

CREATIVE MUSIC AND MOVEMENT BASED ON CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE FOR EARLY LITERACY SUSTAINABILITY AMONG UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN

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Abstract: Creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge has the capacity and signification that goes way beyond words for the growth of young children mainly the underprivileged. Underprivileged children can explore creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge in a fun and joyful way while experiencing various cultural aspects, nurture and be able to function effectively within the society. Based on the current issues regarding the COVID-19 pandemic which has disrupted the livelihoods of every Malaysian, the underprivileged children suffer the most in acquiring formal education. Most of these children lack modern technology and have no access to the internet in their homes since school closure nationwide. A positive learning experience can be achieved when creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge is being incorporated. Doing so helps in bridging the gap in the Malaysian early childhood education. Therefore, this research attempts to employ creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge for early literacy sustainability among underprivileged children. This method has been implemented before at the Orang Asli's Nature School in Gua Musang Kelantan as a means of delivery. The outcome was very encouraging to the extent the children were looking forward to more of such activities. This research employed narrative research design through a single case study directly in the field from the scientific underprivileged community. The data collection methods were obtained from one-on-one interviews with three experienced preschool teachers, five parents and observations with 15 underprivileged children. Information gained through interviews and site observation from this community will be used as tools for the researcher that are worthy of discussion. The sample was chosen among preschool teachers through purposive sampling technique. The main findings from the interview revealed the concept, importance, and requirements to employ creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge for early literacy sustainability among underprivileged children as well as the optimism of teachers in implementing it in class. This research emphasizes that creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge has its own way of imparting knowledge to young children especially the underprivileged.

Keywords: *Creative Music, Movement, Cultural Knowledge, Early Literacy, Underprivileged Children*

INTRODUCTION

The direction of education today has seen vast changes in the implementation of school curriculum, teaching pedagogy and assesment based learning. As to what our former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad articulated his Vision 2020, was for Malaysia to become a fully developed nation economically, politically, socially, spiritually, culturally in terms of national unity, quality of life, national pride and confidence (Da Wan et al., 2018). In order for Malaysia to become a developed nation whether by 2020 or after education must play its role as a critical enabler that goes beyond mere economic aspiration of having an efficient and effective labour market. Education as to what is guided by the National Philosophy of Education, need to focus on how to develop a holistic person that encompasses intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balance and harmonious based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. With equal access to all levels of educational opportunity mainly for the undeprivileged children, our nation can reach a copenhensive, holistic, ambitious, aspirational and universal standard towards Education 2030 (Da Wan et al., 2018).

Preschool teaching and learning strategies incorporating creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge can deliver a high-quality education experiences to young underprivileged children. By identifying the current issues in preschool teaching and learning strategies in Malaysia, cultural knowledge-based creative music and movement could produce a positive impact towards underprivileged children's learning experience whilst bridging the gap in the field of Malaysian early childhood education (Salmon Angela, 2010 ; Barton & Barton, 2018).

Problem Statement

There are several challenges early childhood educators faced in helping underprivileged children to master early reading. One of them is, the tendency to often limit music to mat time, sporadic rhythmic clapping or singing throughout the day without a conscious understanding of how these activities link to the strands and the goals in literacy learning (Chronopoulou & Riga, 2012). However, teaching with 'chalk and talk' on how to read often bores most of the underprivileged children down which makes them lose interest in reading. The actual process of learning to read and communicate in Bahasa Malaysia and English Language has not been receiving proper attention to improving academic success among the underprivileged children which include particularly a degree of capability in the knowledge of the basic building blocks of reading skills these days (Malay Mail, 2015). The qualities required of teachers to teach 21st-century learners must be life-long for learners, adventurous, innovative and imaginative.

Research Objectives

To overcome these challenges, teachers and educators need to come up with greater innovation that can be thought of as new ideas, a new way of looking at things, new methods that have value and intentional use of creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge to deliver a high-quality education experiences to young underprivileged children. appropriately (Serdyukov, 2017). "What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught, rather it is in large part due to the children's own doing, as a consequence of their activities and resources", *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Malaguzzi, 2015).

Having a significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand throughout their programs. Day-to-day activities play an integral part which is necessary to complete the whole purpose of early reading skills among underprivileged children. With this, by investigating teachers' perception on the employment of creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge to enhance early reading among underprivileged children, researches will be able to organize a more structured technique that allows them more time to learn and able to access large amounts of high-quality literacy instructions and design (Adams, 2005).

Research Design

Therefore, this research attempt to conduct a need assessment on teachers' perceptions in teaching early reading by integrating music and movement based on cultural knowledge to enhance early reading among underprivileged children as the means of delivery. This research employed narrative research design through a one-on-one interview with 3 preschools experienced teachers as the data collection methods. The sample was chosen among preschool teachers through purposive sampling technique.

This qualitative approach employs a case study which used extensively a wide variety of disciplines mainly in the social and life sciences. This case study has been used as a "research strategy" to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an indigenous community located at the Orang Asli's Nature School in Gua Musang Kelantan incorporating creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge to enhance early reading. This method has been proven to and obtained positive results and will be later used at Kampung Penderas Kuala Krau Pahang, where the event or phenomena of interest in its natural real-life context. Preschool teachers and educators can utilize certain culture and values through education by utilizing various resources to elaborate and explore the phenomenon and gained quality information from this case study.

This study employs a qualitative approach that provides an extensive experience to understand deeply based on a single case study directly in the field from the scientific Indigenous community in the Orang Asli's Nature School in Gua Musang Kelantan. Information gained through interviews and site observation from this community will be used as tools for the researcher that are worthy of discussion. Qualitative data collection methods play a major role regarding the impacts produced by an intervention. This method can provide useful information to understand the processes behind observed results and assess changes in people's perception of their well-being (Jamshed, 2014).

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Based on the notion or concept of creative music through the interviews from all the informants, there is the significance of how creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge to enhance early reading is being transmitted from music through sound waves to the listener (Burton, 2017). Creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge experiences guided by intentional teaching produce learning opportunities especially for young underprivileged

children. They experience the joy of being artists while learning essential skill across the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) subjects through music, drama, dance for example the (*Tarian Sewang*), and puppetry, (Cooper, J., 2016). STEAM-based programs take an integrated approach to learn and teaching which receives an intended connection between curriculum objectives, standards, assessments, and lesson implementation.

Children approach challenges like engineers to do an example, where they tell stories in ways that prepare them to become readers and eloquent speakers. They learn the fundamentals of mathematics when counting beats in the song. They recognize patterns through dance, which are an essential building block for algebraic thinking. This is when the teachers-in-role strategy challenges children to use creativity and critical thinking through creative music. The strategies children use help them solve a problem for instance where there is more than one way to solve it. They begin to ask intentional, open-ended questions to guide in their exploration. Using these strategies, create a safe environment in which failure and revision are part of the process (Cooper, J., 2016).

FINDINGS

The researcher explained the importance of interviews in design processes and decision making by creating a thorough and effective interview protocol. A variety of questions were drafted to elicit high quality information and organized interview questions in a structure that facilitates gaining the most useful and meaningful information (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). For this research, the researcher used semi-structured interviews that are in-depth interviews where the respondents need to answer pre-set closed ended and open-ended questions to gain information which will be compared later. Semi-structured interviews permits the researcher to achieve optimum use of the interview time, keep the interview focused on the desired line of action and more systematically (Jamshed, 2014).

The findings of this research based on the themes from the interview session held with the informant pertaining teachers' perception on the employment of creative music to enhance early reading among pre-schoolers as shown in *Figure 1* below:

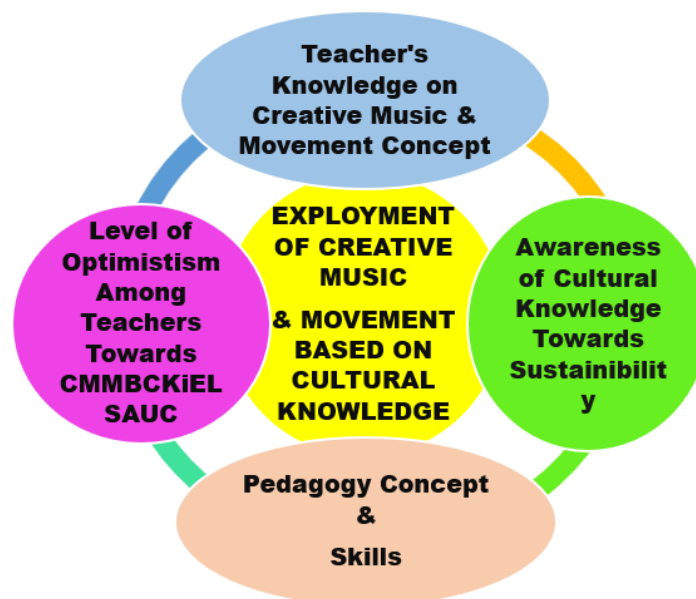


Figure 1. Four main themes from the interview session held with the informant conducted by the researcher regarding teachers' perception of the employment of creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge in early literacy sustainability among underprivileged children.

5.1.1 How teachers perceived regarding Creative Music and Movement Concept based on Indigenous Knowledge as Teaching and Learning Strategies for Early Literacy Sustainability among Underprivileged Children

From all informants, the notion or concept of creative music and movement be as follows:

"Anything that can produce sound and comes out as a melody, that is music;" - (Informant 1)

"Especially dealing with young children, somehow music is a part of children since birth their mothers used to sing to them" - (Informant 2)

"Although they don't know the languages of the song, they will just follow along in singing and try to memorize the words" - (Informant 2)

"For some kids, this is their learning style" - (Informant 3)

"The idea of creativity in music that connotes creativity as an idea from one's own imagination and expression through experiences that allows flexibility" – (Informant 1)

It is important for teachers in knowing how to apply various teaching methods to suit the abilities and intelligence of indigenous preschoolers. These methods has to be nature-friendly environment which supports the development in enhancing literacy learning opportunities among these underprivileged children's reading patterns (Samuels, 2018 ; Delibegovic Dzanic & Pejic, 2016 ; Mohamed et al., 2019). Children's participation in creative music activities such as singing, moving, snapping, and clapping strengthen their thinking, listening and word recognition skills. Literacy learning through creative music and movement based on indigenous knowledge stimulates the learner's multiple intelligences.

5.1.2 The Awareness of Cultural Knowledge Towards Sustainability

From all informants, the awareness of cultural knowledge towards sustainability be as follows:

"Easy to understand about music" - (Informant 1)

"Creative music enhances children's psychomotor skills" - (Informant 1)

"The sound of music gets them to move their body, energized" - (Informant 2)

"Help children to learn how to listen well, dance and sing" - (Informant 2)

"Learn new words through songs" - (Informant 2)

"It is very important because music is somehow very inviting, allows the kids to be more relaxed to help them learn better" - (Informant 3)

"When creative music is being incorporated, children will be more attentive, able to follow the rhythm and will easily follow instructions" - (Informant 1)

"Teachers play an important role, using music instruments excite children's interest" - (Informant 1)

"Teachers and parents play an important role" - (Informant 2)

"Creative music must be incorporated to enhance children's learning" - (Informant 3)

The underprivileged children can make connections of their cultural background knowledge when they listen to creative music or participate in movement activities such as the *Tarian Sewang*, which requires them to move their fine and gross motor skills (Burgess Cathie, 2019). Auditory memory allows them to take in information that is presented orally, process that information, store it in their mind and then recall what has been heard. Basically, it involves the skills of attending, listening, processing, storing and recalling (Murphy et al., 2015).

These children comprehend better when they actively think about and apply their cultural knowledge, their own experiences in the activities they participate and the world around them. They feel a sense of belonging and feel appreciated when teachers and educators understand the importance of their culture, moral values and participating along with them during classroom activities.

5.1.3 Pedagogy Concepts and Skills

From all informants, the learning environment for creative music approach be as follows:

"Inclusive of percussion instrument, audio, radio and television as a form of tool used" - (Informant 1)

“Teachers required to think out of the box” - (Informant 1)

“Music goes beyond the boundary of languages, age, race and religion” - (Informant 1)

“Children learn through listening, visual and moving. Some children just love to move and dance around” - (Informant 2)

“Children interact more with teachers when this approach is being used in a fun and learning way” - (Informant 2)

“Provide a big space for them to move around freely to explore the surroundings” - (Informant 1)

“Good to have mirrors as children feel excited when they can see their own reflection and movement” - (Informant 1)

“Parquet flooring allows children to roll or move easily during learning session” - (Informant 1)

“All kinds of environment inclusive of in-door and out-doors” (Informant 2)

“A very big space for them to move around and interact with their peers” - (Informant 3)

“It is good that the teachers bring them out of the classroom as there is a lot of space for them to move around where they can move around better” - (Informant 3)

Culturally responsive teaching attempts to bridge the gap between teacher and students by helping the teacher understand the cultural nuance that may cause a relationship collapse and would affect student achievement as well. The teachers must make sure that the students are getting key knowledge that also includes their culture (Li Wah & Binti Mohamad Nasri, 2019). Teachers and educator are required to have authentic conversation with the pre-schoolers and one way to do so is to incorporate creative music and movement based on indigenous knowledge in their daily teaching and learning strategies for early literacy. By looking at the content of their own lesson and how to deliver them to the underprivileged children that comes from different backgrounds and ethnicity can produce positive impact on students learning. Doing so, helps the underprivileged children to develop their talents. By providing choices and including topics of diversity can make these children become more interested in learning early literacy (Gabriel Kathleen F, 2018).

5.1.4 Level of Optimism among Teachers Towards Creative Music and Movement Based on Cultural Knowledge in Early literacy Sustainability among Underprivileged Children

From all informants, the level of optimism among teachers in implementing creative music be as follows:

“Through singing increase their level of confidence” - (Informant 2)

“Children at the age from 3-6 years old in general cannot sit still, unable to focus, difficulty in blending sounds and influenced by the digital technology” - (Informant 1)

“Children are definitely much more attentive compared to just sitting down and learning” - (Informant 2)

“Children will love the experiences” - (Informant 3)

“They will pay attention” - (Informant 3)

“Feel very happy and allows them to participate in activities better” - (Informant 3)

“Very optimistic” - (Informant 1)

“Very into it” - (Informant 2)

“Encourage others to do the same” - (Informant 2)

“A person who likes to sing and does not like to sit down and study to avoid becoming boring” (Informant 2)

“Music makes children happy” - (Informant 3)

Preschool teachers and educators must incorporate past theories to assist the underprivileged children acquire early literacy using creative music and movement based on indigenous knowledge as teaching and learning strategies with great confidence to achieve collective goals in a fun learning environment (Westlake Pricilla, 2017). According to Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond (2018), pre-schoolers are inherently musical, respond better in learning through creative music and movement based on indigenous knowledge. Music also teaches them to belong to a culture and develops their cognitive well-being and inner self worth.

According to Alas & Mousa (2016), teachers and educators must develop cultural competence in a world that consists of multicultural. Given the political, economic, social and education interactions which is part of global society, the numbers are increasing. This capacity includes knowledge of how culture influences an over-generalized belief regarding certain people, the way they think, their actions and their ability to communicate across cultures (Alas & Mousa, 2016).

DISCUSSION

Providing underprivileged children with various techniques through the exploration of creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge in early literacy sustainability, allows them to discover a whole lot of experiences and promotes fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration of thought (Paquette & Rieg, 2008). A lot of accomplishments can be achieved when we incorporate creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge as a type of approach to enhance early reading among underprivileged children. The goal of this research was to find out how creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge affects the brain, how it influences underprivileged children’s knowledge and understanding using this method of approach. To also understand if incorporating creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge, has any effects on these children’s emotions, or impact on special populations regarding implementing this method as a learning strategy to enhance early literacy. The researcher’s perception of how things turn out depends on how he or she respond after gaining information to test a specific hypothesis attained in the researchers thoughts (R et al., 2019).

Through past and present studies, music has been examined, in multiple aspects, to see how it has a positive impact on the brain, on literacy skills, and on student behaviour. The goal of this research review is to relay how leading researchers have studied creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge, the effect it has on people especially underprivileged children so that this method can create meaningful opportunities for music engagement that encourages hands-on exploration, foster direct learning and developing music and movement creativity (Rajan, 2017).

Preschool teachers are faced with various challenges when it comes to including a subject or techniques in teaching in which they feel they have not had enough knowledge in interdisciplinary collaboration, and how to go about incorporating creative music to enhance early reading. Therefore, the findings from this study support two major conclusions and implications for teacher education across disciplines: (a) strengthening preschool teachers on the employment of creative music to enhance early reading among pre-schoolers and (b) developing collaborative professional development to incorporate this elements to enhance early reading among them (Morrow & Casey, 2004).

“Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things” (Theodore Levitt) (Serdyukov, 2017a).

CONCLUSION

To acquire early reading skills, much in the same way, underprivileged children should be read to and have books in their environment to engage with. Teachers and educators can sing to them or sing along with them, move with and have a high quality in the music environment. In school and at home, play time should include a variety of musical elements. Having loads of fun through experimentation with different sources of sound, exploration whether with pots and pans, shakers and drums, which supports preschool children’s brain development (Jay, 2015). Children learn new things, like sounds, words, and patterns through creative music. It helps cultivate communication skills, foster physical skills, for instance, their fine motor skill and gross motor skills. The most important way to encourage musical development in underprivileged children is to provide or make adequate preparation for an environment rich with music and musical opportunities. Teachers and educators must display a great deal of interest and encourages underprivileged children with whom to share musical experiences.

Overall, the evidence from this study suggests that more creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge activities should be included in daily teaching instructions. Cheong Jan & Shwu Shyan (2010), mentioned that teachers should stimulate their lessons beyond the use of nursery rhymes. Using motivating language activities based on cultural knowledge aiming at reading skills of phonological awareness, vocabulary, and inference skills would help underprivileged children learn more effectively and reach their goals.

A long-term intervention would probably have a better impact compared to a short-term in producing a progressive result on underprivileged children reading skills. As the connection between music and reading skills is very strong, various strategies can be used to boost the development of all learners. Therefore, in conclusion, intentionally literacy activities intertwined with creative music and movement based on cultural knowledge should be planned wisely with the aim that every child can become involved in the process towards developing his or her language knowledge naturally (Jan & Shyan, 2010).

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