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Evaluation of the teachers' views on the rhythm practices in musical activities in preschool institutions

Ali Öztürk^a *

^a*Asst. Prof. Dr., Anadolu University, Eskisehir 26470, Turkey*

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Abstract

This study aims at evaluation of the primary school teachers' opinions related rhythm practice in music education at pre-school period in Turkey. For this purpose, 79 teachers were participated to the present study and the data were gathered through using a questionnaire which has two sections. The first part of the data gathering instrument inquires the demographic information about the participants whereas the second part inquires the opinions of the teacher related to the rhythm studies in the classroom. The gathered data were analyzed through SPSS 16.0 software program and the findings were interpreted under the light of the statistical examinations. The findings of the present study revealed that most of the participants were not qualified enough to teach and develop rhythm activities in music education during the preschool period.

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1. Introduction

If parents do not have any special interests, the music education in Turkey usually starts in the pre-school education institutions. Music education in pre-school education institutions is given as the "activities" suggested by The Ministry of National Education for the "pre-school education programs". It is thought that the music activities in this program will be helpful for multilateral development of the child when they are held consistent with the aims of the program. To achieve this, the components that form the music education in the pre-school education including rhythm, musical audition and voice education should be known by pre-school teachers.

One of the most important components that form the music education is rhythm. However, this does not mean that rhythm is an element that can only be met in music. Although we are not aware, rhythm exists in every moment of the life. All the motions that provide the continuity of the life such as heart beating, breathing- which are called body rhythm (bio-rhythm) - have rhythms as well. Beside these, we can see the marks of rhythm in all the activities we do such as walking, running, speaking, eating or in all the natural phenomena around us, such as the blowing of the wind, tide, summer or winter.

* Ali Öztürk. Tel.: +90-0222-335-0580; fax: +90-0222-335-0579.

E-mail address: alio@anadolu.edu.tr.

The rhythm is a sine qua non component of music when it is used as a term. Rhythm education that is the core of musical audition should be taught in tune with the voice and musical instrument education. For a child to sing a song easily or to play it, especially rhythm education and auditory education cannot be thought separately (Sun and Seyrek, 1993). However the priority should be given to the rhythm education. Music could be produced solely with the rhythms without the voices in music (do, re, mi ...) but it is impossible to make music with the voices that are not turned into rhythmical forms. Concerning this fact it could be claimed that, musical audition, singing a song or playing a musical instrument cannot be achieved properly without rhythm education.

Rhythm studies can be carried out by various ways such as by beating the different parts of the body, by using melodic instruments (flute, accordion, piano, stringed instruments etc.) by playing percussion instruments (xylophone, glockenspiel, cymbals, buss drum, side drum, tambourine, etc.) by using the other tools that give voice (a table, a desk, metal tops of the bottles, nut shells, tins, drumsticks etc.) and by recorded tools for listening to music (record, cassette, CD, etc). Among these instruments, percussion instruments which are also known as “Orff instruments” are the most convenient and the most common ones for the rhythm studies.

The person who introduces these instruments and their principles in education is the teacher. The teacher is probably the most important factor for the music education of a child because s/he is a person who provides the above mentioned advantages of rhythm education to the children. However, the effect of rhythm education on the child's development is restricted with the teacher's knowledge and his/her ability on the rhythm.

When the advantages of rhythm education for a child is considered, it is inevitable that pre-school teachers should have enough knowledge and ability, generally on music, and especially on rhythm education. The educational attainment of rhythm education can be listed as follows;

- Provides an attention in the harmony of speech and music (prosody)
- The child adapts himself/herself easily to the fast-slow warnings in speech and music
- Provides the development of musical audition.
- Provides the repetition of the rhythm s/he heard.
- Increases the attention.
- Strengths the listening and perception capacity.
- Teaches to monitor himself /herself (being active not whenever s/he wants, but when necessary),
- Provides co-ordination among the body parts,
- Increases the pleasure of doing something,
- Provides the habit of working together harmoniously,
- Reinforces the feeling of confidence,
- Provides entertainment,
- Helps the development of children's accents.

2. The Aim of the Study

General aim of this study is to evaluate the opinions of teachers, who work in pre-school education institutes, on rhythm studies. To this aim, the following research questions were posed;

- Do the teachers think that they avoid doing rhythm studies,
- Do the teachers think that rhythm studies mean the waste of time while teaching songs,
- Do the teachers think that they use the bodies for rhythm studies,
- Do the teachers think that they can enrich the rhythms they heard by improvisation,
- Do the teachers think that they can change the speed of their speeches according to the content
- Is there any relation between the school they graduated from and their opinions on rhythm?
- Is there any relation between their experience in teaching and their opinions on rhythm?
- Is there any relation between the music studies they have participated before and their opinions on rhythm?

3. Method

3.1. The method of the study

The present study aims to reveal the existing case. To this aim, a descriptive methodology is considered as an appropriate research design.

3.2. Sampling

The participants of the present study were 79 pre-school teachers, who participated in the in service training program on Drama in Rize between 1 and 6 July 2001. All of the participants were also the participants of the in-service training program therefore no other sampling model was regarded. The demographic information about the participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic Data about the Participants (N = 79)

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Female	79	100
Male	0	0
The Last School They Graduated From		
Vocational High School (child's development department)	50	62.6
University (Education faculties)	29	37.4
The number of years in service in pre-school education institutes		
1 – 5	37	46,3
6 –10	17	21,3
11 – 15	11	13,8
16 – 20	14	17,5
The number of studies about pre-school music activities that the respondents participated in		
Never	64	80
Once	11	13,8
Twice	3	3,8
Three times	1	1,3

As it can be seen in Table 1, all of the participants were female. 62.6 % of the participants graduated from the child's development departments of vocational high schools whereas 37.4 % of them graduated from the education faculties of the universities. When their working periods in pre-school education institutes were examined, it was revealed that the percentage of those who has worked between 1-5 years was 46.3 %, between 6- 10 years was 21.3 %, between 11-15years was 13.8 % and the percentage of those who has worked between 16-20 years was 17%. 80% of the participants had never participated in any study related with the pre-school music education 13.8% of them had participated once, 3.8% of them had participated twice and 1.3 % of them had participated three times in the education programs related with the pre-school music activities before.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

When the related literature was reviewed it is observed that there was not any specific data collection instrument which serves solely for this purpose. Thus, a data collection instrument –questionnaire- was developed by the researcher. In order to provide the internal validity of the questionnaire, the opinions of the experts were asked and the questionnaire was reorganised according to their suggestions. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, the reliability of each item was examined and the reliability of the instrument was determined as reliable .85 (CROMBACH's Alpha= .85).

The questionnaire consists of two sections. In the first part, four questions were asked in order to get personal information. In the second part, six questions were asked in order to determine the opinions of the participants on rhythm studies in music activities. The participants were asked to choose one of the "always", "often", "sometimes", and "never" options for these questions. These options were given points from 0 to 3 according to the type of question. In the first and second questions option "always" was given "0" point, option "often" was given "1" point, option "sometimes" was given "2" point and option "never" was given "3" point. In the other questions (3., 4.,5.,6.) the points were given from the negative towards the positive in the following manner: option "never" was given 0 point, option "sometimes" was given 1 point, option "often" was given 2 point and finally option "always" was given 3 point. The aim of this scoring is to obtain a total point for each participant. The highest score in the questionnaire was 18. Therefore, each participant was given a point between 0 and 18. While the data was interpreted by the researcher, the total points of the respondents were regarded as "poor" if it is between 0 and 6, it was regarded as "average" if it is between 7 and 12, and it was regarded as "good" if it is 13 and above 13.

The questionnaire was given to the participants by the researcher, who was also the instructor of the in service training program on Drama. A 15 minute period was devoted for the participants to answer the questionnaire and all of the participants of the in-service training program answered the questionnaire. The data were analysed through using SPSS software program and depicted through using frequencies and percentages. Additionally, the correlations between some of the findings were examined.

3.4. The Findings and Discussion

The findings of the present study were interpreted with reference to the sequence of the research questions which were presented in the aim of the study section.

1. Do the teachers think that they avoid doing rhythm studies while teaching songs?

In order to reveal this, the first item in the questionnaire "I avoid doing rhythm studies while teaching songs" was evaluated. The distribution of the teachers' opinions related to doing rhythm studies while teaching songs were depicted in the Table 2 below.

Table 2. The frequencies and percentages of the distribution of the teachers' opinions related to doing rhythm studies while teaching songs

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	3	3,8
Often	4	5,1
Sometimes	47	59,5
Never	25	31,6
Total	79	100

In this question, the options "sometimes" and "never" were considered as positive, whereas the options "always" and "often" were considered as negative. A great number of the teachers ("sometimes" 59.5 %, "never" 31.6 %) think that they do not avoid doing rhythm studies while teaching songs. The number of those who stated that they avoid doing rhythm studies while teaching songs is a few in numbers ("always" 3.8 %, "often" 5.1 %). This case is regarded as positive. However, rating the "sometimes" option as 59.5 % reveals that, teachers sometimes avoid doing rhythm studies.

2. Do the teachers believe that rhythm studies cause a waste of time while teaching songs?

In order to determine this, the second item in the questionnaire "I believe that rhythm studies cause a waste of time while teaching songs" was evaluated. The distribution of the teachers' opinions related to time concern in doing rhythm studies while teaching songs were depicted in the Table 3 below.

Table 3. The distributions of the percentages and frequencies that reveal if the teachers believe that rhythm studies cause a waste of time while teaching songs.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	5	5
Often	12	15,2
Sometimes	12	15,2
Never	50	62,5
Total	79	100

In this question, the options "sometimes" and "never" were considered as positive, whereas options "always" and "often" were considered as negative. 77.7 % of the teachers think that ("sometimes" 15.2 %, "never" 62.5 %) rhythm studies are not a waste of time while teaching songs. The percentage of those who think that rhythm studies cause a waste of time while teaching songs is 20.2 % ("always" 5 %, "often" 15.2 %). This result is regarded as positive.

3. Do the teachers use their bodies for rhythm studies?

In order to determine this, the statement "I use my body (hand, arm, foot) for rhythm studies" was evaluated. The distribution of the teachers' opinions related to use of body parts in doing rhythm studies while teaching songs were depicted in the Table 4 below.

Table 4. The distributions of the percentages and frequencies that reveal if the teachers use their bodies for rhythm studies or not.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	40	50,6
Often	23	29,1
Sometimes	15	19
Never	1	1,3
Total	79	100

The options "always" and "often" were considered as positive, whereas, options "sometimes" and "never" were considered as negative for this question. A great number of the participants ("always" 50.6 %, "often" 29.1 %) stated that they use their bodies for the rhythm studies. The number of those who stated that they don't use their bodies in the rhythm studies is very little ("sometimes" 19 %, "never" 1.3 %). This case is accepted as positive.

Using body as a natural instrument in the rhythm studies has some benefits both for the teacher and for the child. For example, while the teacher is using a natural instrument without using any extra instrument, the child learns to discover his/her own body, to use it functionally and to provide integration among his/her body parts. In this sense, most of the teachers' statements that they use their bodies in the in the rhythm studies regarded as a positive attitude.

4. Do the teachers think that they can enrich the rhythms they hear by improvisation?

In order to reveal this, the 4th item in the questionnaire "I can enrich the rhythms I hear by improvisation" was examined. The distribution of the teachers' opinions related to enriching the rhythm studies through improvisation were depicted in the Table 5 below.

Table 5. The distributions of the percentages and frequencies that reveal if the teachers can enrich the rhythms they hear by improvisation or not

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	12	15,2
Often	28	35,4
Sometimes	36	45,6
Never	3	3,8
Total	79	100

For this question options, "always" and "often" were considered as positive, whereas options "sometimes" and "never" were considered as negative. 50.6% of the teachers ("always" 15.2 %, "often" 35.4 %) stated that they can enrich the rhythms they hear by improvisation; whereas 48.4 % of them ("sometimes" 45.6 %, "never" 3.8 %) pointed out that they are not very successful about doing this. The option "Sometimes" that was regarded as negative was marked by 45.6 % of the teachers and this proves that the teachers regarded themselves below the average about enriching the rhythms they hear.

5. Do the teachers think that they do rhythm studies if necessary while teaching a song?

In order to examine this, the statement: "When I realise that the students get bored while teaching a song, I do rhythm studies" was analysed. The distribution of the teachers' opinions related to their uses of rhythm studies when the students' bored while teaching a song were depicted in the Table 6 below.

Table 6. The Distributions of the Percentages and Frequencies That Reveal if the Teachers Use Rhythm Studies When Necessary

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	12	15,2
Often	29	36,7
Sometimes	32	40,5
Never	5	6,3
Total	79	100

The options "always" and "often" were accepted as positive, whereas, the options "sometimes" and "never" were accepted as negative for this statement. 51.9 % of the teachers ("always" 15.2 %, "often" 36.7 %) stated that they do rhythm studies when the children get bored; on the other hand, 46.8 % of them ("sometimes" 40.5 %, "never" 6.3 %) stated that they don't use rhythm studies when the children get bored. The option "sometimes" that was regarded as negative option was marked by most of the participants (40.5 %) and this revealed that the teachers sometimes do the rhythm studies when they realise that the children get bored. However, it is assumed that turning the rhythm studies into a game or a joy facilitates learning.

6. Do the teachers think that they can change the speed of their speeches according to the content?

The sixth item in the questionnaire "I can change the speed of my speech according to the content" was questioned in order to reveal this. The distributions of the teachers' opinions related to the adaptation of their speed in speech concerning the content were depicted in the Table 7 below.

Table 7. The distributions of the percentages and frequencies that reveal if the teachers can change the speed of their speeches according to the content or not

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	32	40,5
Often	40	50,6
Sometimes	3	3,8
Never	4	5
Total	79	100

For this item, the options "always" and "often" were accepted as positive, whereas, the options "sometimes" and "never" were accepted as negative. 91.9 % of the teachers ("always" 40.5 %, "often" 50.6 %) stated that they do rhythm studies when the children get bored; on the other hand, 8.8 % of them ("sometimes" 3.8 %, "never" 5 %) stated that they don't do this.

The speech has also a rhythm. Teachers' statements that they do not have any difficulty while changing the speed of their speeches concerning the content, is a positive result. With reference to this finding, it can be assumed that the adaptation of speed in speech might not cause any problem in rhythm studies.

7. Is there any relation between the school they graduated from and their opinions on rhythm?

In order to answer this question, a correlation analysis between the points of this item in the questionnaire and the schools that the participants graduated from was examined. Total points were divided into three groups. The points between 0 and 6 were regarded as poor; the points between 7 and 12 were rated as average and the points 13 or above 13 rated as good.

Table 8. The distribution of the teachers' total points according to the schools they graduated from

Total Points	Vocational High School (1)	University (2)
0-6	2	-
7-12	24	14
Above 13	24	15
Total	50	29

It can be seen that the total points of the respondents are good and above good. The number of teachers who were rated as poor is only 2. This result can be interpreted as positive. It is seen that the number of the teachers graduated from Vocational High School (1) and who rated good and above good are more than the number of the teachers who graduated from University (2) and who rated good and above good. However, when the relation between the total point and the graduated school was examined, it was seen that there was not any significant relation.

8. Is there any relation between their working periods and their opinions on rhythm?

In order to answer this question, a correlation between the total points of respondents in the questionnaire and their experience in teaching was sought. Total points were divided into three groups. The points between 0 and 6 were regarded as poor; the points between 7 and 12 were regarded as average and the points 13 or above 13 assumed as good.

Table 9. The distribution of the teachers' total points concerning their teaching experience

Total Point	Teaching Experience (years)			
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20
0-6	1	1	-	-
7-12	21	6	4	7
Above 13	15	10	7	7
Total	37	17	11	14

It is seen that many of the points of participants are good and above good in scale. Only 2 of the teachers were regarded as poor for this item. 36 of the teachers whose total points were good and above good have 1 to 5 year experience in teaching. 16 of the participants who have 6 to 10 years of experience in teaching were rated as good and above good. The number of those who had been working between 11 and 15 years and whose total points were good is 11. When the relation between the total points and the graduated school was examined, it was seen that there is not any significant relation between these variables.

9. Is there any relation between the in-service training courses they participated and their opinions on rhythm?

In order to answer this question, a correlation between the total points that the participants got from the instrument and their state of being participated in the in-service training courses was sought. Total points were examined in three groups. The points between 0 and 6 were regarded as poor, the points between 7 and 12 were regarded as average and the points above 13 were regarded as good.

Table 10. The distribution of the teachers' total points concerning the participation in-service training courses

Total Point	Participation in-service Training Courses	
	Yes	No
0-6	-	2
7-12	7	31
Above 13	8	31
Total	15	64

Within the frame of this question, the correlation between the participants' total points in the instrument and their previous participation to the in-service training were examined. The findings revealed that there is not any significant relation between total points in the instrument and their previous participation to the in-service training courses.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

4.1. Conclusion

Rhythm is arguably the most important component of music and it is central to musical experience and understanding. Concerning the diversity of rhythm, it can be claimed that there is a wide range of opinion about how to teach it. It seems that every approach to music education pedagogy prescribes its own unique set of methods and techniques for teaching rhythm (Dalby, 2005). Therefore, determining the teachers' opinions related to the rhythm education, the importance of rhythm education in primary education play important role in training the future teachers. Music education for pre-school children in Turkey starts in pre-school education institutes if the parents do not have any special interests. The studies of these institutes are included in the activities of education programs. The responsibility of practicing the components that form the music education is given to the teachers. The components that form the base of music education are rhythm, voice and musical audition. Rhythm studies have a special and an important place among these components. Rhythm component of which we can see the impressions in every aspect of life can be taught in different ways.

As Dalby emphasized many teachers intuitively understand the value of rhythm, but they tend to use them after the fact (Dalby, 2005). For example, rhythm education can be realized using the opportunities of human body from the changes of hearth beating and breathing to the ways of walking and running or using rhythmical and musical instruments. Teachers know the importance of body for performing the rhythm intuitively, but s/he uses it rarely. These kinds of activities contribute a lot to the educational and personal developments of the children.

Similarly, in his article “Rhythm in Musical Education”, Dalcroze (1930) who is one of the pioneers of rhythmic education declared that rhythm has a very important role in the personal and physical development of children. According to him, teachers should make use of a number of rhythm exercises with children in order to help them to develop as individuals. “When all these movements have become rhythmical, a child learns to think and to express himself rhythmically”.

The findings of the study, which attempted to determine the teachers’ opinions on rhythm studies in music activities, revealed that the teachers have generally positive attitudes towards the rhythm studies. It is thought that pre-school teachers who realized the importance of doing or having the students do rhythm studies during music activities, who keep their knowledge about the topic active, who do not hesitate practicing that knowledge will contribute both to the healthy development of music education with children and to the Turkish education system.

4.2. Suggestions

The present study sought to find answers to its research question and depicted its findings above; however, there seem some insufficient aspects that this study could not answer. Therefore, the following research topics were suggested for further studies.

1. A research could be conducted in order to determine the reasons why the teachers avoid doing rhythm studies.
2. A study might be conducted to investigate how the teachers use their bodies in the rhythm studies
3. An observational study could be conducted to investigate the extent to which teachers enrich their rhythm studies by improvisation.
4. The reasons of why the teachers do not do rhythm studies when they see that their students get bored can also be investigated.

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