INVESTIGATING MUSICAL BEHAVIOUR TEST AT UPPER BASIC SCHOOLS IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

Test or assessment is inseparable from human endaviour as a bedrock for attaining success. It is a core component of the curriculum. Musical behaviour is not without test in indigenous tradition nor in the Western perspective as we have in the school. The slight difference is that in the indigenous tradition no failure is produced unlike what happens in the classroom. This qualitative study gathered data from literature and interview from the pre-service music teachers at the upper basic schools at the South-eastern part of Nigeria. The study revealed among others that paper pencil type of test focusing on multiple choice and essay are the most widely used test type adopted by the interviewed teachers. The result also concurred with literature on the lopsided nature of test that upheld majorly the cognitive domain at the neglect of the psychomotor and affective domains. The study concludes by recommending that the teacher should test both for the subjective and objective musical learning of the students. Furthermore, the researcher through the study recommends organization of workshop or training for the teachers on test construction.

Key words: musical behaviour, test, measurement, evaluation, upper basic schools.

Introduction

Musical behaviors have always been judged by music teachers, performers, and critics; however, the application of systematic testing, measurement, and/or evaluative procedures is crucial for educational decisions. Decisions from test influence learner's

instructional opportunities and experiences. These decisions have consequence for the musical development of the learners that is vital and long-ranged. Not only do instructional and curricular decisions affect individuals, but they also affect broad school, community, and societal goals for music education. It is therefore pertinent that decisions be made from a strong information base.

An information base from two realms of knowledge: subjective and objective should be complementary for better decision making. Music as an art form impact as recognized by many philosophers and psychologists, and educators. As upheld by Dewey (1934) and Merriam (1964) in their writings that music is, at an intellectual and emotional level, a construct of culture, and as such, a product of society. It is most potent when testing response to music to involve a strong feeling component as well as the cognitive. The worrisome state is whether all evaluation of musical behavior and music programmes is undertaken to strengthen the information base for instruction and programmatic decisions. It has been reported that individual teachers and music directors in schools and conservatories occasionally use test for spurious reasons while other test for "window dressing" because it is expected of them, whereas others may use test as punishment (Boyle & Radocy, 1987). An objective music teacher should test for the musical behaviour of the student to enable him/her develop the expected musical understanding and not to victimize nor to fulfil all righteousness. The teacher ought to have a strong philosophical base for testing the students' musical knowledge else s/he will be toted about with any school objectives though might not cover all the crucial components of musical behaviour that ought to be tested.

The upper basic also known as junior secondary is very crucial to any subject in the curriculum. It is a base on which the student develops and decides which carrier to pursue. Hence both instruction and medium of assessment is very crucial. The students' instruction as well as test should more importantly focus on the musical development of the students' creativity, listening and observing, performing music

and not on music facts only. The curriculum is made for the teacher and not the teacher for the curriculum hence the facts about music as we have in the curriculum should be taught within real music (performing, creating, listening, analyzing), and so is the test. If the students develop positive attitude to music at the upper basic, there is every tendency they will choose writing it at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and National Examinations Council (NECO) and sequel might decide to study music at the senior secondary.

Theoretical Base

The cardinal objective of education is learning. Every school subject in the curriculum contributes to the total development of the child via the cognitive, psychomotor and affective as an agent of behavioural change. Music educators are concerned with the musical learning towards understanding and changing musical behavior of the learner. An understanding of the attainment of these behaviours can only be achieved through test. The test has to be measured so that judgement can be passed on else the test is useless. The test as well has to be encompassing so that different musical behaviours has to be tested towards learning in the three main educational domains. Hence to understand the discourse better some concepts like musical behavior, test, measurement and evaluation will be defined.

Musical Behaviour

"Musical behaviour is an integral and important part of human existence" (Boyle & Radocy, 1987, p.3); that facet of human psychological behaviour through which people, either individually or collectively, interact with musical phenomena. These behaviours includes: musical performance (singing or playing an instrument), reading or writing music, improvising or composing music, listening to music, moving to music, reading about music, having a feeling response (affective/aesthetic) to music, or analyzing music. Any of these and/or any observable human activity related to music is termed musical behaviour. These overt manifestations of a myriad of

psychological, physiological, and neurological processes that an individual has in relation to music sound and/or other music-related events or phenomena are determined through test. It is therefore hoped that a summative test for upper basic should have exercises or questions that will test for the music performance ability, perception, and conceptual. Changing musical behaviour is the essence of music teaching and the study of musical behaviour is the subject matter of the psychology of music (Boyle et al). Musical behaviours can be understood by both subjective and objective information.

Test

Test is an application of systematic method for gathering data that indicate the extent to which an individual or group of individuals demonstrate a specific behaviour or sets of behaviours. Cronbach (1970) stated that test "is a systematic procedure for observing a person's behaviour and describing it with the aid of numerical scale or a category system (p.5). Test includes a series of questions, exercises, or other tasks designed for a specific function.Some common functions of test include assessment of knowledge, achievement, skills, ability, aptitude, attitude etc. Every test must be purpose driven and systematic. Its intention primarily is towards obtaining objective information about individual's behaviour relevant to specific purposes, and a test's real value is dependent upon the extent to which it serves the purpose for which it was administered. Technical criteria for evaluating music test include validity and reliability. In designing a test therefore, the test designer should systematically include items, questions, exercises that require the test taker to perform or demonstrate bevaiours reflecting the knowledge, skill, ability, attitude, or whatever is being assessed. The form, format, and general characteristics of educational or psychological tests, may vary greatly as these characteristics are dependent on many variables. These includes the function of the test, the nature of what is to be measured, the characteristics of the individuals, time, costs and so forth. Regardless of whatever characteristics format and function, a basic principle of measurement and evaluation is that the testing

procedure involve a systematic method for assessing the test takers' behaviour relevant to the questions and exercises specified in the test.

Some test types include: Multiple choice, Matching, True-False, Completion, Short Answer, and Easy. Music tests techniques include instrument playing, paper-pencil, response etc; whichever test type or technique is determined by the purpose of the test, subject matter and the learner.

Measurement

This deals with quantification of test data. Just as test involves a systematic method for assessing musical behaviour, procedures for quantifying behavioural responses to test must also be systematic. Payne (1982) defined measurement as the "comparison of something with a unit or standard or quantity of that same thing, in order to represent the magnitude of the variable being measured" (p.1182). Measurement attempts to improve precision and objectivity and as well a base for subsequent objective, statistical treatment of test data. Measurement in music teaching is quite challenging because of the subjectivity of musical behaviours and this has endangered music test as the educational authorities are after quantifiable scores. In order to meet the demand, the test has majorly focused on the factual information about music at the neglect of the affective. The onus is on the test maker to design evaluative tools to test for the affective experience and assign values to them.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the use of test and measurement towards making some judgment or decision regarding the worth, quality or value of experiences, procedures, et cetera, as they relate to educational endeavor. It ought to be an ongoing, systematic process that is an integral part, of any educational endeavor. Evaluation in music has majorly focused on the cognitive and psychomotor at the neglect of the affective, humanistic qualities of the students' educational

experiences which are very crucial. These authors contend that evaluation in music education will approach their best when decision makers (a) have a strong, relevant information base, including both subjective and objective information, (b) consider affective and, where appropriate, aesthetic reasons of (or to) the individual, group, or endeavor being evaluated, and (c) be made with primary goal of improving quality of the learner's educational experiences (Boyle & Radocy, 1978, p.8). Evaluation is broader than test and measurement, as it makes judgement based on the test measurement. However, all of them are systematic. Crucial from the above views, all the three concepts discussed must be purpose driven and more importantly for music education is a more focus on the test, measurement, and evaluation of the affective experience of the music student. Testing musical behaviour focusing on the psychomotor and cognitive domains is more objective than the affective domain that is subjective notwithstanding efforts should be made towards testing the affective experience of the students. The subjective experience of the learner can be inferred from the overt behaviour of the learner towards its testing.

Criticism of Music Testing

Testing generally has been critiqued in literature on the following points: (a) Lehman (1968) noted two points which are test inadequacy and test misuse; Ebel (1979), spotted out test validity and overdependence on objective test because they are easily scored regardless of serious shortcomings of triviality, ambiguity, and guessing; labelling students as a result of test scores and that may cause teachers to abandon sound, long-rang instruction in order to teach for the test; harmful stress and unnecessary experiences of failure to which students are exposed, thus destroying self-confidence and undermining of joy of learning (Boyle et al, 1978,p.23).

Music testing is not exempted from the above mentioned criticisms of testing. But very peculiar to music testing are the global versus the specific approaches to music testing. Two of them may be

complementary however the function for which the test is being used should serve as the determinant. Further is that the purpose of the assessment and the use to be made of the data as well as the degree of inference to be made from the behavioural assessment. Tests generally assess behaviours, but the extent to which test makers and users infer that the behaviour reflect covert cognitive or affective constructs varies greatly. Behaviour versus cognition or affect inference issue is some worth related to the global versus specific issue. Users of music tests must understand and define clearly what they are attempting to assess and select and develop tests or other evaluative procedures appropriate to obtaining the desired information. Responsible test use demands a strong theoretical basis for inferring covert cognitive or affective constructs; otherwise a test user should be cautious in making such inference.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of music teachers at the upper basic about how they have been conducting music tests generally. What challenges they have been encountering that informed their test types and procedures.

Objectives of the Study

The objective is mainly to ascertain the test types used and their reasons for the choice. Test construction is both philosophically and psychologically based hence the interest to ascertain what informs the test makers' objectives in constructing their tests. Two objectives guided the study.

1. To ascertain the most widely used music test type at the basic schools.
2. To explore the rationale for the choice of the used music test type.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the studies. They are:

1. What is the most used music test type at the upper basic schools?
2. What informed the choice of the used music test adopted?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is qualitative. The area of study is the South-eastern Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the 2016/2017 music students on sandwich programme. The study adopted purposive sampling techniques and sampled 12 music teachers teaching music at upper basic.These respondents were music teachers at the upper basic schools. These respondents passed through the National Certificate in Education (NCE). They attended Colleges of Education and are now in the University in pursuit of their bachelor's degree in Music Education at the University of Nigeria Nsukka under sandwich programme. The method of data collection was interview. The interview was conducted in 2017 from September to October at the University of Nigeria Nsukka during the Sandwich programme in the University.

Presentation of Result

The result to research question one which sought to know the music test type mostly applied by the music teachers at the upper basic schools shows that multiple choice test type and assay were the mostly used. Out of the twelve music teachers interviewed there was a unanimous answer of the choice of these test types.

The research question two sought to explore the rationale for the choice of the test type used. They had so many reasons for their choice. Some of them adopted multiple choice test and essay test type because that is what the school authority requires them to use. Some said they chose the multiple choice music test type because they don't want their student to fail. They want all the students to pass their subject as multiple choice test will help the students who do not know the correct answer to select correct answer by chance. Others chose multiple choice because it is easier tomark.

The followings are some of their responses for the rationale for the choice of the music test type adopted in their assessment. A respondent stated thus: "multiple choice is frequently used because I don't want my students to fail". Another respondent said that "assay and multiple choice is what the school encourage". A respondent concurred thus: "assay and multiple choice gives the students more room to pass their exams so that even when they don't know the correct answer they can by chance pick the correct option to the question".

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that music tests at the upper basic schools at the South-eastern states of Nigeria are lopsided. This finding agrees with the test criticism spotted by Ebel (1979) on the overdependence on objective tests. The subjective information that need complement the objective information for quality information base is sacrificed. More crucial to music teachers' understanding of the students' attainment of musical behaviour was not tested. Judging the degree of the students' attainment of some musical behaviour only on the objective statistical score is a disservice to the subject as well as the students. Boyle and Radocy (1987) listed the taxonomy of musical behaviours which out of the four musical behaviours they listed in their taxonomy was the least which is "other cognitive behaviours" was the teachers focus at the upper basic schools in the five states that make up the South-eastern states in Nigeria. Worst still, this focused test type deals with "knowing about" only. Other aspects of musical behaviours which are crucial to attaining music behavioural change were neglected. These neglected musical behaviours which in the words of Reimer (2003) "knowing within" are the core of musical behavioural change which teachers are supposed to focus on while testing. These musical behaviours include performance, reading and writing, and listening behaviours. This omission in test is deleterious to the subject as well as students

because we will have certified students that can talk about music but will not be able to perform music as highlighted by Adeogun, (2006). The teachers' rationale for the choice of the music test type is bias; basing the choice of their music test type on wanting their students to pass and also for easy marking of multiple choice test, lack strong philosophical base. Another worrisome state was the conscripting of the teachers including music teachers to adopt only two test types – multiple choice and assay by the school authority. These two music test types adopted were too narrow compared to test varieties like typical versus maximum performance, item type, norm-versus criterion-referenced, nature of the behvaiour required in the testing tasks, taxonomic domains of educational objectives, and specific versus global behvaiours (Boyle, & Radocy, 1978, p.103).

Summary

This study investigated the music test type and the rationale from the perspective of the music teachers at the southeastern states in Nigeria. Crucial concepts like musical behaviour, test, measurement and evaluation were reviewed. The findings of the study revealed two major types of test which are multiple choice and assay type test. The teachers tended to focus more on the paper and pencil at the neglect of the observation on the performance that would have taken care of the subject nature of the music tests. The study revealed that majority of the musical behaviour is not tested by the teachers. More so, the lowest in the hierarchical order of musical behaviour which is the cognitive was the most measured. Upholding the theoretical base of this study therefore, the psychomotor and the affective domain of the students' musical learning were least examined.

Conclusion

This study concludes by stating that the music test types at the upper basic of the southeastern states are too narrow. The lowest level of musical behaviour was being assessed which were facts about music whereas the core musical behaviours that occurs with interaction with musical stimulus were not tested. If really the

instructional objectives inform test type it implies that the musical performance, reading and writing music, and listening to music were not emphasized in class instruction. The teachers' rationale for the choice of the music test type lack strong philosophical base hence their rationale is bias.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered towards having more strong information base of music instruction evaluation at the basic levels. The music test type should involve objective and subjective test, more importantly, that the subjective nature of music that accrues from the affective should be tested. This test is best done through observation on how they students respond to music. Music tests should focus more on the core musical behaviours and less on the musical facts. There is a need for workshop or retraining of the music teachers on imports of music tests and test construction so that they can construct music test that will test for the core musical behaviour and as well have strong philosophical bases for the choice of the test type they are adopting so they can stand their ground and convince the school authority why they should adopt a particular test type. The school authority should not enforce a test type on the teacher so that they can adopt the appropriate test type that can measure what they are set to measure.

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