

Teachers' Understanding on Music for Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

Music learning is believed to have positive impact and influence on children's development. Teachers' understanding of music advocates for music learning practices which are applied in early childhood education. Many literatures explain that the teachers' perceptions and knowledge of music are very important in the learning process. Teachers' positive attitude towards music is believed to be an important factor in the success of music learning for early childhood. This paper aims to explore teachers' understanding of music for early childhood. The varieties of teachers' educational backgrounds establish different attitudes and understanding. To collect information, the author conducts library research by examining literatures that discuss the importance of music in early childhood education and teachers' perceptions of music for early childhood. The results presented in this paper strengthen the opinion that teachers' perceptions and knowledge of music affect the practice of music learning in early childhood education.

Keywords: *Teachers' understanding, music, early childhood education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the first step towards further education. It is the important time which serves as future investment of the children in all phases of their life. At this stage, educational stimulation is given to support physical and spiritual development. Experts said that the development of early childhood at the age of 0-6 is the Golden Age of complete human development [1]. Research suggests that at this time, there are no less than 100 billion brain cells ready to be stimulated so that one's intelligence can optimally develop. The first six years is the most important and decisive moment in developing children's intelligence compared to the time afterwards. This means if the children get maximum stimulation, their potential will be optimally developed [2].

This illustration shows that early childhood education is very important for every child to have for their future life [3]. One of the early childhood education to optimally stimulate children's intelligence development is music learning [4]. Music education is one of the areas of development that aims to improve children's ability. The potential includes the materials of self-development, attitude, and skills which will be explored in every child. Music learning in pre-school education can be presented in the form of singing and dancing as they learn beats and rhythm through clapping or playing a simple musical instrument. Music learning in early childhood is an

alternative way to be taken in an effort to support children's growth and development [5]. Music education can be seen as one of the effective ways in developing children's potential and directing early childhood to grow based on their talents and interests. Essentially, early childhood education is about learning through play, which means that the children learn in active and fun ways [4]. In line with the characteristics of the early childhood who are active in carrying out various explorations of their environments, playing is part of the learning process. The learning itself must be designed in many ways so that the children will not feel burdened in achieving their developmental tasks. In order not to make the learning process burdensome and boring for the children, the atmosphere needs to be made natural, warm, and fun. The activities which provide opportunities for children to interact with their friends and environment have to be prioritized. In addition, because children are unique and varied individuals, some elements such as individual variety and children's interests must also be considered.

Speaking of music, it is not only about how music is utilized as a learning medium or how children can play a musical instrument, but there are also important issues in music for children. For instance, they have rights in music through meaningful and varied learning [6]. More specifically, children have musical rights as the result of social integration, identity construction, and cultural

changes [7]. The pedagogical aspects of playing music in the context of early childhood education are thoroughly integrated in the curriculum [8]. Each educational unit has its own unique curriculum in which music is integrated. These findings strengthen the opinion that music is part of the children's rights to be fulfilled in a process of education.

2. THE ROLE OF MUSIC FOR CHILDRENS' DEVELOPMENT

Music has an important role in child development. Music learning is believed to have positive influence and impact on children's cognitive and behavioural development [9]. Therefore, it becomes a good means for early childhood to learn in a fun way as the children will listen and focus their attention and practice their thinking skills. There is a strong correlation between learning music and art and improving literacy and mathematical skills [10]. Musical activities which emphasize song lyrics, rhymes, rhythmic patterns, constant beats, and dramatized stories through movement and musical instruments can expand and strengthen children's memory to help develop their linguistic skills.

As a positive activity, music is able to hone children's physical, mental, and emotional sensitivity in a balanced manner [11]. In addition, music is also believed to be able to increase social and emotional competency [12]. Tones and expressions which the children listen to are very useful to train their emotional sensitivity. Singing and playing music altogether enable the children to interact naturally and have fun. Therefore, the children will create important aspects which are useful in their life skills. Musical experiences will also provide motivation and context for children's skills in making interaction with their environment. Because of its broad influence, music is required to be a compulsory program in early childhood education [13]. This opinion means that music learning becomes a reference in early childhood education which is sustainable with various children's development as a whole.

Music learning trains children motor nerves. Music stimulated brain development rapidly and responsively. It also expands and strengthens children's memory to support the development of their language skills. Children's skills in expressing feelings and listening to information being conveyed are well honed. Playing music increases concentration level which is beneficial in other areas of intelligence. Social skills are also developed, enabling the children to interact with others more easily.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Music has a special attraction for children. Through music, they learn to express their feelings and desires.

One of the early childhood's characteristics is active and they have high curiosity. Music can accommodate those matters. In early childhood education, music has its strategic role. The teachers use it as a fun learning medium for children [14]. Music can be utilized as a learning medium in early childhood education. On the other hand, it can also be used as means of communication [15] to channel children's talents and expressions. Through music, children are given the opportunity to express their feelings and ideas by moving to the rhythm of the music.

Music influences children's growth and development from the cradle to adulthood. Previous research has proven that music stimulates brain development rapidly, even since they are in their mother's womb. The "Mozart Effect" supports the idea that the children who are listened to music frequently have better intellectual abilities which stick throughout their life. The increase in their intelligence is noticeable [16]. Although these findings require much more concrete proofs [17], many aspects of development can be stimulated through music. The use of musical elements in learning attracts children's attention [18]. In addition to cognitive development, language stimulation can be developed through memorizing song lyrics in the song which the children listen to. There is a positive correlation between playing music and reading skills in pre-schoolers [19]. The strategy of playing music can be applied to the children with linguistic disorder [20].

Research [21] suggests that providing music practice improves brain development in dyslexic children. Music can develop children's creativity and imagination [22]. Music also stimulates children's memory well as it has strong influence on the brain by stimulating intellectual and emotional level [23] and changes in behaviour [9] including children's social attitude [24]. Musical activities given by the family have an effect on their children's personalities [25] and hone their emotional sensitivity [11] and enrich the development of children's behaviour [26].

Generally, the early childhood likes to play. Through playing, they learn, move, and play music so that they develop both of their motoric skills. As children play a musical instrument, it involves their limbs, such as their fingers. This activity develops their soft motor skills, while dancing develops their rough motoric skills and develops sensitivity to the other motor sensor, such as their eyes and hands. This will help the children harmonize their movement, increase how their body works and improve its coordination.

4. TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING ON MUSIC FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Music has an important role in children's early life and development. Teachers' understanding of early

childhood music advocates music learning practice which will be applied in early childhood education. In general, teachers believe that music has an important role in children's early learning and educational experience [27]. In addition to the teachers' role in music learning, their attitude has an important role in the process of learning as well [28]. The factors which influence teachers' belief in the importance of music of early childhood include internal factors, such as teachers' confidence in the learning process and external factors, such as teachers' experience and education [29]. The internal factor teachers have to possess is an optimistic attitude and confidence in their ability, so that it results in a more consistent teaching method. The external factor comes from their teaching experience as well as their educational backgrounds, either formal or non-formal. These two factors have to be possessed by the teachers so that the goals of music learning in early childhood education can be achieved. This opinion provides important information to support the studies of the factors which influence teachers' belief in the importance of music for early childhood.

Research on teachers in Australia suggests that they have a positive attitude towards music despite having no music educational backgrounds [30]. These findings recommend further professional development to support teachers which will have implications on improving learning outcomes. There is a correlation between teachers' attitude and emotional leadership on the effectiveness of teaching in early childhood [31]. The knowledge and attitude of early childhood teachers towards music have an important role in education. The findings related to the influence of the role theory on music learning for pre-schoolers in Malaysia [31]. These findings bridge the expectations of parents and teachers about teachers' role in music learning for early childhood. Furthermore, teachers' belief in musical abilities affects teaching activities and teachers' interaction in the classroom which relates to the goals of music education for the children. The implementation of music in early childhood education can be applied during the learning time in the classroom or during the break time [32]. This indicates that music can be utilized as a learning activity or an alternative to fill the spare time as children play with their friends.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that teachers' understanding of music has an important role in the implementation of early childhood education. The importance of music in children's development is a priority so that the aspects of development can be optimally stimulated. The aspects of intelligence, mathematical logic, language development, literacy skills, social, and affection develop very well through stimulation of playing music. This urgency must be acknowledged and fulfilled properly by the

kindergarten administrator by providing teachers who are competent in the field of music or at least have basic knowledge of music for children.

As a matter of fact, preschool teachers who have music educational backgrounds are still lacking. This shortage has implications on the practice of music learning in early childhood education. Due to this reason, it is necessary to conduct a more comprehensive study about the characteristics of the pre-school teachers who meet these criteria and provide special training for teachers to improve their understanding on music for early childhood.

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