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A Documentary Analysis on Kindergarten Music Education in Hong Kong

Ho Yan Lam

The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

Alfredo Bautista

The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

Abstract

In Hong Kong, all kindergartens under the Kindergarten Education Scheme are subject to the Quality Review (QR) assessment. Starting from 2018-19 academic year, the QR reports are published on the Education Bureau (EDB) website. Results in the QR assessment determine whether kindergartens can obtain Government subsidies. Many parents use the QR reports to select a kindergarten for their children. Music is a subdomain of the learning area “Arts and Creativity” in the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (KECG), hence it is included in the QR assessment. Specifically, the QR assesses the quality of music lessons according to the KECG objectives and Performance Indicators, which focus on the development of sensory abilities, self-expression, creativity, active exploration, and hands-on art experiences.

This research aimed to analyse the types of music activities described in the QR reports. This topic is relevant given the limited research on music education practices in Hong Kong kindergartens. Analyzing these reports is significant because teachers and principals knew the assessment dates in advance, hence they had put the greatest effort into preparation. Accordingly, these reports demonstrate the best examples of teachers’ classroom practice in music. This exploratory study conducted a summative documentary content analysis of 163 QR reports written in English from 2018 to 2020. MAXQDA was used to conduct quantitative analyses of key terms, word cloud and word tree to visualize word frequencies and interrelationships, and coding according to coding schemes. Inter-reliability was calculated with a second coder, 0.95 as measured by Cohen’s (κ) kappa.

Findings revealed that: Music was mentioned in most reports (99%). Singing (42% of the reports), rhythmic movements (25%), and musical instruments (17%) were the terms most frequently emerged in the reports. Consistently, content analysis showed that the most common music activities were singing, movement, and instrumental music, while rhythm and beat was the most common musical element. In contrast, activities related to self-expression, musical creativity, dancing, and other sound producers were rarely identified. Findings suggested the existence of discrepancies between curriculum proposals and practice. Teachers fell short of implementing music activities that can achieve the KECG’s key objectives, particularly on stimulating children’s creativity and self-expression. This study has implications for kindergarten teacher education and professional development. Future research can investigate teachers’ needs and preferences of music PD programmes, and ultimately help bridge the existing gaps.