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Article Topic: Children's game songs and rhymes

Abstract

The article presents and discusses children's game songs (mitambo yevana) usually performed during children's play time. Each game song is transcribed and discussed to unpack the role the game plays in developing certain skills and concepts in children. The article is a follow up of an applied action research carried out at Chemhanza Mission on Hwedza District of Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe. Children are products of the social fabric whose social experiences are woven within the nexus of social webs generated by social power vested in the social system. One way in which children develop physically, intellectually, socially and morally skills is through playing games that are accompanied by either rhymes or songs. The games discussed in this article are motsiro, zai rakaora, vana vana huyai, sarura wako, kana ndikadayi, chamutswinye mutswinye, chitima, chinyunyuyu, sapero, and maringoringo.

Key words: game song, rhyme, children

Introduction

Children are educators of themselves. Most of their learning is enshrined in the games and rhymes which they play during their leisure time. These games and rhymes comprise those that are handed over to them orally, those that are borrowed from other cultures and also those that are composed by children themselves. In other words games and rhymes are a learning platform on which children gain skills, concepts and knowledge. Children learn as they play and play as they learn and play for them is a serious business. This is part of the natural pedagogical systems that informs most of the learning that takes place in children. Games and rhymes teach children norms, values, numeracy, physical develops, psychological development and social interaction.

Games and rhythms also prepare the child for adulthood and improve his or her ability to socialize and interact with others. Children also learn a lot of musical concepts as they play and sing. Some of the musical concepts are melody, structure, lead and response, rhythm and pitch. Games are played at home and at school when children have nothing to do. It is apparent that every child has to come across this stage as they develop from childhood to adulthood. The games that are presented and discussed in this paper are *motsiro, zai rakaora, vana vana huyai, kana ndikadayi, chamutswinye mutswinye, sapero, and maringoringo*. Each game develops certain skills in the children. The photographs that accompany this article are children selected from Chemhanza Mission in Hwedza District in the district of Mashonaland East in Zimbabwe.

The ultimate goal of the article is to develop and promote African music and dance by advocating for the teaching of concepts using Africanist approach and games. The theoretical underpinnings behind this noble approach are blessed by authorities who embrace Dargie, D (1996), Mngoma, D (1998), Kreutzer, N, (1997) Amoaku, K (1998), Oehrle, E (1997), North, M (1990) and Flolu, J (1996). These authors advocate for the use of Africanist approaches in teaching African songs. They also encourage music teachers to employ various approaches that create room for students to show creativity.

Maringo ringo



This is the first game song presented in the film by Faith Matiure the writer’s daughter. The description of the game is that the rest of the children will be seated with legs stretched. One child will then count the legs up to the leg where she says “*Chinyura*” meaning bent you leg. Lead and response is as follows;

Lead: *Chamutambarare*
 Response: *Ayaye/hiyowe*
 Lead: *Maringo ringo ndiani ndiamujijiri banga, ndazoriwana muchakunda gonzo rine ndoro pamusana, chiya chidembo pamuchinjiri chinyura iwe.*

Musical notation for the song "Maringo ringo" in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a treble clef staff with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "Ma ri ngo ri ngo ndi a ni ndi a muji jiri ba nga. Wa zo ri wa na mcha kunda go nzo ri ndo ro pa mu sa na chi ya chi de mbo pa mu chi nji ri chi nyu ra i we."

Song 1 Maringoringo

This continues until we have a child who remains with a stretched leg who will be declared a loser in the game. The game develops a number of skills and concepts in children. While the game develops both fine and gross motor skills it also teaches children mathematical concept of subtraction. Each leg that is bent (*chinyura*) is subtracted until all the legs have been subtracted. *Maringo ringo* is similar to *stcheva* leg counting game of the Venda people of South Africa which was also written about by Oehrle (1997).

Sarura wako

The game is performed by both boys and girls standing in a circle. One member gets inside circle and start to sing the song by leading and the rest responding as shown below;

Lead:	<i>Dede</i>	<i>Dede</i>
Response:	<i>Kadeya deya nendoro chena</i>	<i>Kadeya deya</i> with a white scar
Lead:	<i>Sarura wako</i>	Choose yours
Response:	<i>Kadeya deya nendoro chena</i>	<i>Kadeya deya</i> with a white scar
Lead:	<i>Wangu musvuku</i>	Mine is light brown
Response:	<i>Kadeya deya nendoro chena</i>	<i>Kadeya deya</i> with a white scar
Lead:	<i>Asina zvimbi</i>	Has no long toes
Response:	<i>Kadeya deya nendoro chena</i>	<i>Kadeya deya</i> with a white scar
Lead:	<i>Zvenge zvenjongwe</i>	Like those of a cork
Response:	<i>Kadeya deya nendoro chena</i>	<i>Kadeya deya</i> with a white scar
Lead:	<i>Wangu ndiyeyu</i>	This is mine
Response:	<i>Kadeya deya nendoro chena</i>	<i>Kadeya deya</i> with a white scar
Lead:	<i>Kiss me dhari</i>	Kiss me darling

De de Sa ru ra wa ko
 4 Ka de ya de ya ne ndoro chena Ka de ya
 wa ngu mu tsvu ku A si
 7 de ya ne ndoro chena Ka de ya de ya ne ndoro chena
 na zvi mbi Zve nge zve jo nhwe
 10 Ka de ya de ya ne ndoro chena Ka de ya de ya
 ne ndoro chena Ki si me dha ri Ka de ya de ya ne ndoro chena

Song 2 Sarura wako

The member leading will pick on a member of his/her own choice who will take over and also choose another member and so on. The game inculcates the concept of choices and ability to make decisions which is helpful in their future life experiences. When we choose our partners we consider a number of aspects. Children are trained to choose by describing the characteristics of their partners. Those who respond chant words that imply that the partner is indeed a beautiful one, (*Kadeya deya nendoro chena*).

Motsiro



Lead:	<i>Motsiro</i>	One
Response:	<i>Dhendere</i>	Two
Lead:	<i>Wagara</i>	Three

Response:	<i>Mashangwe</i>	Four
Lead:	<i>Mbirimbizha</i>	Five
Response:	<i>Pamuromo</i>	Six
Lead:	<i>Wegange</i>	Seven
Response:	<i>Gangirizha</i>	Eight
Lead:	<i>Chindori</i>	Nine
Response:	<i>Gumirawa</i>	Ten



Song 3 Motsiro

This is yet another counting game which teaches children to count from one to ten. They play the game by counting fingers as shown in the photograph. They start from one which is referred to as *motsiro*, then two which is *dhendere* up to ten which is *gumirawa*. *Gumirawa* literally means the ten has been dismantled. When children learn numeracy through music and movement this is in line with Dalcroze Dalcroze's pedagogy referred to as eurhythmics. This method encourages children to learn as they make some movements and at the same time enjoying good music (Brown 1987).

Zai rakaora

Lead:	<i>Zai rakaora</i>	Rotten egg
Response:	<i>Rakaora</i>	It is rotten
Lead:	<i>Zai rakaora</i>	Rotten egg
Response:	<i>Rakaora</i>	It is rotten
Lead:	<i>Zai rakaora</i>	Rotten egg
Response:	<i>Rakaora</i>	It is rotten

In Shona culture if someone is referred to as rotten egg (*zai rakaora*) this implies that the person is foolish. Usually a rotten egg has no any nutritional value. The only thing to do about it is to through away into the bin. So the game trains children to be alert. When one participant runs around the rest of the members (one in red jacket) who will be sitting in a circle, he/she then would drop a stone behind any member. As he /she runs around, he/she chants the words rotten egg (*zai rakaona*) and the rest respond by saying it is rotten (*rakaona*). When a stone is dropped behind a member, the member is supposed to be alert and picks the stone and runs after the one who dropped the stone. If he/she fails to catch he/her she takes over and run around the circle with the stone in order to drop it behind another member. On the other hand if the one who drops

the stone is catch by the one who picks it, then he/she automatically becomes a rotten egg (*zai rakaora*).

Vana vana huyai

Lead:	<i>Vana vana huyai</i>	Come children
Response:	<i>Tinoty</i>	We are scared
Lead:	<i>Munotyeyi</i>	What are you scared for?
Response:	<i>Mapere</i>	Hyenas
Lead:	<i>Mapere aka eanda Hwedza</i>	Hyenas went to Hwedza

The participants of the game are mother, children and a hyena. The mother will be at one side and the children on the other. The hyena will inter between. The mother will call the children and the children will respond by saying that they are scared of hyenas. The mother replies saying that they should not be sacred since the hyenas have migrated to Hwedza area. The children will then run to the mother. The hyena then intercepts and catches any children along the way. Those that are caught automatically become hyenas and start catching children.

The game develops children physically as they run to their mother and attempt to dodge the hyena. The game also teaches children about fierce animals that may attack them. They also learn that mothers have the responsibility to protect the children from dangerous animals.

Kana ndikadayi

Lead:	<i>Kana ndikadayi kana ndikadayi zvoshamisa</i>	If I do this you will be surprised
Response:	<i>Kana ndikadayi kana ndikadayi zvoshamisa</i>	If I do this you will be surprised
Lead:	<i>Kana ndikadayi kana ndikadayi zvoshamisa</i>	If I do this you will be surprised
Response:	<i>Kana ndikadayi kana ndikadayi zvoshamisa</i>	If I do this you will be surprised

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Song 4 Kana ndikadai

The game is played with both boys and girls with one member leading by performing created movements chanting the words “If I do like this you will surprised” (*Kana ndika dai kana*

ndikadai zvoshamisa). The rest of the members will imitate the action and repeat the same words uttered by the leader.

The game teaches children to imitate. Imitation is one of the commonest methods of learning in most of the African societies. It is part of what Akuno (2005:12) refers to as enculturation or learning through observation

Chamutswinye mutswinye



Lead: *Chamutswinye mutswinye*

Response: *Hiyawo*

Lead: *Chamutswinye mutswinye*

Response: *Hiyawo*

Lead: *Maringo ringo ndiyani ndiya mujijiri banga, wazoriwana muchakunda gonzo rine ndoro pamusana chiya chidembo pamuchinjiri chinyura iwe.*

The game is played by pinching the top of each other's hand in alternation. They then chant the words *chamutswinye mutswinye* moving their hands up and down following the rhythm of the value of a crotchet. They then disintegrate and chant the words *fodogo*.

The game develops fine motor skills in children. It also trains them to socialize as they put their hands together to imply oneness and social cohesion. The infrastructure that they form by using their hands signifies a social pillar whose strength is as a result of group involvement. The game also teaches children that for any activity to be successful in a community it has to include everyone's contribution. The game also discourages individualism and selfishness. Children should be taught to love and solidarity as they play games together. In fact children are born playful. Play is the spice of their life. Such games as *chamutswinye mutswinye* go a long way in creating social bonds.

As they children pinch each other the pain endured is pain of love and enjoyment. When they disintegrate the pain is even more but no one cries. Children are taught to endure pain for the success of a group cause. They are prepared for the future pains that they will come across when they grow to be adults. In way a game teaches them to persevere even when the going is tough.

Sapero



All in unison: *Sape sape*
Sapero sapero iwe mukomana wangu.
Usaite manyawi.
Chando chasvika zvino
Chakarova vaiviri
Iwe ndiwe wetatu
Vamwe mbuya vakabika
Zvi dhumbudya zvavo
Ndokutengesera vana
Ve zvodhoma zvavo
Zvi witsi, witsi
Mabhanzi banzi
Kuriti zendemu zendumu
Kuriti zhu zhu

Sape sape.
Sapero sapero my boyfriend.
 Do not be excited.
 Winter is approaching now.
 It has killed two before.
 You may be the third one
 A certain old woman cooked
 some crickets
 The sold them to children
 of goblins
 Sweets, sweets
 bans, bans

Song 5 Sape

The game is played by clapping hands in alternation. When they clap one member's left hand claps with the partner's right hand and then do the same with the other hands. As they clap their hands the children sing the song following the rhythm of their hands. This rhyme teaches

children to get the sense of rhythm. The rhyme is in line with Dalcroze eurythmics which emphasis rhythmic coordination and the development of the whole person through music and movement (Akuno 2005:59).

Chinyunyunu



All: *Chinyunu nyunu*
Chikakakaka
Chinyunu nyunu
Chikakakaka

Song 6 Chinyunyunu

The game is played in pairs. The pair knocks on their fingertips saying *chinyu nyu nyu nyu* and then knocks using the knuckles saying *chi ka ka ka*. This is a game performed for entertainment. The game develops children’s fine motor skills

Chitima



All: *Kwe-kwe-kwe here kwe-kwe-kwe*
Chitima chinofamba
Masikati nehusiku
Kana chomira chinoti gere geze

The train moves
 During the day and at night
 If stopping it says *gere geze*

Two children hold their hands up in front of the other members standing in a single file. All the children sing the song as the members move in a single file passing between two members with hands held up. The two members will then trap any member of their choice. The member is asked some few questions and left to pass. The game goes on and on in that fashion.

Rure rure

Lead: *Rure rure rure rure*
Response: *Hayi*
Lead: *Rure rure*
Response: *Hayi*
Lead: *Uyu ndiye (Name) azvara mwana wegaka, ngaagwadame tione*
 This is (Name) who gave birth to a cucumber let her sit
Response: *Gada (Named member)*
All: *Yuwi ndazvara mwana wegaka, yuwi ndazvara mwana wegaka*
Yuwi I have given birth to a cucumber. Yuwi I have given birth to a cucumber

Ru re ru re Ru re ru re U yu ndi ye Ku pa A
 Ha yi Ha yi
 zva ra mwa na we ga ka Nga gwa da mi ri re ti o ne Ga da

Song 7 Rure rure

The game is played when children are standing in a circle. They sing and swing their joined hands. A member whose name is mentioned sits down. This goes on until all the members have set down. The game teaches children to alert.

Conclusion

Most of the games songs and rhymes that have been presented and many more can be interpreted clearly when reference is made to some the early methods postulated by Dalcroze, Cruwen, Orff Schuwerk and Kodaly. Emile Jacque Dalcroze initiated what he called eurhythmics which put emphasis on rhythm, body movements and the use of the voice. According to Akuno (2005:59) the principles that support eurhythmics are communication, motivation, movement, listening and memory. Akuno goes on to say that the method involves children in exploration, experience, analysis and improvisation.

The other method is by Cruwen which emphasizes the use of the voice as the fundamental aspect of learning music. The method is guided by the principle of moving from concept to symbol, that is putting sound before its sign (Akuno 2005:61). The next was initiated by Carl Orff which emphasizes that children learn by expressing themselves through music. The method also emphasizes learning music through improvisation. It encourages group work and socialization. Singing, movement, playing and speaking, rhymes are used in mother tongue. It allows exploration, imitation and improvisation. The last is that of Kodaly which emphasizes the use of folktales and folksongs in teaching music.

Children are born music and playful. Play begins as soon as the child can interact with another person. Play starts when they are still in the mother’s womb by kicking. Game songs and rhythms play a very crucial role in developing children’s musical competence as well as developing them socially, mentally and physically. Children learn a lot of skills and concepts through these games. Teaching music at infant level can be an exciting thing if teachers make use of game songs and rhymes in the teaching of music. The game songs and rhymes can provide a reliable content that can be used even by higher grades. The content ranges from textual analysis, rhythm, melody, tonality, timbre and intervals.

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