood education in Kenya, hereafter referred to as ECE, traces its roots to the 1940s. In the years before independence in 1963, the British settlers established centres where their own children attended day care (Kabiru, 1993). These centres were run by the settlers' wives. After Kenya gained independence, the concept of ECE was expanded as an effort to encourage the whole country to embrace it. The defining moment for ECE in Kenya was the inception of the Preschool Education Project which was mainly sponsored by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, based in The

Hague (Kabiru, 1993). The Project's mandate was to come up with a suitable structure and curriculum for ECE in Kenya. Some key recommendations were the need for partnership between the government and local communities in the provision of ECE and an in-service approach to training early childhood practitioners. Within this set-up, those interested in becoming preschool teachers apply for the positions after completion of their O-level or secondary school education. After they are admitted into preschools as teachers, they undergo in-service training during school holidays (April, August and December each year) and first attain a Certificate in ECE, after which they can proceed to attain a Diploma.

The concept of ECE has now been broadened to early childhood education and care to reflect the various aspects of early education in Kenya. The term 'preschool' is often used in Kenya to refer to centres and institutions that provide early childhood education and care. It is possible that the term was adopted from the project referred to above. Preschool education takes place between the ages of three and six years, although in urban areas, some children are admitted into early education at two years of age.

### **Introduction**

Early childhood music education is a multifaceted discipline, involving myriad strands of knowledge. These include aspects of sociology, philosophy and even anthropology. One of the single-most important disciplines in this regard is psychology, which plays an important role in demystifying child development and education, hence its prominent position in teacher education. Developmental psychology, in particular, has and continues to contribute immensely to the formulation of theories of pedagogy in music. Jean Piaget's cognitive developmental theory (Piaget, 1951) as an example is one of the most extensively used theories in ECE.

Apart from the various disciplines potential teachers are taken through, there is the actual process of preparing them to teach music at early childhood. It is expected that such preparation takes into account the contexts in which the educational process is expected to evolve, therefore issues such as culture, government policies and other specifics operative within a particular society are addressed. Under girding the preparation process is always the (perhaps) implicit matter of the meaning of music in children's lives, as well as its role in the life of the society. This implies that the extent to which music is regarded as important to the child and the society at large determines its position in the curriculum and the way in which it is taught.

The need to translate psychological, sociological or educational theories applied to early childhood music education into culture-compatible models is crucial to education, yet it seems to be one of the least addressed issues in pedagogy, according to Hargreaves (1996). Additionally, as Hargreaves notes, there is a gap between theory (i.e. research in musical development) and classroom practice in music education, yet, in his opinion, there is a greater need for a definite theoretical framework in the arts than in many other areas of the curriculum. While he acknowledges the fact that teachers do have some working theories of pupils' musical development, such theories tend to be implicit, whereas they need to be made more explicit so that they can be better understood, refined and examined more critically, with a view to improving them where necessary. His observations attest to the importance of developing sound pedagogical principles in music, which is one of the most prominent arts in the school curriculum.

Pedagogical issues in early childhood music education present challenges in every culture, as demonstrated by various scholars (e.g. Andang'o & Mugo, 2007; Hernández-Candelas, 2007; Ilari, 2007). Whereas Kenya has achieved commendable strides by documenting guidelines for musical activities for preschools (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], 1992, 2003), it is not yet clear the extent to which they are enacted by teachers (KIE, 2002). Curricula activities in the guidelines for music education are well spelled out through 15 objectives to be achieved in the learning process. Collectively, they address the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of knowing. Despite this commendable step in the right direction, certain drawbacks continue to impede curriculum enactment in music education. The most threatening of them all seems to be the peripheral position music and other arts occupy in school curricula activities (Gumo, 2003; B. Koech, 2003). A strong indicator of music's position in ECE is the time allocated to music and movement, as music education is referred to in ECE in Kenya, in the timetable. Most preschools following the national curricula guidelines have music and movement scheduled once a week. Furthermore, music time is a communal affair involving the entire school, and often falls prey to more 'urgent' activities such as sports practice prior to sports day, or preparations for end-of-year parents' day or Christmas parties. Questions therefore abound as to what music and movement really entails in the majority of Kenyan preschools, and what the perceptions of teachers are about its role in a child's life.

### **Cultural relevance in early childhood music education in Kenya**

Hargreaves (1996) rightly observes that social and cultural contexts are important in the study of human development. Issues of teaching and learning should therefore be approached with respect to the culture and society in which they exist. Music education in Kenya is undergoing a paradigm shift, emerging from a system heavily skewed towards western approaches and resources. This shift has been occasioned by a greater consciousness of the need for every Kenyan to develop a national identity. The quest for such an identity is evident in the use of such phrases as 'respect and development of cultural heritage' and 'appreciate cultural background and customs' in curricula documents (KIE, 2003, p. iv, 1992, p. xi, respectively). Although since Kenya attained independence there have been deliberate efforts to emphasise the need for cultural relevance in education (Reports of the Commissions of Inquiry into Education of 1964 [Ominde, 1964], 1976 [Gachathi, 1976], 1988 [Kamunge, 1988] and 1999 [D.K. Koech, 1999]), the twenty-first century is seeing renewed and deliberate efforts towards this end. More recently, the political crisis of 2007 and early 2008 in Kenya (Kiplagat, 2008) brought to the fore the need to pursue national cohesion in a culturally diverse country threatened by ethnic strife. In ECE, therefore, as in all other levels of schooling, there is a call for an education that socialises pupils to live in Kenya and to maintain their national identity wherever they may live.

What is the link between cultural relevance and music? Since some of the objectives for music education in the preschool guidelines state an aim to attain cultural relevance, an assumption must exist of a connection between music education and culture. Elliott (1989, 1995), in his praxial philosophy of music education, sums up the matter into the statement that music is culture, since no music exists apart from in a cultural context. Music then becomes a vehicle through which culture is conveyed. In order for culture to be relevant, music, as its bearer, must also be relevant to those

it serves. Allsup (2003) fully concurs with this philosophy and emphasises that cultural practices are to be understood through musical performance.

Viewed in this way, culturally relevant music as a concept presents certain challenges, in that children today tend to strongly identify with global cultures at play all around them, and their resultant musical culture(s). Such music is made available through improved and easily accessible technology. Hence, whereas the inclusion of indigenous Kenyan music into the curriculum presents a great opportunity to foster cultural relevance, it must contend with the everyday music of children's 'lived culture' (Allsup, 2003), which in most cases is a different type of musical experience altogether. Additionally, the need to foster international consciousness (awareness that there are other cultures from diverse countries worldwide) inevitably leads to the inclusion of musics from foreign cultures into the curriculum. One of the 15 objectives in the preschool curricula guidelines clearly states that children should 'appreciate others' cultural heritage and develop a sense of international consciousness' (KIE, 2003, p. 79). Teachers are therefore expected to foster children's nationality as well as their 'globality'.

### **Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood music education in Kenya**

The concept of 'developmentally appropriate practices' in ECE as defined by the US National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is applicable to ECE in general. However, the interpretation and implementation of this practice may differ according to cultural contexts (Jambunathan & Caulfield, 2008). Within this paper, therefore, the term DAP is applied very generally, in reference to its three key paradigms as identified by NAEYC, namely human development and learning, individual characteristics and experiences, and social and cultural contexts of the child (Jambunathan & Caulfield, 2008; NAEYC, 1997). In this paper, issues involving DAP are discussed with respect to three questions, namely:

- (1) How do teachers demonstrate understanding of child development and learning in the musical activities they provide for children?
- (2) To what extent do teachers cater for individual differences in children's musical activities?
- (3) To what extent is musical learning in early childhood centres culturally relevant and appropriate to build preschool children's national identity?

The rationale behind this particular discussion is the felt need for teachers to understand the importance of DAP in early childhood music education within their cultural contexts, and the belief that their understanding of its paradigms and application of its principles is necessary for harmony between teaching and learning.

### **Musical experiences in ECE in Kenya**

Music education in early childhood, an evolving research area, is faced with numerous concerns. These include curricular issues, teaching methodology and children's musical responses. The principle purpose for music education at this stage of life and level of education is also an important matter that should be resolved from the onset of education. Concerning the former issue, international research in music education

at early childhood has yielded much useful information. Examples include playing of instruments (Young, 2003), singing (Campbell, 1998) and dance (Bradley & Szegda, 2006). With regard to purpose, Temmerman (1998) argues that children should learn music primarily for enjoyment. While this may conjure up images of fun-directed learning, attaining enjoyment does not negate the importance of planning for musical activities, which is an important aspect of the whole educational process, as observed by Pugh and Pugh (1998).

In Kenya, children's musical experiences in ECE heavily depend on the kind of musical exposure teachers have had in their own educational journey, as well as their interaction with music in their adult lives. It also depends on the availability of resources and teachers' ingenuity in creating meaningful musical experiences within varying cultural and societal contexts. One of the most important resources in attaining musical growth is time, which, as already noted, is a challenge. This paper therefore seeks to strengthen the link between pedagogical practices and the musical experiences of children in a bid to minimise the existing gaps between teaching and learning.

### **The study**

The aim of the present study was to find out how preschool teachers in Kenya interpret and consequently enact the music curricular activities laid out in the Curricular Guidelines for ECE in Kenya (KIE, 2003). The study was formulated out of a concern that the Early Childhood Curriculum is fast taking on the character of educational programmes from primary school to tertiary levels in Kenya, where the performing and creative arts are continually relegated to the periphery of education (B. Koech, 2003). This situation greatly accelerates ECE in Kenya towards the precipice described by UNESCO as 'schoolification' of the early childhood learning process (Custodero, 2007). The study therefore sought to determine how teachers interpreted and enacted the music curriculum amid the above concerns. The second concern was to determine the official musical repertoire of the preschools, represented by types of music children performed at preschools, in term of its cultural origins and genres. Additionally, the study sought to ascertain whether the type of musical experiences children received in school was planned to ensure progressive musical growth, and the extent to which children related to the music they performed, since one of the concerns at a national level is the need to preserve the rich Kenyan cultural heritage through fostering appreciation for it from the onset of schooling.

### **Method**

One hundred and forty-five preschool teachers in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city and most culturally diverse area, received questionnaires in which they were asked a number of questions relating to the teaching of music. These questionnaires were developed specifically for this study, which is part of a wider study on creating a multi-cultural curriculum for use in Kenyan preschools. The questionnaires were designed to solicit information from an urban setting in Kenya. They comprised four sections. The first section sought personal information about the teachers, such as where they teach and for how long they had taught in that preschool. The second section sought information related to the teaching environment such as how many times music was taught in a week. In the third part, information was required on curriculum enactment in terms of what was taught during music and movement sessions. One of the questions

in this section addressed the genres of music taught, with genre operationally defined as distinct types. Three of the four genres suggested were chosen from the Kenya Preschool Teachers' Activity Guide (1992), namely religious songs (songs for festivities such as Christmas, Idd-Ul-Fitr and songs children learn at Sunday School in church), indigenous Kenyan songs (children's songs from Kenyan ethnic communities) and patriotic songs (songs expressing devotion for Kenya). Popular songs (the diverse repertoire of songs heard over the radio both from Kenya and other countries especially Central Africa and western countries) was added by the researcher in an attempt to find out if they were also part of the repertoire of preschool music, especially in an urban setting. In the last section, information was sought on objectives of music and movement in the curriculum.

One hundred and thirty questionnaires were returned duly filled, giving a good response rate of 89.6%. Some questions were structured and required teachers to indicate their response by ticking against the appropriate answer. This set of questions generally required a specific number of responses (multiple responses) in order to determine what respondents considered important without undue restriction. The rest of the questions required brief individual responses. This format was used due to the concern that preschool teachers may have some difficulty expressing their responses owing to their level of education (in most cases, preschool teachers are recruited based on their performance in the national examination taken after four years of secondary education. Most of those who apply for the positions have scored average to slightly below average aggregate grades in the national examination). The questions sought to determine the most important objectives of music and movement. Four out of the 15 preschool music objectives were used for the study. The four objectives were derived from the Activity Guide (1992),<sup>1</sup> which was the more available document at the onset of the study. However, these objectives covered the essential aspects of music and movement in ECE. Other questions involved the aims of musical activities; activities engaged in during music sessions; the type of music performed in these sessions; and the cultural origins of the music performed.

Observations were also carried out in six preschools randomly selected from the sample of 21 preschools. The aim of carrying out the observations was to determine how the curricula activities were enacted. They also corroborated the information provided in the questionnaires. As Robson (2002, reported in Santiago, 2004) reminds us, it is not possible to determine whether the respondent to a questionnaire is giving real attention and sincere answers to the questions. Information on the setting in which musical activities took place, the resources used and the manner in which they were utilised, and the way teachers interacted with pupils was obtained through the sessions. The way in which teachers introduced a new song or led the children in singing known songs, and whether there were any clearly articulated musical goals in the entire experience, were all objectives of the observation sessions. Each preschool was visited on a different day, with the researcher conducting six visits per preschool.

## **Results from questionnaires**

### ***Purpose and aims of music education***

Ninety-two per cent ( $n = 120$ ) of the surveyed teachers thought music was primarily for enjoyment. The second most chosen response was social development, with half the respondents (51%,  $n = 66$ ) choosing it. A significantly small number (12%,  $n = 19$ )

thought it was important for cultural development. Those who regarded music at early childhood as foundational for future musical development represented 12% ( $n = 15$ ). An additional response inserted by one participant was that music was important for spiritual development.

The aims for music and movement were, in order of importance, relaxation (39%,  $n = 51$ ), rhythmic development (26%,  $n = 34$ ), developing interest in instrumental music and audibility and voice projection (13%,  $n = 17$ ), and development of a sense of nationhood (12%,  $n = 16$ ).

### *Activities done during music and movement*

Concerning activities done during music sessions, singing was the most popular at 98% ( $n = 128$ ), dance came second at 69% ( $n = 90$ ) and playing instruments at 56% ( $n = 73$ ). More skill-directed activities like creating songs (52%,  $n = 68$ ) and listening (22%,  $n = 29$ ) were chosen by a significantly smaller number of respondents. This is one of the few questions where there were no missing responses. It is instructive that all the listed activities were drawn from the Kenya Preschool Teachers' Activity Guide (KIE, 1992) that teachers are expected to use in their planning.

### *Types of songs performed (genres)*

Religious songs were chosen by 89% ( $n = 116$ ); indigenous Kenyan songs by 77% ( $n = 100$ ); popular songs by 52% ( $n = 68$ ); and patriotic songs by 42% ( $n = 54$ ).

The overwhelming choice of religious songs in public preschools suggested their predominance in preschool music, a fact substantiated in the discussion section below.

### *Cultural origins of songs performed*

Teachers' ranking of English, Kiswahili (the national language), indigenous Kenyan music and music from other countries in Africa and the globe indicated a preference for English songs and games (36%,  $n = 47$ ), Kiswahili songs (29%,  $n = 38$ ), indigenous Kenyan music (13%,  $n = 17$ ) and songs from other countries (5%,  $n = 7$ ).

Although Kiswahili is an indigenous African language, it is not strictly an indigenous Kenyan dialect. While it is quite similar to languages spoken by the communities dwelling off the Kenyan side of the Coast of the Indian Ocean, these communities have their own distinct dialects such as Taita, Taveta and Digo.

### **Results from observations**

The observations revealed that music and movement sessions took place in the playground. Most musical activities were performed with teachers and pupils standing in a circle, and mainly consisted of singing and dancing. Performances were not age-specific, contrary to the expectation that musical activities would be designed separately for each of the three class levels found in the preschools (baby class, for two- to three-year-olds, nursery for four- to five-year-olds and pre-unit for five- to six-year-olds). Instead, the entire preschool took part in the activities at the same time. Although a few sessions involved singing of indigenous Kenyan

songs, there was a dominance of English (the official language used in the country) and Kiswahili (the national language) songs. Teachers tended to dominate the musical activities, with children mainly extemporising by getting into the circle and dancing when called upon by the teachers to do so. Call and response songs were generally led by the teachers. Finally, the teachers did not have any actual records to indicate that they planned activities prior to the music and movement sessions, nor did they possess any records of children's progress in musical development.

## Discussion

Teachers' opinion on the most important role music plays in children's lives reveals their rationale for teaching it as they do, as well as their beliefs about its importance in children's lives. The overwhelming choice of music for enjoyment revealed that teachers understand the primary purpose of music in children's lives, as proposed by Temmerman (1998) and Trehub (2006). It also reveals cultural perceptions of the role of music in human life. One important purpose for musical activities in traditional Kenyan societies was entertainment, which denotes enjoyment (Senoga-Zake, 1986). From the observations carried out in this study, there is a likelihood that teachers see themselves as the initiators of the musical activities, and children are the participants who do not necessarily require any qualification other than to enjoy themselves. Within most traditional Kenyan cultures, musical performance was communal, and no special qualification was required of the participants. A sense of enjoyment and oneness was created by the fact that there was no division of participants as active performer versus passive audience (Akuno, 2005). However, those who produced the music and led the community in its performance (i.e. the instrumentalist and his back-up group) were trained and qualified in their roles. Drawing parallels with findings in this study, those children who expressed disinterest in the musical activities, or who had a short attention span and could not keep up with the activities, were left to their own devices. When questioned about this, the teachers confidently responded that the children would eventually gain interest in the activities. This reveals both a cultural mindset as well as an implicit theory about learning in music: that enjoyment is a spontaneous response and that learning in music is mainly by voluntary participation. The communal nature of the activities is hence supposed to foster spontaneous participation and at the same time encourage observation by the younger children. This may also explain the belief that since music is a social activity, its performance should mainly be corporate. As one teacher observed, through the corporate activities, shy children learned how to interact with their peers.

The teachers' opinion on the most important objectives for music and movement corresponds with their purpose for teaching it. Children are supposed to relax and enjoy the musical activities. The fact that only 12% thought music in early childhood is a foundation for subsequent musical development suggests that identification and nurturance of individual musical talent is a secondary aim in early childhood music education. Music is likely regarded as a transient experience that involves the moment, and then is gone. Dance was also a popular choice, reinforcing the cultural orientation in which song and dance are inseparable (Mans, 2002). More general aims like developing a sense of nationhood were less prominent, as well as developing specific disciplines that aid musical performance such as audibility in singing and nurturing children's inherent interest in instruments.

### ***Musical activities***

The findings reveal that musical activities in the preschools are heavily geared towards performance, with significantly less attention paid to the other skills in music namely listening and creating. The latter two are foundational to music (Young & Glover, 1998), and are supposed to complement performance. Without them, performance tends to be merely a rote experience, and does not provide children the opportunity to develop a keen sense of discrimination, nor does it afford them time to explore their own musical ideas. Nonetheless, reflecting on most Kenyan communities, the oral nature of musical performance may take for granted skills such as listening and creating. Listening is foundational to learning music in oral cultures, yet the usual way of internalising music is by rote. Teachers operating within such an orientation may not easily isolate listening from performance. In the case of creating, another African characteristic is improvising in the course of a performance. This ability may be taken for granted as a natural process in music making, whereas in reality, it is necessary to pause and consider just what has taken place in the process of creating. Mediating such issues may require that teachers receive basic musical training in order to help them 'think about what they are doing', consciously guide the children they teach and recognise their musical abilities.

Another apparently missing link in the musical activities is the lack of space to nurture individual talent. In traditional society, music specialists were few and well trained. Identification of talent began in middle childhood (Nzewi, 1999), suggesting that from an early age children were encouraged to participate in musical activities. One of the legacies of the western system of education to Kenya is its attention to individual learning. In music, this involves the nurturance of individual talent. In this regard, teachers need to actively identify children's needs and guide them to develop in their areas of gifting.

### ***Song genres and cultural origins***

The predominance of religious songs in the preschool repertoire reveals that historical issues still influence music education. Teachers revealed that during their training, they were encouraged to teach music that promoted good morals. In their opinion, the best music to promote good behaviour is religious music. Religious children's songs (at least those from Kenya) also employ lots of action in the singing, another reason teachers used them. A more implicit rationale for the predominance of religious music in preschools is the notion that indigenous music contradicts the principles of Christianity. While this may be true of certain ritualistic music, indigenous children's songs are for the most part, free of ritualistic connotations. However, the teachers' implied attitudes towards indigenous music can be appreciated against the background that Kenya's population is 80% Christian (Andang'o & Mugo, 2007), with a majority possibly still holding notions about indigenous music promoted by the missionaries. However, with more music educators promoting awareness of the merits of indigenous music in the curriculum (such as Akuno, 2005; Senoga-Zake, 1986), there is hope of a change of outlook to view this music more positively.

Preschools in urban areas, particularly those in upmarket middle-class areas of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, mainly use English for communication. The preschools visited were located in diverse areas of the city. Those in the 'inner city' and less socioeconomically endowed areas used more of Kiswahili, while those

nearer the city centre and upmarket areas used English for communication. The songs sung in the preschools reflected the same diversity and character. It was also found that in preschools where Kiswahili was the language of communication between teachers and children, and among peers, there was greater likelihood to sing indigenous Kenyan songs than in the predominantly English-speaking preschools. It was therefore clear that promotion of indigenous Kenyan music needed to be viewed as important to the promotion of a national identity, regardless of the predominant language of communication.

***In search of a meeting point between teacher activities and children's experiences***

Cultural relevance in music education seems to be an unresolved issue among the preschool teachers. Chief among their challenges is their limited knowledge of and lack of access to indigenous Kenyan music. Although in the findings most respondents indicated that they taught indigenous Kenyan music during musical activities, in reality they hardly did so. Most confessed to lacking access to indigenous Kenyan children's songs. Others were uncertain how to teach indigenous songs in a multicultural setting such as Nairobi city. During the observations, it was also clear that some teachers were not conversant with teaching a song from a different culture (such as translating its meaning, getting the children to say the lyrics rhythmically and either teaching it by immersion or phrase by phrase). A reason for their preference of English and Kiswahili songs in class was the convenience of teaching songs in a language already understood. Furthermore, they justified the use of these languages as enabling children to enhance their speaking and writing skills in the language they are likely to use throughout their education.

These findings seem to imply a belief that children should not be exposed to a multiplicity of languages. However, in multicultural settings, the introduction of indigenous music into education is beneficial to children's understanding of their immediate surroundings and socialisation with their peers. Preference for English and Kiswahili songs over indigenous Kenyan songs may well be an indication of inaccurate assumptions about children's language development. Teachers' belief in upholding the languages spoken in the environment without exploring other indigenous Kenyan languages negates the importance, challenge and joy children derive from learning new things, albeit taught to them in manageable proportions.

The translation of objectives into actual musical activities also demonstrated the gap between theory and practice. As mentioned above, the musical activities listed in the questionnaire were drawn from the Kenya Preschool Teachers' Activity Guide (1992) ostensibly used by teachers. The lack of reference to the book by teachers was confirmed when one teacher expressed surprise over the existence of such a book. It appears that teachers relied on musical practices passed around from one preschool to another. This was evident in the similarity of songs performed in all preschools visited. The organisation of the music and movement sessions also provided little opportunity for experimentation through creation of songs. Listening was only applied when children were learning a new song by rote. Therefore, theoretically, teachers were aware of some musical activities but did not consider how they might actually execute them. Other activities such as playing of instruments were not witnessed at all during observations, despite teachers' indication that they were performed. Lack of time to construct the instruments was the most cited reason for the situation.

### *The issue of developmentally appropriate practice*

Teachers' understanding of child development and learning could be inferred in various ways through the musical activities they led. This was especially evident in their expectations of what tasks the children could perform. During musical activities, they tended to ask older children into the circle to dance or perform some action related to the music. However, they seemed to overlook the younger children's needs, and did not provide opportunities for performance of activities suited to their capabilities. Additionally, the communal performances did not take into account younger children's shorter concentration span. The assumption that younger children would always learn by observing thus denied this age group opportunity to engage with music.

Related to the above issue was the impracticability of isolating and attending to individual differences, which are quite diverse besides age. The preschools in the study admit children from different cultures and even countries. Each of these children represents unique musical behaviours, which if harnessed, would enrich their peers. Other differences may be preferences children have in terms of musical styles, singing versus playing instruments and the all-important issue of rate of internalising information and experiences. Despite the real challenge of time constraints imposed by the timetable, the fact that musical activities across the schools observed were fairly similar in structure revealed that teachers needed to diversify their teaching approaches in relation to their unique contexts.

Once more the issue of cultural relevance is revisited, as an important aspect of DAP. From the foregoing, it is clear that cultural relevance ought to be interpreted and enacted at many different levels. Cultural relevance as suggested by preschool curricula documents in Kenya denotes the teaching of music and musical activities originating from traditional Kenyan society. However, the concept should also be expanded to include contemporary Kenyan music suitable for early childhood music education. Both traditional and contemporary Kenyan music have the potential to give the children a sense of belonging and help them have an understanding of their national identity. Teachers need to surmount the challenge of learning this music, which may not be easily available to them unless they are proactive in collecting it and perhaps recording it. Some teachers also appear to have negative attitudes towards indigenous Kenyan music. Such mindsets need to be confronted by examining the reasons behind these prejudices, and making an effort to change them.

The next level of cultural relevance involves interacting with the music of children's 'lived culture'. This music includes the commercials they hear on radio and watch on TV as well as other musics in their everyday lives. To successfully teach this music, teachers need to cultivate interest and actively seek knowledge about the music around them. The final level of cultural relevance involves looking beyond the country's borders, and teaching music from international cultures. Such music helps children to regard themselves as world citizens and prepares them to interact with other cultures apart from those within their borders.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Pedagogy is a broad phenomenon, still in evolution as more research takes place. In view of the complexities of human behaviour and development, it comes as no surprise that the search for answers must be an ongoing process. Various scholars admit to changing their outlook or perspectives on issues after engaging deeper in a

bid to gain greater understanding (e.g. Bamberger, 2007). We all could attest to having a different view of matters after interacting with them over time and in varying contexts. In this regard, the findings of this discourse are shared with the knowledge that they are prone to change. Learning is equally a complex issue, and as Bamberger reminds us, it contains many enigmas, particularly when it comes to determining how musical development progresses in humans.

There are, however, constants as well. The need to build bridges between research and practice is one such constant. There is also the need for teachers to connect with pupils through making every effort to delve into the child's world. This is perhaps one of the most effective ways of synchronising teaching practice with children's learning experiences. The need for sound theories to aid the process cannot be overstated either.

In order to effectively synchronise pedagogy and learning experiences, the theories of child development should be tried and tested by observing children during musical activities and providing opportunities for them to perform according to their physical, mental and emotional levels of maturity. Teachers therefore need to interact closely with the children both during play and as they engage in actual musical activities. Additionally, there is need to continually challenge children to perform progressively complex tasks, whether in singing, dance, playing instruments or creating their own songs. This is one way to ensure they are developing their musical capabilities.

Teachers also need to develop a positive and open mind towards different musics. The quests for cultural relevance in music education not only requires, it indeed demands, that teachers keep abreast of musical trends and maintain an analytical mind about the character of different musics. Most importantly, they need to view and convey to their protégés, all music in the context of its cultural origins. Since children are able to appreciate music due to the natural positive relationship they have with it (Temmerman, 1998), teachers need to take them further into their musical experience by guiding them to relate this music with reality. Explaining meanings, describing song contexts and performing accompanying actions of songs, helps children to regard music as a human phenomenon, an expression of life and all it is about. In this way, pedagogy keeps in touch with the experience of learning.

Finally, in contextualising DAP, the most important factor teachers should consider is the centrality of the child to the learning process. As Jambunathan and Caulfield (2008) remind us, the child is the focal point of the curriculum. The curricular activities in music as prescribed for Kenyan preschools are all about the child, his or her musicality and ultimately, his or her holistic growth. Cultural practices applied in learning should therefore emphasise the development of the whole child. Although learning music by observation suggests a cultural practice and orientation, teachers should go a step further in ensuring that children learn by participating as well. Additionally, teachers are to bear in mind that curricula are not static but dynamic, therefore it behoves them to bring to life that which is written by applying it as is best suited to the learners. The teachers therefore need to study the Activity Guide (KIE, 1992) and curricula guidelines (KIE, 2003), and seek to enact them in ways best suited to their circumstances. As they may not be able to achieve this without support, short, regular in-service sessions for the trained teachers (conducted by specialists in early childhood music education) should be conducted from time to time to enable teachers to keep up with developments in the curriculum. This endeavour requires the full support of the preschool administration, which should also look into increasing time allotted for music and movement in the timetable.

## Note

1. The four objectives for music and movement in ECE as stated in the Activity Guide (KIE, 1992) are as follows: (1) relaxation and enjoyment, (2) social development, (3) cultural development, and (4) a foundation for later musical development.

## Notes on contributor

Elizabeth Achieng Andang'o teaches at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya, where she was recently awarded a PhD in music. Her doctoral thesis is entitled *The use of song and movement to create a multicultural curriculum for early childhood music education in Kenya*. Andang'o teaches musicianship and aural training, as well as voice and vocal skills at the Department of Music and Dance. In line with her research interests, she also hopes to collaborate with her University's Department of Early Childhood Studies to teach courses in early childhood music education. Her research interests include early childhood music education, singing and vocal pedagogy, psychological issues in music and multicultural music. She also enjoys choral singing. Besides attending academic conferences in Kenya, she has participated in the Early Childhood Music Education Commission of ISME since 2006, and the respective ISME World conferences. She also presented a paper and participated in a symposium at the RIME conference at the University of Exeter in 2007. Elizabeth hopes to participate in many more conferences and forums to gain exposure and global perspectives on music and music education. She hopes to contribute to preschool music education in Kenya through developing culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate teaching materials, and helping children to explore and exploit their 'naturally positive relationship with music'.

## References

- Akuno, E.A. (2005). *Issues in music education in Kenya: A handbook for teachers of music*. Nairobi: Emak.
- Allsup, R.E. (2003). Transformational education and critical music pedagogy: Examining the link between culture and learning. *Music Education Research*, 5(1), 5–12.
- Andang'o, E., & Mugo, J. (2007). Early childhood music education in Kenya: Between broad national policies and local realities. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(2), 43–52.
- Bamberger, J. (2007). What develops in musical development? In G.E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician. A handbook of musical development* (pp. 69–81). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bradley, K., & Szegda, M. (2006). The dance of learning. In B. Spodek & O. Saracho (Eds.), *Handbook of research on the education of young children* (pp. 243–250). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Campbell, P.S. (1998). *Songs in their heads: Music and its meaning in children's lives*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Custodero, L.A. (2007). Harmonising research, practice and policy in early childhood music: A chorus of international voices. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(2), 3–5.
- Digolo, B.A. (2003). Indigenous music, education and religion in Kenya: The academic crossroads. In E. Akuno, C. Orawo, & T. Njooa (Eds), *Proceedings of the 1st East African symposium on music education*. Nairobi: Enteros Enterprises.
- Elliott, D.J. (1989). Key concepts in multicultural music education. *International Journal of Music Education*, 13, 11–18.
- Elliott, D.J. (1995). *Music matters: A new philosophy of music education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gachathi, P.J. (1976). *Report on the national committee on educational objectives and policies*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Gumo, A.W. (2003). *Teachers' factors related to the teaching of art and craft in preschools in Kikambala and Kaloleni divisions in Kilifi District*. Unpublished master's thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi.
- Hargreaves, D. (1996). The development of artistic and musical competence. In I. Deliège & J.A. Sloboda (Eds.), *Musical beginnings: Origins and development of musical competence* (pp. 145–170). New York: Oxford Press.

- Hernández-Candelas, M. (2007). Policies for early childhood music education in Puerto Rico. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(2), 27–32.
- Ilari, B. (2007). Music and early childhood in the Tristes Tropiques: The Brazilian experience. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(2), 7–18.
- Jambunathan, S., & Caulfield, M. (2008). Developmentally appropriate practices in Asian Indian early childhood classrooms. *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(3), 251–258.
- Kabiru, M. (1993). *Early childhood care and development: A Kenyan experience*. Nairobi: KIE.
- Kamunge, J.M. (1988). *The presidential working party on education and manpower training for the next decade and beyond*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- KIE (Kenya Institute of Education). (1992). *Kenya preschool teachers activity guide*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- KIE. (2002). *Early childhood development regional conference*. Nairobi: KIE.
- KIE. (2003). *Guidelines for early childhood development in Kenya*. Nairobi: KIE.
- Kiplagat, S. (2008, January 20). A heart-rending journey through the valley of fear, death and ruins. *Sunday Nation*, pp. 4–5.
- Koech, B. (2003). *New, emerging category of young children at developmental risk in Kenya* (Child Research Symposium). Nairobi: Childwatch.
- Koech, D.K. (1999). *Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET) for unity, equity and development* (Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya). Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Mans, M. (2002). Playing the music: Comparing children's music and dance in Namibian education. In L. Bresler & C.M. Thompson (Eds.), *The arts in children's lives: Context, culture and curriculum* (pp. 71–86). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
- Musau, P.M. (2002). Language attitudes and their implications for language planning in Kenya. *Chemchemi: International Journal of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 93–109.
- NAEYC. (1997). *Position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Nzewi, M. (1999). Strategies for music education in Africa. *International Journal of Music Education*, 33, 72–87.
- Odwar, H.A. (2005). *Music education in Kenya: A historical perspective*. Eldoret: ZapfChancery Research Consultants.
- Ominde, S.H. (1964). *Kenya education commission report*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Piaget, J. (1951). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood*. Melbourne: Heinemann.
- Pugh, A., & Pugh, L. (1998). *Music in the early years*. New York: Routledge.
- Santiago, P.F. (2004). *An exploration of the potential contribution of the Alexander Technique to piano pedagogy*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Senoga-Zake, G. (1986). *Folk music of Kenya*. Nairobi: Uzima Press.
- Temmerman, N. (1998). A survey of early childhood music education programs in Australia. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 26(1), 29–34.
- Trehub, S.E. (2006). Infants as musical connoisseurs. In G.E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (pp. 33–49). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Young, S. (2003). Time-space in spontaneous play on educational percussion instruments among three- and four-year olds. *British Journal of Music Education*, 20(1), 45–59.
- Young, S., & Glover, J. (1998). *Music in the early years*. London: Falmer.