

Challenges and Opportunities for Preschool Music Appreciation

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Abstract: In recent years, early childhood education has increasingly emphasized the arts, with music recognized as a vital component of holistic development. This study investigates the challenges and opportunities associated with preschool music appreciation, highlighting its significance in fostering children's cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic growth. Music education promotes creativity, enhances attention, and cultivates cultural literacy, contributing to long-term academic and personal development. Despite these benefits, several barriers persist, including a shortage of qualified music educators, limited professional training opportunities, financial constraints, and insufficient instructional resources. These obstacles constrain the variety and effectiveness of musical experiences available to young learners. Drawing on interpretivist perspectives and a synthesis of recent literature, this research examines how teacher beliefs, curriculum design, and resource allocation influence outcomes in preschool music education. Opportunities for innovation are evident through play-based learning strategies, integration of music with language and physical development, and the application of evidence-informed practices. By addressing existing limitations, preschool music appreciation can serve as a transformative foundation, supporting lifelong learning, creative expression, and meaningful cultural engagement.

Keywords: preschool music education; teacher training; play-based learning; cognitive and emotional development; educational policy

1. Introduction

Activities that cultivate a love of music are essential for young children's development, reflecting the increasing emphasis on arts in preschool curricula. Music education supports holistic growth by enhancing cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic abilities. It strengthens attention, listening comprehension, creativity, and aesthetic sensitivity, while also contributing to future academic success, emotional regulation, and cultural literacy. Consequently, music is increasingly recognized as a core subject in early education worldwide.

Nevertheless, practical implementation presents notable challenges. Many early childhood educators lack professional training in music, limiting their ability to design and deliver effective activities. This shortage of expertise reduces opportunities for children to develop musical appreciation. Financial constraints further restrict access to instruments and high-quality resources, making it difficult for preschools to provide diverse and engaging musical experiences [1].

Despite these obstacles, the passion and creativity of music educators can inspire children and enhance the classroom environment. By integrating innovative strategies and emphasizing the emotional and social benefits of music, preschools can nurture musical literacy, strengthen arts education, and lay a strong foundation for lifelong engagement with music.

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2. Methodology

This review adopts an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and context-dependent. Interpretivism is particularly suitable for examining complex phenomena such as preschool music education, as it emphasizes subjective meaning and the role of socio-cultural influences in shaping learning experiences. Within this framework, children and teachers are viewed as active agents who bring their own histories, cultures, and perspectives into the classroom. Such sensitivity allows for the development of pedagogies that foster creativity, cooperation, and emotional expression, while also enabling the investigation of how limited teacher training and resources affect the quality of music appreciation activities [2].

Researcher positionality further informs the analysis. Early exposure to music shaped the researcher's conviction that music fosters emotional, cognitive, and social growth. This perspective may emphasize themes such as teacher training and resource allocation, while reflexivity ensures awareness of potential bias. Recognizing the universal value of music education provides a foundation for balanced interpretation.

For the literature search, databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate were utilized, focusing on peer-reviewed works published between 2015 and 2025. Studies outside preschool contexts or lacking empirical or theoretical grounding were excluded. From an initial pool of 132 articles, six met the inclusion criteria for the final synthesis [3].

3. Broad Review of the Literature

3.1. Introduction

This chapter systematically examines existing scholarship on preschool music education, focusing on the challenges and opportunities identified in six peer-reviewed studies. The primary aim is to synthesize key findings from a variety of geographical and methodological perspectives, thereby providing a solid foundation for subsequent theoretical and practical analyses. Selected articles were rigorously screened through academic databases using inclusion criteria such as relevance to the preschool environment, empirical or theoretical rigor, and alignment with an interpretivist approach. By analyzing these studies, the chapter highlights recurring themes, approaches, and gaps in current research, ultimately constructing a discourse on how music appreciation can be effectively integrated into early childhood education.

The review is structured to provide a concise summary of each article (Section 3.2), followed by structured analyses emphasizing their contributions to understanding teacher preparation, curriculum design, and resource allocation. This synthesis not only contextualizes the complexity of preschool music education but also underscores its multifaceted impact on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development [4]. Through this critical engagement with the literature, the chapter lays the groundwork for proposing actionable strategies in later sections that connect theoretical insights with practical applications in early childhood education.

3.2. Article Summary

3.2.1. Source A

Young children who actively participate in music demonstrate multiple social, cognitive, and scholastic advantages, which extend beyond mere musical skill development. Engaging in music has been shown to enhance executive functions, including attention control, working memory, and task-switching abilities, which are foundational for later academic achievement. Many preschool curricula recognize this and incorporate music-making as a core component, emphasizing its role in holistic child development. This study highlights the importance of providing classroom teachers with high-quality, research-informed resources to design and implement musical activities that are developmentally appropriate.

Best practices for music teaching in preschools were identified through a combination of established pedagogical frameworks, empirical research findings, and key educational standards. Examples include strategies for whole-group activities that foster collaboration and social interaction, choice-time or center-based activities that encourage autonomy and decision-making, and approaches to integrate music with literacy, numeracy, and science concepts. The study also evaluated the alignment of commercially available preschool music curricula with these best practices, revealing nine core practices, including singing, dancing, improvisation, and playing instruments. Orff and Kodály pedagogies served as guiding frameworks for structuring activities [5].

Teachers are encouraged to consider students' individual interests and contributions, such as incorporating songs children enjoy or connecting musical activities to other academic subjects or environmental themes. Music-making not only supports self-regulation, phonological awareness, and language development, but it also reinforces cognitive skills through culturally relevant songs and storytelling. Moreover, participation in music provides children with opportunities for emotional expression, sensory engagement, and creative exploration, enhancing both personal and social development through instrumental and movement-based activities.

3.2.2. Source B

Many countries provide limited or inconsistent training for early childhood educators in music, a factor that has direct implications for children's learning and developmental outcomes. The study emphasizes that the scarcity of music education in preservice and in-service teacher programs leads to lower teacher confidence and limited instructional quality in music classrooms. This gap often results in missed opportunities for children to engage in meaningful musical experiences that foster cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

To address these challenges, the study proposes low-cost, scalable, and sustainable strategies to enhance teacher preparation. These include integrating structured music modules into existing early childhood education programs, pairing student teachers with experienced music specialists, offering observation opportunities in high-quality music classrooms, and providing ongoing mentorship. Such approaches are designed to increase teachers' self-efficacy, competence, and engagement in music instruction. By equipping teachers with knowledge, practical skills, and pedagogical confidence, these interventions aim to create a positive feedback loop in which teachers' enhanced capabilities translate into richer, more impactful musical experiences for children, ultimately supporting overall developmental outcomes [6].

3.2.3. Source C

A study conducted at a Swedish university investigated student teachers' perceptions of themselves as musicians and their anticipated professional roles as preschool educators. Data collected from focus groups and questionnaires revealed that most students had not actively chosen a music-focused career path; rather, their participation was often influenced by program availability, convenience, or institutional requirements. Despite this, students recognized the multifaceted contributions of music to children's learning, including enhancements in language development, mathematical understanding, motor skills, and cultural awareness [7].

The study highlighted the significance of enjoyable musical experiences, noting that positive engagement in music promotes intrinsic motivation for both students and teachers. Practical training, such as hands-on workshops, peer teaching exercises, and supervised classroom practice, was identified as critical for developing the ability to effectively apply musical knowledge in real-world preschool settings. Students reported that such experiences allowed them to integrate music creatively across the curriculum,

enhance classroom management through rhythmic activities, and foster inclusive learning environments that address diverse learner needs.

3.2.4. Source D

This comprehensive review analyzed 39 studies on music education and child development, revealing both the strengths and limitations of existing research. Strengths included multi-year longitudinal studies, diverse participant populations, and examination of varied developmental domains such as cognition, social-emotional skills, and motor coordination. Music education, defined broadly as structured learning guided by a teacher or facilitator, was consistently associated with improvements in children's cognitive abilities, executive function, phonological awareness, social-emotional competence, and visual-motor integration.

Program examples included weekly instrumental group sessions, ukulele instruction, rhythm and movement activities, and specialized curricula implemented across multiple countries, underscoring the global relevance of early music education. The review emphasized that music programs offer not only skill development but also opportunities for social collaboration, creative expression, and cultural learning. Challenges identified included variability in program quality, differences in pedagogical approaches, and the need for more research on long-term developmental impacts and cross-cultural applicability [8].

3.2.5. Source E

Research on introductory-level music education courses revealed three overarching themes: the desire to share and develop passion for music, emotional growth through expressive activities, and creating inclusive learning opportunities for all students. The study underscores that preservice teachers' beliefs, identities, and attitudes toward music are shaped early in their training and can significantly influence their instructional approaches in future classrooms.

Effective music educators are characterized by innovation, adaptability, and the ability to cultivate a positive, creative, and inclusive learning environment. They are able to support students' curiosity, engagement, and potential for discovery, while also encouraging collaborative learning, problem-solving, and reflective thinking. By fostering a supportive environment that values both process and product, teachers can help children develop self-expression, confidence, and an appreciation for the cultural and emotional dimensions of music. The study suggests that teacher preparation programs should prioritize experiential learning, reflective practice, and mentorship to reinforce these qualities in future educators [9].

3.2.6. Source F

This study explored the interactions among children, parents, and teachers in shaping beliefs about creativity, musical engagement, and overall development. Findings indicate that music education supports personal growth, collaborative skills, creativity, and reflective and critical thinking across cognitive, motor, and social-emotional domains. Children participating in structured and informal music activities demonstrated increased attention, memory, problem-solving skills, and social cooperation [10].

The research highlights the pivotal role of teachers in fostering musical creativity, emphasizing their responsibility not only in delivering instruction but also in creating supportive and stimulating environments that integrate music into broader educational objectives. Parents and caregivers were also found to influence children's engagement, reinforcing musical learning outside formal settings. Overall, the study underscores that music education serves as a powerful tool for holistic child development, bridging cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural learning and fostering lifelong appreciation for creative expression.

4. Grounded Theory of Music Appreciation in Early Childhood

This chapter presents the grounded theory of music appreciation in early childhood. Music appreciation serves as a vital medium for emotional expression and understanding, and childhood represents a critical period during which young children can freely express their own emotions while perceiving and empathizing with the feelings of others. Through music, children can convey and experience happiness, sadness, anger, and other emotions, thereby fostering emotional awareness and development.

Appreciating music contributes significantly to cognitive development by promoting neural connectivity and maturation, enhancing concentration, memory, and thinking abilities, and supporting the cultivation of skills such as classification, sorting, and pattern recognition. In terms of emotional and social growth, music appreciation stimulates empathy and emotional expression, fostering emotional literacy. It also positively influences group social skills and teamwork abilities, encouraging collaborative behaviors and group socialization among young learners [11].

Classroom instruction in music appreciation should emphasize participatory and interactive approaches, allowing children to fully experience the unique appeal of music through practical activities. Techniques such as body tapping, consistent with established music pedagogy methods, help deepen children's understanding of music and associated emotional experiences. Role-playing is another effective teaching strategy, enabling children to immerse themselves in diverse musical roles and directly perceive the emotions and expressive qualities of music. These approaches make music appreciation activities more engaging, dynamic, and meaningful for young learners.

5. Challenges and Opportunities for Preschool Music Appreciation

5.1. Introduction

This chapter critically examines the multifaceted landscape of preschool music appreciation education, addressing its challenges, opportunities, and avenues for future development. The analysis begins by identifying key barriers to effective implementation, including shortages of qualified music educators, variations in children's developmental readiness, and systemic resource constraints. The importance of addressing these issues is reinforced by the recognized role of music in fostering creativity, aesthetic sensitivity, and holistic development in early childhood.

Amid these challenges, promising opportunities emerge for revitalizing music appreciation pedagogy. Play-based approaches have demonstrated transformative potential, enabling children to engage with music through interactive play, performance, and collaborative activities tailored to their cognitive and emotional needs. In addition, evidence linking music exposure to physical coordination, language development, and emotional intelligence reinforces the value of integrating developmentally appropriate and scientifically-informed practices [12].

The chapter concludes with actionable recommendations advocating systemic reforms, including enhanced teacher training, policy-driven curricular innovations, and increased investment in resources. By bridging gaps in educator expertise and institutional support, preschool music appreciation can transcend current limitations and fully realize its potential as a cornerstone of early childhood education. Through this dual lens of critique and optimism, the analysis responds directly to the research questions, providing a roadmap for transforming challenges into catalysts for innovation and growth.

5.2. Challenges in Preschool Music Appreciation

A primary challenge in preschool music appreciation is the shortage of professionally trained music educators. Many teachers lack confidence and expertise in music instruction, which limits their ability to meet the diverse developmental needs of children. Variations in children's interests and levels of musical readiness further complicate lesson planning

and necessitate carefully selected music works and adaptive teaching methods. This disparity creates obstacles in delivering high-quality music education experiences and ensuring that children's musical talents are nurtured effectively.

Limited resources and funding present another significant challenge. Financial constraints hinder the procurement of musical instruments, the organization of music activities, and the development of well-equipped music classrooms. These limitations make it difficult to provide children with rich, multi-form musical experiences. The scarcity of resources emphasizes the need for educators to continually develop professional competencies, master pedagogical techniques, and cultivate strong educational literacy in music teaching [13].

Overall, preschool music appreciation education faces multiple interconnected challenges: insufficiently qualified educators, uneven developmental readiness among children, and restricted resources. Addressing these challenges is essential to advancing preschool music education and lays the foundation for exploring opportunities for future growth.

5.3. Opportunities for Enhancing Music Appreciation in Preschool

Play-based approaches offer significant opportunities for enhancing music appreciation in preschool settings. Game-based activities such as song-guessing, music memory, musical solitaire, and performance exercises stimulate children's enthusiasm and engagement. These activities allow children to encounter various musical elements naturally while developing logical memory, reaction abilities, and an understanding of musical emotions. Role-playing in music games enables children to embody characters and experience music more deeply, promoting emotional communication and fostering a love for music.

Scientific organization of music appreciation activities also supports children's physical, linguistic, and cognitive development. Rhythmic activities enhance physical coordination, motor skills, and emotional expression, while singing and rhyming exercises facilitate language acquisition, phonological awareness, and independence. Music activities stimulate sensory, cognitive, and emotional capacities, acting as drivers of holistic development and learning [14].

In summary, play-based teaching and scientifically structured musical experiences create multidimensional opportunities. These approaches enhance children's aesthetic sensitivity, creativity, physical coordination, and cognitive growth, providing a dynamic space for innovation and development within preschool education [15].

5.4. Recommendations for Future Development

Future development of preschool music appreciation should prioritize teacher training and professional development. Music educators are central to implementing effective music programs, and their expertise directly influences the quality of instruction. Establishing systematic training programs and regular professional development opportunities ensures that teachers gain comprehensive knowledge of music forms, styles, and pedagogical strategies. In addition to technical skills, fostering positive beliefs about music education and cultivating a genuine passion for music are essential for effective teaching [16].

Enhancing teaching literacy through observation, case-based learning, and collaborative seminars allows teachers to analyze successes and challenges in practice, refine methods, and innovate pedagogical strategies. Music teaching seminars provide forums for exchanging ideas, addressing common issues, and exploring innovative teaching approaches [17].

Policy and curriculum improvements are also critical. Preschool music education should be integrated into the curriculum as an indispensable component, supported by policies that provide financial assistance for facilities, instruments, and teacher training.

Curricular innovations should align with children's interests, focus on cultivating musical perception, expression, and creativity, and offer experiences that broaden horizons and enrich knowledge.

In facing current challenges-insufficiently trained educators, outdated teaching methods, and limited resources-the future of preschool music appreciation education depends on two key strategies: strengthening teacher training and professional development, and optimizing policy and curriculum systems. By implementing these measures, preschool music appreciation education can overcome existing barriers and unlock its full potential for fostering holistic development and innovation in early childhood education.

6. Conclusion

This research systematically explores the challenges and opportunities associated with preschool music appreciation activities, aiming to provide a theoretical and practical basis for enhancing the quality of early childhood music education. Through comprehensive literature review and theoretical analysis, several core conclusions have been identified.

Regarding the primary challenges, the first is insufficient professional literacy among teachers. Many early childhood educators lack systematic music training and teaching confidence, which limits their ability to design and implement effective music activities. The second challenge is the shortage of resources and funding. Kindergartens often face financial constraints in acquiring musical instruments, teaching facilities, and organizing activities, restricting the diversity and innovation of music experiences. Thirdly, teaching methods lack sufficient adaptability. Variations in children's interest and understanding of music at different developmental stages necessitate targeted adjustments in content and instructional approaches.

In terms of key opportunities, game-based teaching emerges as a significant avenue. Activities such as music guessing and role-playing effectively stimulate children's engagement, promote emotional expression, and foster creative development. Cross-disciplinary integration, combining music with language, physical activities, and other domains, enhances cognitive abilities, physical coordination, and social cooperation awareness. Additionally, scientifically-informed curriculum design, such as rhythm-based exercises aligned with children's physical and mental development, improves sensory experience and supports comprehensive learning.

This study emphasizes the importance of strengthening teacher training by establishing systematic pre-service and in-service training programs to improve educators' musical literacy and instructional competence. Encouraging case-based learning and teaching discussions, optimizing policy support to embed music education in the core preschool curriculum, and providing financial support to enhance facilities are crucial steps. Collaboration between kindergartens and higher education institutions can cultivate professional teachers, foster innovative curriculum models, and develop content aligned with children's interests, integrating multicultural elements and modern technology. Building an integrated music education framework encompassing perception, expression, and creation will maximize the developmental benefits of music.

Music serves not only as a tool for artistic expression but also as a critical medium for children's holistic development. By addressing existing challenges and capitalizing on available opportunities, preschool music education can lay a strong foundation for emotional growth, cognitive enhancement, and social adaptation. Future practice should focus on professionalizing educators and scientifically structuring curricula, while continuing to explore the diversified value of music education, providing guidance for global reforms in early childhood education.

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