

## Implementation of Music in Government Preschools in Malaysia: Music Activities, Teachers' Perceptions and Teachers' Self-Efficacy

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper, the implementation of music in government preschools is studied from three aspects, namely music activities, teachers' perception of the role of music in preschool education, and teachers' self efficacy in music teaching. A questionnaire, which was designed according to the local curriculum syllabus, as well as adapted parts of Wu's (1999) and Oreck's (2001) research instruments, was distributed to 138 preschool teachers in various districts in the state of Selangor, from which 96 valid responses were gathered. The findings revealed that the music activities carried out in preschool, from the order of the most frequently conducted, are group singing, music and movement, listening, sound exploration, and instrument playing. Meanwhile, 95.8% of the respondents conducted group singing daily, and only 28.1% conducted music and movement daily. More than 70% seldom or had never conducted sound exploration activities. Majority of the respondents perceived that music plays a role in personal and social development, music skills and knowledge development, classroom management, and other benefits. There are however disagreements by few on the aspects related to the importance of music in child development. The findings on teachers' self efficacy revealed that one-third of the respondents were not confident to conduct music activities in school. These findings reflected the background of the respondents, whereby 31.3% were untrained in preschool education and 92.7% others did not possess any relevant qualification for instrumental proficiency.

**Keywords:** Music, preschool, self-efficacy, implementation, curriculum

### INTRODUCTION

In a society where traditional arts are vanishing alongside the process of urbanisation, school becomes the substitution for the community to impart the arts into children's growth, as well as to carry out the process of enculturation through the arts. However, the transition is not that simple. The arts, including music, are now put under a new social context called education. The change of environment, i.e. from community to school classroom, will affect the quality and mode of art creation and sharing by and for the children.

Research on the status of implementation of music in schools is necessary to identify the existing barriers to the transition mentioned, and to ensure music fully functions in the multiple areas in children's learning. The purpose of this paper is to study the implementation of music in preschools in Malaysia<sup>1</sup>, onto which the National Preschool Curriculum has been implemented for its first three years since 2003, undoubtedly at a stage of adaptation. The number of new government preschools has escalated since 2000<sup>2</sup>, and teachers have been given 'refresher courses' to attend to the new curriculum at newly opened schools<sup>3</sup>.

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Under the structure of the National Preschool Curriculum, music is part of the creative and aesthetic component<sup>4</sup>. The objectives of the component are to enable students to: (a) appreciate nature's beauty through creative performance, (b) use natural and recycled materials creatively, (c) express emotion creatively, and (d) value cultural heritage. In order to achieve these objectives, three main contents are identified for music, and these are: (1) music enjoyment or in original terms *menikmati muzik*, (2) singing or *nyanyian*, and (3) creative movement or *pergerakan kreatif*. Each of this is further divided into specific learning activities.

With respect to teaching approach, on the other hand, the curriculum suggests that a component can be taught through: (1) play, (2) thematic teaching, (3) integration with other component, or (4) application of ICT. Music is therefore to be taught both in separation, i.e. as a component by itself and in integration with other components.

There are various types of preschool in Malaysia. Preschools are run by either private bodies, associations, churches or the government, and they are conducted in Chinese, English, Tamil or in other languages. The government preschools, which are conducted in Bahasa Malaysia by principle, are created for all children irrespective of their cultural background and ethnicity. At present, it is however attended by mostly Malay children and taught by mostly Malay teachers<sup>5</sup>. Hence, in Government preschools, the homogeneity of students is high in terms of language, culture and religious background. The findings of this paper will therefore reflect the characteristics of this particular ethnic group.

The existing issues in music education in Malaysia include the public's low perception, and therefore the lack of appreciation, towards music and music education, the issue which was voiced by music educators in the Resolution of the First National Conference of Music Education declared in 2002<sup>6</sup>. In relation to this, the positioning of music and music education according to Islam's teaching is an issue which

has been constantly discussed by the society at large, and has received scholarly attentions through the works by Mohd Tahir and others (1996: 2006).

On the other hand, teacher's readiness and ability in teaching music have been raised both in the academic world and the society at large. Mah's research (2003) on the effectiveness of teacher training programmes revealed that more than 50% of his respondents, who were teacher trainees, did not have any formal education in instrumental skills prior to their entry into the teacher training programme. This is consistent with the government's survey (EPRD, 2000) on music teaching in primary school, which found that teaching competency was one of the shortcomings in the curriculum implementation, besides the lack of teaching resources and other concerns.

Meanwhile, review of relevant literature reveals the common music activities conducted in preschools. Among other, Wenerd (1989) reported six musical activities in preschools, in the order of the most frequently conducted, which are: singing, movement, listening, instrumental activity, improvisation of melodies, and sound exploration. The National Preschool Curriculum of Malaysia, on the other hand, listed three main contents for music; these are music enjoyment, singing and creative movement. Each of these contents has sub-items detailing the actual activities to be carried out in class. Apparently, all the activities listed by Wenerd above are covered in the National Preschool Curriculum, except for the 'improvisation of melodies'. However, the grouping of the actual music activities in the National Preschool Curriculum still lacks clarity. The sub-component for music enjoyment, for example, comprises a mixture of listening, sound exploration, and instrumental activities, while listening and song identification activities are included under the sub-component of singing. Hence, regrouping is necessary in order to analyze the music component in the NPC.

Beside the types of activity, the researchers have also looked into the use of musical instrument and equipment, as in the surveys

by Nardo (1996) and Temmerman (1998). In Malaysia, private early childhood music providers in Malaysia are reported to use audio tape, un-tuned percussion, song book, keyboard or piano, percussion and song charts in their music sessions (Liew and Lam, 2006).

As for the aspect of teachers' perception, Wu (1999), in investigating the attitudes of kindergarten teachers in Taiwan, found that music is perceived as a valuable learning tool that plays important roles in child development, is useful for classroom management, and is effective in motivating children to learn other subjects. How would the Malaysian preschool teachers then, coming from a different cultural and training background, perceive the role of music in preschool education?

As for the aspect of teaching competency, Oreck (2001) conducted a survey on teachers' self-efficacy, attitudes and personal characteristics, and covered a wide scope on the use of arts in teaching which encompassed dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. In his findings, teachers' self-efficacy was found to be more influential than other personal characteristics. To what extent, then, are preschool teachers in Malaysia confident and comfortable in leading musical activities in preschool?

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of music in preschools in Malaysia, it becomes necessary to include both the matters related to the perception towards music and teacher competency as subjects of inquiry in the study. In view of the discussion thus far, a successful implementation of music in preschools would display the qualities of: (1) being dynamic and varied in music activities, (2) being conducted by teachers who understand the role of music in the development of a child in various aspects, and (3) teacher showing confidence in their ability to translate concepts of music education into actions in classroom effectively.

## METHOD

Within the 269 government preschools in the Selangor state, there are 215 preschool teachers

who teach music. In this study, a technique of proportionate stratified sampling was employed to determine the sample size for this target population of 215. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a sample of 135 and 140 was obtained from a population size of 210 and 220, respectively. By proportioning for a population size of 215, a sample size of 138 was calculated. Eventually, there were 96 respondents or 69.6% retrieval of completed questionnaires out of the 138 sets sent.

The questionnaire was designed according to the three variables sets, which are: (1) music activities conducted, (2) teachers' perception towards the role of music in preschool education, and (3) teachers' self-efficacy in music teaching. In view of the existing literature and the requirement of the National Preschool Curriculum, questions on music activities<sup>7</sup> followed closely to the items stated in the NPC, with some additional items. In addition, 'music equipment used' and 'the amount of time devoted to music daily' were added into the questionnaire. Meanwhile, the questions on the second variable were mainly adapted from Wu's research (1999). The items in Wu's questionnaire on the roles of music were comprehensive. The perception towards the role of music in education in this questionnaire was asked based on the four aspects, namely (1) personal and social development, (2) musical knowledge and skills development, (3) classroom management, and (4) miscellaneous benefits. The questions on teacher's self efficacy were adapted from the instruments of Wu (1999) and Oreck (2001).

A pilot study employing 15 preschool teachers who were attending in-service training at Maktab Perguruan Bahasa Melayu Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, was carried out. The contents of the questionnaire were reviewed based on the comments gathered. Reliability tests for measuring the homogeneity of the questionnaire items were computed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The reliability indexes for all variables had coefficients of 0.70 and above, for both the pilot study, as well as the final questionnaire.

After obtaining the permission to conduct research in schools from the Ministry of Education and the Education Department of Selangor, copies of the questionnaire were sent to the subjects through their respective headmasters. A total of 138 sets of questionnaire were sent to the subjects in various districts in the state of Selangor, including 16 in Gombak, 21 in Hulu Langat, 10 in Hulu Selangor, 16 in Klang, 10 in Kuala Selangor, 23 in Petaling, 14 in Sabak Bernam, and 10 in Sepang.

The data collected were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 13.0. A descriptive statistical analysis method, using frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviations, was used to analyze the profile of respondents and all the variables of the research.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the variables, i.e. between the music activities and teachers' perception, as well as between the music activities and teachers' self-efficacy.

#### *Respondents' Profile*

Of the 96 teachers who responded to the questionnaire, majority (92.7%) were females (Table 1). All the respondents have undergone teacher training courses and have met the basic qualification of a teacher in government schools<sup>9</sup>. However, 31.3% of the respondents were not equipped with relevant training to teach in preschools. As for musical skills, only a few respondents (7%) have received substantial formal education in instrumental skills<sup>10</sup>, whereas 22% others who have attended in-service courses reported that the courses were rather limited to only music with creative movement. It is important to note that the majority (72.9%) of the government preschools in this study are located in the rural areas.

TABLE 1  
Respondents' profile  
(N=96)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	7	7.3
Female	89	92.7
<i>Professional qualification</i>		
Teacher Training Certificate	40	41.7
Teacher Training Diploma	53	55.2
Degree in Education/Teacher Training	3	3.1
<i>Specialization</i>		
Preschool	66	68.8
Other	30	31.3
<i>Qualifications of instrumental / Vocal competency</i>		
No	89	92.7
Yes	7	7.3
<i>In-service courses attended</i>		
No	74	77.1
Yes	22	22.9
<i>Location of school</i>		
Rural	70	72.9
Urban	26	27.1

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Music Activities Conducted in Government Preschools*

The mean scores for each music component in the curriculum give the impression of a moderately high level of implementation of music, as shown in Table 2. As mentioned earlier, the categorization of the music activities in the National Preschool Curriculum lacks clarity, in which some of the names of contents do not reflect the exact activities. Hence, the results have to be reorganized according to the exact activities in each sub-component to gain a better picture of the implementation status of each sub-component. The reorganized results are presented in the following order: the amount of time devoted to music daily, the type of instrument and equipment used, singing and vocal activities, music and movements, listening, sound exploration and instrumental playing.

TABLE 2  
Implementation of music according to the component listed in the national preschool curriculum (N=96)

Activities	Mean	Standard deviation
Music appreciation	3.28	0.57
Singing	3.56	0.50
Creative movement	3.98	0.57

Low (1.00-2.33), Moderate (2.34-3.66), High (3.67-5.00)

As the curriculum does not specify time allocation for music, time devoted to music in classroom varies. 83.3 % of the respondents spent between 10-20 minutes daily, while 7.3 % spend less and 9.4% spend more, as presented in Table 3. Meanwhile, the usage of music instruments and equipment is shown in Table 4. CDs, cassettes, video, TV, and un-tuned percussion were found to be the common equipment used, showing a high dependency on audiovisual equipment in the music activities conducted. Similarly, the dependency on auto

playback device is also apparent, implying live accompaniment using music instruments, except for the un-tuned percussion which is rare. As for musical instruments, mainly non-melodic percussion instruments, such as tambourine, ring bell, castanet, drum, *kompang* and double tick-tuck, were found to be commonly utilized.

TABLE 3  
The amount of time devoted to music per day in classroom (N=96)

Time (minute)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None	-	-
About 5	7	7.3
About 10	25	26.0
About 15	32	33.3
About 20	23	24.0
More than 20	9	9.4

*Singing and Vocal Activities*

Among the items grouped under singing and vocal activities (Table 5), group singing was reported to be the most frequently conducted activity. 95.8% conducted group singing once a week or more, while 58.3% practicing it daily. Singing with structured instruction is, however, less frequent.

Of the 58.3% who practiced group singing daily, only about half conducted group singing with structured instruction like ‘listen to children song and follow the melody’ (29.2%) and ‘singing with expression of feeling’ (30.2%). Based on the findings for the type of instrument used (Table 4), it is clear that singing was conducted either with auto playback music or without any accompaniment, since the usage of music instruments other than percussion was not reported.

Meanwhile, structured rehearsal and performance scored the lowest of the entire questionnaire. 15.6% of the teachers had never prepared children for any performance. On the use of music for utility needs, singing was used during the assembly, with 90.6% in the frequency of once a week and above. Among



the three items for utility needs, 5.2% stood out to have never conducted singing in any particular occasion like national day and the major yearly festivals of their respective society.

‘Vocal activities’ which refer to the usage of voice in ways other than the ordinary singing yielded a slightly lower count of frequency as compared to group singing. The frequency for weekly practice and above for ‘imitation with voice’ was 62.5% for inside the classrooms, and this was 66.7% for outside the classrooms, ‘making various sounds’ 62.6%, and ‘producing voice according to rhythm’ was 80.3%.

TABLE 4  
Type of equipment used  
(N=96)

Music equipment	Percentage (%)
CDs and CD player	96.9
Cassette tapes and player	95.8
Music video, VCR, Video recorder, TV	94.9
Non-melodic percussion instruments (tambourine, ring bell, castanet, drum, <i>kompang</i> , etc.)	93.9
Computer technology	51.7
Melodic percussion instruments (melodian, xylophones, etc.)	11.5
Recorder	10.4
Piano, organ or keyboard	4.2
Guitar	1.0

Although all the respondents had conducted singing in class, a portion of teachers only did it rarely or rather infrequently. In this context, ‘infrequently’ refers to more than once in a semester but less frequent than ‘weekly’ in the original questionnaire. In particular, 4.2% conducted group singing infrequently, 10.4% conducted ‘listening and trying to follow the melody of the song’ infrequently, and 19.8% conducted ‘singing with expression feeling’ infrequently. As for the vocal activities, the count for ‘infrequently’ marked between 12.5 to

36.5%, while 1.0 to 3.1% had never conducted such activities. The lower frequency for singing for utility needs is understandable, as this particular type of singing is normally conducted according to the occasions.

#### Music and Movement

Besides group singing, listening to music and doing free movement are the most frequently conducted activity, as shown in Table 6. The findings in this section reflect the level of technical demand among the items for music and movement, whereby an ascending order of score is observed for the column of ‘infrequently’ and descending for ‘everyday’. Rhythmic movements (or *pergerakan Bertram*, refer to doing structured movements as in aerobic exercises, etc.) stood out to be the most demanding activity, but only 12.5% of the teachers practiced it daily, weekly (63.5%), infrequently (20.9%) and had never done it (3.1%). Meanwhile, 12.5% to 20.9% of the respondents conducted music and movements infrequently. These are in contrast with the high score for the teachers’ perception of music’s role in enhancing psychomotor skills, an item to which 99% agreed (*see* Item 3, Table 10). Hence, the cause for the infrequent practice of music and movement lies in aspects other than the teachers’ perceptions.

#### Listening Activities

The teachers’ frequencies of conducting listening activities are shown in Table 7<sup>11</sup>. Among the items, sound guessing was found to be practiced the least, with 49% of the respondents conducted it infrequently. As for the type of songs listened to, children’s songs were indicated to be the most frequently listened to, while patriotic songs, religious songs, *nasyid*, and popular songs were also played in the classroom. In general, listening activities were less frequent compared to group singing and music and movement, whereby a portion of the respondents reported that they had never conducted these activities at all.

TABLE 5  
Singing and vocal activities in preschool  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Never	Infrequently	Weekly	Daily
<i>Group singing</i>	-	4.2	37.5	58.3
Listening to children songs and trying to follow melody of the song	-	10.4	60.4	29.2
Singing with expression of feeling as: Lively, Happy, Sad or Enthusiastic	-	19.8	50.0	30.2
<i>Singing for utility needs</i>				
Singing songs in preparation for birthday occasions	-	77.1	16.7	6.3
Singing songs in preparation for assembly events	-	9.4	57.3	33.3
Singing songs in preparation for national day and celebration events	5.2	57.3	18.8	18.8
<i>Structured rehearsal and performance</i>				
Singing and playing music in preparation for performance	15.6	60.4	18.8	5.2
<i>Vocal activities</i>				
Imitating sound heard in classroom using voice	1.0	36.5	40.6	21.9
Imitating sound heard outside classroom using voice	3.1	12.5	32.3	34.4
Making various sounds with voice like: Loud – Soft, Fast – Slow , High – Low	1.0	36.5	43.8	18.8
Producing voice according to rhythm of song heard	1.0	18.7	49.0	31.3

'Infrequently' refers to more than once in a semester, but less frequent than 'weekly' in the original questionnaire

#### *Sound Exploration and Instrument Playing*

Sound exploration was done through various means like listening, giving vocal response, making movements, and playing instruments. The four items for the 'vocal activities' discussed in Table 5 are by themselves sound exploration using voice as a medium. Listed in Table 8 are items for the sound exploration that was not included in any other session. As compared to the results for vocal activities in Table 5, sound exploration through knocking, scraping, snapping, and blowing had a lower frequency of implementation, whereby 45-59% of the respondents stated that they conducted these

activities infrequently and 11-31% others had never carried out them in their classes. This low percentage for sound exploration activities coincided with Wenerd (1989) who reported in her study of American preschools where sound exploration was found to be the least frequently conducted activity.

Just like sound exploration activities, instrumental activities were also less frequently conducted (Table 8), whereby 58.3 to 59.4% stated that they conducted them infrequently and 4.2 to 6.3% had never conducted them. This apparently contradicts with the results obtained for group singing, music, and movement and listening activities. In more specific, only

TABLE 6  
Music and movement activities in preschool  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Never	Infrequently	Weekly	Daily
Listening to music and doing free movement	-	12.5	59.4	28.1
Listening to song and doing clapping, tapping or body movement according to rhythm	-	19.8	56.3	24.0
Listening to music and moving creatively according to beat	-	18.8	61.5	19.8
Listening to song and doing movement according to lyric of the song	-	19.8	60.4	19.8
Listening to song and doing rhythmic movement	3.1	20.9	63.5	12.5

'Infrequently' refers to more than once in a semester, but less frequent than 'weekly' in the original questionnaire

TABLE 7  
Listening activities in preschool  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Never	Infrequently	Weekly	Daily
Producing voice according to rhythm of song heard	1.0	18.7	49.0	31.3
Imitating sound heard in classroom using voice	1.0	36.5	40.6	21.9
Imitating sound heard outside classroom using voice	3.1	12.5	32.3	34.4
With eyes closed and guessing act by listening to sound like: Snapping finger, Bell ringing, Table knocking, Opening or Closing door	3.1	49	37.5	10.4
Listening and guessing the melody of: children songs	5.2	23.9	58.3	12.5
patriotic songs	6.3	42.7	37.5	13.5
religious songs <i>nasyid</i>	8.3	47.9	38.5	5.2
popular songs	9.4	48	36.5	6.3

'Infrequently' refers to more than once in a semester, but less frequent than 'weekly' in the original questionnaire



TABLE 8  
Frequency of sound exploration and instrumental activities  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Never	Infrequently	Weekly	Daily
<i>Sound Exploration</i>				
Exploring sound resulting from knocking and scraping activity	11.5	58.4	29.2	1.0
Exploring sound resulting from snapping activity	28.1	54.2	16.7	1.0
Exploring sound resulting from blowing activity	31.3	45.8	18.8	4.2
<i>Instrumental Activities</i>				
Exploring sound played by music equipment	6.3	58.3	33.3	2.1
Playing music percussion instruments according to beat	4.2	59.4	31.3	5.2
Utilizing material from environment to produce melody	27.1	54.2	15.6	3.1
Singing and playing music in preparation for performance	15.6	60.4	18.8	5.2

'Infrequently' refers to more than once in a semester, but less frequent than 'weekly' in the original questionnaire

TABLE 9  
Perception towards the role of music in personal and social development  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Music can be used for personal development and improving self-esteem	-	2.1	66.7	31.3
Music can cultivate moral values among children	-	2.1	63.5	34.4
Music is important for complete development of a child	-	13.5	51.0	35.4
Music is a way to develop the child creativity	-	-	50.0	50.0
Music can help children learn language skills	-	2.1	54.2	43.8
Music can help children learn social skills like cooperation and sharing	-	3.1	52.1	44.8
Music can instill spirit of patriotism among children	-	-	54.2	45.8
Music can help children learn art	-	-	65.6	34.4

Mean = 3.37, Standard deviation = 0.36

35.0% explored and 36.5% played musical instruments at the frequency of once a week or more. Although these data are not shown in the table, 40.6% of the children would get to touch while 43.8% others played musical instruments once in every few weeks. This is a situation of instrumental learning, despite the high score of 93.9% who admitted the usage of un-tuned percussion in their classrooms, as presented in Table 4. Utilizing material from the environment marked the highest count for the category ‘never’ in this study, i.e. 27%.

*Teachers’ Perception towards the Role of Music in Preschool Education*

From the findings, the overall perception by the respondents towards the subject of music is positive, with an overall mean of 3.34 (Table 14), where majority supported all the statements listed in the questionnaire. There is, however, a

certain percentage of teachers (ranging from 1 to 17% given in Tables 9-12) who disagreed with some of the roles of music stated. Observations on each section are discussed below.

*Music for Personal and Social Development*

As shown in Table 9, most of the respondents agreed that music is useful in enhancing human skills, like creativity (100%), language (98%), and social skills (96.9%). Unanimous agreements were also achieved for the role of music in instilling patriotism and helping children to learn art. A mean of 3.37 obtained for this section indicated that the respondents generally had a positive perception towards the roles of music in personal and social development. Meanwhile, none of the respondents stated ‘strongly disagree’ for this particular section, 13.5% of them disagreed with the statement that music is important for a

TABLE 10  
Perception towards the role of music in preschool for the development of music skills and knowledge  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Music can be used for the development of vocal responses	-	4.2	69.8	26.0
Music can be used for the recognition of dynamics in music	-	8.3	68.8	22.9
Music can be used for the development of psychomotor responses	-	1.0	61.5	37.5
Music can be used for the development of aesthetic sense	-	2.1	61.5	36.5
Music can be used for improving pitch discrimination and tonal memory	-	9.4	58.3	32.3
Music can be used for the development of affective responses in music	-	4.2	54.2	41.7
Music can be used for the learning of musical concepts	-	5.2	61.5	33.3
Music can be used for the development of meaningful responses to meter in music	-	6.3	59.4	34.4

Mean = 3.28, Standard deviation = 0.38

Implementation of Music in Government Preschools in Malaysia

TABLE 11  
Perception towards the role of music in classroom management  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Music is a good way to change students' mood	-	-	32.3	67.7
Music can be used as a reward when the academics are completed	-	6.3	61.5	32.3
By including music, my class is better adjusted	-	2.1	59.4	38.5
Music helps to release stress in children	-	-	36.5	63.5
Music increases attention span	-	7.3	58.3	34.4
Music assists the child with repeated tasks	-	15.6	58.3	26.0
Music can establish a positive learning environment	-	2.1	56.3	41.7
Music helps to change children's energy level	-	6.3	57.3	36.5

Mean = 3.38, Standard deviation = 0.37

TABLE 12  
Perception towards the role of music in miscellaneous benefits  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Music can be used for demarcation of time as an opening, transition, or ending	-	4.2	53.1	42.7
Music is recreational	-	-	60.4	39.6
Children have a right to learn about music	-	1.0	49.0	50.0
Music should be part of a personal education	-	10.4	67.7	21.9
Music motivates the children to learn about concepts and facts in other subjects	-	11.5	68.8	19.8
Music is fun for children	-	1.0	24.0	75.0
Music is for special occasions like birthdays, holidays, and celebrations	-	17.7	45.8	36.5
Music offers an opportunity to help learning of disabled students	-	5.2	62.5	32.3

Mean = 3.33, Standard deviation = 0.34

complete development of a child. This finding is striking as it contradicts with the widely accepted concept of child development in today's era, whereby music is regarded an effective means to develop all rounded skills of a child.

*Music for Musical Development*

This section consists of questions pertaining to the importance and relevance of promoting musical growth in preschool education. The responses reflect the teachers' awareness and understanding towards various aspects of musical growth. The result tabulated in Table 10 shows a mean of 3.28 for this particular section.

Unlike the other three aspects of perception, there is a consistent disagreement for all the items in this section, although the percentage is small. This could probably be due to the teachers' unfamiliarity towards the conceptual terms in music stated in the questions, as at least 30% had neither specialised in preschool education nor qualifications for instrumental skills. As such, terms that are shared with other

subject areas and hence more common like 'psychomotor response' and 'aesthetic sense' had the least misunderstanding, while other terms such as 'vocal response', 'dynamics', 'affective response', 'musical concept', 'meter', 'pitch discrimination' and 'tonal memory' did not seem to be well-understood by 4 to 9% of the respondents.

*Music for Classroom Management*

Table 11 shows the results obtained for music for classroom management. As stated, the majority of the respondents agreed with the role of music in classroom management, although there were disagreements concerning certain statements. Repeated task, which is essential for musical skills acquisition, was not associated with music by 15.6% of the respondents. Interestingly, the same percentage was obtained for teachers who had never prepared children for performance (see Table 5). This implies that to these respondents, music is yet to be recognised as an activity that requires active participation, as compared to

TABLE 13  
Self-efficacy in music teaching  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)			
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have confidence in my abilities in teaching music	-	30.2	61.5	8.3
I feel comfortable leading music activities	1.0	32.3	52.1	14.6
I feel that I have time to include music in the classroom schedule	1.0	9.4	79.2	10.4
I enjoy music with the children	-	5.2	69.8	25.0
I always enjoy music	2.1	14.6	61.5	21.9
I use various approaches in music instruction in a creative way	1.0	18.8	72.9	7.3
I feel that music in my classroom would not disturb other teachers and students	-	9.4	75.0	15.6
I have confidence to use music equipment to facilitate music activities	2.1	31.3	59.4	7.3

Mean = 2.93, Standard deviation = 0.40

TABLE 14  
Overall mean and distribution of level of all variables  
(N=96)

	Variables		
	Perceptions	Self efficacy	Music activities
Percentage (%)			
High	82.3	31	38.5
Moderate	17.7	66	61.5
Low	-	3.1	-
Mean	3.34	2.93	3.49

Low (1.00-2.33), Moderate (2.34-3.66), High (3.67-5.00)

TABLE 15  
Result for the correlation with implementation of music  
(N=96)

Variables	R	p
Perception towards the role of music in education	.308	.002
Self-efficacy	.309	.002

listening or passive response. In addition, 6.3% disagreed that music could be used as a reward when academic tasks are completed. The same number of respondents was of the opinion that music could not help to change children's energy level.

#### *Music for Miscellaneous Benefits*

As shown in Table 12, 17.7% of the respondents disagreed that music is for celebrating events, while 11.5% disagreed with the role of music in assisting the learning of other subjects. 10.4% excluded music from personal education, which is consistent with 13.5% who found music as not important for child development (Table 9). It is surprising to observe that 5.2% of the respondents did not acknowledge the opportunities that music could offer to help disabled children in learning. The results obtained for items 3 and 4 were of significant contrast, whereby 99% of the teachers affirmed that music learning is part of children's right, but

10.4% did not think music should be a part of their personal development, indicating about 9% contradictory thoughts towards music.

#### *Music Used in Integration with Other Components*

Several items from the questionnaire are related to the integrated approach in music teaching. These items are 'Music can help children learn language skills' (Table 9), 'Music can be used for demarcation of time', 'Music motivates children to learn other subjects', and 'Music is for special occasions' (note that the three statements above are from Table 12). It seems that not all the respondents agreed to the statement that music could be taught in integration with other component, as 2.1 to 17.7% disagreed with the four statements given above. These respondents' disagreement might have affected the teaching approach used as determined by the NPC, i.e. 'teaching one component in integration with other component'.

*Teachers' Self Efficacy in Music Teaching*

Of the responses gathered for the questions pertaining to self efficacy (Table 13), a range of 52.1 to 79.2% indicated their agreement, whereas 7.3 to 25.0% strongly agreed to the statements. There are also considerable percentages of the respondents, i.e. from 5.2 to 31.3% who disagreed with the statement. The 'strongly disagree' response, which is absent in the perception towards the role of music in education, emerges here but it only remains between 1.0 to 2.1 %.

Meanwhile, the respondents felt most confident about enjoying music with children, of which 94.8% agreed to the statement. However, questions pertaining to music teaching skills received responses that indicated a low level of the respondents' confidence, i.e. about 30% of the total number. 30.2% were not confident in teaching music, 32.3% stated that they were not comfortable with leading music activities, and 31.3% lacked skills in using music equipment. On the other hand, 16.7% of the respondents stated that they did not always enjoy music. Hence, it is clear that 30% of the respondents were not competent enough to carry out their duties in music education. These findings reflect the respondents' profile, whereby 30% of them were untrained in preschool education.

Table 14 provides the overall means for the three variables, with each divided into three equal intervals of high, moderate and low. Despite the

fact that 82.3% perceived positively on the role of music in preschool education, only 31% saw themselves as confident and 38.5% conducted musical activities with high frequency. Judged together with the characteristic of respondent's profile, it could be said that some teachers lacked the relevant pedagogical skills to translate their beliefs in musical benefits and values in their teaching. This is also supported by the comparatively low mean score for the teachers' self-efficacy.

The relationships between variables were also tested, and these are shown in Table 15. Based on the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients, both the teachers' perceptions and self-efficacy were found to be correlated with the implementation of music. Hence, the findings gathered for the three variables are useful in evaluating the status of the implementation of music in preschool.

**CONCLUSIONS**

It is important to view the results of each statement in relation to the curriculum as a whole. There are statements where a higher percentage of response recorded at the low or negative end is to be considered as normal in terms of curriculum implementation. For example, the result that indicates 57.3% of the respondents conducted singing for celebration events only 'infrequently' (Table 5) deserves

TABLE 16  
Items of disagreement in teachers' perception  
(N=96)

Items	Percentage (%)
Music is for special occasions like birthdays, holidays and celebrations	17.7
Music assists the child with repeated tasks	15.6
Music is important for complete development of a child	13.5
Music motivates the children to learn about concepts and facts in other subjects	11.5
Music should be part of a personal education	10.4
Music can be used for improving pitch discrimination and tonal memory	9.4
Music can be used for the recognition of dynamics in music	8.3



no special attention from the researcher because celebration events are by nature scarce in the school's yearly calendar. On the other hand, the failure of 27.1% of the respondents to 'utilize any material from environment to produce melody' (Table 8) means that the implementation of that specific item in the curriculum is only moderately effective. Some results, on the other hand, would need serious attention if there were any responses in the negative form. Generally speaking, any percentage of responses in the form of 'never' for the implementation of music activities indicates that that particular component is not effectively conducted or missing in the education at the respective schools.

Due to the comparatively low percentage of the respondents who conducted 'music and movement activities' 'daily', i.e. between 12.5 to 28.1%, the researcher would not regard 'music and movement activities' as being effectively carried out in preschools. In preschool education, it is only natural for music and movement to be conducted daily. Thus, it is inappropriate to conclude that the implementation of 'music and movement activities' in a school as effective if the children were only asked to move their bodies to music once a week, or even lesser. Hence, there is a room for improvement, particularly concerning the teaching of 'music and movement activities' in government preschools, where 'music and movement activities' should be conducted more frequently in order to achieve optimal outcomes of the activities.

In general, the category for 'singing and vocal activities' (Table 5) was actively implemented. Group singing was the most frequently conducted activity in the entire study, with 58.3% of the respondents conducted it daily and 37.5% weekly. The fact that 15.6% of the respondents had never prepared children for formal performance, however, deserves more attention.

As for the category of 'listening activities' (Table 7), 1.0 to 9.4% of the teacher had never conducted listening activities listed in the questionnaire. In fact, the percentage of the respondents who actually conducted listening activities daily was not large, i.e. between 5.2

to 31.3%. Therefore, the implementation of the listening activities could be said as moderately active, at least in terms of the frequency of the activities being conducted.

Meanwhile, it is the results for the category of 'sound exploration and instrumental activities' (Table 8) that demands the most attention as majority of the respondents (between 45.8 to 60.4%) only conducted them 'infrequently', whereas 4.2 to 31.3 % had never conducted these activities. However, the low frequency of practices for this particular category is understandable as 'sound exploration and instrumental activities' is not the central component in the curriculum, while the fact that some teachers have never carried out these activities in their classes needs due attention. In relation to this, it is worth pointing out that music activities in government preschools are highly dependent on audiovisual equipment, while music instrument other than percussion is rarely used both by the teachers and students (Table 4).

As for the teachers' perception, the preschool teachers surveyed in this study generally perceived that music has an important role. It was also found that, although the concept of teaching music in preschool education has not been fully understood by some respondents, a small percentage of them rejected the fundamental statements regarding music and child development. Based on the statements that received unanimous agreement, preschool music teachers were found to relate music to 'creativity', 'patriotism', 'learning of art' (Table 9), 'changing of mood', and 'stress release' (Table 11), as well as 'recreation' (Table 12). On the contrary, the statements that had most of the respondents disagreeing with are listed in Table 16. From this list, it can be said that the understanding of the fundamentals of the early childhood music education has not been fully grasped by some of the respondents.

As for the teachers' self efficacy, although 69.8% of the respondents felt that they were confident with their abilities to teach music, 30.2% of them stated otherwise. Meanwhile, a further investigation on self-efficacy revealed that 33.4% of the respondents did not have the

confidence to use music equipment and 33.3% of them felt uncomfortable leading music activities in their classes. The findings reaffirm the two issues in music education in Malaysia, namely the low perception towards music and music education by the society, and the music teachers' lack of readiness and teaching ability.

Therefore, teacher training is the major area to be worked on in order to change the perception of teachers and to raise their teaching competency. In particular, training in the concept and philosophy of music in the early childhood education is necessary for preschool teachers to conceptualise and comprehend the idea of music in preschool education, as well as the role and connection between each sub-component, namely singing, movement, listening, instrument playing, and sound exploration, among others.

Training in music pedagogy, on the other hand, will equip teachers with the relevant skills to conduct various music activities that are required in preschool music education. Moreover, it is vital to raise the confidence level of the teacher. It is hoped that the shortcomings in implementation can be overcome when the two issues are being dealt with through teacher training courses.

Future research can focus on the process of music making in preschool by applying case study and field observation, and this can be approached from the viewpoint of a student. A study and evaluation on the existing teacher training programme for pre-service preschool teachers in Malaysia should also be conducted. These evaluations may examine the courses needed and the type of courses that are appropriate to improve preschool teachers' preparation and encourage implementation of music teaching in their classroom. A historical study which systematically examines how music activities have developed in preschool in the past until the present would also be very valuable. There is also a need to look into developing suitable music activities to suit the local needs, which will create greater awareness towards the importance of music education in this country.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>At present, national preschools are located as an additional provision of a primary school, a structure which has been developed since 1992.

<sup>2</sup>The number of government preschools increased rapidly throughout the country from the existing number of 1131 preschools in 2001 to more than 2000 preschools in 2004.

<sup>3</sup>Much effort has been invested to provide in-service training for preschool teachers to ensure quality teaching and understanding of the new curriculum prior to the implementation of the 'National Preschool Curriculum'. More than 3000 teachers who were trained in preschool education before this were given 'refresher course' before they were placed in this newly opened government preschools.

<sup>4</sup>The National Preschool Curriculum consists of six components, which are language and communication component; cognitive development component; spiritual and moral education component; socio-emotion development component; physical development component; and, creative and aesthetic component.

<sup>5</sup>This applies to all states in Malaysia, with the exception of the East Malaysia and some areas like Georgetown, where racial composition is different from the other states.

<sup>6</sup>Resolution of the First Malaysia Music Education Conference 2002.

<sup>7</sup>In this study, implementation of music was measured from its frequency of conduct. A five-point Likert scale was used, indicating 1 'never', 2 'once or twice a semester', 3 'once every few weeks', 4 'once or twice a week', 5 'everyday'. A rough interpretation of implementation level was made by dividing the scale into three, i.e. 1-2.34 'low', 2.34-3.66 'moderate', and 3.66-5 'high'.

<sup>8</sup>In analyzing the frequency of conduct for each music activities, the results for Likert scale 2 'once or twice a semester', and 3 'once every few weeks' were grouped into one category under 'infrequently' to make a clear presentation. Hence, there are only four categories in the results reported for the frequency of conduct of music activities, i.e. 'never', 'infrequently', 'weekly' and 'daily'.

<sup>9</sup>The teacher training certificate ceased to be awarded in 1996 and was replaced by the teacher training diploma.

<sup>10</sup>Qualification, here, mainly refers to the graded examination for instrumental skill organized by examination board such as the ABRSM, Trinity, LCM, and so on.

<sup>11</sup>Listening activities that are embedded within the music and movement activities are excluded in Table 7.

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