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Views of Music Teachers on Psycho-Motor Activities

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Abstract

The current study investigated the practices available to develop psycho-motor skills within the context of 8th grade music courses offered at the secondary school level in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC). The central research question focused on exploring how effectively psycho-motor skills-based activities were conducted in 8th grade music classrooms to meet the goals set by the music curriculum, and included three subquestions: (a) What psycho-motor activities are applied in 8th grade music lessons?, (b) What are music teachers' views of the psycho-motor activities applied in 8th grade music lessons?, and (c) What difficulties are experienced by music teachers regarding the application of psycho-motor activities in music lessons? The research examined music teachers' views regarding activities used to develop psycho-motor skills to answer these three subquestions. Qualitative data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 music teachers, and data were analyzed through content analysis. Findings revealed that activities for developing psycho-motor skills were designed and used randomly based on music teachers' preferences and hence were not applied at a required level in an efficient way. Participants indicated that these problems were due to a lack of instructional materials and instruments, lack of appropriate music classrooms, lack of supervision and in-service training, and the negative attitude of both families and students towards music lessons. Based on the findings curriculum revisions and suggestions regarding how to develop psycho-motor skills through musical activities are proposed, and the importance of producing a realistic curriculum is emphasized.

Keywords: Music education, Psycho-motor skills, Body percussion, Playing instruments, Singing.

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As a discipline music education takes a holistic approach to targeting behaviours that are also acquired through separate cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor approaches. As Şendurur and Barış (2002) suggest, in addition to influencing deviant and affective behaviors positively, music education plays a primary role in cognitive learning and thus the approach is holistic-music includes cognitive, emotional, and psycho-motor behaviours.

Psycho-motor development focuses on building skills relevant to manual tasks and physical movement, such as renditions in arts and music in particular (Rovai et al., 2009). Psycho-motor skills are noticeable in practical activities such as sports (Romiszowski, 1999) or in musical activities. The psycho-motor domain includes all behaviours that require the joint use of mind and muscles while psycho-motor skills specifically refer to learnt behaviors based on movement (e.g., walking, running, writing, playing the guitar). Having psycho-motor skills helps sustain behaviors learned through music teaching for a longer period of time, but, at the same time, developing good psycho-motor skills is also foundational for acquiring the target skills taught in music education. In this context any activity that improves psycho-motor skills becomes important for achieving this goal (Schwebel, 1973; Yıldız & Bayram, 2006).

There are many psycho-motor skills in music education, such as playing instruments, singing, keeping time, creative dance, and body percussion. These skills are developed through psycho-motor activities, which also impart knowledge, reinforce the learning taking place, and promote active learning. As well as facilitating permanent learning, these activities are important for developing students' self-confidence and socialization skills, promoting creativity, imparting a sense of collectivity, and sharing emotions (Turkish Ministry of National Education, 2013). In this context, we can say that music has diverse functions to develop different skills. For example, individuals who participate in music activities become more social, make friendships, and develop social networks (Blacking, 1995). Music inspires creativity and increases self-confidence by, for example, opening the door to developing new ideas based on music knowledge (Stavrou, 2012). In fact, the skills that develop through music create reciprocal relationships such that developing one facilitates the development of another, which, in turn, further reinforces the skill learned previously-like the relationship between self-confidence and creativity (Stavrou, 2012).

Music teachers play a pivotal role in making music education responsive to individual expectations and goals, and. In this context, music teachers expect music teaching programmes and classroom environments to meet the needs of the existing student profile (Yıldız, 2002) and, in the process of acquiring certain musical behaviors, for individuals to play with music, have fun with music, experience relaxation with music, and interact with the musical environment. For these goals to be realized a productive learning environment that involves active learning and contemporary teaching methods should be created to enable individuals to use body language, improvise, be creative, and develop self-confidence (Çevik, 2007). To this end both music teachers and students have developed their own methods for developing psycho-motor skills, in addition to current standard music teaching methods (Karacan, 2014). The resulting multitude of music teaching methods and the foundational nature of psycho-motor skills point to the importance of evaluating and ensuring the standards and success of music teaching methods and activities.

Music is learned by playing instruments, singing and listening, in short, by doing and living. It is not expected for music lessons that only convey theoretical information to be adequate. Rather, teaching music by directing students' attention to the process of making and creating music bears more successful results. At the same time, music teachers should impart their musical knowledge to students through words, play, movement and listening, as well as by encouraging them to create and make use of acquired knowledge (Özeke, 2010).

The content of music education should be prepared in accordance with individuals' goals and expectations, which should be determined by taking individual developmental characteristics into account. When we examine the importance of psycho-motor activity in music teaching, we see that it has not been

implemented adequately in music education programmes. For example, Gürgen (2009) reported that the lack of psycho-motor activities in lessons is one negative factor affecting music education. In the study by Köroğlu (2013), music teachers expressed that the programme was lacking in terms of musical concepts and subjects and that the subjects were not prepared in accordance with the students' level. In the same study, teachers stated that they found the activities designed to improve psycho-motor skills to be adequate and effective but that the activities failed to be sufficiently productive due to the short duration of the course (Köroğlu, 2013). In another study related to the same topic, it was reported that the music instruction programme did not meet students' needs and expectations and that the music lesson only partly contributed to students' cognitive-affective and psycho-motor development (Sağlam, 2004).

Considering that especially Grade 8 students are in adolescence; in this period, it can be said that it is difficult for a practical lesson like music lesson to be realized in full. It is possible to say that it is difficult to do some activities and make music lessons into an active lesson (Köroğlu, 2013). Some activities appear to be hilarious or unnecessary, which also creates difficulties during implementation. In this respect, the aim is to teach students the skills to be taught in different ways. The fact that music lessons are interesting and productive also causes teachers to experience problems sometimes. In this respect, the efficiency of the music lessons applied in this period, the activities and skills used, the problems experienced and the solutions offered to these problems are important.

The current study considered the process of the music programme to evaluate the degree to which it facilitates the development of psycho-motor skills. More specifically, the programme of 8th grade music lessons in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) was examined to determine steps being taken to develop psycho-motor skills within the programme. The Music Teaching Programme for classes 1-8 in the TRNC, which came into force in 2016, has defined its aims as:

To enable students to develop an interest in music, to make use of basic musical knowledge, to enjoy musical events, to make use of technology in different areas of music, to develop musically, to express oneself by using musical creativity, to recognize local and universal music cultures and to form an understanding of aesthetics.

Although, psycho-motor skills and activities are not explicitly stated within the objectives of the music teaching programme, students' enjoyment of music, their musical development, and their ability to express themselves in musical creativity should provide a basis for developing psycho-motor skills.

Since psycho-motor skills constitute an important part of musical and individual development, the central research question focused on exploring how effectively psycho-motor skills-based activities are conducted in 8th grade classrooms to meet the goals set by the TRNC Ministry of National Education. To answer this question the research examines music teachers' views regarding psycho-motor skills activities to answer three subquestions: 1) What psycho-motor activities are applied in 8th grade music lessons?, 2) What are music teachers' views of the psycho-motor activities used in 8th grade music lessons?, and 3) What difficulties are experienced by music teachers regarding the application of psycho-motor activities in music lessons?

Methods

This qualitative study used content analysis to analyze text, which may include interview transcripts, diaries, or documents (Patton, 2002). Qualitative content analysis was used in the study cause as it is an "a research method for the subjectivist interpretation of text and data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes" (Shannon, 2005, p.12). Textual data for the current study was generated via semi-structured interviews. The analysis was guided by the research questions such that data were first coded, and subsequently organized into categories and then themes.

Participants

The research involved music teachers employed in secondary schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. The sample included 15 music teachers working in 11 secondary schools in the Gazi Mağusa and Iskele districts of the TRNC. These music teachers were selected based on convenience sampling and because they represent teachers working in both state and private schools. There were 12 female and 3 male music teachers aged 27 to 50 years old. Participants ranged in teaching experience from 3 to 26 years. All participants were Turkish-Cypriot and spoke Turkish. Ten music teachers graduated from Music Teacher Education Departments at universities in Turkey, four music teachers graduated from Music Teacher Education Departments at universities in North Cyprus, and one music teacher graduated from a Music Department at a university in North Cyprus. Classrooms where the research was conducted ranged from 15 to 40 students, and the duration of music lessons was 40 minutes. Except for in two public schools, music lessons were conducted in music rooms. Major facilities and common tools of these music rooms included a piano, whiteboard, some percussion instruments, and informative panels.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore music teachers' views regarding psycho-motor skills activities in 8th grade music lessons. The interview protocol was prepared in consultation with two experts in curriculum and programme development, and one expert in music education (see Appendix A for the interview protocol). The protocol included 10 central questions designed to ensure that participants' responses were on-topic and clear. Before the interviews, the meaning of 'psycho-motor' was explained to the music teachers (i.e., "all educational/instructional and reinforcement skills performed using our bodies"). Furthermore, interviews were conducted in informal settings to help establish rapport and put participants at ease so that they would be relaxed and more likely to provide honest answers that reflected their true feelings.

Prior to starting the research ethical approval was obtained from the Ministry of National Education in the TRNC. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to each interview, which lasted between eight and 30 minutes and was audio-recorded. All interviews were conducted in Turkish (although specific quotes have been translated to English by a Turkish-Cypriot English-language teacher for this article). The audio-recorded interviews were then transcribed.

Data Analysis

Interviews with music teachers were first transcribed and then analyzed by the research team, which included the researcher and the experts in music education and programme development. The research team worked both independently and collaboratively during the process of coding the interview responses. During analysis, participant responses were grouped by question and each set of responses was reviewed. Members of the research team read the transcripts separately and noted key words in the margins. After all research team members read the transcripts they came together to compare their notes regarding each interview question and similar points were noted.

Including multiple members in the research team, as well as including experts in topic areas relevant to the research project (i.e., music education and programme development), contributed to the study credibility and reliability (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The reliability of the research findings was further bolstered by 95% inter-coder reliability for each interview question. The codes determined by the research team were collated and main themes for each interview question were established.

Results

Psycho-motor Activities Applied in 8th Grade Music Lessons

Three themes regarding category one (i.e., psycho-motor activities applied by music teachers) were identified. Three themes are presented as: Activities that build psycho-motor skills, activities/events believed to be psycho-motor, cognitive and psycho-motor activities used jointly. The first theme, *activities that build psycho-motor skills*, specified the most frequently used activities as singing, playing instruments, rhythm exercises, body percussion, and drama activities. For example, while addressing singing activities one music teacher (MT) stated:

To have more singing exercises, but these songs are no longer children's songs. They do not want to sing songs or march songs. They prefer to sing popular songs. So, I would like to teach more music appreciation and listening skills... I am trying to lean more towards what they are used to listening to and what they enjoy listening to. Because they won't get much pleasure from the music I prefer. So, I use a method of "something from you, something from me" (MT 3).

In this quote MT 3 commented on how music teachers choose music that students would like to sing and listen to in order to capture students' attention, and at the same time emphasizes the importance of cultivating listening skills and an appreciation for different types of music that lie beyond students' current interests.

Another music teacher expressed the following view about playing instruments in class as part of group and rhythm studies while addressing student preferences for listening and singing:

For example, by dividing the class into two and getting one group to sing and the other to play instruments, I try to make it enjoyable. I try also to accompany this with body percussion, with Orff instruments and by doing this, at least trying to, create rhythm harmony (MT 10).

In this quote MT 10 emphasized the utility of applying rhythm exercises in class.

The second theme, *activities/events believed to be psycho-motor*, included playing songs, piano accompaniment, and identifying songs and instruments. With respect to activities believed to be psycho-motor such as listening to songs, piano accompaniment and song/instrument identification, one teacher stated "I use the listening method as an alternative...if I can't get them to sing, and they are misbehaving, then I get them to listen" (MT 15) while a second said:

If I can't get them to do a thing, I definitely get them to at least sing. And let me stress that it would be with accompanying piano music. We have an electronic piano. The song that they would sing in any case, I try to get them to sing it to the accompaniment of piano music (MT 2).

MT 15 emphasized how listening activities can function as a means of providing class discipline, and, as MT 2 stated, using piano accompaniment can function as a means of incorporating all students into the lesson while the rest of the class is singing.

A third theme of *cognitive and psycho-motor activities used jointly* was also identified and included both rhythm reading and solmization. The music teachers often pointed out that they used rhythm reading and solmization methods together in their lessons. For instance, one teacher stated "First we form the rhythm of the piece then I sing it in the Solmization manner with the aim of getting the children's ears to form familiarity with the piece" (MT 3). Here, MT 3 emphasizes how these activities function together rather than independently to achieve the desired learning outcome.

Music Teachers' Views Regarding Psycho-motor Activities Used in Music Lessons

Category two (i.e., music teachers' views regarding 8th grade psycho-motor activities) included generally positive views of these activities in that they were believed to contribute to affective and cognitive areas of development. Two themes are presented as: Views regarding contribution to the affective area, views

regarding contribution to the cognitive domain. The first theme was *views regarding contribution to the affective area*. This theme captured how music teachers believed psycho-motor activities helped establish a sense of togetherness, were fun, helped students relax, and made students like the lesson more. Below is a typical teacher view that psycho-motor activities helped bring students together by encouraging the sharing of responsibilities and by giving students the feeling of doing something together:

If there's someone in class who plays an instrument, we take someone else that plays an instrument and we kind of develop something along with what they are playing and we look at it in class, to see how it is, how we play in harmony together. Teachers can attract more children into the classroom by creating many different things, and creating the feeling of being able to do this together...the ability to move together, to touch, to feel, to feel the music, to direct each other and listen to each other (MT 3).

In this quote MT 3 stressed the importance of collaborating in music lessons.

The music teachers said that the psycho-motor activities they used in class were mostly to enable students to relax and make lessons more enjoyable:

Firstly, having such an intensive programme, or in the case of students thinking that they have a really intensive programme, the student should be able to relax in my lesson, should leave the lesson happy and laughing, should leave without having been bored. My aim is this: the child should firstly enjoy himself in class, should relax and then should gain whatever he has to gain from it. Because, in any case, if he's laughing and enjoying himself, he will gain what you want him to gain anyway (MT 5).

According to MT 5, the purpose of the music lesson is to learn something by having fun and it is important for the students to relax through the lesson.

Music teachers included psycho-motor activities in music lessons to foster positive feelings in the students regarding the lesson. The following teacher comments support this idea. One teacher said "To get them like the lesson, get them to enjoy themselves, to learn something...On that day I try to get the children to like me, to like my lesson and to like music" (MT 11), while another stated that "My aim of course is to get them to like music, and to at least learn musical notes. To consolidate, to teach, to get them to like it...and so on" (MT 9).

The second theme was *views regarding contribution to the cognitive domain*. This theme illustrated how teachers viewed psycho-motor activities as being instructive, attracting students' interest, playing a consolidating role, and leading to permanence in learning. For instance, one music teacher stated:

The topics we are looking at, it helps them to remember it. I mean, it consolidates and becomes stronger. They don't need to write it down. I don't like to make them write down a lot of the things. When I get them to apply it, visuals are used in all areas, body language, mood, and when everything is combined, the child will not forget that topic. And there are children in class who do not speak Turkish but despite this, their grades are 8-9. I mean, they have practised it, they have understood it, they've understood from facial expressions, from movements, they've understood what was being expressed there and even though they don't know Turkish, they're able to understand the question being asked and so they are able to come up with the answer (MT 1).

MT 1 emphasized the importance of music courses to be application-oriented and underlined that learning by doing is an effective means of making learning permanent.

Difficulties Experienced by Music Teachers Regarding the Application of Psycho-motor Activities in Music Lessons

Music teachers addressed difficulties related to applying psycho-motor activities in music lessons in four themes: *problems arising from students*, *problems arising from physical infrastructure*, *problems arising from the programme*, and *problems arising from the education system*. For the first theme, *problems arising*

from students, music teachers specified issues such as students' musical backgrounds, their attitudes towards the lesson, a lack of motivation, and the students being in adolescence. The following is an example of a music teacher's view of how students' musical backgrounds are inadequate:

It could be a student from outside the school. It could be a student that you haven't dealt with since grade 1 who is now coming from a different school and his level is now different, so he can't adapt easily for example. So, he forms a kind of defence mechanism...That is, instead of catching up with what he's missed, he becomes defensive (MT 7).

Moreover, another obstacle was that many students, as well as their parents, did not see the importance and value of music lessons. One such view, which relates to student attitudes towards the lesson, is that "The kids don't give importance to music lessons either... Families don't and neither do students. They see music lessons as time wasted" (MT 9).

Another problem arising from students was a general lack of motivation regarding music lessons amongst 8th grade students. The following quote highlights the motivation problem facing music teachers: "And another thing, the students don't see this lesson as important. It's once a week; let's go and sing and then get out is mostly the attitude. I mean, that's how they come to class, there's no motivation at all" (MT 9). Moreover, many music teachers indicated that the students being adolescents caused problems. The following quote supports this view:

As I said, I especially can't get them to do anything involving use of their bodies. They find it comical. The only thing the students are concerned about at that age are their looks, their hair, and so on...As these kids are undergoing puberty, I have to be especially careful about the movements I choose, to be honest...We can't go much further than clapping and stamping our feet (MT 15).

In this teacher's opinion the students' developmental characteristics had negative effects on the music lesson.

A lack of materials, inadequate class environments and crowded classes were pooled in the theme of *problems arising from physical infrastructure*. The interviewed music teachers regarded the lack of materials as an important issue. One music teacher stated "We experience problems regarding lack of materials. Because there aren't enough instruments and rhythm instruments for the whole class. That's why I prefer to divide them into groups where they can take turns either singing or playing instruments" (MT 9).

As for the theme of *problems arising from the training programme*, teachers emphasized issues such as the brevity of lessons, the intensity of curriculum content, and the inclusion of activities and songs in the curriculum inappropriate for 8th grade students' developmental level. The fact that music lessons were just one lesson per week was the most important issue preventing all music teachers interviewed from achieving the full potential of their lessons:

You take the class once a week and it's 40 minutes long. So you have to follow the Ministry of Education's curriculum, and you also have to put it into practice ... I mean 5 minutes is already over with calling out the register and so on, and you are left with a solid 30 minutes to actually get something done. If it had been two lessons per week, you could more comfortably do psycho-motor activities, you could cover all the topics and have lessons that were solid (MT 7).

Some of the music teachers interviewed talked about the fourth theme: *problems arising from the education system*. Here, music teachers attributed problems to the lack of regular supervision and the lack of importance of music lessons in the education system. One teacher attributed the lack of a regular supervisor to there not being any supervisors available in the relevant field. The following quote illustrates the challenges that music teachers faced because of the lack of inspectors:

And there aren't any inspectors from the Ministry. Nobody to come and take a look, to oversee things. I mean, am I actually giving this lesson or am I not? I could be doing whatever I want in class...nobody knows. And the management at the school, they don't care about that. In short, if there isn't an inspector to oversee things, all the teachers can conduct their lessons however they want and even, not have a lesson at all (MT 4).

In addition, many of the teachers agreed that the importance given to music lessons in the education system was inadequate, as illustrated by the following quote:

With so many teachers out there, would it not be nice...if there were people who were keen? But we, music teachers, and music lessons are looked down upon...nobody takes an interest. Every year, we write what we would like to have, but the school management doesn't take an interest and neither does the Ministry. We don't have any materials, not enough hours...what can I do on my own? How much more of this? You give up and you adapt to this bad system, whether you like it or not (MT 4).

Discussion

Music teachers have identified psycho-motor activities in their lessons as using popular songs in singing activities, creating musical instruments, conducting instrument playing sessions, and trying to apply psycho-motor-enhancing activities through observation and by organizing students for body percussion or rhythm studies. In all these activities, especially the selection of songs, the tendency of teachers to consider the update factor, the developmental characteristics and needs of the students, is multiplied. This issue becomes even more important when the 8th grade developmental characteristics of the students are taken into account. Students in the 13-14 age group have different behaviors when compared to other ages in adolescence, and they bring situations with different needs.

Music teachers who indicated using psycho-motor activities in their lessons also stated that they found these activities useful in multiple areas. For instance, collaborative work, as a form of psycho-motor activity, developed students' cognition, mental capacity, and facilitated a positive affective experience vis-à-vis the lesson as well as with other students. In particular, teachers' views regarding the impact of collaboration on the affective domain (i.e., as specified in the first theme) included relaxing with music and increasing student interest in music. Effects on the cognitive domain (i.e., as specified in the second theme) was another important outcome music teachers emphasized, which was to teach music theory in an applied way that encourages permanent learning through learning from practice. To sum up, in today's teaching methods, the learning from practice approach is frequently applied by music teachers. It is observed that the learning from practice approach gives positive results, especially in the field of music, which is highly practicable. On the other hand, music lessons in North Cyprus are only 40 minutes per week, which can be a reason pushing music teachers to teach the subjects in a more practical way.

When we evaluate the problems that music teachers face when performing psycho-motor activities, we see problems related with music education policy and problems arising from the attitudes of parents and students. Inadequacy of music lesson hours, inadequately equipped music classrooms, and incompatibilities in music curriculum are the prior topics of music education policy. The lack of music classes, or inadequately equipped music classrooms, affected classroom management and accordingly the performance of psycho-motor activities, besides affecting student behaviors. Students who cannot move easily in class, cannot reach the instrument, and cannot access the facilities provided by the technology, may be lacking in motivation. Teachers did not regard 40 minutes per week as sufficient time for music education, emphasizing that most topics, activities, and content could not be covered in that time. Additionally, the fact that the content of the curriculum is intense affects course efficiency, and the music teachers emphasized that they must catch up with subjects in the curriculum during the course. Also, the fact that the subjects and activities in the curriculum were not appropriate for 8th grade students was also

pointed out by many music teachers. The teachers stated that curricular activities were at a lower level than the developmental level of the 8th grade students, and that the songs were for children. This situation led to the students finding the activities childish, comical, and unnecessary. These results highlight how the music curriculum should be questioned, regulated, and restructured.

Negative attitudes of parents and students to music lessons can be shown as factors in the devaluation of music lesson. Students challenging behavior is a general stressor that identified in Wong, Chik and Chan's (2018) study, and this stressor also effects the classroom management negatively. Music teachers stated that students challenging behaviors depended on different factors such as immigrant students and puberty problems. Changing student profiles and behaviors develops the ability to solve problems by generating strategies such as changing activities for each class to be implemented; this qualification developed by the teachers is a feature that expands with experience.

Overall these findings bring up the question of restructuring the current policy for providing music education, especially in terms of establishing suitable teaching environments as well as appropriate methods and techniques. Considering the importance of psycho-motor skills activities in music education, the degree to which they can be implemented and integrated into lessons must be reconsidered and reorganized.

Finally, we see that inconsistencies prevail between the reality of the curriculum currently in existence and the reality of the classroom environment. This situation once again highlights the importance of taking a range of factors into account while formulating the curriculum as well as when preparing both textbooks and the teaching environment. At the same time, teachers should have the opportunity to use their initiative to organize the curriculum, determine the environment, and establish the resources to be utilized based on their observations of learning environment characteristics.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Which teaching methods and techniques do you use for teaching 8th grade music lessons?
2. What do you think about using activities to improve psycho-motor skills in music lessons?
3. Do you include activities that build psycho-motor skills in your lessons?
4. How often do you include these activities?
5. Would you briefly mention the activities that you have included in your lessons to build psycho-motor skills?
6. What goals have you set when performing such activities?
7. What difficulties do you face when practicing these activities with students who are in the 8th grade?
8. What kinds of solutions have you created for the challenges you face?
9. Do you produce alternative activities instead of using activities that may be included in the curriculum or music books, but are not suitable for the class or students? Can you briefly explain these alternative activities?
10. Could you describe any of these alternative activities in detail?