Music Activities in Hong Kong Kindergartens and Stakeholders' Perspectives on Quality Musical Practices

by

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Statement of Originality

I, HO, Yan Lam, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis and the material presented in this thesis is my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgement. I further declare that I have followed the University's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copyright and Plagiarism in writing the thesis and no material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

Abstract

Early exposure to quality musical activities benefits children's holistic development and learning. It is, therefore, crucial to ensure kindergarten teachers can provide such activities for children. In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau (EDB) designed the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). While music is included as a subdomain in the official curriculum, with specific learning objectives and expectations for children, there is a dearth of research on the musical activity types kindergarten teachers conduct in practice. Similarly, no research has been conducted to explore the perspectives of local kindergarten stakeholders (e.g., quality assessors) on quality music education. Investigating these topics is vital to guide subsequent professional development (PD) efforts in kindergartens.

This dissertation portfolio draws on Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s theoretical framework of quality music education in early childhood. The overall objective was to explore the provision and types of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens and stakeholders' perspectives on quality musical practices. This dissertation comprises three empirical studies. Study 1 was a large-scale survey study with kindergarten teachers (n = 1,019), investigating the provision of musical activities in kindergartens and the potential differences in musical activities among teachers with different teaching experience. Descriptive, non-parametric, and parametric statistical analyses were performed. Study 2 was a content analysis exploring the types of musical activities mentioned in 164 Quality Review (QR) reports published by the EDB. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical analyses, word frequency, and co-occurrence analyses. Study 3 was a content analysis of 323 QR reports, exploring the positive and negative feedback and recommendations for improvement regarding music pedagogical practices mentioned by quality assessors in the reports. Data

was analyzed using descriptive statistical analyses. The three studies, altogether, inform stakeholders on the status of kindergarten music education in Hong Kong kindergartens.

Findings revealed important discrepancies between the Hong Kong local music education curriculum and actual practices in kindergartens, particularly pertaining to the limited use of music to develop children's creativity and self-expression. Additionally, teaching experience emerged as a crucial variable that affects the provision of musical activities. Beginning teachers reported conducting significantly fewer musical creativity and self-expression activities than Advanced teachers. However, quality assessors seemed to have overlooked these curriculum/practice discrepancies. It is worrisome that the assessors might not notice that musical practices are insufficient to achieve the curriculum objectives and, hence, their feedback is inadequate for practitioners to make further improvements.

This dissertation portfolio enriches the limited literature on early childhood music education in Asia, providing important baseline information on the status of music education in Hong Kong kindergartens. Findings raise stakeholders' (i.e., curriculum designers, teachers, and principals) awareness of the discrepancies between curriculum and practices. Teacher educators and PD providers can design PD initiatives that respond to the training needs of teachers with different teaching experience. In turn, such initiatives will allow teachers to design and implement their music lessons more strategically, ultimately enhancing the quality of music education provided to children.

Keywords: kindergarten education**,** teaching practices**,** music education**,** music activities**,** pedagogical quality

Acknowledgments

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CDC	Curriculum Development Council
ECDA	Early Childhood Development Agency
ECE	Early childhood education
EDB	Education Bureau
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
KECG	Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
PCA	Principal component analysis
PD	Professional development
QR	Quality Review

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Publications

Study 1 is extracted from an article titled ‘Musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: The role of teaching experience’. This article was accepted for publication by a journal and is currently in press. The citation of this article is: Ho, Y.-L., Bautista, A., & Lee, K. (in press). Musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: The role of teaching experience. *Australian Journal of Music Education, 56*(2).

Study 2 is extracted from a published article titled ‘Music activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: A content analysis of the quality review reports’. The citation of this article is: Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2022). Music activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: A content analysis of the quality review reports. *Revista Electrónica de LEEME, 49*, 32-49. https://doi.org/10.7203/LEEME.49.24249

Study 3 is extracted from a published article titled ‘Quality assessors’ feedback and recommendations on music education in Hong Kong kindergartens’. The citation of this article is: Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2024). Quality assessors’ feedback and recommendations on music education in Hong Kong kindergartens. *Education Sciences, 14*(5), 466. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14050466

List of Presentations Related to this Dissertation

1. Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2024, July 28-August 2). *Official assessors' vision of quality music education in Hong Kong kindergartens* [Round table paper presentation]. 36th World Conference of the International Society for Music Education 2024 (ISME 2024), Helsinki, Finland.
2. Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2024, June 1-3). *Quality music teaching and learning in Hong Kong kindergartens* [Paper presentation]. The 1st EdUHK International Research Conference on Early Childhood Education and Development (InCRECE 2024), Hong Kong SAR, China.
3. Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2023, August 9-11). *A survey study on the relationship between teaching experience and musical activities in kindergartens* [Paper presentation]. 14th Asia-Pacific Symposium for Music Education Research, Seoul, Republic of Korea.
4. Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2023, July 24-26). *The effects of teaching experience on musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens.* [Paper presentation]. International Summer School and Research Conference for Doctoral Students, Hong Kong SAR, China.
5. Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2022, July 17-22). *A survey study on the provision and diversity of music activities in Hong Kong kindergartens* [Paper presentation]. 35th World Conference of the International Society for Music Education 2022 (ISME 2022), Brisbane, Australia.
6. Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2022, July 8-10). *Perspectives on high-quality music education in Hong Kong kindergartens* [Paper presentation]. Transforming Early Childhood Education – From Policy to Practice: PECERA HK Celebration of 25th Anniversary of HKSAR Establishment cum 22nd PECERA Annual Conference, Hong Kong SAR, China.
7. Ho, Y.-L. (2021, December 29). *Exploring music education in Hong Kong kindergartens:*

To what extent are classroom practices aligned with curriculum objectives? [Seminar presentation]. Department of Early Childhood Education, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China.

8. Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2021, September 18-19). *A documentary analysis on kindergarten music education in Hong Kong* [Paper presentation]. The 13th Asia Pacific Symposium for Music Education Research: Exploring Possibilities and Alternatives in a Changing Future, Tokyo, Japan.
9. Ho, Y.-L. (2021, January 26-28). *A documentary analysis on music education in Hong Kong kindergartens: Vision vs reality?* [Paper presentation]. International Graduate Studies Seminar (IGSS 2021), Hong Kong SAR, China.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation portfolio was conducted in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), China, specifically within kindergarten settings. In this region, the term kindergarten refers to the center-based programs provided to children aged 3-6. Children attend half-day (around 63%) or full-day (37%) center-based programs in kindergartens. In the school year of 2023 to 2024, the teacher-child ratio was 1:8.3 (Education Bureau, 2023). The Education Bureau (EDB), which is a government agency, regulates and provides subsidies to local kindergartens, though local kindergartens are operated by private providers and non-profit organizations (EDB, 2020a).

The present Introduction chapter consists of six sections. First, I present an overview of the importance of quality early childhood music education and stakeholders' perspectives on quality music education practices. Next, the chapter introduces kindergarten music education in Hong Kong. Subsequently, Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s theoretical framework of quality music education in early childhood is presented. Afterwards, the chapter presents the research gaps. This is followed by an introduction to the three empirical studies. Then, the context of this dissertation is introduced. Finally, this chapter closes by presenting the structure of the dissertation portfolio.

Overview: Importance of Quality Early Childhood Music Education

Music is a key learning area in early childhood education (ECE), given that it brings numerous positive influences on children's musical and holistic development (Hallam & Himonides, 2022; Sullivan, 2016; Young & Ilari, 2019; Zadnik & Jerman, 2015). Existing studies have evidenced that children who participate in a variety of musical activities can develop specific abilities and skills. For example, while listening to music enhances learning effectiveness (Campbell, 2000), singing leads to positive language development (Chen-Hafteck & Mang, 2012), and rhythmic movement reinforces self-regulation and executive

functions (Williams, 2018). Furthermore, music can foster children's creative thinking skills (Liu, 2023), enhance prosocial behaviors, and maintain their social bonds among peers (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010; Váradi, 2022).

Consequently, contemporary international early childhood curriculum frameworks and standards have stressed the importance of providing adequate and diverse musical activities to children, including music listening, singing, performing, rhythmic movement, and creativity-fostering musical activities (Head Start Resource Center, 2010; National Association for Music Education, 2015; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019). This emphasis can be observed in countries around the world. For instance, in Finland, music is regarded as a kind of expression that allows children to utilize their imaginations and express their thoughts and feelings when engaging in diversified musical activities (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, music is classified under the learning area of Expressive Arts and Design, which comprises two learning objectives: exploring musical materials and being imaginative (Department for Education, 2017). The early childhood music curriculum in other countries (e.g., Canada, New Zealand, Singapore) share similar learning objectives, which predominantly focus on implementing musical activities that unleash children's expression and creativity (Council of Ministers of Education, 2014; Ministry of Education [New Zealand], 2017; Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2013).

ECE stakeholders across the globe seem to share relatively common perspectives that quality music education essentially involves implementing integrated musical activities, which can foster children's holistic development, creativity, and self-expression (Flores, 2018; Robertson et al., 2022; Salvador, 2019). Drawing on well-known music-specific teaching pedagogies, Barrett et al. (2021) proposed that singing, playing instruments, and movement are three essential activities constituting the best music pedagogical practices.

Regarding the teaching approach, researchers further recommended that quality music practices should be children-centered and build upon children's knowledge through play-based approaches (Meyers, 2017; Young, 2018). Barrett et al. (2021) concurred that teachers should offer children open-ended opportunities to express themselves through music with high freedom of choice. In contrast, the perspectives of ECE stakeholders in Asia on quality musical practices are relatively under-researched. The next section introduces kindergarten music education in Hong Kong, where this dissertation portfolio is situated.

Kindergarten Music Education in Hong Kong

In 2017, the EDB published a new curriculum framework, the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (KECG)—hereafter the *Guide* (Curriculum Development Council [CDC], 2017). The *Guide* was developed by drawing on the literature on developmental and educational psychology (CDC, 2017). Music is included as a subdomain of the learning area 'Arts and Creativity'. There are three learning objectives: (1) "to develop sensory abilities and accumulate art experiences", (2) "to express feelings and unleash creativity through presenting and creating the arts", (3) "to develop creativity through active exploration in art activities" (CDC, 2017, p. 47). The EDB published the performance indicators (EDB, 2017b) to assess the quality of teaching and learning in kindergartens, including the area of music education. Teachers are expected to accomplish those indicators, which include providing children with sufficient, diversified, and enjoyable daily musical activities.

Local kindergartens are required to undergo the Quality Review (QR) assessment mechanism, which determines whether kindergartens will obtain government subsidies (EDB, 2017a). Assessors from the EDB visit kindergartens for 2.5 to 3.5 days to conduct on-site observations and write the QR reports. If those kindergartens meet the performance

indicators (EDB, 2017b), they can pass the assessment. Then, their QR reports are published on the EDB website (EDB, 2021b).

In Hong Kong, the kindergarten curriculum *Guide* (CDC, 2017) strongly emphasizes the importance of child-centricity in learning and fostering creativity. The learning objectives in the learning area 'Arts and Creativity' strongly emphasize creativity and self-expression through arts. Nevertheless, many Hong Kong kindergarten teachers, especially those with limited teaching experience, reported lower confidence and self-efficacy in teaching music as compared to other learning areas, especially conducting musical activities such as self-expression and creativity (Bautista & Ho, 2022). A possible reason is that beginning teachers receive limited education related to music and movement (Bautista & Ho, 2021). A similar issue was found in ECE teachers around the world (Burak, 2019; Liao & Campbell, 2016). Hence, it is crucial to investigate the extent to which kindergarten music education in Hong Kong aligns with the local curriculum *Guide*, as well as kindergarten stakeholders' perspectives on quality music education.

Teaching experience is a factor influencing various aspects of music education, including teachers' confidence, professional development (PD) preferences, and lesson evaluations (Conway, 2012; Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014). For instance, Wong et al. (2023) found that while beginning teachers preferred PD regarding educational technologies, advanced teachers were interested in PD regarding music listening and appreciation. In Swain and Bodkin-Allen (2014)'s study, teachers who had relatively less music training tended to be unconfident and indicated negative beliefs toward singing. Madsen and Cassidy (2005) found that experienced teachers provided evaluations that were more critical and judgmental. Nevertheless, no research has been conducted to investigate whether kindergarten teachers' amount of teaching experience influences their provision of musical activities in the classroom. It is, therefore, theoretically and practically relevant to investigate this topic.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation portfolio draws on Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s theoretical framework of quality music education in early childhood. This framework is the one that most aligns with the local curriculum *Guide* (CDC, 2017) regarding the activity types and characteristics of quality music education. These authors proposed that early childhood educators should provide children with sufficient and diverse musical learning experiences to develop their holistic musical abilities. As shown in Table 1, Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019) suggested that five musical activity types are essential in an early childhood music curriculum.

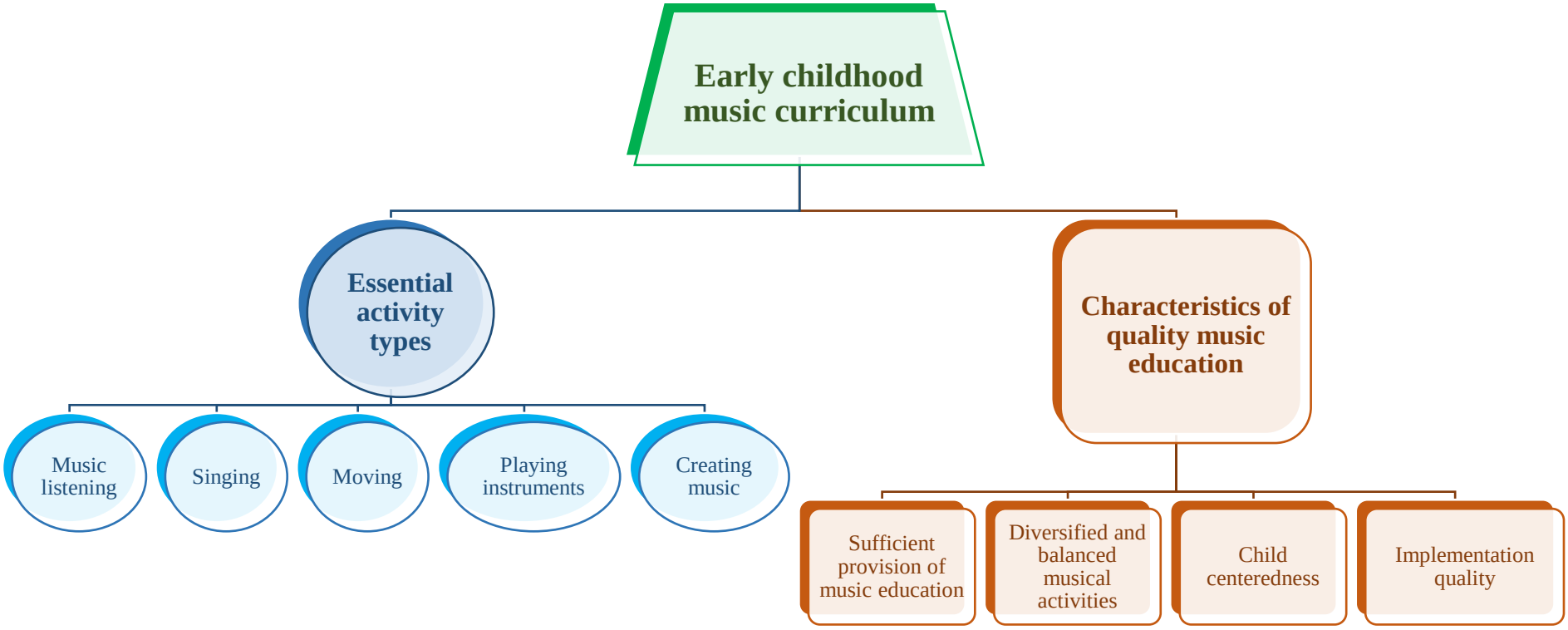
Table 1

Five Essential Musical Activity Types in an Early Childhood Music Curriculum Proposed by Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)

Activities	How can children participate in these activities?
1. Music listening	Children learn simple musical concepts (e.g., pitch, rhythm, tone colors, dynamics, tempo, and style) through listening to music. Children can engage actively during the listening process such as using vocabulary to describe what they perceive, they therefore can develop their music appreciation skills.
2. Singing	Children learn to sing a diversified repertoire of songs in different genres and styles. They sing expressively with appropriate dynamics, phrasing, and interpretation. When children are singing, they express their interests, experiences, and feelings through music.
3. Moving	Children move to music in guided and/or expressive ways, which may require activating the coordination of their larger muscles. When children move in response to music, they develop attentive listening skills to focus on rhythmic duration and patterns.
4. Playing instruments	Children explore and play musical instruments. Musical instruments for children in the early years are relatively simple. There are two main categories of musical instruments in kindergartens: (1) conventional pitched (e.g., recorder, tone bells) and (2) non-pitched percussion instruments (e.g., rhythm sticks, castanets). Body percussion is also a type of instrument in which children clap, tap, stamp, and pat their body parts (e.g., shoulders, head, knees) to produce sounds.
5. Creating music	Creating music is another essential element for children to develop musical creativity skills. The creation process involves three stages: exploration and discovery, improvisation, and composition. For instance, children improvise music representing specific characters or moods (happy, excited, or angry) in a story.

Figure 1

Quality Early Childhood Music Curriculum Proposed by Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)



As shown in Figure 1, teachers should provide children with sufficient, diversified, balanced, quality, and child-centered musical activities to accomplish the quality early childhood music curriculum proposed by Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019).

In this dissertation portfolio, I examined the extent to which the musical activities implemented by Hong Kong kindergarten teachers in the classroom align with the five essential musical activity types included in Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework. In addition, I examined the extent to which local musical practices can achieve the characteristics of quality music education in their framework. These essential elements constituting quality early childhood music education are consistent with researchers' perspectives of quality music education in contemporary literature (Barrett et al., 2021; Essa & Burnham, 2019; Juntunen, 2020) and the local curriculum *Guide* (CDC, 2017).

Research Gaps

Despite the benefits of music to young children, there are important research gaps in the field of early childhood music education. First, there are no large-scale quantitative studies investigating the types of musical activities teachers conduct in Hong Kong kindergarten classrooms. Existing studies focusing on the musical activities conducted in the classroom (e.g., Nieuwmeijer et al., 2019; Süner & Ünlü, 2013) are primarily qualitative and conducted with relatively small samples of participants. Therefore, conducting a large-scale study on the types of musical activities within kindergarten settings in Hong Kong is essential.

Second, no research has been conducted to investigate whether kindergarten teachers' teaching experience influences their music pedagogical practices. Prior studies indicated that teaching experience is a factor influencing various aspects of music education, including teachers' confidence, PD preferences, and lesson evaluations (e.g., Barrett et al., 2021; Králová & Butvilas, 2016). Therefore, it is timely to conduct large-scale quantitative studies

investigating whether teaching experience is a crucial factor influencing kindergarten teachers' types of musical activities conducted in the classroom.

Lastly, little is known about the local kindergarten stakeholders' understanding of quality music pedagogical practices in contexts such as Hong Kong. Existing research focusing on kindergarten stakeholders' perspectives of quality music education is commonly authored by scholars in other countries and/or jurisdictions (e.g., Barrett et al., 2021; Králová & Butvilas, 2016). These perspectives may not be entirely consistent with local expectations, values, and norms (Bautista et al., 2018). While practitioners in certain societies (e.g., Singapore) tend to value rules and structure and utilize the teacher-directed approach in the classroom, some societies (e.g., the United States, Norway) tend to value free choice and apply the child-centered approaches in their teaching (Bautista et al., 2018; Koops & Kuebel, 2018; Schei & Ødegaard, 2020; Wood, 2014). Hence, it is essential to document local kindergarten stakeholders' (e.g., quality assessors) perspectives on existing musical practices in local settings (Lum, 2013; Ødegaard, 2015). Overall, addressing all the abovementioned research gaps is therefore essential.

Three Empirical Studies

This dissertation comprises three empirical studies (Studies 1, 2, and 3) focusing on distinct critical issues related to kindergarten music education. Considering that each of these three studies is an independent article that has been published or accepted in journals, part of the background presented in each study may consist of some repetitions.

Study 1, titled "Musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: The role of teaching experience", has been accepted for publication in the *Australian Journal of Music Education*. It will be published in mid-year 2024 (Ho et al., in press). Study 1 was a survey investigating the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens and the role of teaching experience. The study had two research goals.

Goal 1.1 To investigate the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens.

Goal 1.2 To analyze the potential differences among teachers with different levels of teaching experience regarding the provision of musical activities.

Participants were 1,019 kindergarten teachers, around 8% of the total population. Specifically, three groups of teaching experience were formed for analytical purposes: Beginning, Experienced, and Advanced Teachers (Early Childhood Development Agency [ECDA], 2013). In the survey, participants were asked, "How often do you implement the following activities in your own classroom?". Drawing on Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s theoretical framework, a list of musical activities using a 4-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, overall means, and standard deviations), ranking positions, and Principal component analysis (PCA) were performed among the measured 18 activities (DeCoster, 1998). Then, parametric analyses (One-way Analysis of Variance [ANOVA], Welch's ANOVA) and post hoc Tukey HSD or Games Howell tests were utilized to examine the associations between teaching experience and the provision of musical activities.

Study 2, titled "Music activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: A content analysis of the quality review reports", has been published in *Revista Electrónica de LEEME (Electronic Journal of Music in Education)* in 2022 (Ho & Bautista, 2022). Study 2 was a content analysis of the Quality Review (QR) reports focusing on the musical activities implemented by Hong Kong kindergarten teachers.

Goal 2.1 To examine the presence of music in the QR reports.

Goal 2.2 To analyze the types of music activities and the most common combinations of musical contents alluded to in the reports.

The number of kindergartens represented was 164, around 16% of the total number of kindergartens in Hong Kong (EDB, 2022). First, the amount of text (mean number of words, standard deviations, minimum, and maximum) related to music in the QR reports was analyzed. Descriptive statistics of the most common lexicon were performed within the music-related segments. Furthermore, descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and literal examples were used to examine the musical activities that appeared in the QR reports. Lastly, a code co-occurrence model was generated to examine the most common combinations of musical contents alluded to in the reports.

Study 3, titled "Quality assessors' feedback and recommendations on music education in Hong Kong kindergartens", has been published in the journal *Education Sciences* in 2024 (Ho & Bautista, 2024). Study 3 was a content analysis analyzing the feedback pertaining to music education in the QR reports from the quality assessors' perspective.

Goal 3.1 To analyze the positive feedback pertaining to music classroom practices in the QR reports.

Goal 3.2 To analyze the negative feedback and recommendations for improvements pertaining to music classroom practices in the reports.

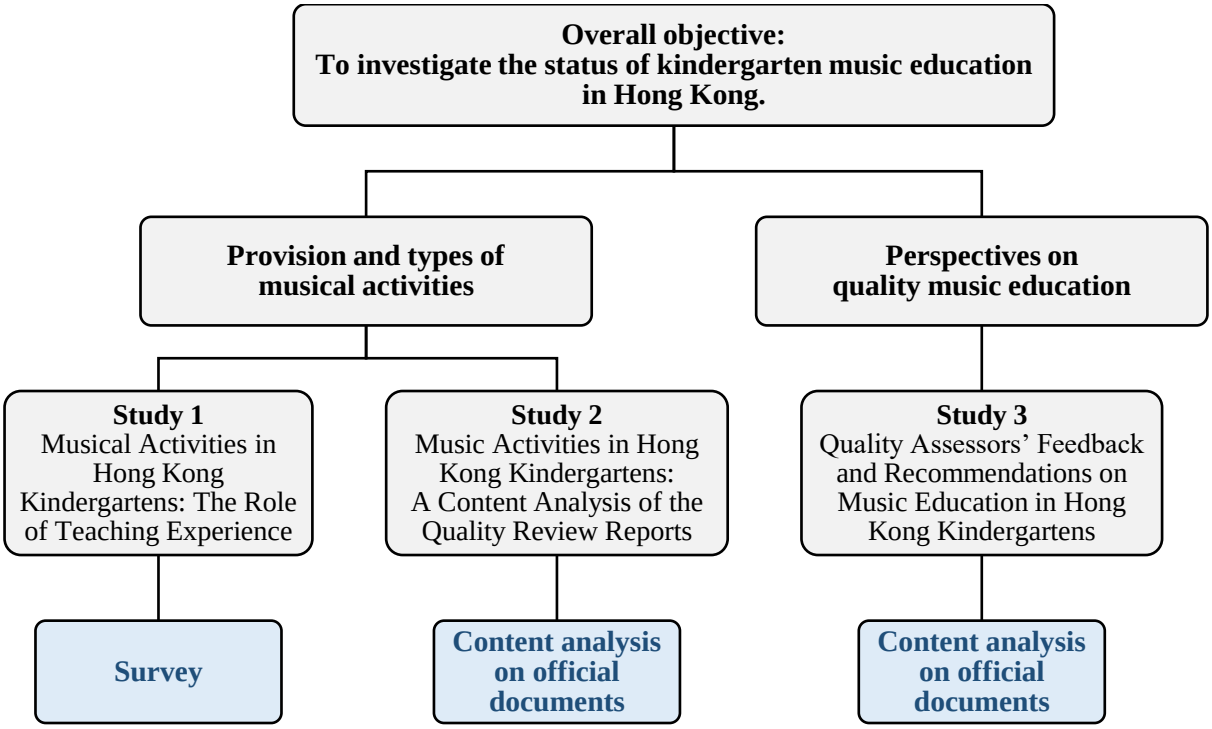
The number of kindergartens represented was 323, approximately 31% of the total number of kindergartens in Hong Kong (EDB, 2022). Study 3 involves a higher number of QR reports than Study 2 because this study was conducted in 2024. The EDB further released 159 more reports from late 2020 to 2024. Given that the local curriculum *Guide* was effective from 2017 to the present, adding these new reports to the analyses was therefore essential. First, the coding schemes regarding the positive and negative feedback and recommendations for improvements pertaining to music classroom practices were presented. Then, descriptive

statistics (frequencies and percentages) of each code were run. Literal examples extracted from the QR reports were presented to further illustrate the analytic codes (Eldh et al., 2020).

Figure 2 presents a diagram that illustrates the interrelationship among the three studies. The overall objective was to investigate the status of music education in Hong Kong kindergartens. Studies 1 and 2 were focused on investigating the provision and types of musical activities. Specifically, Study 1 investigated the self-reported musical activities implemented by teachers with different teaching experience. Study 2 investigated teachers' musical activities described by quality assessors in the QR reports. Study 3 analyzed the quality assessors' positive and negative feedback and recommendations pertaining to music education in the QR reports. Their feedback represents the EDB's perspectives on kindergarten music education.

Figure 2

Diagram Illustrating the Interrelationship Among the Three Studies



Applying Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework guided me in developing the survey questions for Study 1. We presented a list of musical activities in a survey question with references to the five essential musical activities in this framework. Each musical activity category consists of several survey items: Music listening (e.g., Exposing children to different music styles), Singing (e.g., "Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children"), Moving (e.g., "Move to the beat, tempo or dynamics of music"), Playing instruments (e.g., "Teach children how to play musical instruments"), and Creating music (e.g., "Invent songs or create pieces of music"). With this framework, I could better understand the standards of musical practices in kindergarten settings, which allowed me to identify relevant themes and design the coding scheme for Study 2 regarding the types of musical activities using the inductive and deductive approaches (Creswell, 2018). After conducting the data analyses in Studies 1 and 2, I could first examine the overall presence of music in kindergartens and the frequency of each type of musical activity. Most importantly, I could identify the infrequent musical activities conducted in the classroom, in which teachers might need the highest amount of support and assistance through professional development initiatives (Bautista, Yau, et al., 2016).

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s theoretical framework further guided me to understand the essential elements of quality kindergarten music education. The learning objectives in the local curriculum *Guide* (CDC, 2017) and performance indicators (EDB, 2017b) are aligned with Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework. Hence, teachers are required to provide sufficient, diversified, quality, and child-centered musical activities for children. They should be well-prepared to conduct all the essential musical activities in the classroom effectively. Such understanding assisted me in identifying relevant themes for Study 3 (e.g., Diversified Music Activities and/or Elements, Good Preparation and/or Design). Therefore, I could delve into the quality assessors' perspectives and expectations on

quality music education, and provide practical insights for curriculum designers and teacher educators accordingly.

Context for the Dissertation

This dissertation portfolio was undertaken within the scope of two funded research projects: (1) Arts and Creativity in Hong Kong Kindergartens: Towards 'Glocal' Pedagogies (grant number 04592), and (2) Hong Kong Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Development Needs and Preferences regarding Music and Movement: A Survey Study (grant number DRG2018-19/004) (see the ethical approval for the studies in Appendix A and B). The Principal Investigator of these two projects is Dr. Alfredo Bautista, who is also my Principal Supervisor. I worked as a full-time Senior Research Assistant on the first project and a part-time Research Assistant on the second project. I was involved in all aspects of the two research projects, including literature review, designing of the data instruments, recruitment of participants, and data collection. While the data was collected as part of these larger projects, the studies in my dissertation did not overlap with the main objectives of the projects and were undertaken independently. The research goals in my studies are distinct from the research goals addressed in these projects.

The three studies included in this dissertation portfolio were designed and conceptualized by myself under the guidance of my supervisory team. I handled every aspect of the studies, including data analysis, interpretation, discussion, writing journal articles, and presenting at conferences. The studies utilized two main types of data sources: Quality Review reports (project grant number 04592) and a survey (project grant number DRG2018-19/004). I was given an ethical exemption approval (Appendix C) by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at The Education University of Hong Kong to analyze and include these data in my dissertation portfolio, endorsed by my Principal Supervisor. Given that

Study 1 involved human participants, I attached the Consent Form and Information Sheet in Appendix D.

Structure of This Dissertation

This dissertation portfolio comprises a total of five main chapters: Introduction, three empirical studies (Study 1, Study 2, Study 3), and General Discussion. Three empirical studies are presented in the following chapters, focusing on distinct critical issues related to kindergarten music education. Finally, the General Discussion chapter presents the theoretical synthesis, conclusions, and implications of this dissertation portfolio, as well as the recommendations for future research.

This dissertation portfolio enriches the limited literature on kindergarten music education in Asia, providing important baseline information on music pedagogical practices in Hong Kong. The three studies, altogether, can inform stakeholders of the extent to which musical practices in Hong Kong align with the local curriculum *Guide* (CDC, 2017). Accordingly, curriculum designers can refine the music curriculum and performance indicators in Hong Kong to bridge the gap (if any) between the actual practices and curriculum. Findings further allow teacher educators and PD providers to infer the training needs of teachers and design PD initiatives that respond to these needs (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Wong et al., 2023). In turn, such initiatives enable teachers to gain music teaching ideas and plan their music lessons more strategically, ultimately enhancing the quality of music education provided to young children in Hong Kong.

STUDY 1: Musical Activities in Hong Kong Kindergartens: The Role of Teaching Experience[1]

Abstract

We investigated the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens and analyzed potential differences among teachers with different levels of teaching experience. Using a self-designed survey, we asked 1,019 teachers how often they conducted 18 specific musical activities. Overall, we found that participants provided considerable music exposure to children. Advanced teachers (more than 15 years of experience) reported to conduct more musical activities for children than Beginning teachers (less than 5 years). Principal component analysis revealed the existence of four components: Singing and Transitions (the most frequent); Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities; Sound Production; and Creativity and Self-expression (the least frequent). Teachers with varying teaching experience tend to focus on different musical activities in the classroom. Specifically, Beginning teachers reported to conduct significantly fewer musical creativity activities than Advanced teachers. We conclude that teaching experience is a crucial factor that affects the provision and types of musical activities conducted by kindergarten teachers. Findings may guide subsequent professional development efforts to better prepare kindergarten teachers with different profiles to achieve the learning objectives established in the curriculum framework.

Keywords: early childhood education, musical activities, teaching practices, teaching experience, music pedagogy, creativity

[1] Ho, Y.-L., Bautista, A., & Lee, K. (in press). Musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: The role of teaching experience. *Australian Journal of Music Education, 56*(2). Reproduced with permission from the journal's Editor.

Introduction

This study was conducted with kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), China. In Hong Kong, kindergarten education is not compulsory. Kindergartens offer center-based education programs to children aged 3-6 and are operated by private operators and non-profit organizations. Most kindergartens (85.7%) are local (i.e., government-funded), and the rest (14.3%) are international (i.e., private) (Education Bureau [EDB], 2022). All Hong Kong kindergartens have teachers with varying levels of experience, from beginning teachers (who spend most of their time teaching children) to more experienced teachers (who are typically in charge of administrative and curriculum leadership matters).

Music is included as a subdomain of the learning area 'Arts and Creativity' in the official curriculum framework—the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (KECG)—hereafter the Guide (Curriculum Development Council [CDC], 2017). There are three learning objectives in this learning area: (1) "to develop sensory abilities and accumulate art experiences", (2) "to express feelings and unleash creativity through presenting and creating the arts", (3) "to develop creativity through active exploration in art activities" (CDC, 2017, p. 47). Kindergarten teachers are expected to fulfill those standards by providing children with adequate, diversified, and enjoyable daily music activities, which align with the taxonomies proposed by music education scholars (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Moravcik et al., 2013).

Research on the types of musical activities conducted by kindergarten teachers in Asia is limited, and prior studies have mostly utilized qualitative methods such as case studies, interviews, and observations (Lau & Grieshaber, 2018; Wong, 2011). Given that no large-scale quantitative study has investigated the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens, the alignment between the official curriculum and actual practices on the

ground remains unknown. The present study aims to investigate the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens by teachers with different levels of teaching experience. Given the effects of teaching experience on numerous aspects pertaining to music education, such as professional development (PD) preferences, lesson evaluations, and confidence (Conway, 2012; Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014; Wong et al., 2023), we infer that teaching experience could also be a crucial factor influencing teachers' music pedagogical practices.

Literature Review

Provision of Musical Activities in Kindergartens Around the World

Research has shown that the provision of music-related activities tends to be limited in kindergartens around the world. One of the reasons is that kindergarten teachers are not fully aware of the intrinsic value and benefits of music and musical creativity (Young & Ilari, 2019). It is concerning that some children have no exposure to music at all, as found in studies conducted in countries such as Sweden (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018) and the United States (Nardo et al., 2006). In South African kindergartens, the time allocated to music is only 30 minutes per week (Van Vreden, 2016). Similar trends of insufficient exposure to music have been found in Asian countries like Singapore (Bautista et al., 2018).

Singing and transitions with music are the most common musical activities in kindergarten classrooms (Bautista et al., 2018; Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018). Rajan (2017) found that numerous teachers used CDs to sing nursery rhymes with children daily, and the repertoires were mainly related to greetings (e.g., hello, goodbye), clean up, food, numbers, etc. In a study conducted in Hong Kong a decade ago, children were often asked to follow teachers singing songs in unison, repeating many times to enhance their singing techniques (e.g., breathing, pitch, rhythm) (Lau & Grieshaber, 2010). Teachers typically sing with

children in large groups to facilitate transitions during circle time, before or after morning assembly (Bond, 2015; Gillespie & Glider, 2010).

Rhythmic movement is involved in many musical activities typically conducted in kindergarten classrooms (Williams, 2018). In Turkey, moving to music was found to be one of the most prevalent activities (Ersoy & Dere, 2012). In a study conducted in Singapore, children were often asked to move (jump, crawl) in response to the beat of songs, mainly with non-vocal music (Bautista et al., 2018). Some teachers have been found to integrate technology into rhythmic movement activities (Sumaryanto & Utomo, 2015; Zhang, 2021). Sullivan and Bers (2018) depicted the process of teachers incorporating rhythmic movement and technology in thematic activities. Specifically, children created a robot and dressed up to represent the same cultures their robots were representing. Then, children performed rhythmic movements with the robots in response to music. Panagiotakou and Pange (2010) stated that using technological equipment could stimulate children's interest in joining musical activities.

Kindergarten teachers may also conduct activities related to sound production (Rajan, 2017). A study conducted in Spain found that teachers generally guided children to play conventional (both pitch and non-pitch) and unconventional musical instruments (Rodríguez & Álvarez, 2017). Unconventional instruments include daily objects (e.g., bowls, metal beads), instruments and auditory materials of music pedagogical methods (e.g., Orff, Kodály, Willems), as well as body percussion (Bond, 2015; Rodríguez & Álvarez, 2017). However, the challenge of limited access to musical instruments in kindergarten classrooms has been identified in many countries, for example, in the United States (Kirby et al., 2022) and Singapore (Bautista et al., 2018).

Finally, while music curricula around the world emphasize the importance of unleashing children's self-expression and creativity through music experiences, the available

research indicates that kindergarten teachers rarely conduct activities focusing on such objectives (Hickey & Schmidt, 2019; Rajan, 2017). Specifically, activities related to improvisation and composition are rarely identified in kindergartens (Bernhard & Stringham, 2016; Hickey & Schmidt, 2019). In the United States, Cho et al. (2017) reported that teachers did not provide children with opportunities to explore, improvise, create, and express themselves freely with music and sound, even though teachers were aware of music's importance in cultivating creativity. Similarly, Bautista et al. (2018) found that musical activities in Singapore kindergartens lacked creative elements. Activities were found to be primarily reproductive and focused on factual knowledge. Musical creativity seems to be more prevalent in kindergartens specializing in music education. For example, John et al. (2016) observed that teachers implemented creative musical play for children in a Canadian music school, which involved free exploration, spontaneous improvisation, and guided composition utilizing graphic scores.

Teaching Experience and Its Influence on Teachers' Music Pedagogical Practices

Several studies indicate that teaching experience is a factor that influences various aspects of music education. Teaching experience, deliberate practice in educational settings, and professional training all contribute to teachers' level of expertise (Eraut, 2005; Ericsson, 2017). However, kindergarten teachers with limited teaching experience have been found to lack prior training and knowledge in music pedagogical design and implementation. They therefore tend to feel relatively ill-prepared to conduct diversified musical activities in their classrooms (Bautista & Ho, 2022; Burak, 2019; Liao & Campbell, 2016). Kindergarten teachers rarely implement certain types of musical activities for children (Ehrlin & Wallerstedt, 2014). For instance, a study conducted by Rajan (2017) found that teachers chose to rely on playing prerecorded music but not to include composition and improvisation in their music lessons. As a result, a vicious circle is established in which teachers continue

implementing mainly reproductive, repetitive, and teacher-led classroom musical activities, but rare creativity-fostering activities for children (Bautista et al., 2018; Lau & Grieshaber, 2010).

Additionally, teaching experience influences other aspects of music education, such as teachers' confidence, PD preferences, and lesson evaluations (Conway, 2012; Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014; Wong et al., 2023). In a mixed methods study, Swain and Bodkin-Allen (2014) found that teaching experience could affect kindergarten teachers' beliefs and confidence level in music teaching. Teachers who were relatively less trained in music tended to be unconfident and indicated negative beliefs toward singing. Another survey study conducted by Wong et al. (2023) in Hong Kong concluded that kindergarten teachers' music-specific PD preferences varied according to their career stages. While beginning teachers were interested in PD related to educational technologies, advanced teachers preferred PD related to music listening and appreciation. Other studies have explored the influences of teaching experience within higher educational settings (Conway, 2008). For example, in a study focusing on the evaluation of teaching effectiveness for music lessons in primary education, participants with varying teaching experience were asked to watch specific video clips and rate the teaching effectiveness. Results showed that experienced teachers made more critical and judgmental comments in their evaluations (Madsen & Cassidy, 2005).

This study investigates the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens and compares teachers with various levels of teaching experience. Noteworthily, our Literature Review did not reveal any large-scale quantitative studies investigating whether teaching experience influences kindergarten teachers' music practices. Hence, we believe this study constitutes a unique contribution to the field of early childhood music education.

Goals

This study had two research goals. Goal 1.1 was to investigate the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens (specifically, overall frequency, most common and uncommon activities, and associations among the activities). Goal 1.2 was to analyze the potential differences among teachers with different levels of teaching experience regarding the provision of musical activities. This study contributes to broadening existing knowledge on music pedagogical practices in early childhood education (ECE) settings, from the perspective of an Asian society. Specifically, the study informs ECE stakeholders (i.e., curriculum designers, teachers, teacher educators, and PD providers) about the type and frequency of musical activities conducted by teachers with varying teaching experience in their classrooms. Findings can inspire teacher educators and PD providers to design music education courses in response to the needs of teachers with different teaching experience (Wong et al., 2023). Specifically, PD courses could be designed to support kindergarten teachers in music education, especially in the most uncommon areas.

Method

Participants

In Hong Kong, there are approximately 12,644 kindergarten teachers (EDB, 2023). We employed a convenience sampling recruitment strategy. Participants in the study were 1,019 kindergarten teachers (approximately 8% of the total population), all in charge of teaching K1-3 children (3-6 years old) in Hong Kong kindergartens (972 females, 39 males, eight did not specify). They taught in local (86.1%) and international (13.9%) kindergartens. All participants were qualified kindergarten teachers (EDB, 2020b). The majority of the participants held a Bachelor's Degree or above (69%), whereas the rest held a Higher Diploma (two years of post-secondary education) or a Certificate in Early Childhood Education (31%). Given that our study focuses on investigating the associations between

teaching experience and the provision of musical activities, we classified the participants into three groups according to their teaching experience for analytical purposes based on the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) (2013): Beginning (less than 5 years) (30.6%), Experienced (5-15 years) (34.8%), and Advanced Teachers (more than 15 years) (34.5%). Note that the gender and types of kindergartens of our sample of participants accurately reflected the current composition of Hong Kong's kindergarten sector (EDB, 2022, 2023). The demographic characteristics of our sample largely represented the total population of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong in terms of gender, teaching experience, educational qualifications, and types of kindergartens (EDB, 2022, 2023).

Materials

The survey first presented the demographic items, including information about teachers' years of teaching experience. Then, we asked the participants, "How often do you implement the following activities in your own classroom?" We presented a list of musical activities identified in textbooks commonly used to train kindergarten student teachers, for example, "Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children", "Teach children how to play musical instruments", and "Invent songs or create pieces of music" (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Moravcik et al., 2013), Participants indicated their responses using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *Never,* 2 = *Once a week or less*, 3 = *Several times a week*, and 4 = *Every day*). We utilized a four-stage process to ensure the face, content, and ecological validity, and reliability of the survey.

Stage 1: Literature review. First, the authors conducted a comprehensive literature review on the theoretical taxonomies of musical activities (e.g., Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Moravcik et al., 2013), and the provision of musical activities in kindergarten settings (e.g., Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018; Rajan, 2017).

Stage 2: Pilot interviews. We piloted the interviews individually with 71 kindergarten teachers to qualitatively explore their current music and movement classroom practices. During these pilot interviews, we asked the participants to think aloud and comment on the relevance of the items and the proposed response choices (Bautista & Ho, 2021).

Stage 3: Preliminary version of survey, piloting, and expert review. We revised and converted the interview protocol into a survey according to teachers' interview responses and feedback. Next, we consulted a panel of experts to review the items in the survey. Then, we created the survey on an online survey system Qualtrics XM Platform (http://qualtrics.com/). Subsequently, the Qualtrics survey was piloted with 15 teachers.

Stage 4*: *Final version and survey translation. Based on the teachers' feedback, we made minor modifications to the survey to ensure its quality and validity. Then, the first author translated the survey from English into Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese. Finally, we set up the finalized survey on Qualtrics and distributed it.

Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the authors' university. We obtained the email addresses of all kindergartens in Hong Kong from the official website of the EDB[2]. Individual invitation emails were sent to all kindergarten principals, which included the project's information sheet and the school's consent form as attachments, and the hyperlink to the Qualtrics online survey. We asked principals to forward our email to teachers in charge of 3- to 6-year-old children in their kindergartens. Then, we sent two follow-up emails to the principals to remind their teachers to complete the survey. Note that we could not track the number of teachers who received our invitation emails to complete the survey, hence we were unable to calculate the survey's response rate. At the

[2] Please visit: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/student-parents/sch-info/sch-search/schlist-by-district/index.html

beginning of the survey, teachers were asked to provide informed consent. The survey was active for one month on Qualtrics.

Data Analysis

The survey initially recorded a total of 1,128 entries. We went through a data-cleaning process to eliminate the invalid responses. Specifically, we eliminated 94 entries of the participants who completed the survey in less than the minimum estimated time required (i.e., 4 minutes and 30 seconds), eight entries of the participants who did not sign the consent form, and seven entries of the participants who indicated "I have no experience teaching children aged 3-6". Finally, we recorded 1,019 valid responses. To address Goal 1.1, descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, overall means, and standard deviations) were utilized to obtain a general overview of the data. Principal component analysis (PCA) was run to identify whether there were any underlying relationships and groupings among the measured 18 activities (DeCoster, 1998). Varimax (orthogonal) rotation was applied to simplify the interpretation of results, given that the activities were not significantly correlated (Jolliffe, 2002). To address Goal 1.2, we used the mean scores of each of the 18 musical activities to calculate their ranking position (1^{st}, 2^{nd}, 3^{rd}, etc.) to better understand the priorities that resulted from the participants' responses. Activities with the highest mean scores (i.e., closest to 4) would be ranked 1^{st}, and so forth. Finally, we performed parametric analyses (One-way ANOVA, *Welch's* ANOVA) to examine the associations between teaching experience and the provision of musical activities. When significant differences were found in specific items, post hoc Tukey HSD or Games-Howell tests were run. Data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 26.0.

Results

Provision of Musical Activities: Descriptive Statistics

In response to the question, "How often do you implement the following activities in your own classroom?", we found that the most common response choices were *Several times per week* and *Once a week or less*, whereas *Every day* and *Never* were selected less frequently (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Breakdown of Response Choices

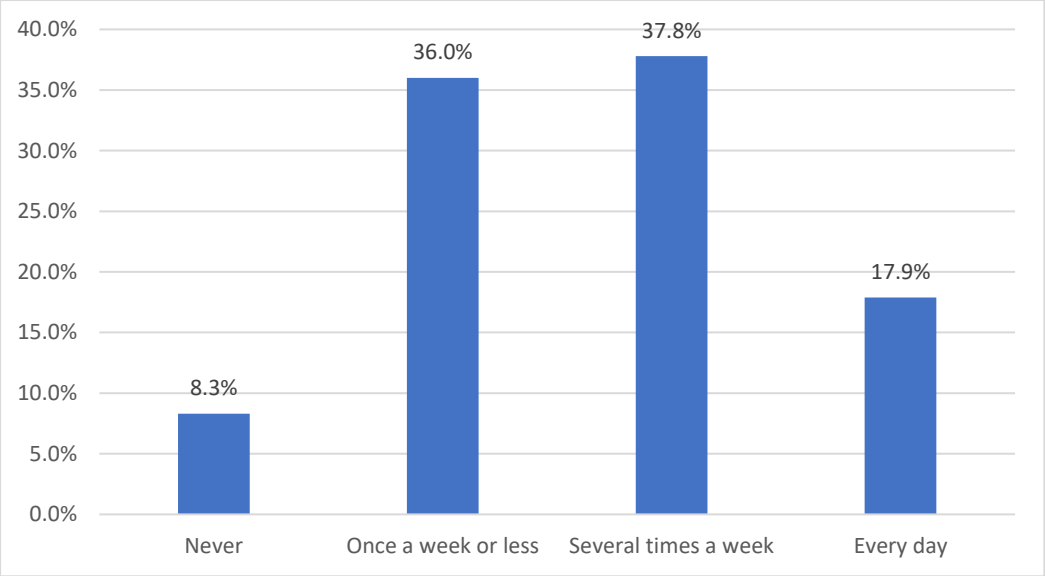


Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of teachers' responses for the 18 musical activities presented, including the frequencies and percentages for the four response choices, overall mean scores (in descending order), and standard deviations. The resulting means ranged from 2.14 to 3.63. The most common activities were "Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children" and "Use music and movement during transitions", which most participants reported to conduct *Every day*. This was followed by the activities participants chose *Several times per week*, including activities related to rhythmic movement (i.e., "Move to the beat, tempo or dynamics of music", "Move to music freely [without teacher direction]"), musical integration (i.e., "Integrating music and movement in theme-based activities", and musical

instruments (i.e., “Body percussion [explore the sounds our bodies can produce]”, “Play musical instruments for children [you play for them]”). Finally, activities related to musical creativity, such as “Ask children to invent new lyrics for songs” and “Invent songs or create pieces of music” were relatively rare, as most participants reported to conduct them *Once a week or less*.

Table 2

Provision of Musical Activities in Kindergartens: “How Often Do You Implement the Following Activities in Your Own Classroom?”

Musical activities	Never (1)		Once a week or less (2)		Several times a week (3)		Every day (4)		Overall Mean (*SD*)
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children	12	1.2	49	4.8	248	24.3	710	69.7	3.63 (.63)
Use music and movement during transitions	25	2.5	98	9.6	379	37.2	517	50.7	3.36 (.76)
Move to the beat, tempo or dynamics of music	49	4.8	209	20.5	525	51.5	236	23.2	2.93 (.79)
Imitating world sounds with voice	60	5.9	328	32.2	430	42.2	201	19.7	2.76 (.83)
Integrating music and movement in theme-based activities	52	5.1	340	33.4	452	44.4	175	17.2	2.74 (.80)
Move to music freely (without teacher direction)	70	6.9	323	31.7	434	42.6	191	18.8	2.73 (.84)
Body percussion (explore the sounds our bodies can produce)	58	5.7	326	32.0	491	48.2	144	14.1	2.71 (.78)
Activities focusing on musical concepts (fast/slow, high/low)	56	5.5	330	32.4	503	49.4	130	12.8	2.69 (.76)
Play musical instruments for children (you play for them)	99	9.7	358	35.1	427	41.9	135	13.2	2.59 (.84)
Ask children to freely explore the sound of objects or instruments	56	5.5	426	41.8	440	43.2	97	9.5	2.57 (.74)
Storytelling with music and movement	126	12.4	383	37.6	358	35.1	152	14.9	2.53 (.89)
Teach children how to play musical instruments	77	7.6	402	39.5	481	47.2	59	5.8	2.51 (.72)

Ask children to describe their feelings in response to music	89	8.7	460	45.1	356	34.9	114	11.2	2.49 (.81)
Using music technology (music software, audio recordings)	158	15.5	369	36.2	339	33.3	153	15.0	2.48 (.93)
Exposing children to different music styles	74	7.3	527	51.7	331	32.5	87	8.5	2.42 (.75)
Ask children to invent new lyrics for songs	134	13.2	561	55.1	240	23.6	84	8.2	2.27 (.79)
Activities exclusively centered on coordinated rhythmic movement	139	13.6	569	55.8	259	25.4	52	5.1	2.22 (.74)
Invent songs or create pieces of music	191	18.7	536	52.6	247	24.2	45	4.4	2.14 (.77)
OVERALL	85	8.3	366	36.0	386	37.8	182	17.9	2.65 (.79)

(*) The response choice with the highest percentage for each musical activity is highlighted in grey.

Table 3 presents the means, rank position, and standard deviations among the three teaching experience groups. Asterisks highlight items for which significant differences were found. Overall, the three groups of teachers conducted activities related to singing and rhythmic movement more frequently, such as “Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children”, “Use music and movement during transitions”, and “Move to the beat, tempo or dynamics of music”. In contrast, activities related to inventing songs or lyrics were rarely conducted by the three groups of teachers, such as “Ask children to invent new lyrics for songs”, and “Invent songs or create pieces of music”.

Table 3

Provision of Musical Activities among Three Groups of Teachers with Different Teaching Experience

Musical activities	**Overall Mean (*SD*)**	**Beginning (<5 years)**		**Experienced (5-15 years)**		**Advanced (> 15 years)**	
		Rank	***M* (*SD*)**	**Rank**	***M* (*SD*)**	**Rank**	***M* (*SD*)**
Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children	3.63 (.63)	1st	3.62 (.63)	1st	3.65 (.58)	1st	3.61 (.70)
Use music and movement during transitions	3.36 (.76)	2nd	3.32 (.76)	2nd	3.35 (.73)	2nd	3.41 (.77)

Move to the beat, tempo or dynamics of music	2.93 (.79)	3rd	2.89 (.83)	3rd	2.88 (.74)	3rd	3.02 (.80)
Imitating world sounds with voice	2.76 (.83)	4th	2.74 (.83)	4th	2.77 (.82)	7th	2.76 (.85)
Integrating music and movement in theme-based activities	2.74 (.80)	5th	2.70 (.80)	5th	2.72 (.76)	5th	2.78 (.83)
Move to music freely (without teacher direction)	2.73 (.84)	6th	2.69* (.85)	7th	2.66* (.82)	4th	2.85* (.85)
Body percussion (explore the sounds our bodies can produce)	2.71 (.78)	8th	2.66 (.81)	6th	2.71 (.77)	8th	2.75 (.76)
Activities focusing on musical concepts (fast/slow, high/low)	2.69 (.76)	6th	2.69 (.74)	8th	2.62 (.74)	6th	2.77 (.79)
Play musical instruments for children (you play for them)	2.59 (.84)	9th	2.64 (.90)	9th	2.58 (.82)	12th	2.55 (.79)
Ask children to freely explore the sound of objects or instruments	2.57 (.74)	10th	2.54 (.77)	10th	2.57 (.72)	10th	2.59 (.73)
Storytelling with music and movement	2.53 (.89)	15th	2.41* (.88)	11th	2.54 (.88)	9th	2.62* (.90)
Teach children how to play musical instruments	2.51 (.72)	10th	2.54 (.72)	13th	2.48 (.71)	13th	2.52 (.72)
Ask children to describe their feelings in response to music	2.49 (.81)	12th	2.46 (.82)	12th	2.50 (.79)	14th	2.50 (.81)
Using music technology (music software, audio recordings)	2.48 (.93)	14th	2.43 (.98)	14th	2.43 (.91)	11th	2.57 (.90)
Exposing children to different music styles	2.42 (.75)	13th	2.44 (.77)	15th	2.42 (.74)	15th	2.41 (.74)
Ask children to invent new lyrics for songs	2.27 (.79)	17th	2.13* (.78)	16th	2.26 (.76)	16th	2.40* (.82)
Activities exclusively centered on coordinated rhythmic movement	2.22 (.74)	16th	2.20 (.68)	17th	2.18 (.72)	17th	2.28 (.81)
Invent songs or create pieces of music	2.14 (.77)	18th	2.08* (.78)	18th	2.09* (.74)	18th	2.25* (.77)
OVERALL	2.65 (.79)		2.62 (.80)		2.63 (.76)		2.70 (.80)

Asterisks [*] indicate the group in which a significant difference was found.

Note that the overall mean score of Beginning teachers was lower than Experienced and Advanced teachers. Only Advanced teachers' overall mean score for the 18 activities was higher than the overall mean of all participants. While the activities' ranking positions were relatively similar among the three teaching experience groups, there was wide variability for

four specific activities ranked at the top and in the middle of the table. The activity with the widest difference in the ranking was "Storytelling with music and movement" (15th for Beginning teachers, 11th for Experienced teachers, 9th for Advanced teachers). Another activity with wide ranking differences was "Imitating world sounds with voice" (4th for Beginning and Experienced teachers, 7th for Advanced teachers). The other two activities were related to musical instruments, including "Play musical instruments for children (you play for them)" (9th for Beginning and Experienced teachers, 12th for Advanced teachers) and "Teach children how to play musical instruments" (10th for Beginning teachers, 13th for Experienced and Advanced teachers).

Groups of Musical Activities Based on Provision Frequency: Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

PCA for the 18 musical activities was run over the sample using Varimax (orthogonal) rotation[3] (see Table 4). Both Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) (.935) and Bartlett's test of sphericity values ($p < .01$) indicated that the correlation among items was well-defined for a PCA. Four components were extracted with the eigenvalue set at 0.9, which explained 62.506% of the variance for the entire set of variables. The components are presented in order of eigenvalue magnitude.

We labeled the four components as follows:

- **Component 1: Creativity and Self-expression.**

  This component correlated most strongly with "Ask children to invent new lyrics for songs". All the items in Component 1 were related to creating music pieces or new lyrics for songs and expressing feelings in response to music.

- **Component 2: Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities.**

[3] The average of the communalities among all items was 0.67, which was stable (Beavers et al., 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). While a loading greater than 0.7 is the standard, a loading of 0.4 is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2011). In this study, component loading of 0.4 and above was used as the cut-off point.

This component had a strong correlation with items related to coordinated rhythmic movement, music technology (music software, audio recordings), and theme-based activities.

- **Component 3: Sound Production.**

  This component correlated most strongly with "Teach children how to play musical instruments" and "Play musical instruments for children (you play for them)". The other two items related to body percussion and sound exploration obtained relatively less but acceptable loadings.

- **Component 4: Singing and Transitions.**

  This component had the strongest correlation with "Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children". All items in Component 4 obtained high loadings.

Table 5 shows the rank position, component mean scores, and standard deviations of the four components of musical activities among different teaching experience groups. There was wide variability in the ranking positions for these four components of musical activities. The first-ranked component was Sound Production (Beginning teachers), Singing and Transitions (Experienced teachers), and Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities (Advanced teachers). In contrast, the last-ranked component was Creativity and Self-expression (Beginning teachers), Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities (Experienced teachers), and Sound Production (Advanced teachers). A one-way ANOVA test indicated a significant difference in Creativity and Self-expression among the teaching experience groups, F (2, 1016) = 3.596, p = .028. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean component score for Beginning teachers (M = -.124, SD = .97) was significantly lower than Advanced teachers (M = .075, SD = 1.02, p = .029). Finally, a significant difference was found in Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities, F (2, 1016) = 4.285, p = .014. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the

mean component score for Experienced teachers (M = -.097, SD = .97) was significantly lower than Advanced teachers (M = .119, SD = 1.03, p = .011).

Table 4

Principal Component Analysis: Varimax Rotated Matrix of 18 Musical Activities

Musical activities	Component			
	1. Creativity and Self-expression	**2. Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities**	**3. Sound Production**	**4. Singing and Transitions**
Ask children to invent new lyrics for songs	.719			
Storytelling with music and movement	.678			
Exposing children to different music styles	.673			
Ask children to describe their feelings in response to music	.639			
Invent songs or create pieces of music	.612			
Imitating world sounds with voice	.515			
Activities exclusively centered on coordinated rhythmic movement		.683		
Integrating music and movement in theme-based activities		.668		
Activities focusing on musical concepts (fast/slow, high/low)		.668		
Using music technology (music software, audio recordings)		.662		
Move to music freely (without teacher direction)		.532		
Move to the beat, tempo or dynamics of music		.530		
Teach children how to play musical instruments			.799	
Play musical instruments for children (you play for them)			.795	
Body percussion (explore the sounds our bodies can produce)			.548	
Ask children to freely explore the sound of objects or instruments			.499	
Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children				.811
Use music and movement during transitions				.787

Percentage of variance explained: 62.506%
(Component 1: 17.647%, Component 2: 17.375%, Component 3: 15.429%, Component 4: 12.055%).
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = .935.
Bartlett's test of sphericity = $p < .01$.

Table 5

Four Components of Musical Activities among Three Groups of Teachers with Different Teaching Experience

Musical activities	Beginning (<5 years)		Experienced (5-15 years)		Advanced (> 15 years)	
	Rank	***M (SD)***	**Rank**	***M (SD)***	**Rank**	***M (SD)***
Creativity and Self-expression	4th	-.124* (.97)	2nd	.034 (1.00)	2nd	.075* (1.02)
Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities	2nd	-.023 (.99)	4th	-.097* (.97)	1st	.119* (1.03)
Sound Production	1st	.075 (1.09)	3rd	-.038 (.99)	4th	-.029 (.93)
Singing and Transitions	3rd	-.038 (1.03)	1st	.037 (.92)	3rd	-.003 (1.05)
OVERALL		-.028 (1.02)		-.016 (.97)		.041 (1.01)

Asterisks [*] indicate the group in which a significant difference was found.

Discussion

Regarding Goal 1.1, we found that the provision of musical activities for children in Hong Kong kindergartens was high overall, given that the overall mean score of the 18 musical activities was 2.65 (between *Once a week or less* and *Several times per week*). Such provision seems to be higher than in other countries such as South Africa (Van Vreden, 2016), Sweden (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018), and the United States (Nardo et al., 2006). However, large differences in the frequency of provision were found among the various musical activities considered. Some activities were reported to be frequently conducted by participants, while others were rarely implemented. Based on the PCA's results, the musical activities were classified into four groups: Singing and Transitions (the most frequent); Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities; Sound Production; and Creativity and Self-expression (the least frequent).

The most common musical activities were related to Singing and Transitions such as "Sing songs, rhymes, or chants with children", and "Use music and movement during

transitions", which is aligned with prior studies conducted in Singapore and Sweden (Bautista et al., 2018; Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018). Although the CDC established the new curriculum Guide (2017) with an emphasis on musical creativity, it seems that children are still often asked to follow teachers singing songs in unison with repetition as a routine, similar to the findings of a prior local study conducted a decade ago (Lau & Grieshaber, 2010). Singing was followed by other common musical activities pertaining to Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities. The fact that these activities were included in the same cluster in kindergarten teachers' pedagogical practice was a unique finding. We interpreted that teachers possibly integrate rhythmic movement and technology into thematic activities. Sullivan and Bers (2018) also demonstrated an example of this combination of activities. Other musical activities frequently conducted by the participants were related to Sound Production, which revealed that teachers in Hong Kong might not be facing the issue of limited musical instruments in kindergarten classrooms, as compared to other countries like Turkey (Ersoy & Dere, 2012) and the United States (Kirby et al., 2022).

In contrast, the most rarely reported activities were related to Creativity and Self-expression, including "Invent songs or create pieces of music", "Ask children to invent new lyrics for songs" and "Ask children to describe their feelings in response to music". This is consistent with the trend of prior research conducted in other Western countries like the United States (Bernhard & Stringham, 2016) and Asian countries like Singapore (Bautista et al., 2018). Participants tended to implement activities focusing on musical skills (either singing or instrumental) instead of exposing children to musical creativity activities, involving elements of exploration, improvisation, and creation (Bautista et al., 2018). This result revealed that not all participants fulfilled the curriculum Guide's objectives, which emphasized providing children with diverse musical activities daily (CDC, 2017).

Teachers in Hong Kong face various challenges in teaching children musical creativity and self-expression. Previous studies found that the usefulness of pre-service and PD courses is limited, and that the musical knowledge and skills acquired during teacher preparation programs are too theoretical and disconnected from the reality of Hong Kong kindergartens (Bautista & Ho, 2021). Such insufficient preparation leads teachers to feel a lack of confidence and competence to provide certain types of musical activity, particularly those involving exploration, improvisation, and creation (Burak, 2019; Hickey & Schmidt, 2019). Moreover, creativity skills are usually considered by parents and society as relatively less important compared to reproduction and memorization skills (Young, 2018). To fulfill social expectations, teachers tend to focus on activities such as singing, so children can learn new vocabulary and develop their memorization skills.

Regarding Goal 1.2, we found that different levels of teaching experience are associated with varying provision of musical activities. Beginning teachers reported a lower overall mean score for the 18 musical activities than Advanced teachers. Particularly, Beginning teachers conducted significantly fewer musical creativity and self-expression activities compared to Advanced teachers. Moreover, there was wide variability for four specific activities. Beginning teachers had a higher ranking of “Play musical instruments for children (you play for them)”, “Teach children how to play musical instruments”, and “Imitating world sounds with voice”. In contrast, Advanced teachers had a higher ranking for “Storytelling with music and movement”. These findings indirectly corresponded to the study conducted by Wong et al. (2023), which focused on kindergarten teachers’ music-specific PD preferences. Beginning teachers preferred PD on playing musical instruments and creativity with music and movement, whereas Advanced teachers preferred PD related to music listening and appreciation. Given the limited number of studies investigating the provision of

musical activities conducted by teachers with different teaching experience, our study serves as a unique contribution to the existing corpus of knowledge.

Teachers in different career stages seem to have different competence in music pedagogical practices, which could be one of the reasons influencing their provision of musical activities (Bautista & Ho, 2022; Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014). It is understandable that teachers tend to conduct musical activities in which they are confident, especially if they believe that such activities will benefit children's development and learning. We infer that Beginning teachers rarely conduct specific musical activities (i.e., musical creativity and self-expression) due to their limited knowledge of musical creativity's definition and benefits (Young & Ilari, 2019). Besançon and Lubart (2008) found that teachers believed all music-related activities necessarily foster musical creativity. Hence, Beginning teachers who conducted music-related activities with children (e.g., singing, moving to music) might misinterpret that they have already fulfilled the curriculum objectives pertaining to musical creativity and self-expression. On the other hand, Advanced teachers have richer teaching and PD experience than Beginning teachers. Advanced teachers may conduct most musical activities more frequently as they have higher confidence and competence in music teaching overall. However, they seem to conduct slightly fewer activities related to playing musical instruments compared to Beginning teachers. This could be due to their limited instrumental skills or lack of time.

Conclusion

We conclude that while the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens is relatively high, the activities lack diversity. Teachers seem to conduct reproductive and routine activities focused on singing and transitions, and doing rhythmic movements rather than fostering children's musical creativity and self-expression, similar to the trend found in other Asian societies (Bautista et al., 2018). Such practices are insufficient

to fulfill the local curriculum objectives articulated in the Guide, which heavily emphasize unleashing and developing children's creativity and self-expression through music (CDC, 2017). Moreover, Advanced teachers seem to conduct more musical activities for children as compared to Beginning teachers. Teachers with varying teaching experience tend to focus on different musical activities in the classroom. We infer that teachers in different stages may have distinctive competence in conducting musical activities, as well as diverse understandings and interpretations of the local curriculum objectives (i.e., musical creativity) (Besançon & Lubart, 2008).

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations in this study. First, while our methodological approach allowed us to recruit a large sample of participants, our study relied on a single data source, namely self-reported survey responses. It would be worthwhile for future studies to triangulate the findings by collecting and analyzing complementary data sources (e.g., observations, one-to-one and focus group interviews) to increase the validity and credibility of the research findings (Noble & Heale, 2019). For instance, it would be important to conduct interviews to explore why teachers implement specific musical activities more than others. Second, the present study focused exclusively on investigating the provision of musical activities in kindergartens. Our findings suggest that teachers with different teaching experience are likely to have diverse understandings and interpretations of local curriculum objectives in music teaching. Future research can explore ECE stakeholders' understandings of local curriculum objectives in music teaching and their perspectives on high-quality music pedagogical approaches. In addition, future studies can utilize a similar methodology (i.e., survey) to investigate the provision of musical activities in other countries (Bautista et al., 2023). Comparative studies could be further done to explore if the trends are similar among different countries and jurisdictions. Finally, given that the present study focused exclusively

on analyzing associations between different levels of teaching experience and provision of musical activities, future studies should investigate the reasons behind such associations.

Implications

The findings of this study bring important implications for music teaching to ECE stakeholders, including curriculum designers, teachers, teacher educators, and PD providers. Curriculum designers are recommended to review and clarify the curriculum objectives related to music education in the Guide (CDC, 2017). For instance, the definition of musical creativity should be explained in more detail. Specifically, creativity in music education encompasses activities involving sound creation and exploration through musical instruments, vocalization, improvisation, composition, and performance (Tan et al., 2019). Furthermore, we suggest that curriculum designers include the optimal frequency of the musical activities for each objective in the Guide, which can allow teachers to have a better understanding and avoid misinterpreting the expectations from the curriculum. Given that there is a similar trend in the lack of musical creativity and self-expression in other countries (e.g., the United States and Singapore), we encourage those countries' curriculum designers to review and clarify the curriculum objectives related to music education.

Last but not least, teachers with different teaching experience need different kinds of PD support. Hence, teacher educators and PD providers should design courses in coherence with teachers' needs (Wong et al., 2023). For example, design PD courses on activities related to musical creativity and self-expression for Beginning teachers. In addition, we recommend teachers at different stages to share their perspectives and ideas on high-quality music pedagogical practices with their colleagues, in order to learn and gain insight into their lesson design and implementation (Barrett et al., 2019). Ultimately, teachers can be equipped with plentiful musical knowledge and skills to fulfill all the learning objectives in the curriculum,

therefore reinforcing the quality of kindergarten music education to benefit children (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019).

STUDY 2: Music Activities in Hong Kong Kindergartens: A Content Analysis of the Quality Review Reports[4]

Abstract

In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau (EDB) assesses the quality of services provided to children in local kindergartens. Quality Review (QR) reports of kindergartens that pass the assessment are published on EDB's website. We conducted a content analysis of 164 QR reports to examine the alignment between the music activities alluded to and the curriculum objectives established for music in official policies. A coding scheme was developed using both inductive and deductive approaches. High inter-reliability was obtained. MAXQDA was used to conduct word frequency, descriptive, and co-occurrence analyses. The most common terms identified in the music-related segments focused on children's development of sensory abilities through music experiences, in relation to singing, rhythm, beat, movement, and instrumental music. However, activities intended to foster musical creativity and self-expression were seldom mentioned. We conclude that the QR reports reveal important discrepancies between official curriculum policies and actual classroom practices, which EDB assessors seemed to ignore or overlook. Implications focus on the need for kindergarten stakeholders to address curriculum/practice gaps and further prepare teachers to foster children's musical creativity.

Keywords: early childhood education, music activities, preschool curriculum, creativity

[4] Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2022). Music activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: A content analysis of the quality review reports. *Revista Electrónica de LEEME, 49*, 32-49. https://doi.org/10.7203/LEEME.49.24249 This is an open-access article. Authors are retain the copyright to reprint the publication, as described in the journal's website: https://ojs.uv.es/index.php/LEEME/about/submissions

Introduction: Kindergarten Education in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the term *kindergarten* is used in reference to preschools for 3- to 6-year-old children. Kindergarten education is not compulsory, yet most children attend center-based programs, either half-day (around 63%) or full-day (37%). Unlike most Western countries but similar to other Asian societies (Kagan, 2019), kindergartens in Hong Kong are operated by private providers and non-profit organizations. A government agency, the Education Bureau (EDB), regulates and subsidizes the local kindergarten sector (EDB, 2021a). In fact, the Kindergarten Education Scheme (2017a) was recently implemented to enhance the quality of kindergarten education across the territory and to provide government subsidies to a large mass of local kindergartens—currently 73% of the total (EDB, 2023).

All kindergartens under this Scheme are subject to the Quality Review (QR), an assessment mechanism that determines whether (or not) kindergartens will obtain government subsidies. Teams of EDB assessors visit kindergartens for 2.5 to 3.5 days to conduct lesson observations, examine children's work, revise curriculum materials, and interview the kindergarten staff. QR reports are written based on these on-site observations. Those kindergartens that meet the performance indicators (EDB, 2017b) will pass the assessment. Their QR reports are published on the EDB website[5] for public information, aiming to strengthen the transparency of the QR mechanism and disseminate high-quality pedagogical practices across the city (EDB, 2017a).

This study analyzes the feedback pertaining to music education in the QR reports. We believe these reports constitute a large-scale and highly interesting database. Other than providing an excellent window into pedagogical practices within local kindergartens, they reveal the types of pedagogical practices regarded as high-quality practices by the EDB,

[5] Please visit: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/qr-report/index.html

given that these kindergartens passed the QR assessment. Systematic analyses of these reports are therefore of great interest to various stakeholders (e.g., researchers, teacher educators, curriculum designers, principals, teachers). The Literature Review is structured into two sub-sections. The first one elaborates on the official kindergarten music curriculum in Hong Kong. The second one reviews the international literature on music activities within kindergarten settings.

Literature Review

Kindergarten Music Curriculum: The Case of Hong Kong

Music is a key learning area in kindergarten education, given its multiple benefits to children's holistic development and learning (Cremades et al., 2017; Sullivan, 2016; Young & Ilari, 2019). Western scholars have defined kindergarten music education as the provision of diversified musical experiences for children to learn about musical elements, develop musical skills and dispositions, express emotions and feelings, and stimulate children's imagination (Essa & Burnham, 2019; Moravcik et al., 2013). There is evidence that different types of music activities contribute to fostering specific outcomes in young children. For instance, singing promotes language development (Chen-Hafteck & Mang, 2012); music appreciation can enhance intellectual and creative development (Campbell, 2000); singing action songs, playing musical games, clapping rhythms, and rhythmic movement in groups can generate positive social behaviors (Moravcik et al., 2013); and moving to the beat develops self-regulation and executive functions (Williams, 2018). Well-known Western pedagogical approaches such as Reggio Emilia and Montessori emphasize the importance of music within the early childhood curriculum, highlighting its power to cultivate children's divergent thinking, creativity, and self-expression (Watts, 2018).

Within the Hong Kong context, government-subsidized kindergartens are required to follow the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide—hereafter the *Guide* (Curriculum

Development Council [CDC], 2017). The Guide includes music as a subdomain of 'Arts and Creativity'. The three main learning objectives of this learning area comprise: (1) "to develop sensory abilities and accumulate art experiences" (e.g., body movements, singing, music appreciation, rhythm and beats), (2) "to express feelings and unleash creativity through presenting and creating the arts" (e.g., using imagination and expressing feelings through singing and movements), and (3) "to develop creativity through active exploration in art activities" (e.g., improvising and creating on musical elements) (CDC, 2017, p.47). Half-day and full-day kindergartens are expected to allocate 45-60 minutes and 90-105 minutes per day, respectively, for children to participate in arts and physical activities. Teachers are advised to implement sufficient, diversified, and enjoyable music activities on a daily basis.

The EDB published the performance indicators (EDB, 2017b) to assess the quality of teaching and learning in the Guide's various learning areas. The performance indicators pertaining to music involve two domains (Table 6).

Table 6

Music Performance Indicators

Domain II	**Learning and Teaching – Curriculum Structure**
	Focuses on the provision of sufficient daily music activities for children to gain music learning experiences.
Domain IV	**Child Development – Aesthetic and Cultural Development** Sub-domain: Creativity and Appreciation
	Focuses on arts and music with specific expectations for children. a) develop a different sense to recognize sound, rhythms, clapping, and imitating the sound of nature; b) sing songs with movements and play musical instruments; c) enjoy the music activities; d) experience and express musical elements; e) enjoy music performance, dancing, creating, and composing; f) create music and self-expression; g) appreciate music and express feelings in relation to personal experiences.

These performance indicators reflect the EDB's perspective of high-quality music pedagogical practices. Note that performance indicators (a) to (d) relate to the first objective of the Arts and Creativity learning area (develop sensory abilities), while performance indicators (e) to (g) put the emphasis on the second objective (express feelings) and third objective (develop creativity through active exploration). This means that local curriculum policies require teachers not only to implement reproductive or routine music activities in the classroom; rather, teachers are also expected to utilize music as a tool to develop an array of skills and foster children's creativity and self-expression (EDB, 2017b). The abovementioned learning objectives and performance indicators are consistent with contemporary curriculum standards and early childhood education (ECE) frameworks around the world (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Cremades et al., 2017). In the next section, we review recent empirical studies that have investigated music teaching practices at kindergartens around the globe.

Music Activities in Kindergartens: Classroom Practices Around the World

Research studies conducted in various countries and jurisdictions, including Hong Kong (Lau & Grieshaber, 2018), have reported that kindergarten teachers primarily focus on providing children with music experiences to develop their sensory abilities, including singing, movements, instrumental and integrated activities (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018; Stolić, 2015). Singing is the most typical music activity (Pérez-Moreno & Folch, 2019). For example, in the United States, Rajan (2017) found that teachers spend long periods of time singing songs related to shapes, letters, numbers, seasons, and counting, in order to build academic connections between music and other learning areas (i.e., language and numeracy acquisition). In an observational study conducted in Singapore by Bautista et al. (2018), singing and moving to music was the most common combination of activities among various art forms. In particular, teachers were frequently observed instructing children to perform specific movements while singing traditional children's songs. Other prior studies conducted

in Sweden and Spain indicated that teachers frequently let children play musical instruments, typically melodic, percussion, and Orff instruments (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018; Rodríguez & Álvarez, 2017). However, in Turkey, Ersoy and Dere (2012) found that around half of the teachers did not provide children opportunities to explore instruments due to the lack of instruments in the classroom.

In contrast, activities that involve sound exploration, improvisation, creation, and self-expression through music are less frequently identified in kindergartens around the world (Bautista et al., 2018; Garvis, 2012; Gonzalez & Tarrés, 2019). Denac (2008) found that kindergarten teachers in Slovenia spent less than 15% of music education time engaging children in experimentation with sound. In Singapore, Bautista et al. (2018) reported that music activities were primarily reproductive in nature, lacking creative elements and exposure to diversified music genres. A similar issue was reported in Hong Kong a decade ago. Kindergarten teachers mainly emphasized teaching factual knowledge such as musical elements and concepts, rather than using sound and music to unleash children's creativity (Cheung, 2012; Lau, 2006).

Prior qualitative studies conducted in the West have demonstrated how teachers may foster children's musical creativity in kindergarten classrooms, in alignment with contemporary curriculum discourses in music education. For instance, the narrative case study conducted by Schei and Ødegaard (2020) analyzed how young children engaged in a music exploration theme-based activity. Children created a story with the teacher's instrumental accompaniment and expressed their feelings by improvising movements in response to the music's rhythm, melody, and mood. Süner and Ünlü (2013) documented how children explored sound and created different instruments by utilizing mundane materials (e.g., create a guitar using waste boxes, rubber strings, and ropes). In Italy, the observational study conducted by Ferrari and Addessi (2014) analyzed how teachers applied the

Continuator, an interactive and creative musical system designed to elicit children's thinking on sound. Findings showed that this technological tool could further cultivate children's interest in exploring musical elements.

Our review of the international literature reveals the existence of important research gaps. First, prior studies focusing on the enactment of music curricula are mainly qualitative and conducted with relatively small samples of participants (e.g., Gonzalez & Tarrés, 2019; Süner & Ünlü, 2013). Hence, large-scale quantitative studies are needed. Second, some prior studies are not specific to music but integrate other art forms such as visual arts, drama, and dance (e.g., Bautista et al., 2018). More music-specific research is therefore required. Finally, existing studies on how Hong Kong kindergarten teachers implement the music curriculum are limited and relatively outdated (e.g., Chan & Leong, 2007). Updated studies are essential to better understand how recent curriculum policies are being enacted on the ground.

Goals

This study presents a content analysis of the QR reports focusing on the music activities implemented by Hong Kong kindergarten teachers. We had two specific research goals. Goal 2.1 was to examine the presence of music in the QR reports, focusing on the most typical lexicon (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) and the frequency of key terms related to the various music objectives, as stated in local policies. Goal 2.2 was to analyze the types of music activities and the most common combinations of musical contents alluded to in the reports.

Our ultimate purpose was to assess the correspondence between the music activities implemented by teachers on the ground and Hong Kong local curriculum policies, as specified in the Guide's learning objectives (CDC, 2017) and the performance indicators (EDB, 2017b). Findings can inform kindergarten stakeholders (curriculum designers, principals, teacher educators, professional development providers) about the types of music

activities that teachers tend to do less in class, hence revealing the areas in which teachers need the greatest support.

The significance of the study and its interest for an international audience, especially for Western countries in Europe and America, lies in its potential to illustrate the unique characteristics of childhood education systems in Asia. Most Western countries are developing public kindergarten systems, training teachers up to the degree level, and advocating for pedagogies that are child-centric, play-based, and characterized by high-quality teacher-child interactions (Kagan, 2019; Torres et al., 2022). In contrast, the kindergarten sector in Hong Kong is run by private providers, with most teachers trained up to the higher diploma level (2 years of post-secondary education), and even though the curriculum Guide advocates for Western theories and practices, kindergartens continue to enact teacher-centric and content-focused teaching approaches (Bautista et al., 2021). Readers in Western countries will therefore benefit from learning about music education practices in a different socio-cultural setting.

Methods

Data Analysis and Sources

Content analysis is "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). A content analysis was conducted on all the QR reports available since 2017 (year in which the new curriculum Guide was launched) up to 2020 (year in which this analysis was conducted). The number of kindergartens represented was 164 (approximately, 16% of the total number of kindergartens in Hong Kong). More specifically, we included one QR report published in 2017 (0.6%), 33 in 2018 (20.1%), 122 in 2019 (74.4%), and eight in 2020 (4.9%). These reports covered kindergartens in different

geographical areas of Hong Kong, thereby providing a holistic picture of the music curriculum across the territory.

Procedure

First, ethical approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the authors' University. Then, a four-stage process was employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis.

Stage 1: *Literature review.* A detailed review of the local and international literature was conducted to provide us with a better understanding on the trends and standards of the music curriculum and practices in kindergarten settings. This allowed us to identify relevant themes pertaining to music activity types in kindergarten classrooms.

Stage 2: *Develop the coding scheme.* The QR reports were downloaded from the EDB's website and imported into MAXQDA Analytics Pro (VERBI Software, 2019) for data analysis. The authors applied both inductive and deductive approaches (Creswell, 2018) to develop a coding scheme. We first utilized open coding, as an initial interpretive process to identify common themes that emerged in the reports. Then, we added other codes gathered from the international and local literature (e.g., Other sound producers [Refsum, 2007]). The coding scheme was presented in a table format which contained the definitions, examples, and counterexamples for each code. Key illustrative examples were extracted from the QR reports. Codes were binary (i.e., Yes vs No), capturing whether the report mentioned this type of music activity or not.

Stage 3: *Piloting of coding scheme.* The coding scheme was validated by the authors and one student helper. The scheme was first piloted by selecting 35 reports randomly. Definitions, examples, and counterexamples were refined. While we explored various conceptual frameworks of music activities (Denac, 2008; Van Vreden, 2016; Zadnik & Habe, 2017), the low number of references to certain activities in the QR reports led us to collapse

related activities and/or elements under the same code. For example, activities related to music composition and improvisation were both condensed under the code Musical Creativity. Inter-rater reliability was 0.95, as measured by Cohen's (κ) kappa, which indicated that the coding scheme had sufficient reliability.

Stage 4: *Final coding.* The first author (Coder 1) trained a student helper (Coder 2) to be familiar with the coding scheme. Then, both coders analyzed all the reports independently. Disagreements were resolved through discussion until 100% agreement was reached to ensure the reliability and consistency of the coding and assessment process (Boettger & Palmer, 2011).

Data Analysis

To address Goal 2.1, we first analyzed the amount of text (mean number of words, SD, minimum, and maximum) related to music in the QR reports. Descriptive statistics of the most common lexicon were performed to examine the 60 most typical nouns, verbs, and adjectives within the music-related segments. This was supplemented with a word cloud generated by Word Art, intended to offer a visual representation of the findings. To address Goal 2.2, we used descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to examine the kinds of activities that appeared in the QR reports. Literal examples were used to illustrate the analytic codes. Furthermore, a code co-occurrence model was generated to examine the most common combinations of musical contents alluded to in the reports. Common phrases among the co-occurring codes were shown as examples.

Results

Overall Presence of Music in the QR Reports

In total, the 164 QR reports included 2,225,589 words. Each report had an average of 13,571 words (*SD* = 1066.49), with a minimum of 11,185 words and a maximum of 16,679 words. Segments pertaining to music were identified in 162 reports (98.78%). Only two

reports, both published in 2019, did not include any music-related content. The music segments covered 109,155 words in all reports, with an average of 665.58 words per report (4.84% of the total content, on average), ranging from 0 words (0%) to 2,422 words (17.84%) per report.

Table 7 presents the 60 most common words within the coded segments. Irrelevant words including conjunctions (e.g., and, because), prepositions (e.g., in, to), and pronouns (e.g., they, many) were excluded from the analysis. Terms in different grammatical numbers (e.g., child, children) or tenses (e.g., learn, learns, and learning) were considered the same word. Words are sequenced according to their frequency (from highest to lowest) and presented based on word types (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives). Moreover, the table shows the mean and maximum number of times each word appeared per report, and the number and percentage of QR reports (n = 164) in which each word appeared in the music segments.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of the Most Common Lexicon in Music-related Segments

Word	Overall frequency	Average frequency per report	Maximum frequency per report	Number and percentage of reports (n=164) in which the word appeared
Nouns				
Child	645	3.93	12	160 (97.56%)
Activity	592	3.61	15	161 (98.17%)
Music	545	3.32	13	162 (98.78%)
School	276	1.68	12	118 (71.95%)
Teacher	251	1.53	7	104 (63.41%)
Choice	142	0.87	5	114 (69.51%)
Free	142	0.87	5	114 (69.51%)
Movement	115	0.70	5	68 (41.46%)
Time	113	0.69	4	83 (50.61%)
Schedule	110	0.67	4	79 (48.17%)
Art	105	0.64	3	93 (56.71%)
Opportunity	97	0.59	4	69 (42.07%)
Balance	84	0.51	3	72 (43.90%)
Development	80	0.49	3	65 (39.63%)
Instrument	77	0.47	5	53 (32.32%)
Group	56	0.34	2	51 (31.10%)
Rhythm	54	0.33	3	39 (23.78%)
Arrangement	43	0.26	3	34 (20.73%)

Song	42	0.26	3	26 (15.85%)
Melody	40	0.24	3	29 (17.68%)
Fun	39	0.24	2	36 (21.95%)
Experience	33	0.20	3	28 (17.07%)
Element	28	0.17	2	21 (12.80%)
Game	28	0.17	3	23 (14.02%)
Rhyme	27	0.16	2	21 (12.80%)
Body	26	0.16	2	20 (12.20%)
Ability	25	0.15	3	18 (10.98%)
Appreciation	25	0.15	2	20 (12.20%)
Beat	24	0.15	3	18 (10.98%)
Percussion	22	0.13	2	20 (12.20%)
Question	21	0.13	2	20 (12.20%)
Verbs				
Learn	156	0.95	3	91 (55.49%)
Provide	106	0.65	6	81 (49.39%)
Sing	102	0.62	4	60 (36.59%)
Design	82	0.50	4	57 (34.76%)
Engage	77	0.47	4	56 (34.15%)
Play	73	0.45	5	47 (28.66%)
Enjoy	67	0.41	4	55 (33.54%)
Facilitate	66	0.40	3	54 (32.93%)
Teach	65	0.40	6	46 (28.05%)
Participate	50	0.30	3	41 (25.00%)
Express	42	0.26	2	37 (22.56%)
Improve	40	0.24	3	35 (21.34%)
Ensure	37	0.23	2	31 (18.90%)
Conduct	35	0.21	3	30 (18.29%)
Enhance	33	0.20	3	26 (15.85%)
Interest	32	0.20	4	17 (10.37%)
Perform	31	0.19	2	23 (14.02%)
Create	27	0.16	2	21 (12.80%)
Enable	26	0.16	2	23 (14.02%)
Respect	24	0.15	2	23 (14.02%)
Adjectives				
Daily	165	1.01	6	106 (64.63%)
Sufficient	126	0.77	4	97 (59.15%)
Rhythmic	80	0.49	4	50 (30.49%)
Musical	61	0.37	8	34 (20.73%)
Individual	44	0.27	2	43 (26.22%)
Adequate	36	0.22	3	32 (19.51%)
Effectiveness	36	0.22	5	25 (15.24%)
Good	25	0.15	2	21 (12.80%)
Appropriate	21	0.13	2	20 (12.20%)

A word cloud (see Figure 4) was generated using Word Art[6] to visualize the most common 60 words within the music segments. To facilitate the readers' interpretation, the

[6] https://wordart.com/create

words' size was determined by their frequency within the reports (i.e., larger represents a higher frequency). Besides, we used different colors to represent the different types of words (i.e., nouns are in blue, verbs in red, and adjectives in green).

Figure 4

Word Cloud Emerging from the Music Segments

Note. Blue = noun, red = verb, green = adjective.

As shown in Table 7 and Figure 4, the most typical words identified in the music-related segments were nouns (31), followed by verbs (20), and then adjectives (nine). The most frequent words were generic teaching and learning terms, for example, nouns such as "child", "activity", "school", "teacher", "free", "choice", verbs such as "learn", "provide", "design", "engage", and adjectives such as "daily", "sufficient". While the word "music" was

mentioned in 162 reports (98.78%), the presence of music-specific terms (e.g., “song”, “melody”, “beat”, “percussion”, “create”) was low overall, which each term only appeared in below a quarter of the reports. The most prevalent music-specific terms were in relation to sensory abilities development through music experience, such as “instrument”, “rhythmic”, “sing”, and “movement”. However, none of these terms appeared in more than half of the reports. Furthermore, terms related to musical elements (e.g., “rhythm”, “melody”, “beat”) were seldom mentioned, with less than one-fourth of the reports. Note that only two terms related to the music learning objectives—expressing feelings through music (i.e., “express”) and developing creativity through active exploration in art activities (i.e., “create”) were identified in the most common lexicon. Yet, both “express” (22.56% of the reports) and “create” (12.8%) were infrequently mentioned. Apart from the terms in the most common lexicon, we identified some even more rarely mentioned words such as “emotions” (7.32%), “expression” (1.83%), “improvise” (0.61%), and “exploration” (0.61%). Surprisingly, terms strongly linked with creativity such as “experimentation”, “improvisation”, “invention” did not even appear within the music segments.

Interestingly, we found that certain terms related to music rarely appeared within the music segments, although they did frequently appear in other parts of the reports. Some examples pertaining to the area of creativity include the words “creativity” (64.02% of the QR reports versus 7.93% within music segments), “imagination” (43.90% versus 8.54%), and “creation” (36.59% versus 1.22%). Pertaining to the area of self-expression, similar findings were identified for the words “feeling” (44.51% versus 6.71%), “expression” (43.90% versus 1.83%), and “emotions” (29.27% versus 7.32%). Overall, this word frequency analysis revealed that kindergarten teachers did not seem to emphasize creativity and self-expression while teaching music to young children.

Types of Music Activities

A coding scheme with 13 analytic codes (see Table 8) was designed to analyze the types of music activities alluded to in the reports. Note that Table 8 only presents each code's definitions due to space restrictions, while the examples are introduced in the body text.

Table 8

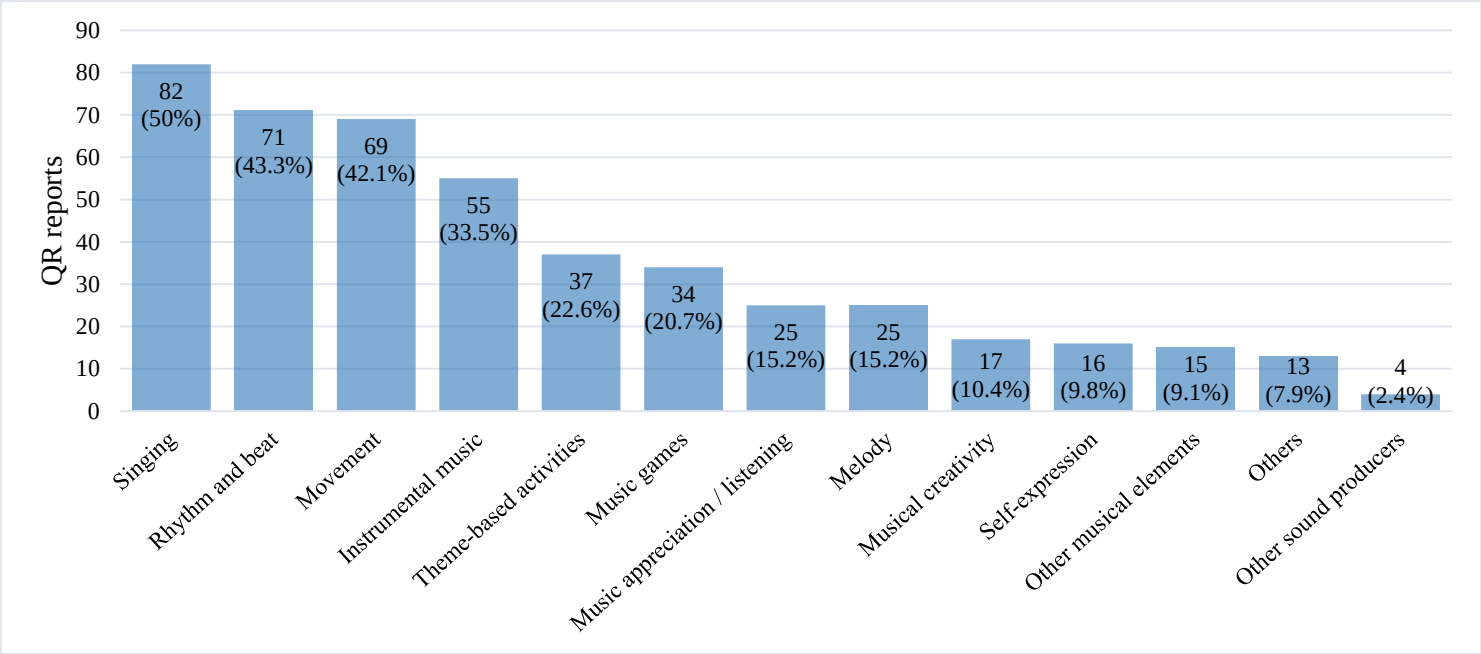
Coding Scheme for Music Activity Types in Teachers' Classroom Pedagogical Practices, as Described in the QR Reports

Code	Definitions
Rhythm and beat	References to activities involving rhythm and/or beating.
Melody	References to activities involving melody.
Other musical elements	References to activities involving musical elements other than rhythm, beat, and/or melody, such as pitch, dynamics, lyrics, tempo, timbre, etc.
Music appreciation / listening	References to activities that involve music appreciation, listening to music, and/or any other activity that requires the understanding and/or description of the parameters of music.
Singing	References to singing songs, rhymes, and/or chants.
Movement	References to moving in response to music (e.g., to the beat, tempo, dynamics) and/or moving to music freely (without teacher direction).
Music games	References to playing music games.
Instrumental music	References to playing conventional musical instruments, including percussion instruments.
Other sounds producers	References to producing sound with resources other than conventional instruments, for example, body, eco-friendly instruments, nature, and/or technology.
Theme-based activities	References to theme-based activities that integrate music with other learning areas, scenarios, and/or stories.
Self-expression	References to self-expression of feelings, emotions, and/or ideas through music and/or in response to music.
Musical creativity	References to exploration, experimentation, improvisation, invention, and/or creativity with music and/or sound.
Others	References to generic music activities or elements not captured in the above categories.

Each report alluded to 2.88 codes on average (min = 0, max = 11, *SD* = 2.58). Figure 5 presents the frequencies and percentages for each code within the QR reports.

Figure 5

Music Activities Identified in the QR Reports: Frequencies and Percentages of Reports (n = 164) that Alluded to Each of the 13 Analytic Codes



The most frequently mentioned music activity was Singing (50% of total reports) (e.g., “singing”, “sing along with music”, “sing nursery rhymes”, and “sing the melody of songs”). This was followed by Rhythm and Beat (43.3%) (e.g., “beating time to the music”, “learn beats through demonstration”, and “feel the change of rhythms”), Movement (42.1%) (e.g., “make body movements”, “engage in rhythmic movements”, “perform rhythms and melodies through body movements”, and “actions songs”), and Instrumental Music (33.5%) (e.g., “instrumental playing”, “playing musical instruments”, and “playing percussion instruments”).

Certain music activities were mentioned in just a handful of the reports (between 15% to a quarter). These included Theme-based Activities (22.6%) (e.g., “design theme-related music activities and link up different music sessions with scenarios” and “the school arranges

Cantonese opera activities for each class once a week as integrated music and physical play activities"), and Music Games (20.7%) (e.g., "integrate different games into music activities" and "incorporate the play elements in music activities"). This was followed by two codes that obtained the same percentage: Music Appreciation / Listening (15.2%) (e.g., "music appreciation", "song appreciation", and "guide children to listen to music"), and Melody (15.2%) (e.g., "identify different parts of the melodies", "follow the melodies to perform rhythmic movements", and "sing the melody of songs").

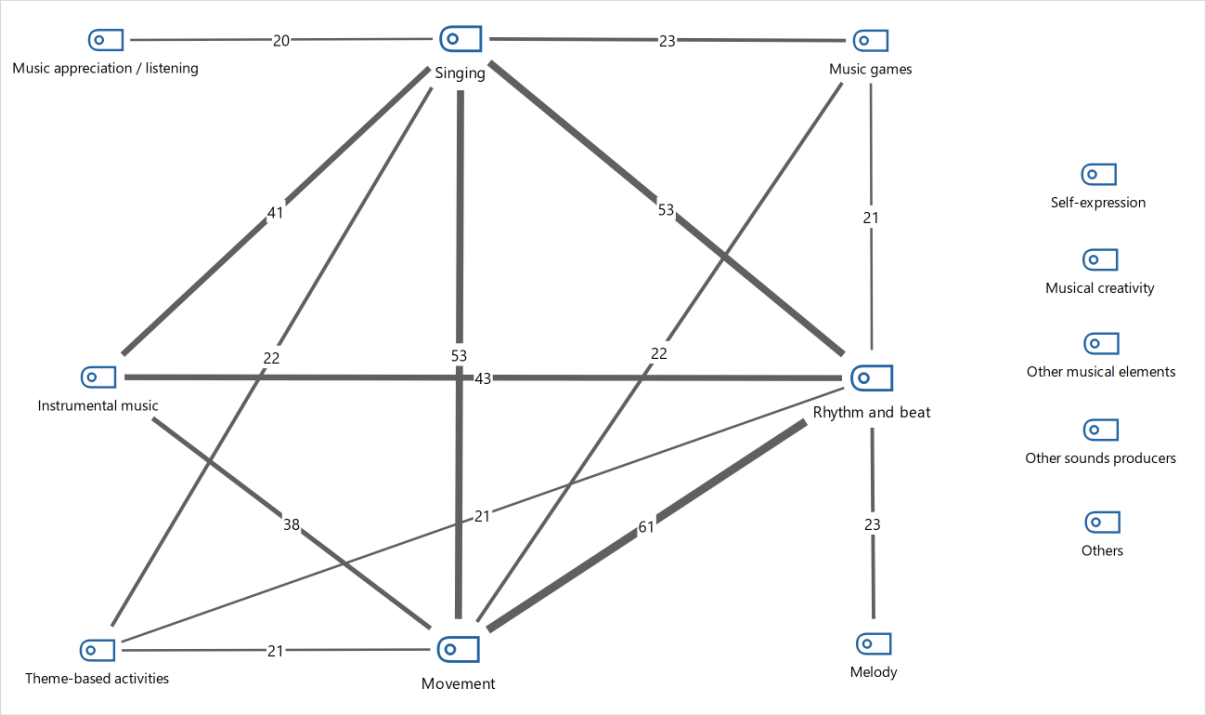
The remaining categories, which mainly related to creativity and self-expression, were mentioned in a very low percentage in the reports (less than 15%). These included Musical Creativity (10.4%) (e.g., "create new words and actions to songs in order to unleash their creativity", "improvise lyrics", and "create simple and fluent melodies"), and Self-expression (9.8%) (e.g., "express their feelings freely through music and rhythmic movements" and "dance or move according to the rhythms of the music to express their feelings freely"). This was followed by Other Musical Elements (9.1%) (e.g., "flexibly introduce different musical elements, "pitch exercises", and "identify when the music starts and rests as well as its high and low pitches"). The least-mentioned category was Other Sound Producers (2.4%) (e.g., "eco-friendly musical instruments").

In Figure 6, a code co-occurrence model was produced using MAXQDA to depict the most common combinations of musical contents alluded to in the reports. This model allowed us to visualize the number of times the various codes co-occurred in the reports. The thickness of lines connecting the codes is determined by the frequency of co-occurrence. The minimum co-occurrence frequency was set as 20 reports. Because the codes Self-expression, Musical Creativity, Other Musical Elements, and Other Sound Producers did not meet the minimum co-occurrence frequency, we excluded them from the co-occurrence model. Code co-occurrence is described from the highest to the lowest frequency. Excerpts from the QR

reports in which two (or more) musical contents co-occurred are presented for illustrative purposes.

Figure 6

Code Co-occurrence Model Regarding the Musical Contents in Teachers' Classroom Pedagogical Practices Emerged in the Reports



As shown in Figure 6, the code Singing was strongly associated with Rhythm and Beat (53 reports), Movement (53), and Instrumental Music (41). Movement was intensely associated with Rhythm and Beat (61), as well as Instrumental Music (38). For example, "children follow melodies to perform rhythmic movements and manipulate musical instruments together", and "teachers arrange activities such as singing, playing percussion instruments and music appreciation to guide children to move their limbs in response to the rhythms and melodies of music". Theme-based Activities was moderately associated with Singing (22 reports), Rhythm and Beat (21), and Movement (21). Examples involving these four musical contents were: "teachers use stories to stimulate children's imagination, enabling children to engage in movements along with the rhythms and melodies while expressing

emotions through body movements", and "teachers create scenarios in accordance with themes to conduct music games, so as to guide children to exercise their imagination and perform rhythmic movements by following the music". This analysis shows that many teachers tended to implement similar combinations of musical contents within the QR period, probably given their higher confidence in conducting these activities.

Discussion

We have provided an overall account of the types of music activities conducted in 164 kindergartens that had successfully passed the QR assessment in Hong Kong. Accordingly, our discussion below is based on the understanding that the music teaching and learning practices described in these reports had been endorsed by the EDB.

Goal 2.1 was to examine the presence of music in the QR reports, focusing on the most typical lexicon and the frequency of key terms related to the various music objectives, as stated in local policies. We found that the presence of music was minimal (average of 4.84% of total content). Indeed, relatively speaking, music-specific terms were rather infrequent. Furthermore, terms related to musical creativity and self-expression (e.g., "emotions", "expression", "improvise", "exploration", and "experimentation") were either rare or completely absent. The minimal presence of music in the QR reports may be due to multiple factors. First, teachers possibly did not allocate sufficient time for music activities during the QR assessment period. Hong Kong is a competitive society, where parents often demand teachers prioritize academic learning areas to prepare children for Primary school (Chan, 2019; Gopinathan & Lee, 2018). Another possibility is that the EDB assessors could have paid more attention to other learning areas (i.e., language or mathematics) in lieu of music, which would indirectly reveal that the government also views music as a secondary or supplementary learning area. Similar findings have been reported in other Asian countries such as Singapore (Bautista, Ng, et al., 2016), and even in Western countries like the United

States (Nardo et al., 2006) and Sweden (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018). Finally, it could be the case that the primary purposes of using music in Hong Kong kindergartens are those of greeting children (e.g., singing welcome song, weather song), classroom management (e.g., getting children's attention), arranging transitions and circle time, and supporting the learning of other curriculum areas (Barrett et al., 2018; Rajan, 2017), and thus EDB assessors did not pay explicit attention to these uses of music in their written feedback. All these factors, independently or in combination, could help us explain the limited presence of music activities in the QR reports.

Goal 2.2 was to analyze the types of music activities and the most common combinations of musical contents alluded to in the reports. Teachers heavily focused on conducting activities related to the first objective of the Guide, which deals with the development of sensory abilities (CDC, 2017). Specifically, our results indicated that singing, rhythm and beat, and movement were the concepts most frequently mentioned. Nursery rhymes were the most typical song type alluded to, as found in other international studies (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018; Rajan, 2017). Playing instrumental music was another typical music activity, which suggests that Hong Kong teachers do not face the issue of instruments deficit in the classroom, as reported in countries like Turkey (Ersoy & Dere, 2012). Moreover, similar to trends in Singapore (Bautista et al., 2018), teachers commonly combined four music contents during the QR period, namely singing, rhythm and beat, movement, and instrumental music. In a nutshell, the music activities conducted in Hong Kong kindergartens mainly focused on providing children with experiences to learn musical skills and/or factual knowledge, which mirrors trends identified in the territory more than a decade ago (Chan & Leong, 2007; Cheung, 2012).

Our findings suggest that Hong Kong kindergarten teachers may not sufficiently implement music activities related to objectives 2 and 3 of the Guide, which relate to self-

expression and creativity (CDC, 2017). The music activities described in the QR reports did not explicitly allude to children's self-expression of feelings and emotions, exploration, experimentation, improvisation, invention, or creativity with music or sound. Children seem to be hardly ever given opportunities to produce sound with resources like their own bodies, eco-friendly instruments, sounds of nature, or using technology, in contrast to prior studies that have clearly demonstrated the value of such sound exploration activities to provoke children's creative thinking (Ferrari & Addessi, 2014; Süner & Ünlü, 2013). Note that similar trends have been identified in other countries, including Slovenia (Denac, 2008), Australia (Garvis, 2012), and Singapore (Bautista et al., 2018). It is therefore concerning that kindergartens might not fully utilize the power of music as a medium for communication and exploration (Moravcik et al., 2013).

Conclusions

In summary, our evidence shows important discrepancies between Hong Kong local music education curriculum policies and actual practices in local kindergartens. Our first conclusion is that the EDB assessors seemed to have ignored or overlooked these important curriculum/practice discrepancies, particularly regarding the limited use of music to foster children's creativity and self-expression. Note that these 164 kindergartens had passed the QR assessment, which means that the EDB assessors endorsed the quality of their pedagogical practices. We infer that the EDB assessors could have superficial understandings of the meaning of high-quality music education practices, perhaps due to their limited training (Bautista et al., 2024) or due to the lack of concrete examples provided in the Guide (CDC, 2017). The situation is concerning because this misleading feedback could result in a dangerous vicious circle: kindergarten practitioners may receive the message that their music pedagogical practices are of high-quality, when in fact they are clearly insufficient to fulfill the official curriculum objectives, thereby perpetuating poor music practices.

Our second conclusion is that Hong Kong kindergarten teachers seem to treat music as a secondary learning area, using it to manage classroom routines and transitions and to teach about other areas, but seldom implementing activities purposefully designed to foster children's musical creativity and self-expression. Indeed, we hardly identified references to music activities involving sound exploration, free vocalizations, or improvisation, as suggested in the literature (Schei & Ødegaard, 2020; Siebenaler, 2006). This might be due to two challenges that Hong Kong teachers are currently facing: they receive insufficient pre- and in-service preparation in music education and, consequently, they have low confidence and limited competencies to teach music to young children (Bautista & Ho, 2021). This reveals the need to support Hong Kong kindergarten teachers regarding musical creativity and self-expression to ensure they can design, implement, and evaluate these activities in classroom settings.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the large number of kindergartens included in our content analysis, the study has certain limitations. First, the low presence of music content in the QR reports does not necessarily mean that teachers neglect music in their usual classroom practices. Indeed, perhaps teachers focused less on music during the QR observation period to satisfy other expectations or requirements. Further investigations of teachers' music pedagogical practices are therefore needed. Additional large-scale studies should be conducted based on other data sources such as classroom observations, interviews, and analysis of curriculum materials. Second, the QR reports represent the EDB assessors' perspectives on high-quality music pedagogical practices. Future research should explore the perspectives of other kindergarten stakeholders such as kindergarten teachers, principals, and teacher educators. Finally, the QR reports only focus on kindergartens that joined the Kindergarten Education Scheme (2017a) to receive government subsidies. International kindergartens were therefore excluded from

the present analysis. Future research must explore whether the trends reported herein are generalizable to international kindergartens, which are not subject to the QR exercise.

Practical Implications

The first implication relates to the need to raise awareness of kindergarten stakeholders (including EDB assessors) about the official expectations for high-quality music education. Being aware of the curriculum/practice discrepancies is vital for improvement. In particular, we recommend that the curriculum designers further clarify the official expectations by exposing the EDB assessors to concrete examples of internationally-recognized high-quality music pedagogies, especially regarding musical creativity and self-expression. When the assessors conduct on-site QR observations in the future, they should be more mindful of the various learning objectives and performance indicators pertaining to music teaching and learning in local policies. By increasing awareness and preparation, the EDB assessors would be able to provide relevant advice for kindergarten practitioners to improve their music practices, thereby bridging existing curriculum/practice gaps (Barrett et al., 2018).

The second implication relates to the need for ongoing professional development (PD). Teacher educators and PD providers should offer kindergarten teachers additional support on musical creativity and self-expression. For instance, it is vital to engage teachers in training that enables them to conduct music activities that are open-ended (e.g., sound exploration, experimentation, improvisation, invention), while at the same time considering the constraints related to time and resources in local kindergartens. This is consistent with a previous local interview study where teachers expressed a high demand and motivation to participate in PD courses focusing on activity design, curriculum integration, and musical creativity (Bautista & Ho, 2021). By providing kindergarten teachers with responsive PD music experiences, they will be able to better plan and implement their music lessons more

strategically, ultimately reinforcing the quality of music pedagogical practices that benefit children in the long run (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Cremades et al., 2017).

STUDY 3: Quality Assessors' Feedback and Recommendations on Music Education in Hong Kong Kindergartens[7]

Abstract

In Hong Kong, quality assessors from the Education Bureau (EDB) visit kindergartens to conduct Quality Review (QR) assessments. Their written reports, therefore, reflect the official local perspective of quality kindergarten education. We conducted a content analysis of 323 QR reports focusing on the positive and negative feedback and recommendations for improvement regarding music education. Two coding schemes were developed using an inductive approach. High inter-reliability was obtained. The most frequently mentioned positive feedback codes were related to sufficient exposure to music and enjoyable musical learning experiences. In contrast, there were negative feedback codes pointing out that children's musical exposure was insufficient at Kindergarten 3 (children aged 5-6 years) and some musical activities were poorly prepared and/or designed. Children's music learning outcomes were rarely mentioned in the reports. The analyses indicate that the local understanding of kindergarten music education strongly emphasizes exposing children to enjoyable musical activities, with a lower focus on the nature and quality of musical learning. We conclude that the QR reports reflect a teacher-centric view of music education. Findings may inform curriculum designers and teacher educators about EDB's expectations in the area of music education. Future research should explore the perspectives of other kindergarten stakeholders such as teachers, principals, and teacher educators.

Keywords: early childhood education, quality assessment, pedagogical practices, music education, music curriculum

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[7] Ho, Y.-L., & Bautista, A. (2024). Quality assessors' feedback and recommendations on music education in Hong Kong kindergartens. *Education Sciences, 14*(5), 466. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14050466 This is an open-access article. Authors retain the copyright to reprint the publication, as described in the journal's website: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/education/about

Introduction

Quality assessors from the Education Bureau (EDB) in Hong Kong conduct Quality Review (QR) assessments for kindergartens. The assessors visit kindergartens to conduct on-site reviews and write the QR reports. Considering that no existing research explores the perspectives of official quality assessors on quality music pedagogical practices, it is therefore crucial to address this research gap. We conducted a content analysis of 323 QR reports focusing on the positive and negative feedback and recommendations for improvement regarding music education, given that those reports are a large-scale database reflecting the official local perspective of quality kindergarten education. Findings inform stakeholders (e.g., curriculum designers and teacher educators) about EDB's perspectives and expectations in kindergarten music education.

Literature Review

The Literature Review is structured into two sub-sections. The first one reviews the international literature about perspectives on quality music education by various early childhood education (ECE) stakeholders (i.e., teachers, teacher educators, scholars) and musical practices in ECE centers. The second sub-section introduces Hong Kong's kindergarten music education curriculum and the QR mechanism.

Perspectives and Practices on ECE Music Education Around the World

There is widespread agreement among ECE scholars regarding the importance of implementing child-centric musical practices, in which "children are viewed as active constructors of knowledge and the teachers' role is mainly to facilitate their learning in the classroom" (Lerkkanen et al., 2016, p. 146). Children should be provided with opportunities to contribute and express their musical ideas and thoughts during diversified and enjoyable musical activities with play elements and high freedom of choice (Barrett et al., 2021; Chung, 2022). Young (2018) argued that children learn music best through play-based approaches, as

these are child-centered and foster children's holistic development. Similarly, Chung (2022) demonstrated well-known music education pedagogies using play-based approaches. Children actively participated in diverse musical activities with substantial play elements, such as performing rhythmic movements, playing musical instruments, and producing musical improvisations. Juntunen (2020) concurred that children should be given opportunities to explore different ways to move and vary their movements in response to music. Noteworthy, Koops and Kuebel (2018) argued that children's enjoyment is key to quality music learning. In their view, it is essential to analyze whether children enjoy the musical activities implemented in classrooms and observe how children express their enjoyment. These authors have therefore encouraged ECE teachers to develop and adjust lesson plans and curricula with references to children's interests and pace of learning, in order to enhance the effectiveness of music teaching and learning.

In prior interview studies, ECE teachers highlighted the importance of their own role as facilitators of quality music education, predominately focusing on how teachers should prepare, design, and implement musical activities in ECE classrooms (Nousia & Raptis, 2023; Robertson et al., 2022). For example, in an interview study conducted in the United States by Flores (2018), kindergarten teachers suggested quality teaching examples to integrate music with other learning areas. Participants recommended designing musical activities such as singing songs in different languages to expose children to foreign languages, and drawing/making an instrument to promote children's musical creativity and expression. In China, Robertson et al. (2022) conducted an interview study to explore kindergarten teachers' perspectives on children's engagement in group musical activities. Teachers recommended implementing theme-based activities that utilize singing, movement, and instruments to play out a pretend scenario (e.g., a theme or story). They also expressed that teachers should engage children in appreciating different music genres rather than only

singing numerous songs accurately. Denac (2008) highlighted that preschool teachers in Slovenia play a crucial role in cultivating children's interest in listening and reproducing quality musical learning outcomes. Teachers were responsible for raising children's interests in music, creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere, selecting songs that aligned with children's interests, and encouraging children's active participation in musical activities. In sum, research shows that ECE teachers are aware of the need to provide children with adequate instruction and materials to experiment with and explore diverse instruments and rhythmic movements when conducting musical activities (Flores, 2018; Robertson et al., 2022).

Some studies have documented examples of good musical classroom practices in ECE settings, aligned with the principles of sufficient provision and enjoyment mentioned above (Barrett et al., 2021; Essa & Burnham, 2019). In the United States, Rajan (2017) documented the case of preschool teachers who spent ample time singing nursery rhymes with young children. The songs' themes were mainly in relation to letters, numbers, shapes, and counting, aiming to facilitate children's development in other learning areas (e.g., language and mathematics) through music. Schei and Ødegaard (2020) documented the case of ECE teachers in Norway conducting a child-centered music exploration theme-based activity, in which children created a story and improvised movements in response to music to express themselves. Koops and Kuebel (2018) found that preschool teachers in the United States usually provide children with freedom of choice. For example, teachers allowed children to decide whether they participate in movement or vocal activities by choosing a dice representing the activity. Hence, children enjoyed and showed a high enthusiasm for participating in the musical activities.

In contrast to these examples of quality musical practices, prior research in regular ECE classrooms has reported multiple cases of lack of diversity, poor design and

implementation of the musical activities (Bautista et al., 2018; Ersoy & Dere, 2012). Bautista et al. (2018) reported that preschool teachers in Singapore usually conducted musical activities heavily focused on reproduction (e.g., following teachers' instructions to sing and move), yet lacked creative-fostering elements and exposure to diverse music genres. A similar issue of the lack of focus on musical creativity has been recently identified in Hong Kong kindergartens (Bautista et al., 2023). In Australia, Garvis (2012) found that ECE teachers rarely provided opportunities for children to select their musical activities. The activities conducted in classrooms were teacher-directed and did not align with children's interests. Ersoy and Dere (2012) found that around half of the ECE teachers in Turkey did not let children play musical instruments due to instrument deficiency in the classroom. Finally, ECE teachers in countries such as Spain (Rodríguez & Álvarez, 2017) and Singapore (Bautista et al., 2017) voiced challenges in implementing quality musical practices due to the lack of quality teaching materials and ideas for designing creative musical activities and games.

Kindergarten Music Education in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, where the present study was conducted, kindergartens offer center-based education programs for children aged three to six. Most children (around 63%) attend half-day programs (3-4 hours), while some attend full-day (37%) programs, which also provide care services. The Education Bureau (EDB), a government agency, oversees and subsidizes the operations of local kindergartens, which are managed by non-profit or private organizations (EDB, 2021a). To strengthen kindergarten education quality, the EDB designed the Kindergarten Education Scheme (2017a) to offer government subsidies to most local kindergartens in Hong Kong (EDB, 2023).

In 2017, the EDB published a new curriculum framework, the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (KECG)—hereafter the *Guide* (Curriculum Development

Council [CDC], 2017). The *Guide* emphasizes the core value of 'child-centeredness' with the idea that each child is unique. Music is included as a subdomain of the learning area 'Arts and Creativity'. The *Guide* (CDC, 2017) proposed that teachers offer children sufficient daily musical activities. In particular, children in full-day and half-day kindergartens should be provided with arts, musical, and physical activities for 45-60 minutes and 90-105 minutes each day, respectively. The activity types should be diversified. For example, children express their feelings and creativity through facial expression, voice, and movement, and they explore sound effects and timbre utilizing a variety of methods. Children can enjoy the fun of music by actively participating in musical activities.

The performance indicators for kindergartens (EDB, 2017b) were established by the EDB in 2017, aiming to assess the teaching and learning quality for the various learning areas in the *Guide* (e.g., Early Childhood Mathematics, Language [Chinese], Second Language [English], Nature and Living). The performance indicators related to music education revolve around two areas: (1) provision and formats of the musical activities and (2) musical learning outcomes and experiences. First, teachers are required to provide children with sufficient daily musical activities in which teachers can flexibly adjust the daily schedule. These musical activities must be arranged using different classroom formats (i.e., whole-class, group, and individual). Second, the performance indicators set specific expectations for children, mainly related to positive learning outcomes and enjoyable musical experiences. For instance, children should be: "able to sing simple songs, play musical instruments", "fond of their own work, enjoy music activities, love singing and listening to music", "able to express the elements of music, e.g., dynamics, tempo and pitch, through singing and movements", "able to create and express feelings and thoughts through different art forms, and show creativity through art and crafts, music, role-playing, imaginative play, etc." (EDB, 2017b, p. 80-82).

The EDB's perspective on quality music education in kindergartens is reflected in these performance indicators, given that the EDB established these performance indicators and kindergartens are required to achieve these performance indicators (EDB, 2017b). Overall, the local curriculum learning objectives and performance indicators are aligned with the standards and expectations in early childhood music education across the globe (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Essa & Burnham, 2019).

All kindergartens participating in the Kindergarten Education Scheme (2017a) are required to undergo an assessment mechanism called Quality Review (QR) (EDB, 2020a), which uses the performance indicators (EDB, 2017b) as the standard of quality education. The objectives of the QR assessment are to inform the public about the present state and quality of kindergarten education in Hong Kong and to disseminate excellent practices among kindergartens, ultimately strengthening the quality of kindergarten education provided to children (EDB, 2017a, 2020a). During the QR period, the EDB assessor teams visit kindergartens for 2.5 to 3.5 days to conduct on-site reviews. The primary duties are to observe lessons, inspect children's work, review the kindergarten documents, and interview the kindergarten personnel (i.e., principals, teachers, parents, and children) (EDB, 2020a). These on-site reviews serve as the basis for the assessors to write the QR reports and determine whether the kindergarten can pass the quality assurance. To enhance the transparency of this exercise, the QR reports of those kindergartens that successfully pass the assessment are made public on the EDB website (EDB, 2021b). Those kindergartens obtain government subsidies (EDB, 2017a).

A content analysis of 164 QR reports focused on exploring the types of musical activities in kindergartens was conducted (Ho & Bautista, 2022). We found that while the most prevalent musical activities were related to children's development of sensory abilities through music experiences (e.g., singing, rhythm, beat, movement, and instrumental music),

activities related to musical creativity and self-expression were rarely mentioned in the QR reports. We concluded that important inconsistencies existed between the official curriculum guide and actual musical activities provided in kindergartens. However, that study was particularly focused on the musical activity types. Other aspects pertaining to music teaching and learning (e.g., children's music learning outcomes, teachers' design and implementation of the musical activities) were unexplored.

Significant research gaps are reflected in our review of the international literature. First, no existing research explores the perspectives of official quality assessors on quality music pedagogical practices. Therefore, it is vital to delve into the official and local expectations of quality music education. Second, previous research on the perspectives of ECE stakeholders on quality music education has mostly used qualitative methods and included small participant samples (e.g., Koops & Kuebel, 2018). Some are non-empirical articles (e.g., Barrett et al., 2021). Further quantitative research is therefore required. Lastly, prior studies on kindergarten music practices in Hong Kong are limited and conducted a decade ago (e.g., Lau, 2008). Updated research is needed to get further insight into the practical implementation of the current local music curriculum.

Goals

With the final aim of exploring the perspectives of EDB assessors on quality music pedagogical practices, this study presents a content analysis of the QR reports focusing on music classroom practices in Hong Kong kindergartens. The study has two specific research goals. Goal 3.1 was to analyze the positive feedback pertaining to music classroom practices in the reports. Goal 3.2 was to analyze the negative feedback and recommendations for improvements pertaining to music classroom practices in the reports. These QR reports comprise a large-scale database that reveals EDB's view of quality kindergarten education, given that all the kindergartens featured in these reports passed the quality assurance.

Findings may therefore inform kindergarten stakeholders (mainly curriculum designers and teacher educators) about EDB's expectations in the area of music education (Ødegaard, 2015).

Method

Data Sources

We conducted a content analysis on QR reports of 323 local kindergartens in Hong Kong. Content analysis is defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). We analyzed all the reports published in English from 2017 to 2023, which include: one report in 2017 (0.3%), 33 in 2018 (10.2%), 122 in 2019 (37.8%), nine in 2020 (2.8%), 66 in 2021 (20.4%), 64 in 2022 (19.8%), and 28 in 2023 (8.7%). As these reports focus on kindergartens across all areas in Hong Kong, they provided a holistic overview of the music curriculum throughout the territory.

Procedure

The content analysis was conducted by adopting a four-stage process.

Stage 1: *Obtaining ethical approval and downloading the QR reports.* Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the authors' university. Then, we downloaded the 323 QR reports from the EDB's website and imported them into MAXQDA Analytics Pro (Software, 2019) for data analysis.

Stage 2: *Developing the coding schemes.* The authors applied an inductive approach to develop two coding schemes (i.e., one related to the positive feedback pertaining to music pedagogical practices, and another related to the negative feedback and recommendations for improvement). We applied the open coding approach to identify common themes in the reports. All the codes were derived inductively (Creswell, 2018; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The coding schemes were presented in a table format, including the definitions and examples for each code. Examples were extracted literally from the QR reports for illustrative purposes. Codes were binary (i.e., Yes vs No), depending on whether the report alluded (or not) to the idea at hand.

Stage 3: *Piloting of coding schemes.* The coding schemes were validated by the authors and one student helper. We randomly selected 35 reports to pilot the schemes. Definitions and examples were refined. We collapsed certain related feedback under the same code, given the low frequency of references to certain prior codes. For instance, feedback related to rhythm accuracy and creating simple melodies were both condensed under the code Positive Music Learning Outcome. High reliability was obtained in both coding schemes (i.e., 0.95 and 0.96, respectively), as measured by Cohen's (κ) kappa.

Stage 4: *Final coding.* The first author (Coder 1) trained a student helper (Coder 2) in the use of the two coding schemes. Coders 1 and 2 then analyzed all the reports independently. To ensure the reliability and consistency of the coding process, the coders discussed and resolved the disagreement until a 100% agreement was reached (Boettger & Palmer, 2011).

Data Analysis

The same set of statistical analyses were applied to address both Goal 3.1 and Goal 3.2. For each goal, we first presented the coding schemes (including the codes and their definitions) in the Results section. We utilized descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) of each code. Bar graphs were used to show the frequency of the codes, from most to least frequent. Literal examples extracted from the QR reports were presented to further illustrate the analytic codes and provide a narrative account of the findings (Eldh et al., 2020). The purposes of strategically using direct quotations include demonstrating the

richness of the data, providing a qualitative reporting basis, serving as evidence, and enhancing readability (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011).

Results

Positive Feedback Pertaining to Music Classroom Practices

A coding scheme with nine analytic codes (see Table 9) was designed. We introduce each code's definitions in Table 9 and present the examples in the body of the text.

Table 9

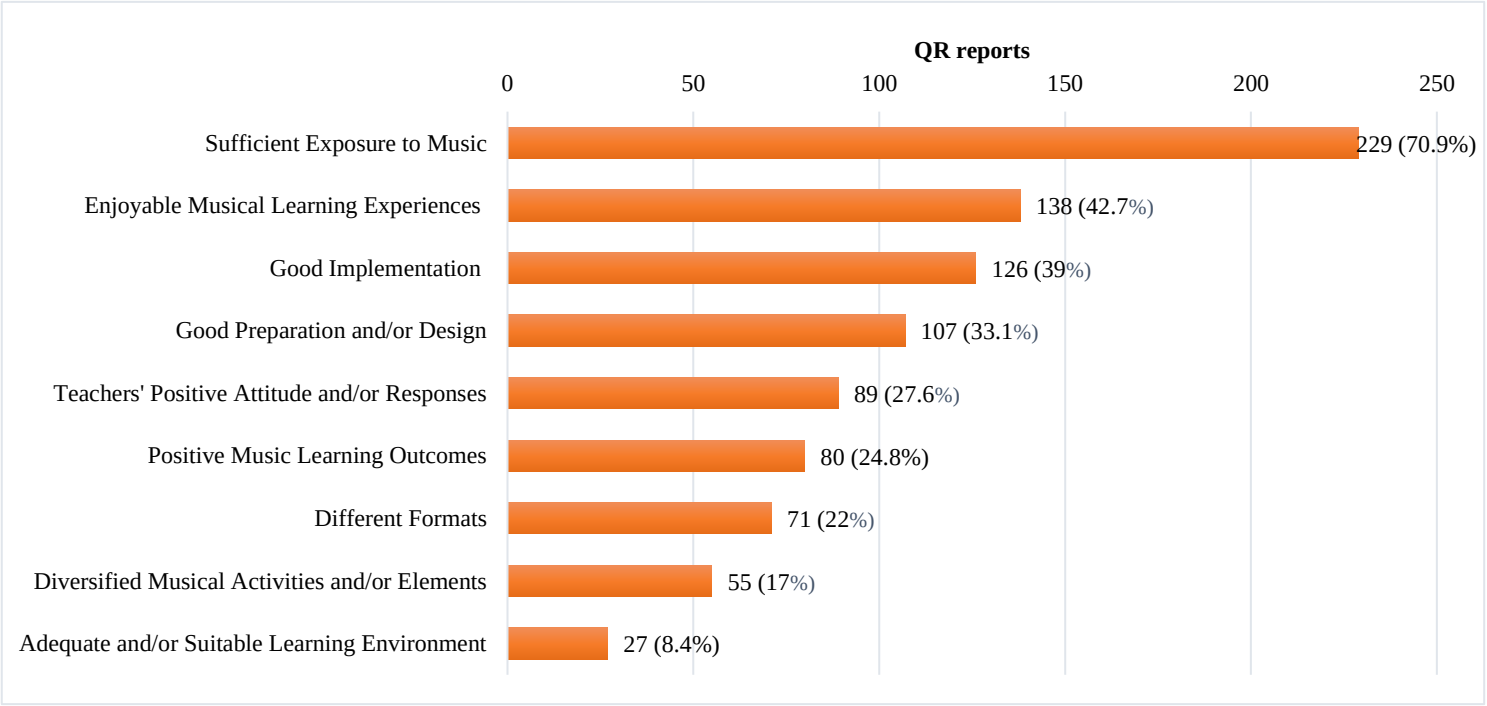
Coding Scheme for Positive Feedback Pertaining to Music Classroom Practices

Code	Definitions
1. Sufficient Exposure to Music	References to children having enough daily exposure to music.
2. Diversified Music Activities and/or Elements	References to provision of diversified musical activities and/or elements in the classroom.
3. Enjoyable Musical Learning Experiences	References to children enjoying and/or showing enthusiasm about music learning.
4. Positive Music Learning Outcomes	References to children achieving positive music learning outcomes (i.e., demonstrating good music abilities, showing confidence about music learning) from the musical activities conducted.
5. Adequate and/or Suitable Learning Environment	References to the adequacy and/or appropriateness of the music learning environment (i.e., classroom or music room).
6. Different Formats	References to provision of musical activities that utilize different classroom formats (e.g., whole-class, small group, and/or individual learning).
7. Good Preparation and/or Design	References to teachers being well-prepared to conduct the musical activity and/or the good design of the music activity at hand.
8. Good Implementation	References to the good implementation of musical activities (e.g., giving clear instructions and/or using suitable questioning skills).
9. Teachers' Positive Attitude and/or Responses	References to teachers' positive attitude and/or responses during the musical activity.

Each report alluded to three codes on average (min = 0, max = 7, *SD* = 1.82). Figure 7 presents the frequencies and percentages for each code within the QR reports (in descending order).

Figure 7

Frequencies and Percentages of QR Reports Coded Under Each Category of Positive Feedback (n = 323)



The most frequently mentioned code for positive feedback was Sufficient Exposure to Music (70.9% of total reports). The reports typically included sentences appreciating that the kindergartens provided children with sufficient time to engage in musical activities daily (e.g., “regarding the daily schedule, children are arranged to have adequate time to engage in music activities every day”). This was followed by Enjoyable Musical Learning Experiences (42.7%). The reports described that children enjoyed and engaged happily in the musical activities. The structure of those sentences mainly used children as the subject, expressing

that children had fun (e.g., “children enjoy engaging in sing-along sessions and have great fun in music activities”) and enjoyed the musical activities happily (e.g., “children sing and dance happily”).

The following three analytic codes focusing on teachers’ performance were identified in around one-third of the reports. The subject of those sentences was primarily teachers. The first code in this group was Good Implementation (39%). The reports positively commented that teachers implemented and led the musical activities properly (e.g., “teachers are good at conducting music activities, using interesting stories as an entry point to lead children to sing, play percussion instruments and musical games”), giving clear instructions and using appropriate questioning skills (e.g., “teachers suitably use questioning and prompts to stimulate children’s thinking in music activities”). The second was Good Preparation and/or Design (33.1%). The reports appreciated that teachers were well-prepared for their music teaching (e.g., “teachers design music activities with great efforts to facilitate children to enjoy the fun of music activities”), and that teachers designed and organized the musical activities with a clear structure (e.g., “teachers design music activities with careful thoughts, organizing structured activities that allow children to enjoy music games”). The third code in this group was Teachers’ Positive Attitude and/or Responses (27.6%). The reports utilized various positive adjectives such as amicable, friendly, and promptly to describe teachers’ attitudes (e.g., “teachers are amicable and friendly with smiling faces in theme-related music activities”) and/or their responses to children in class (e.g., “teachers respond to children’s questions promptly in music activities”).

The remaining four codes of positive feedback were mentioned in just a handful of the reports (less than 25%). One of them was Positive Music Learning Outcomes (24.8%), indicating that children had achieved positive music learning outcomes (e.g., “children can create new words and actions to songs in order to unleash their creativity”) and demonstrated

good musical learnings as a result of the music class (e.g., “children demonstrate a good sense of rhythm when beating the musical instruments”). Another code was Different Formats (22%). These reports mentioned that teachers organized their classrooms in distinct formats when conducting musical activities (e.g., “in music activities, children also have the opportunities to participate in whole-class, group and individual learning activities”). Diversified Musical Activities appeared only in 17% of the reports, which described that teachers arranged a wide variety of musical activities for children such as singing, doing rhythmic movements, and playing musical instruments (e.g., “teachers organize diversified activities for children when conducting music activities”). The least-mentioned code was Adequate and/or Suitable Learning Environment (8.4%). These reports described that teachers were able to arrange adequate space for children to engage in musical activities (e.g., “teachers flexibly spare more space for conducting whole-class music games by moving the desks and chairs in the classroom”).

Negative Feedback and Recommendations for Improvement Pertaining to Music Classroom Practices

Table 10 presents the names and definitions of each code. Examples will be included in the body of the text.

Each report alluded to one code on average (min = 0, max = 5, *SD* = 1.07). Note that values were lower than the positive feedback codes in Goal 3.1. Figure 8 presents the frequencies and percentages for each code within the QR reports (in descending order).

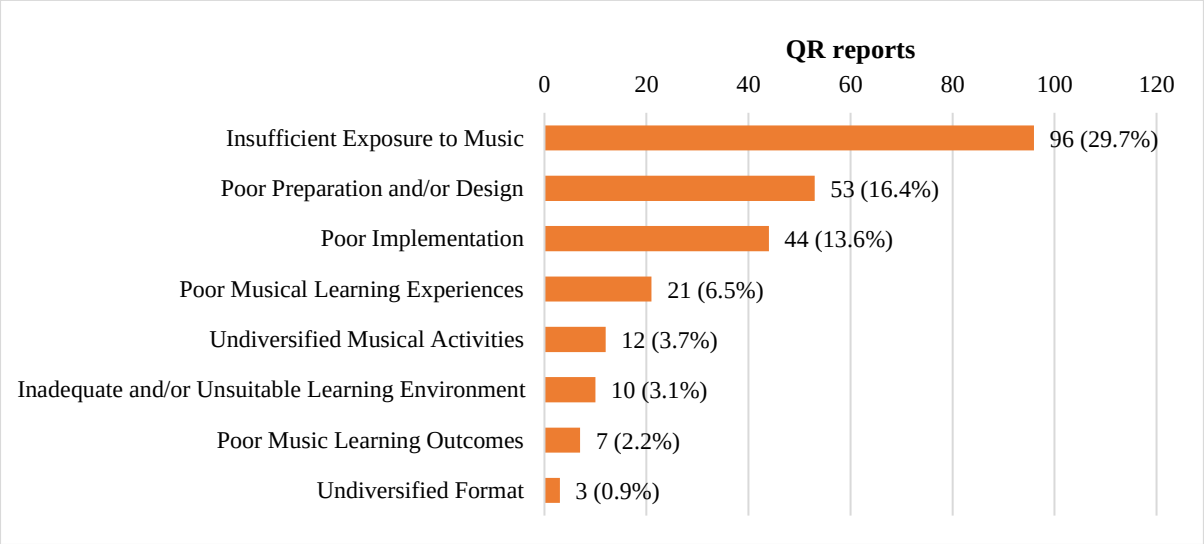
Table 10

Coding Scheme for Negative Feedback and Recommendations for Improvement Pertaining to Music Classroom Practices

Code	Definitions
1. Insufficient Exposure to Music	References to children not having enough daily exposure to music, and/or recommendations of providing higher level of exposure to music.
2. Undiversified Musical Activities	References to provision of musical activities not being diversified enough, and/or recommendations of arranging diversified music activities.
3. Poor Musical Learning Experiences	References to teachers providing poor musical learning experiences, unable to raise children's interest in music, and/or recommendations of providing enjoyable musical learning experiences to raise children's interest.
4. Poor Music Learning Outcomes	References to children cannot achieve the music learning outcomes (i.e., unable to master the music learning content, showing low learning effectiveness about music learning) from the musical activities conducted.
5. Inadequate and/or Unsuitable Learning Environment	References to the music learning environment (i.e., classroom or music room) being inadequate and/or unsuitable, and/or recommendations of rearranging the music learning environment to be adequate and/or suitable.
6. Undiversified Format	References to musical activities not having diversified classroom formats (e.g., whole-class, small group, and/or individual learning), and/or recommendations of adopting diversified classroom formats in musical activities.
7. Poor Preparation and/or Design	References to teachers not being sufficiently prepared to conduct the musical activity and/or poor design of the musical activity at hand, and/or recommendations of teachers obtaining better preparation to conduct and/or design musical activities.
8. Poor Implementation	References to the poor implementation of the musical activity (e.g., long waiting time, giving unclear instructions), and/or recommendations of teachers improving implementation quality (e.g., reducing the waiting time, giving clearer instructions).

Figure 8

Frequencies and Percentages of QR Reports Coded Under Each Category of Negative Feedback and Recommendations (n = 323)



The most frequently mentioned code for negative feedback and recommendations was Insufficient Exposure to Music (29.7% of total reports). These reports mainly criticized that children in specific grades, especially K3, were not provided with enough time for musical activities daily due to being occupied by the kindergarten primary transition activities (e.g., "when the school arranges activities to prepare K3 children for the interface between kindergarten and primary school, it fails to provide adequate music activities on a daily basis"). Therefore, the reports further recommended that the school should provide children in each grade with sufficient exposure to music (e.g., "the school is required to improve the daily schedule of half-day classes to make sure that sufficient music activities are arranged for children of each grade level").

This was followed by the other two analytic codes focusing on teachers' performance, in which the teacher was the subject. The first code was Poor Preparation and/or Design (16.4%). These reports commented negatively that the musical activities were poorly designed and unsuitable for children in that grade level (e.g., "teachers have not yet fully

grasped the skills of designing integrated music activities"). Hence, the reports recommended that teachers should be better prepared to improve the design of the musical activities (e.g., "teachers are advised to design sing-along activities that can inspire children's imagination and creativity"). The next code was Poor Implementation (13.6%). These reports commented that teachers conducted the musical activities poorly, hence undermining the teaching and learning effectiveness (e.g., "teachers place too much emphasis on explaining the rules of the games during the activities but seldom guide children to take note of the music elements in the games"). The reports, therefore, advised teachers to improve the implementation of musical activities by providing better guidance to children (e.g., "teachers should guide children to feel the beats and melodies of music, and encourage them to express their feelings using different forms").

The following codes for negative feedback and recommendations were mentioned in a very low percentage in the reports (between 0.5% and 7%). These included Poor Musical Learning Experiences (6.5%), in which the reports criticized teachers for providing children with poor musical learning experiences, hence being unable to raise children's interest in music (e.g., "children lack opportunities for participation, causing it difficult to nurture their interests in music"). This was followed by Undiversified Musical Activities (3.7%) (e.g., "teachers only added a few singing activities in other learning activities"). Inadequate and/or Unsuitable Learning Environment was only identified in 3.1% of the reports (e.g., "when children are engaging in music activities, sometimes collisions happen due to inadequate space"). Poor Music Learning Outcomes were only mentioned in seven reports (2.2%). These reports commented that the learning objectives of the musical activities could not be achieved and suggested teachers to observe whether children could master the learning content (e.g., "when conducting music activities, teachers may pay more attention to children's performance and observe their mastery of content"). Finally, the least-mentioned code was

Undiversified Format (0.9%). The reports recommended for teachers to arrange diversified classroom formats (e.g., “make flexible use of grouping strategies”) when conducting musical activities.

Discussion

To better understand the official perspective of quality kindergarten education held by Hong Kong’s EDB, specifically regarding music education, we conducted a content analysis of 323 QR reports focusing on the positive and negative feedback and recommendations for improvement in this area. A holistic analysis of the codes included in the two coding schemes designed for this study indicates that the EDB assessors focused on rather superficial, easily observable aspects of musical practices. Indeed, the most typical codes were related to the provision of enjoyable musical experiences. Assessors tended to focus predominantly on the role of teachers. In fact, more than half of the codes were teacher-oriented both regarding positive feedback (e.g., Good Implementation, Good Preparation and/or Design, Teachers’ Positive Attitude and/or Responses) and negative feedback and recommendations (e.g., Poor Implementation, Poor Preparation and/or Design). In contrast, references to children’s musical learning (e.g., Positive Music Learning Outcomes) hardly appeared in the QR reports.

More specifically, Goal 3.1 was to analyze the positive feedback pertaining to music classroom practices. The most frequently mentioned positive feedback was related to Sufficient Exposure to Music and Enjoyable Musical Learning Experiences. This suggests that QR assessors applied a somewhat superficial approach by only verifying whether engaging music activities were included in the curriculum. The code Sufficient Exposure to Music was often limited to a few sentences in the reports, stating that the kindergartens offered children sufficient time to participate in musical activities daily. Furthermore, we speculated that the assessors evaluated the enjoyment of musical experiences in a subjective

manner, just based on their own observation of how much children enjoyed the music lesson. This lack of objectivity reflects the very nature of the key performance indicators (EDB, 2017b), which also lack an observation scale or form to record children's signs of enjoyment involving affective responses, continuation, and on-task behavior as used in prior literature (Koops & Kuebel, 2018). As such, the evaluation of children's musical enjoyment might vary among assessors.

In comparison, references to teachers' pedagogies (e.g., Good Implementation, Good Preparation and/or Design) or children's learning (Positive Music Learning Outcomes) were rather infrequent. None of the related codes appeared in more than 40% of the reports, which shows that commentaries on how teachers and children carried out the activities were uncommon. References to the quality of teachers' performance were relatively more frequent compared to the codes about children's learning. Despite the fact that academic achievement is highly valued in Hong Kong (Tam et al., 2021), the assessors seldom ever offered any feedback related to children's musical learning. While the performance indicators (EDB, 2017b) established expectations for children to attain specific positive learning outcomes, evaluating children's musical performance is complex and requires music-specific training (Runfola, 2019). Considering that the assessors might have limited knowledge and expertise with music, they might find it challenging to offer in-depth feedback (Bautista et al., 2024). Therefore, few assessors could only refer to superficial aspects, such as children singing accurately and creating simple melodies.

Goal 3.2 was to analyze the negative feedback and recommendations for improvements pertaining to music classroom practices in the reports. We found that these aspects were less frequent compared to positive feedback. The most common negative feedback was that K3 children were not provided with sufficient music exposure because they were required to participate in primary one stimulation activities. The reports further

recommended that kindergartens modify the daily schedule to ensure children in every grade were provided with sufficient exposure to music. However, none of the negative feedback and recommendations codes appeared in more than 30% of the reports. Negative feedback and recommendations related to undiversified musical activities and poor music learning outcomes almost did not exist, even though prior studies have found that activities related to musical creativity and self-expression are rare in Hong Kong kindergartens (Bautista et al., 2023). These findings suggest that QR assessors might not be concerned about improving the quality of kindergarten music education. While most countries and jurisdictions prioritize children's linguistic and mathematics development in early childhood, non-academic areas such as music typically receive less attention (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018; Young, 2018).

Noteworthy, we found that the QR reports rarely offered recommendations for kindergartens and teachers to enhance the quality of music education. Some reports simply contained negative feedback without any recommendations for improvement, especially for the codes Undiversified Musical Activities and Inadequate and/or Unsuitable Learning Environment. Only a few reports provided valuable recommendations for improvement regarding the quality of musical practices, aligned with stakeholders' perspectives of quality music education based on the international literature (Flores, 2018; Young, 2018). For instance, the literature encourages teachers to design singing activities that stimulate children's creativity and inventiveness (Barrett et al., 2021; Essa & Burnham, 2019). When implementing musical activities, teachers are recommended to focus on children's content mastery and performance (Moravcik et al., 2013). It is concerning that the assessors were not specific about how to enhance current music education practices, as receiving feedback and recommendations is crucial for practitioners' continuous improvement and development (Guo, 2023). Bautista and Ho (2021) reported a critical need for Hong Kong kindergarten teachers to gain further insights into enhancing their music pedagogical instruction, especially

in receiving detailed feedback and advice from experts on their music lessons. Improvements in how the QR exercise is conducted, specifically regarding music education practices, are therefore needed.

Conclusions

To conclude, our evidence reflects the official local perspective of kindergarten music education. The local understanding of kindergarten music education strongly emphasizes providing children in all grade levels with sufficient exposure to music, with a lower focus on the nature and quality of musical learning. While the EDB assessors concentrated on checking whether music was included in the classroom, the feedback was relatively superficial, not demonstrating a thorough comprehension of quality music education practices. International standards and expectations of quality music education have suggested that in addition to sufficient exposure to music, ECE teachers should design and implement high-quality music education activities that are child-centric, actively involved, and diverse (Chung, 2022; Essa & Burnham, 2019). Nevertheless, we rarely identified such features in the reports. In addition, the QR reports tended to reflect a teacher-oriented perspective of kindergarten music education, given that teachers play a crucial role in facilitating quality music education (Nousia & Raptis, 2023; Robertson et al., 2022). However, the reports offered limited recommendations to improve teachers' music pedagogies and children's musical learning. Our findings are worrisome, given that these 323 kindergartens passed the quality assurance. Such superficial music-specific feedback and recommendations could bring a deceptive view that music education is an unimportant area (Donahue & Vogel, 2018). As such, kindergartens might not completely exert the benefits of music for children's communication, self-expression, and creativity (Moravcik et al., 2013). Considering that music learning is crucial for children's holistic development (Sullivan, 2016; Young & Ilari,

2019), we believe there is still much more stakeholders can accomplish to ensure the quality of kindergarten music education in Hong Kong.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the findings relied on a single data source (i.e., QR reports). The low presence of music-specific commentaries in the QR reports does not necessarily mean that teachers do not design and implement quality music activities. Rather, assessors might focus more on the quantity of music education than its quality during the QR observation period. It would be desirable to conduct studies based on other data sources, including classroom observations, interviews, and/or curriculum materials analysis. Second, the QR reports only focused on assessing the quality of local kindergartens. It would be worth investigating the quality of musical practices in international kindergartens. Finally, the QR reports reflected the EDB assessors' perspectives and understanding of music education. In the future, research should investigate the perspectives and understanding of other kindergarten stakeholders (i.e., teachers, principals, and teacher educators).

Practical Implications

Our findings have profound implications for kindergarten stakeholders, mainly QR assessors and curriculum designers, both in Hong Kong and worldwide. Quality assessors should offer more in-depth feedback and recommendations for practitioners to reflect on and eventually enhance their music practices. We identified specific teacher-oriented positive feedback that was detailed, though the frequency was relatively low. Therefore, we encourage the assessors to emphasize the quality of music teaching and offer detailed recommendations when they write the QR reports, with references to the quality features mentioned in the Literature Review section (e.g., Barrett et al., 2021; Essa & Burnham, 2019). Such detailed recommendations could assist Hong Kong kindergarten teachers in obtaining ideas to enhance their music classroom practices (Leung et al., 2023), as reported by Bautista and Ho

(2021). The second implication relates to the global need to enhance curriculum guidelines, standards, and regulations pertaining to music education (EDB, 2017b). In particular, there is an urgent need for more comprehensive and detailed evaluation instruments (e.g., observation forms, scales, tools). Given that assessing children's music enjoyment and learning outcomes is complex (Runfola, 2019), we encourage curriculum designers to develop observation forms and/or scales to specifically evaluate these two aspects during musical activities. For example, curriculum designers could make references to the observation forms developed by Koops and Kuebel (2018) and the evaluation tools by MacGlone (2018). Developing these evaluation instruments would not only help assessors to provide feedback on quality music teaching, but would also assist teachers in evaluating children's musical learning in their daily musical practices (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2023).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In Hong Kong, music is included as a subdomain of the learning area 'Arts and Creativity', which emphasizes the learning objectives of fostering children's self-expression and creativity through music (CDC, 2017). Teachers are required to provide sufficient, diversified, and enjoyable daily musical activities to children (CDC, 2017; Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019). The aims of this dissertation were to explore the provision and types of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens and stakeholders' perspectives on quality musical practices. The three empirical studies, altogether, contributed to depicting the status of kindergarten music education in Hong Kong. While Studies 1 and 2 were focused on investigating the provision and types of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens, Study 3 analyzed the quality assessors' positive and negative feedback and recommendations pertaining to music education in the QR reports. Applying Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework guided me in developing the survey questions for Study 1 and coding scheme in Study 2, and understanding the essential elements of quality kindergarten music education for Study 3.

This General Discussion chapter has six sections. First, this chapter presents the summary of findings for the three studies. Next, the chapter provides a theoretical synthesis to understand music education in Hong Kong kindergartens. Then, the main conclusions of this dissertation are presented. Subsequently, the chapter presents the strengths of this dissertation, followed by the limitations and the direction of future research. Lastly, this chapter closes by presenting the implications for ECE stakeholders (e.g., curriculum designers, quality assessors, teacher educators, PD providers, teachers, and principals).

Summary of Findings

Study 1 (Ho et al., in press), titled "Musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: The role of teaching experience", investigated the provision of musical activities in Hong

Kong kindergartens among teachers with varying teaching experience. Goal 1.1 was to investigate the provision of musical activities in Hong Kong kindergartens (specifically, overall frequency, most common and uncommon activities, and associations among the activities). Findings indicated that kindergarten teachers provided considerable music exposure to children. Principal component analysis revealed the existence of four components: Singing and Transitions (the most frequent); Movement, Technology, and Thematic Activities; Sound Production; and Creativity and Self-expression (the least frequent). Goal 1.2 was to analyze the potential differences among teachers with different levels of teaching experience regarding the provision of musical activities. It was found that Advanced teachers (with more than 15 years of experience) reported to conduct more musical activities for children than Beginning teachers (who had been teaching for less than five years). Teachers with different teaching experience focus on distinct musical activities in the classroom. Specifically, Beginning teachers reported to conduct significantly fewer musical creativity activities than Advanced teachers. Study 1 concluded that teaching experience is a crucial factor influencing the provision and types of musical activities implemented by kindergarten teachers.

Study 2 (Ho & Bautista, 2022), titled "Music activities in Hong Kong kindergartens: A content analysis of the quality review reports", analyzed the Quality Review (QR) reports focusing on the musical activities conducted by Hong Kong kindergarten teachers. Goal 2.1 was to examine the presence of music in the QR reports, focusing on the most typical lexicon (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) and the frequency of key terms related to the various music objectives, as stated in local policies. Findings indicated that the most prevalent music-specific terms were "instrument", "rhythmic", "sing", and "movement". Goal 2.2 was to analyze the types of music activities and the most common combinations of musical contents alluded to in the reports. The most common musical activities identified in the music-related

segments were related to children's development of sensory abilities through music experiences (e.g., singing, rhythm, beat, movement, and instrumental music). However, the reports rarely mentioned activities intended to foster musical creativity and self-expression. Study 2 concluded that the QR reports revealed important discrepancies between the official music curriculum and classroom practices, while the quality assessors seemed to overlook such discrepancies.

Study 3 (Ho & Bautista, 2024), titled "Quality assessors' feedback and recommendations on music education in Hong Kong kindergartens", analyzed quality assessors' feedback and recommendations on music education in Hong Kong Kindergartens. Goal 3.1 was to analyze the positive feedback pertaining to music classroom practices in the reports. The most frequently mentioned positive feedback codes were pertaining to sufficient exposure to music and enjoyable musical learning experiences. Goal 3.2 was to analyze the negative feedback and recommendations for improvements pertaining to music classroom practices in the reports. There were negative feedback codes indicating that children's musical exposure was insufficient at Kindergarten 3 (5-6 year-old children), and the preparation and/or design of some musical activities were poor. The reports rarely mentioned children's music learning outcomes. Study 3 concluded that the QR reports reflected a teacher-directed perspective of kindergarten music education. The local understanding of kindergarten music education strongly emphasizes providing children with enjoyable musical activities, while focusing less on the quality of music education.

Theoretical Synthesis: Understanding Music Education in Hong Kong Kindergartens

In the Introduction chapter, Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s theoretical framework was presented, comprising the five essential musical activity types and characteristics of quality music education. Based on the findings from the three studies, the provision and types of musical activity and local perspectives of quality music education are

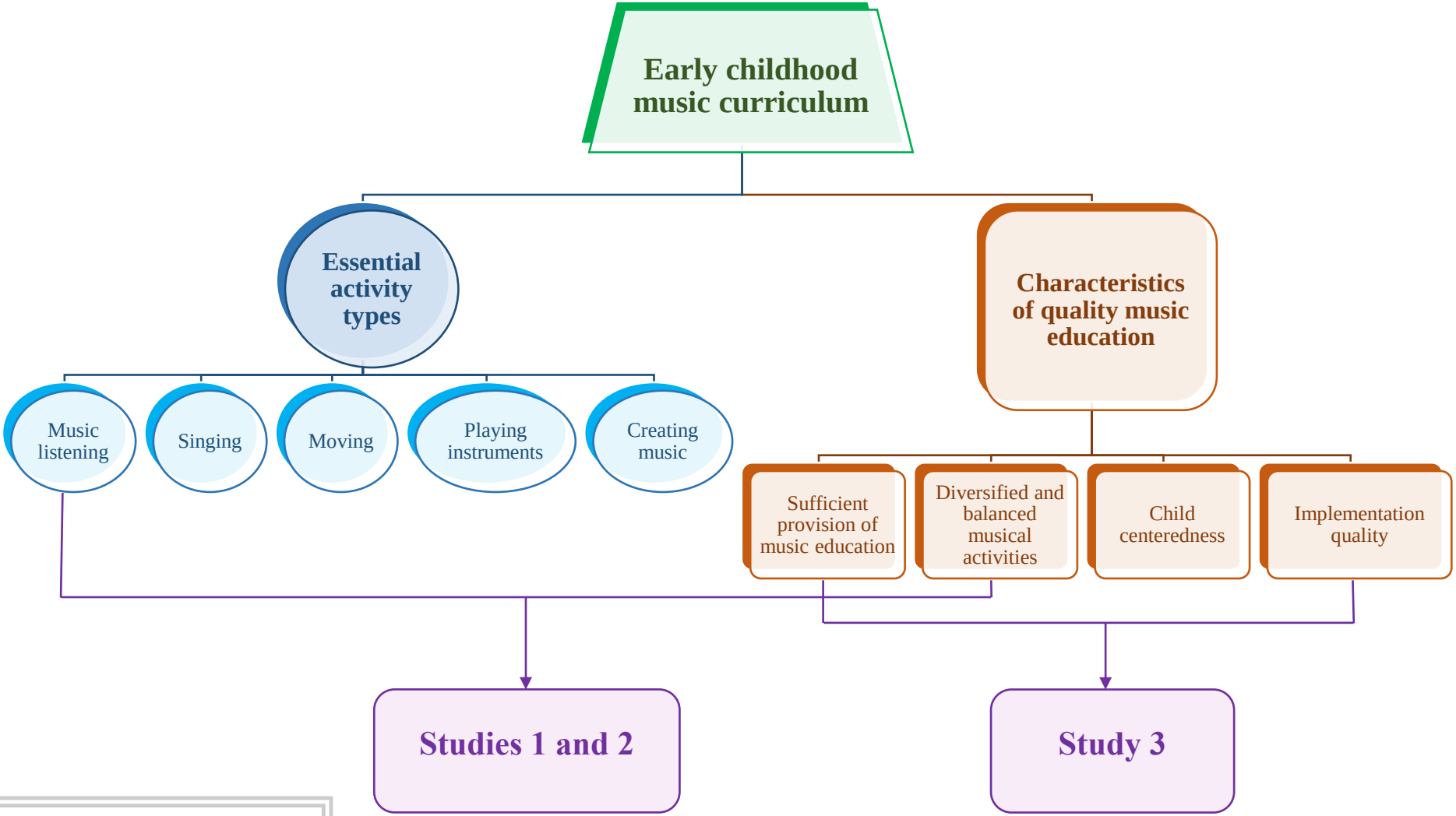
discussed in this section. Figure 9 depicts how the three studies are connected to Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework.

Overall Provision of Musical Activities

This subsection combines the findings of the three empirical studies to depict a general overview of music education in Hong Kong kindergartens. As shown in Study 1, the provision of musical activities for children was relatively high overall. Teachers usually implement musical activities once a week or less and several times per week, similar to prior studies conducted in Singapore (Bautista et al., 2018) and Slovenia (Zupancic et al., 2015). Such provision appears to be higher than in other countries such as South Africa (Van Vreden, 2016), Sweden (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018), and the United States (Nardo et al., 2006). However, the provision of musical activities in some kindergartens does not seem to fulfill the required number of daily minutes in the curriculum *Guide*. Study 3 found that K3 children were provided with insufficient music exposure. One possibility could be they needed to engage in activities related to primary one stimulation. Although kindergartens heavily focus on implementing activities to facilitate K3 children's interface between kindergarten and primary education, kindergartens should modify the daily schedule to ensure that children in all grades are provided with sufficient music exposure, as recommended in the QR reports.

Figure 9

Connection Between Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s Theoretical Framework and the Three Studies



Furthermore, Advanced teachers conducted more musical activities for children than Beginning teachers, as evidenced in Study 1. One reason could be that teachers with varying teaching experience may have distinctive competence in implementing musical activities (Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014). A prior study found that Advanced teachers had a higher perceived confidence and readiness to teach music and movement to children than Beginning teachers (Bautista & Ho, 2022). Teachers in distinct stages may have diversified perspectives of the local curriculum objectives (Jordan et al., 2018). For instance, teachers with relatively less teaching experience may assume that every musical activity can stimulate creativity and self-expression (Besançon & Lubart, 2008).

Types of Musical Activities

In this subsection, I examined the extent to which the musical activities implemented by Hong Kong kindergarten teachers in the classroom align with the five essential musical activity types included in Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework. As mentioned in the Introduction, this framework includes music listening, singing, moving, playing instruments, and creating music. Studies 1 and 2 found that while some musical activity types were frequently implemented in classrooms, some were rarely conducted by teachers. Figure 10 presents the activity types with colors from green (frequent) to red (rarely conducted in the classroom).

Figure 10

Frequency of Appearance of Musical Activity Types in Hong Kong Kindergartens Based on Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s Framework

Singing is the most frequent musical activity type in Hong Kong kindergarten classrooms. Greeting children (e.g., singing welcome song, weather song), classroom management (e.g., getting children's attention), arranging transitions and circle time, and assisting the learning of other curriculum areas are the major purposes of singing in kindergartens (Barrett et al., 2018; Rajan, 2017). Study 1 and Study 2 both evidenced that teachers usually guide children to sing songs, rhymes, or chants as routine activities, similar to the findings of a prior local study conducted more than a decade ago (Lau & Grieshaber, 2010). Teachers typically sing nursery rhymes with children, similar to findings from prior studies (Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018; Rajan, 2017). However, the singing repertoire might not be diversified as described in the framework, given that the QR reports did not mention that children were exposed to songs in various genres and styles.

Moving to music is another musical activity that is frequently conducted in classrooms. Performing rhythmic movements is a typical musical activity in well-known music education pedagogies, which involves play-based approaches and children's active participation (Chung, 2022). Teachers usually utilize music and movement during transitions, and guide children to move to the beat, tempo, or dynamics of music (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Moravcik et al., 2013). Study 2 revealed that movement was notably associated with singing, rhythm and beat, as well as manipulating musical instruments. For instance, children move and play musical instruments in response to the music's rhythm and melody. Teachers often play rhythmic tracks and ask children to perform free and/or coordinated movements (Williams & Berthelsen, 2019).

Playing instrumental music and listening to music are musical activities occasionally conducted in kindergartens. Teachers sometimes play melodic (e.g., tone bells) and non-pitched percussion instruments (e.g., rhythm sticks and castanets) with children (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019). This finding suggested that kindergartens in Hong Kong do not face

significant musical instrument deficiency in the classroom, as identified in other countries such as Turkey (Ersoy & Dere, 2012). Teachers engage children in body percussion activities, such as clapping, tapping, stamping, and patting their body parts to produce sounds (Rodríguez & Álvarez, 2017). Study 1 further evidenced that Beginning teachers conducted more activities related to playing musical instruments compared to Advanced Teachers. One reason could be that Advanced Teachers do not value the importance of playing musical instruments. Other possibilities could be teachers have limited instrumental skills or lack of time (Barrett et al., 2019; Rajan, 2017). In addition, teachers occasionally provide opportunities for children to listen to and appreciate music, aiming to promote children's understanding of the music elements (e.g., melody, rhythm, tone) and different music genres (Hatt, 2019; Reitan, 2013).

In contrast, kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong may not sufficiently implement musical activities related to self-expression and creativity, pertaining to objectives 2 and 3 of the *Guide* (CDC, 2017). Studies 1 and 2 found that children seemed to be hardly ever given opportunities to express their feelings and emotions, as well as exploration, experimentation, improvisation, invention, or creativity with music or sound. Children rarely invent new lyrics for songs, create pieces of music, or produce sound with materials such as eco-friendly instruments, nature, or technology, even though prior studies have clearly demonstrated the value of such creation and sound exploration activities can develop children's thinking and foster their musical creativity (Ferrari & Addessi, 2014; Süner & Ünlü, 2013). Study 1 further supplemented that Beginning teachers conducted significantly fewer musical creativity and self-expression activities compared to Advanced teachers. Beginning teachers tended to conduct activities related to singing or instrumental skills rather than implementing musical creativity activities for children (Bautista et al., 2018). Similar tendencies have been found in other countries, including Slovenia (Denac, 2008), Australia (Garvis, 2012), and Singapore

(Bautista et al., 2018), which were opposed to the learning objectives of contemporary curriculum frameworks.

Local Perspectives on Quality Music Education

The QR reports analyzed in Study 2 and Study 3 represent local stakeholders' perspectives on quality kindergarten music education, given that those kindergartens passed the QR assessment (EDB, 2020a). Among the characteristics of quality music education in Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework, Study 3 found that the assessors primarily focused on superficial aspects such as the provision of musical activities. This could be due to the quality assessors' shallow understanding of quality music education practices, possibly because they had limited musical training (Bautista et al., 2024) or the lack of concrete examples and strategies offered in the *Guide* (CDC, 2017).

Notably, the assessors seldom mentioned kindergarten teachers' pedagogies (e.g., preparation and/or design, and implementation) and children's learning outcomes in the reports. The feedback related to the quality of teachers' performance was relatively more frequent than children's learning. However, specific recommendations for improvement regarding teachers' pedagogies and children's learning were rarely identified. Only a few reports provided valuable recommendations for improvement regarding the quality of music education. Those recommendations were related to teachers' design, preparation, and implementation of the musical activities, aligned with prior literature that encourages teachers to design singing activities to foster children's musical creativity and inventiveness (Barrett et al., 2021; Essa & Burnham, 2019), and focus on children's content mastery and performance when they conduct the activities (Moravcik et al., 2013). The abovementioned inconsistencies between the assessors' feedback and the characteristics of quality music education in Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework are worrisome, given that kindergartens and

teachers need to obtain feedback and recommendations for continuous improvement and development (Guo, 2023).

Conclusions

This dissertation offers significant contributions to the area of early childhood music education in Hong Kong kindergartens. In summary, the three studies found important discrepancies between the local music education curriculum and actual practices. Although the overall provision of musical activities in kindergartens seems to be relatively high, the activities lack diversity. Among the five essential musical activity types in Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework, the studies concluded that reproductive and routine activities (i.e., singing and moving to music) tend to be the most frequent activity types conducted in the classroom. Nevertheless, teachers rarely implement activities related to fostering children's musical creativity and self-expression. These findings coincided with the trend in other Asian societies, such as Singapore (Bautista et al., 2018). The current practices are insufficient to achieve the local curriculum objectives articulated in the official curriculum *Guide*, which heavily emphasizes fostering children's creativity and self-expression through music (CDC, 2017).

However, it is worrisome that the quality assessors seemed to ignore or overlook these curriculum/practice discrepancies, as they heavily focused on the provision of musical activities in general, with a lower focus on the quality of music education. While the QR reports reflected a teacher-directed perspective of music education, the recommendations for improvement in music teaching and learning were rarely identified. Such limited recommendations for improvement could result in a dangerous vicious circle: teachers may receive the message that they are only required to provide children with sufficient musical activities, regardless of the diversity and quality of implementation. Moreover, kindergarten practitioners might not notice that their current practices are insufficient to fulfill the official

curriculum objectives, thereby unable to make further improvements and development (Guo, 2023).

Finally, teaching experience is a crucial factor that influences the provision and types of musical activities in kindergarten classrooms. Advanced teachers seem to conduct more musical activities for children as compared to Beginning teachers. Teachers with varying teaching experience tend to focus on different musical activities in the classroom, given that they may have distinctive competence in conducting musical activities and diverse perspectives of the local curriculum objectives (Bautista & Ho, 2022; Jordan et al., 2018). While Advanced teachers conducted significantly more musical creativity and self-expression activities than Beginning teachers, Beginning teachers conducted more activities related to playing musical instruments than Advanced Teachers. This dissertation concluded that there is much more ECE stakeholders could accomplish to continuously enhance kindergarten music education's quality in the future, given how beneficial music education is for children's holistic development (Barrett et al., 2020; Young & Ilari, 2019; Zadnik & Jerman, 2015).

Strengths

One strength of this dissertation portfolio is that it achieved data triangulation to increase the validity and credibility of the research findings by investigating related issues utilizing complementary data sources (Noble & Heale, 2019). Indeed, both Study 1 and Study 2 investigated similar topics, namely the provision and types of musical activity, utilizing different methodologies, including survey and content analysis of QR reports. While Study 1 analyzed the musical activity provision and types from teachers' perspective, Study 2 analyzed the topic in the QR reports from the quality assessors' perspective. By integrating the strengths and weaknesses of each methodology, the studies could verify and complement each other's findings (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021).

Another strength is that the three large-scale studies constitute a comprehensive view of the entire population, which reduces the margin of error and improves the findings' reliability (Creswell, 2013; Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). This dissertation analyzed two large-scale databases, namely a survey with 1,019 kindergarten teachers (Study 1) and QR reports (Study 2 and Study 3) with 164 and 323 kindergartens, respectively. These databases represent considerable percentages of the total population of kindergarten teachers (approximately 8%) and kindergartens (approximately 31% and 16%, respectively).

Two studies in this dissertation (Study 2 and Study 3) analyzed the provision and types of musical activity, and assessors' feedback pertaining to music education in the QR reports. These reports were an excellent database that offers an overview and insight into music pedagogical practices within Hong Kong kindergartens. Considering that these kindergartens passed the QR assessment, they revealed the musical activity types and pedagogical practices the EDB regarded as high-quality. Hence, conducting content analyses of these reports is beneficial to various stakeholders, including teacher educators, curriculum designers, principals, and teachers.

Limitations and Future Research

While these three studies involved a large sample of participants, the studies relied on self-reported survey responses and QR reports. When I was planning to conduct the studies for my EdD, the COVID-19 pandemic was severe in Hong Kong. It was, therefore, impossible for me to visit kindergartens, conduct interviews with teachers, and observe their daily classroom practices. It would be important for future studies to further triangulate the findings by analyzing complementary data sources, such as classroom observations, one-to-one and focus group interviews. For instance, interviews should be conducted in future studies to explore why teachers frequently or rarely implement specific musical activities.

Additionally, in my dissertation, I focused mainly on assessing the quality of local Hong Kong kindergartens. The demographic characteristics of the sample in the studies largely represented the total population of kindergartens and kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong (EDB, 2022, 2023). Exploring the quality of musical practices in international kindergartens would be worthwhile. In the future, research should be done to investigate whether trends reported in the three studies are generalizable to international kindergartens.

Moreover, it would be meaningful to conduct comparative studies to further investigate if the trends are similar among different countries and jurisdictions. In the future, researchers can utilize a similar methodology (i.e., survey) to investigate the provision of musical activities in other socio-cultural contexts (Bautista et al., 2023). Finally, the QR reports reflected the quality assessors' perspectives and understanding of music education. Future studies should be conducted to explore the perspectives and understanding of other kindergarten stakeholders, including teachers, principals, and teacher educators.

Implications

The first implication of this dissertation focuses on raising the awareness of kindergarten stakeholders (including curriculum designers, quality assessors, teacher educators, teachers, and principals) that kindergartens have not yet fulfilled the curriculum objectives in the curriculum *Guide* (CDC, 2017). It is crucial for stakeholders to be aware of the curriculum/practice discrepancies to make continuous improvements (Leung et al., 2023). When the assessors conduct QR assessments in the future, they should be more conscious of the *Guide*'s learning objectives and performance indicators regarding music education and provide kindergarten practitioners with detailed recommendations to enhance their music classroom practices, with references to the characteristics of quality music education mentioned in the prior literature (e.g., Barrett et al., 2021; Essa & Burnham, 2019) and Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019)'s framework. Their specific recommendations could help

kindergarten teachers generate ideas for reinforcing their music pedagogical practices (Leung et al., 2023).

Another implication relates to the need for curriculum designers to enhance the music curriculum guidelines, standards, and evaluations, with the final aim of addressing curriculum/practice discrepancies (EDB, 2017b). Specifically, curriculum designers are recommended to clarify the official expectations for quality music education by providing stakeholders with concrete and comprehensive examples of quality musical practices, especially pertaining to musical creativity and self-expression (Tan et al., 2019). For example, the curriculum guide in Singapore offers detailed activity examples and strategies for music and movement using various materials such as sound sources, musical games, and props (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2013, 2022). In addition, curriculum designers can develop observation scales and/or tools to evaluate children's music enjoyment and learning outcomes, with references to those evaluation instruments developed by Koops and Kuebel (2018) and MacGlone (2018). Accordingly, assessors and teachers can utilize these evaluation instruments in evaluating children's music learning outcomes in their musical practices (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2023).

Last but not least, findings guide PD efforts to provide better preparation for kindergarten teachers with varying teaching experience. Considering that teachers at different stages have distinct needs for PD support, teacher educators and PD providers are suggested to design courses in coherence with teachers' needs (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Wong et al., 2023). For instance, develop PD courses specific for Beginning teachers on musical creativity and self-expression activities. Furthermore, teachers with varying teaching experience can exchange their ideas on quality music pedagogical practices with their colleagues to obtain insight into their lesson design and implementation (Barrett et al., 2019). Teachers can eventually be equipped with plentiful musical knowledge and teaching skills through these

PD courses and discussions, which help them accomplish all the learning objectives in the *Guide* (CDC, 2017). The quality of kindergarten music education could be enhanced, ultimately bridging existing curriculum/practice discrepancies and benefiting children's musical and holistic development (Barrett et al., 2018; Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019).

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval for Study 1

香港教育大學
The Education University of Hong Kong

26 August 2019

Dr Alfredo BAUTISTA ARELLANO
Associate Professor
Department of Early Childhood Education

Dear Dr Bautista Arellano,

Application for Ethical Review <Ref. no. 2018-2019-0411>

I am pleased to inform you that approval has been given by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for your research project:

Project title: Hong Kong Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Development Needs and Preferences regarding Music and Movement: A Survey Study

Ethical approval is granted for the project period from 26 August 2019 to 14 August 2020. If a project extension is applied for lasting more than 3 months, HREC should be contacted with information regarding the nature of and the reason for the extension. If any substantial changes have been made to the project, a new HREC application will be required.

Please note that you are responsible for informing the HREC in advance of any proposed substantive changes to the research proposal or procedures which may affect the validity of this ethical approval. You will receive separate notification should a fresh approval be required.

Thank you for your kind attention and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Patsy Chung (Ms)
Secretary
Human Research Ethics Committee

c.c. Prof CHOU Kee Lee, Chairperson, Human Research Ethics Committee

香港新界大埔露屏路十號
10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong
T (852) 2948 8888 F (852) 2948 6000 www.eduhk.hk

Appendix B: Ethics Approval for Studies 2 and 3

香港教育大學
The Education University of Hong Kong

5 October 2020

Dr Alfredo BAUTISTA ARELLANO
Associate Professor
Department of Early Childhood Education

Dear Dr Bautista Arellano,

Application for Ethical Review <Ref. no. 2020-2021-0022>

I am pleased to inform you that approval has been given by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for your research project:

Project title: Arts and Creativity in Hong Kong Kindergartens: Towards 'Glocal' Pedagogies

Ethical approval is granted for the project period from 5 October 2020 to 30 June 2022. If a project extension is applied for lasting more than 3 months, HREC should be contacted with information regarding the nature of and the reason for the extension. If any substantial changes have been made to the project, a new HREC application will be required.

Please note that you are responsible for informing the HREC in advance of any proposed substantive changes to the research proposal or procedures which may affect the validity of this ethical approval. You will receive separate notification should a fresh approval be required.

Thank you for your kind attention and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Patsy Chung (Ms)
Secretary
Human Research Ethics Committee

c.c. Prof CHOU Kee Lee, Chairperson, Human Research Ethics Committee

香港新界大埔露屏路十號
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Appendix C: Ethical Exemption Approval Letter

香港教育大學
The Education University of Hong Kong

8 November 2022

Ms HO Yan Lam
Doctor of Education Programme
Graduate School

Dear Ms Ho,

Ethical Review <Ref. no. E2022-2023-0012>

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has vetted your research proposal "*Music Activities in Hong Kong Kindergartens and Stakeholders' Perspectives on Quality Musical Practices*", which has no data from human subjects forming the basis of the research. It is not necessary for your proposal to undergo review by the HREC.

Best wishes for your research.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Patsy Chung (Ms)
Secretary
Human Research Ethics Committee

c.c. Professor CHOU Kee Lee, Chairperson, Human Research Ethics Committee

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Appendix D: Consent Form and Information Sheet for Study 1

Sample Consent Form and Information Sheet for PARTICIPANTS

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Department of Early Childhood Education

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Hong Kong Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Development Needs and Preferences regarding Music and Movement: A Survey Study

I hereby consent to participate in the captioned research conducted by Associate Professor Dr. Alfredo BAUTISTA, who is staff of the Department of Early Childhood Education in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the **attached** information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

I consent to participate: YES NO

Date _____

1

INFORMATION SHEET

Hong Kong Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Development Needs and Preferences regarding Music and Movement: A Survey Study

You are invited to participate in a project conducted by Associate Professor Dr. Alfredo BAUTISTA, who is staff of the Department of Early Childhood Education in The Education University of Hong Kong.

The introduction of the research

A) What does the research involve?

The aim of this study is to survey the professional development (PD) needs and preferences of Hong Kong kindergarten teachers regarding music and movement. Our target population are all trained kindergarten teachers from all local and non-local kindergartens in Hong Kong. The survey is anonymous and confidential. Completion time is 6-8 minutes. Findings will allow local teacher educators and PD providers to design courses and workshops that are customized or more responsive to teachers' specific needs and preferences, and therefore more likely to enhance music and movement teaching practices in kindergartens.

B) Why were you chosen for this research?

Our target participants are in-service kindergarten teachers from local and international kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centers in Hong Kong, in charge of teaching children from three to six years old (K1 to K3). The Principal of your kindergarten has forwarded you the survey link because you fulfill our selection criteria.

The methodology of the research

A) *Participants*

As mentioned, our target participants are in-service kindergarten teachers (with Higher Diploma in ECE or above) from local and international kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centers in Hong Kong, in charge of teaching children from three to six years old (K1 to K3). We expect to obtain responses from at least 1,000 teachers.

B) Procedure of the research

A formal invitation letter has been sent to the principal of your kindergarten indicating the purpose of the study, defining the participants' role, and explaining how anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed. Your principal has sent you the link (via e-mail, SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook) because you fulfill the selection criteria. You can complete this online survey anytime and anywhere, using your own device (phone, computer, tablet). The survey only takes 6-8 minutes. You will be asked to give your consent to participate by ticking a box. No name or signature is required.

C) Potential benefits

There will be no direct benefits or compensation for participating in this study. Findings will inform the design of future professional development courses and workshops, which will potentially benefit the fraternity of Hong Kong kindergarten teachers, and ultimately children's learning.

The potential risks of the research

There are no potential risks or discomforts associated to this study. The survey questions do not touch upon any potentially uncomfortable or personal topics.

Your participation in the project is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you will remain confidential, and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

How results will be potentially disseminated
Information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published in the form of journal articles, conference presentations, and/or other educational activities. However, your right to privacy will be retained. No personal details will be collected. Thus, we require your permission to share your results with larger audiences.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact me (Dr. Alfredo BAUTISTA) at telephone number 2948 7948 or via email at abautista@eduhk.hk.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@eduhk.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Dr. Alfredo BAUTISTA, *Associate Professor*
Principal Investigator

參與者同意書樣本和說明書

香港教育大學
幼兒教育學系

參與研究同意書

香港幼稚園教師在音樂與律動專業發展的需要及偏好：問卷調查研究

本人_____同意參加由副教授 Alfredo BAUTISTA 博士負責執行的研究計劃，他是香港教育大學幼兒教育學系的教員。

本人理解此研究所獲得的資料可用於未來的研究和學術發表然而本人有權保護自己的隱私，本人的個人資料將不能洩漏

研究者已將所附資料的有關步驟向本人作了充分的解釋本人理解可能會出現的風險本人是自願參與這項研究

本人理解我有權在研究過程中提出問題,並在任何時候決定退出研究, 更不會因此而對研究工作產生的影響負有任何責任。

我同意參與： 是 否

日期 _____

說明書

香港幼稚園教師在音樂與律動專業發展的需要及偏好：問卷調查研究

香港教育大學幼兒教育學系教職員副教授 Alfredo BAUTISTA 博士現誠邀閣下參加其進行的一項名為「**香港幼稚園教師在音樂與律動專業發展的需要及偏好：問卷調查研究**」的研究計劃。

研究簡介

A) 研究涉及什麼？

本研究的目的是調查香港幼稚園教師在音樂和律動方面的專業發展的需求和偏好。我們的目標人群均為來自香港所有本地及非本地幼稚園的受過訓練的幼稚園教師。調查是匿名和保密的。完成時間為 6-8 分鐘。調查結果將允許本地師範教育工作者和專業發展提供者設計更具針對性，或能響應教師特定需求和偏好的課程和研討會，因此更有可能改善幼稚園的音樂與律動教學實踐。

B) 為何選中閣下參加此研究？

我們的目標參與者是來自香港本地及國際幼稚園及幼稚園暨幼兒中心的負責教育三至六歲兒童（K1 至 K3）的在職幼稚園教師。貴校校長已將調查鏈接轉發給閣下，因為閣下符合我們的選擇標準。我們期望得到至少 1000 名教師的回應

研究方法

A) 參與者

如上所述，我們的目標參與者是香港本地及國際幼稚園及幼稚園暨幼兒中心的負責教育三至六歲兒童（K1 至 K3）的在職幼稚園教師。

B) 研究程序

本人已向貴校校長發送正式邀請函，說明了研究目的，確定參與者的角色，並解釋如何保證匿名和保密。貴校校長已將調查鏈接轉發給閣下（通過電子郵件、短信、WhatsApp、Facebook），因為閣下符合選擇標準。閣下可以使用自己的設備（手機、電腦、平板電腦）隨時隨地完成此在線問卷。完成問卷只需要 6-8 分鐘。您將被要求通過勾選方框表示同意參與。不需要姓名或簽名。

C) 潛在利益

參與這項研究不會有直接的利益或補償。但調查結果將為未來專業發展課程和工作坊的設計提供信息，這些課程和工作坊將有利於香港整體幼稚園教師，並最終有助於兒童的學習。

研究的潛在風險

本研究沒有潛在的風險或不適。 ***問卷****問題不涉及任何可能不舒服或個人主題。*

閣下參與該項目是自願的。教師有權隨時退出研究而不會產生負面後果。與每位教師相關的所有信息都將保密，並且只能由研究人員知道的代碼識別。

結果將可能如何傳播

從本研究中獲得的資料可用於未來的研究，並可以期刊文章、會議報告和/或其他教育活動的形式發佈。但是，閣下的隱私權將被保留。我們永遠不會透露閣下的個人資料。因此，我們需要閣下的許可才能與更多的受眾分享閣下的結果。

如閣下想獲得更多有關這項研究的資料,請以電話（2948-7948）或電子郵件（abautista@eduhk.hk）與本人 (Alfredo BAUTISTA 博士) 聯絡。

如閣下對這項研究的操守有任何意見,可隨時與香港教育大學人類實驗對象操守委員會聯絡 (電郵: hrec@eduhk.hk ; 地址:香港教育大學研究與發展事務處)。

謝謝閣下對參與這項研究的興趣。

首席研究員
副教授 Alfredo BAUTISTA 博士