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Novice Teachers' Implementation of Music in the Preschool Classrooms

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Abstract:

This study examines the level of implementation of music by novice preschool teachers in central region of Malaysia. It also sought to investigate whether there is any difference in novice teachers' implementation of music in relation to teaching subject option and age group. The specific content of the instrument items for implementation of music was developed by examining the 'Creativity Component of Physical and Aesthetic Strand in the National Preschool Curriculum Standard' (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010). This instrument also reflected the previous work of Wu (1999), Kwan (2006) and Chan and Kwan (2010). The sample consisted of 315 novice teachers. The mean score of novice preschool teachers' implementation of music was 3.13 and the standard deviation was .57. There was a significant difference in teachers' implementation of music in relation to teaching subject option for singing activities. The significant difference was also existed in teachers' implementation of music in relation to age group for sound exploration activities. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study will contribute towards the improving the implementation of music by novice preschool teachers in their classrooms.

Keywords: Implementation, music activities, preschool, curriculum, education

1. Introduction

Music is an important learning tool as contributing to the total development of a child, which includes intellectual, emotional, physical, social and aesthetic (Temmerman, 1998). In order for musical aptitude to develop, a nurturing environment is needed especially one that provides opportunity for purposeful activity to take place (Gordon, 1987). An effective music curriculum and master teachers can promote many positive musical experiences that will stay with the child for a lifetime (Sim, 1995). As an important asset in any educational system, a quality teacher will realize an educational system and quality human being (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2009).

The task of preparing teachers cannot be accomplished solely through pre-service programs. Teacher preparation programs merely provide the foundation for continual professional growth. The novice teachers should also be given on-site support to help them in applying the theoretical knowledge acquired in their teacher preparation programs to the complexity of real-life teaching (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Current empirical studies show that the seemingly simple transition from being student into the role of teacher is in fact a complex multifaceted phenomenon (Urzua, 1999). The novice teachers think they know what it is like to teach. In reality, the situation differs so much from their expectations, hence many of the novice teachers enter the professional life with a 'reality shock'. This scenario becomes more complicated when certain schools do not provide adequate support in assisting the novice teachers to adapt themselves to the new situation.

Music educators face challenges that are unique to their subject area, resulting in high levels of burnout and making them primary targets for attrition (Heston, Dedrick, Raschke and Whitehead, 1996). Because of the extraordinary challenges that music teachers face - challenges such as an activities-based curriculum, and every student being equipped with a tempting noisemaker - it is essential that rule and routines that facilitate the communication necessary to effective learning to be established from 'day one' (Conway, 2003).

Research findings indicate that isolation from other music teachers and resource people is a significant problem for many beginning music teachers. Novice music teachers need to discuss their work, but they often do not have experienced people who have seen them teach (Conway, 2003). Being new in the profession, these novice teachers need to be groomed as professionally effective and quality teachers (Weiss and Weiss, 1999). Having quality teachers to teach in schools will greatly influence students' performance and achievement (Killian and Hirsh, 2001), which will consequently improve the quality of education.

2. Implementation of Music

The major task involved in the implementation of music to children is to provide a variety of meaningful experiences closely related to activities in their world. It should give them time and space to experiment with and explore all types of sounds, to listen to and interpret sounds with their bodies, voices, and instruments.

Research on the status of implementation of music in government preschools in Malaysia was conducted by Chan and Kwan (2010). The music activities carried out in preschools are group singing, music and movement, listening, sound exploration, and instrument playing. CDs, cassettes, video, TV, and un-tuned percussion were found to be the common equipment used. As for musical instruments, mainly non-melodic percussion instruments, such as tambourine, ring bell, castanet, drum, *kompang* and double tick-tock, were found to be commonly utilized. However, the use of recorder, piano or keyboard and guitar were rare.

Kwan (2006) evaluated the implementation of music which includes the type of music equipment used and type of music activities the teachers' implement and frequency of implementation by government preschool teachers in the state of Selangor. The findings indicated that most preschools were in line with the preschool curriculum requirements of music equipment used for teaching and learning facilitation. The level of implementation for music appreciation activities was moderate. Similarly, the level of implementation for singing activities was also moderate. For creative movement activities, the level of implementation was high with many respondents having a large open area for music movement activities. The level of implementation of music for overall music activities which were music appreciation, singing and creative movement was moderate.

Noriza Sulaiman (2011) study aimed to identify the level of effectiveness of the implementation of preschool music education curriculum among 70 Ministry of Education Malaysia preschool teachers in Federal Territory. The study found that the implementation has achieved a satisfactory (high) level of effectiveness. The teachers also used more often 'thematic approach' as compared to other approaches in implementation of music.

Wu (1999) study indicated most kindergarten teachers have adequate music equipment and it is used. Most kindergartens are outfitted with a keyboard, non-melodic percussion instruments, melodic percussion instruments, cassette tapes and player, CDs and CD player, music videos, VCR, video recorder, curriculum guides for kindergarten music, computer and music games. But few kindergartens have guitars and recorders. In the findings of Wu, the music experiences provided were varied, and the frequency of with which they are used is high. The kindergarten classrooms were provided with singing, listening, playing instruments, moving/dancing, playing with music, and watching music programs on TV. The most frequent activities were singing activities, at least 86% once a week. The devoted time to music in their classrooms was an average of 10 to 15 minutes every day.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative method. The study utilized questionnaire as instrument for gathering data. Mail survey was administered in this study to obtain a variety of information or views regarding the implementation of music of novice preschool teachers.

3.2. The Sample

The target population of the study was the novice preschools teachers who have taught five years or less in classrooms of preschools operating in the general National Primary Schools around central region of Malaysia. In this study, the central region consists of the states of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Perak and federal territories of Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur. A total of 390 sets of questionnaires sent to the subjects in this survey. There were 315 respondents or 80.77% retrieval of completed questionnaires out of the 390 sets sent.

3.3. Research Instrument

The specific content of the items in the questionnaire of novice preschool teachers' implementation of music was developed by the researcher by examining the Creativity Development Component of Physical and Aesthetic Strand in the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010). The questionnaire also reflected the previous work of Wu (1999), Kwan (2006), and Chan and Kwan (2010) to measure the novice teachers' frequency of implementation of music in preschool classrooms.

Each item of the questionnaire was measured on a 5-point Likert Scale and is anchored with the notations: Never, Once or twice a semester, Once every few weeks, Once or twice a week, Everyday. The choice of '1' means that the respondent 'Never' implements the music activity while as the choice of '5' means the respondent implement the music activity or the corresponding item 'Everyday'.

3.4. Reliability of Research Instrument

Reliability test for measuring homogeneity of the questionnaires' items were computed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The reliability scores provide evidence that the measures are internally consistent as shown in Table 1.

Research Sub-scales	Reliability (α)	
	Pilot Study	Final
Overall Implementation of Music	0.953	0.940
Singing	0.778	0.854
Playing of Percussion Instruments	0.924	0.908
Sound Exploration	0.927	0.884
Music Appreciation in Concept (Element) Development	0.943	0.920
Music Appreciation in Movement and Expression	0.724	0.826
Music Appreciation in Recognition of Music and Responses	0.854	0.827

Table 1: Reliability of the Research Instrument

3.5. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires were coded and analyzed using SPSS. Analysis of data was performed using descriptive statistics: frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations. The level of the variable was measured by using the mean average rating categories which were classified into low, moderate and high levels. Inferential statistics of t-test and one-way ANOVA were also employed in analyzing the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Levels of Implementation of Music

In general, the novice preschool teachers indicated that they had moderate level of overall implementation of music as shown in Table 2. Specifically, the novice teachers indicated that the levels of implementation in singing activities and music appreciation in movement and expression activities were high. However, the novice teachers indicated that they were having only moderate level of implementation in playing of percussion instruments activities, sound exploration activities, music appreciation in concept (element) development activities and music appreciation in recognition of music and responses activities. In this study, the overall mean value of the six sub-scales of implementation of music was 3.13 (SD = .57). The mean value for the six sub-scales rank as follows: singing activities, 3.93 (SD = .61); music appreciation in movement and expression activities, 3.82 (SD = .71); playing of percussion instruments activities, 2.88 (SD = .80); music appreciation in concept (element) development activities, 2.82 (SD = .82); music appreciation in recognition of music and responses activities, 2.72 (SD = .85); and sound exploration activities, 2.34 (SD = .89). This implied that singing activities were the most frequent activities followed by music appreciation in movement and expression activities.

The moderate level of overall implementation of music among the novice preschool teachers in this study coincides with Kwan (2006) who reported in her study that majority of the in-service preschool teachers had a moderate level of overall implementation of music. The high level of implementation of singing activities in this study was coincides with singing activities in the study by NorizaSulaiman (2011). Furthermore, the high level of implementation in music appreciation in movement and expression activities in this study was also similar to movement activities (music appreciation in movement and expression activities) by NorizaSulaiman (2011). It is noteworthy that four activities (singing, movement, listening and playing instruments) were mentioned repeatedly, although their order differed by study (Golden, 1989; Wu, 1999; Nardo et al., 2006; Temmerman, 2000). Singing, however, mostly topped the lists as the most frequent activity (Golden, 1989; Wu, 1999; Nardo et al., 2006) which consistent with singing activities the highest ranking in this study.

Music Activities	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Overall Implementation of Music	3.13	.57	Moderate
- Singing Activities	3.93	.61	High
- Playing of Percussion Instruments Activities	2.88	.80	Moderate
- Sound Exploration Activities	2.34	.89	Moderate
- Music Appreciation in Concept (Element) Development Activities	2.82	.82	Moderate
- Music Appreciation in Movement and Expression Activities	3.82	.71	High
- Music Appreciation in Recognition of Music and Responses Activities	2.72	.85	Moderate

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Implementation of Music by Novice Preschool Teachers

The results of t-test indicated that there was a significant difference in teachers' implementation of music in relation to teaching subject option for singing activities. The novice teachers in this study who select music as minor option of study are likely to have a higher implementation of music in singing activities. The inability to conceptualize the subject matter might create the lack of competence among novice teachers who didn't select minor music option of study to execute appropriate strategies to implement singing activities.

The results of ANOVA test indicated that there was a significant difference existed in teachers' implementation of music in relation to age group for sound exploration activities. The results also implied that the youngest age group of

novice teachers has higher implementation of music in sound exploration activities. Perhaps they were exhibiting more youthful enthusiasm toward their teaching situations. Schools should be more sensitive to the needs of these fresh graduates and do more to encourage their youthful energies and ideas (Leong, 1999).

5. Conclusion

The moderate level of implementation of music might be contributed by the lack of competence novice teachers have regarding their abilities to meet the demands and difficulties in real life teaching. All the problems and difficulties that the novice teachers faced might influence them to demonstrate only a moderate level of overall implementation of music activities in preschool classrooms. Although the teachers were provided with comprehensive teaching preparation, the tasks of preparing teachers could not be accomplished solely through teacher preparation programs. Being new to the profession, most likely the novice teachers would encounter several problems either professional or personal. In the real context, novice teachers need to seek on their own the appropriate measures when confronted with problems and challenges.

In addition, some of them might have difficulty in transferring the knowledge and skills they obtained during teacher preparation program into their preschool classrooms. The tasks involved in the implementation of music to children are to provide a frequent and variety of meaningful music experiences to them. The data to determine the implementation of music in this study can provide information on the quality of music education for young children in preschools. Therefore, support for the novice teachers in preschools could be critical to increase the level of teachers' implementation of music. Furthermore, music courses should be made as required core courses for all student teachers to graduate from teacher training institutions.

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