Teachers' Perceptions on The Employment of Creative Music and Movement to Enhance Early Reading Among Indigenous Preschoolers

Catherine Cynthia Felix[1] & Mohd Nazri Abdul Rahman[1]
Falculty of Education
University of Malaya[1]

Abstract

Creative Music and movement have the power and meaning that goes way beyond words for the development of young children mainly Indigenous preschoolers especially in early reading. We can actually give and receive love to and from young children just by sharing music, believed to promote learning effectiveness to the students. However, teaching with 'chalk and talk' on how to read bores them down and makes them lose interest in reading. Therefore, this research attempt to conduct a need assessment on teachers' perceptions in teaching early reading by integrating music and movement as the means of delivery. This research employed narrative research design through a one-to-one interview with 3 preschools experienced teachers as the data collection methods. The sample was chosen among preschool teachers through purposive sampling technique. The main findings from the interview revealed the concept, importance, and requirements to employ creative music and movement in teaching early reading as well as the optimism of teachers in implementing it in class. This research emphasizes that creative music and movement have its own way of imparting knowledge to young students especially preschoolers.

Keywords: Teachers' perception, Music and movement, Early reading, Indigenous Preschoolers, Creativity

Introduction

According to (Rohde, 2015; Teale, & Whittingham, 2018), early literacy is the premature skills occurs when children learn about print concepts which is also known as the foundation for early reading development begins. Children with print awareness will begin to understand how written language is associated to oral language. The capacity is associated with seven facets and one of it is, a method of teaching people to read by correlating sounds with symbols in an alphabetic writing system also known as phonics. Phonological awareness on the other hand is a broad skill that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language components such as words, syllables and rimes followed by reading fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and digital literacies (Rohde, 2015; Teale, & Whittingham, 2018).

The process of early literacy often obtained at birth till the child turns six years of age and this is when they began to become fully aware that print convey meaning (Brown, 2015). According to Brown (2015), the child also began to understand how books work (front, back, which way to turn pages) and the awareness of how the text appears in a book. The existing models of emergent literacy is based upon specific skills, as they provide a few things that are key to an open and intelligent society. Emergent literacy is another form of transferring one thought from the other, considerable on the impact of the setting as well as the context, and are critical in making sure that children are able to use previous knowledge, vocabulary and comprehension or understanding of how things work to become successful readers and writers (Rohde, 2015).

Creative music and movement among children consist of four basic elements that is human body, space, time and attachment (Muhamad, Razali, & Raja Azuan Nahar Raja Adnan, 2017). Creative music and movement have become a platform in the child's learning process. The reason is because creative music and movement involves dancing, moving and music which comes natural in a child's creative learning. These components emphasized on the development of gross motor movement among children, creativeness of behavior and the way of thinking to cultivate a healthy child (Muhamad et al., 2017).

Creative music and movement can be used as an essential tool in promoting early literacy learning to the fullest potential among Indigenous preschoolers (Klopper, 2008). Teachers try their level best to provide the best education they can for their students in the early childhood field. They are required to come up with the best learning strategies which mainly focus on keeping Indigenous students engaged more than their counterparts in the inclusive classroom environment. The fact that Indigenous children have a very short attention span and could bore them with the conventional method used in most preschool (Jan & Shyan, 2010).

Studies pertaining the use of creative music and movement as a method to enhance early reading among Indigenous preschoolers have not been utilized to the fullest potential (Augustine, 2015). Most teachers have minimal knowledge and understanding in applying various strategies on how to apply these methods. Some of them are afraid to explore various techniques in helping Indigenous children enhance their early reading skills (Augustine, 2015). According to Augustine (2015), creative music and movement consist of a section of the creativeness and aesthetic element of a larger whole. Out of the four purposes of the elements, part of it permits children to appreciate the phenomena of the physical world collectively.

Indigenous community or in Peninsular Malaysia the official name is *Orang Asli* where the community represents about 0.6 percent of the total Malaysian population which is 178,197 in the year 2010, according to Nordin, Danjuma, and Yahya (2018). The Indigenous community (*Orang Asli*) in Malaysia comprises of diverse ethnic groups with unique culture, backgrounds and languages (Nordin et al., 2018). They are divided into three groups: *Negrito, Senoi* and *Melayu* Proto (Malay Proto), and 18 ethnicities: *Kensiu, Kintak, Lanoh, Jahai, Mendriq, Bateq, Temiar, Semai, Semoq Beri, Jahut, Mah Meri, Che Wong, Orang Kuala, Orang Kanaq, Orang Seletar, Jakun, Semelai* and *Temuan* spread all over various regions of the country (Sharifah Mahsinah Abdullah, 2019).

More than one third of the *Orang Asli* live in rural and remote arears therefore, they are often excluded from the mainstream development (Nordin et al., 2018). The *Orang Asli* community do not have means of entry to favorable infrastructure or quality education due to their geographical location (Rabahi, Yusof, & Awang, 2016). Schools dropout rate among the *Orang Asli* children in 2011, has been reduced to 26 percent with the help from the *Kementerian Kemajuan Luar Bandar dan Wilayah* (KKLW) and *Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli* (JAKOA) cited from book PPOA-UKM.

According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2017), their aim is to create a culture of continuous quality education to support every child's needs across all developmental domains. One way is by making sure all students including the Indigenous (*Orang Asli*) children receive quality education that is pertinent to their needs. Education conveyance that caters to diverse needs of the Indigenous (*Orang Asli*) children constitute different challenges compared to those in the mainstream urban setting. The gap between these two widens as remoteness increase underlying explanation for poorer developmental status among Indigenous children (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017).

Therefore, this study aims to explore and investigate teachers' perception on the employment of creative music and movement as well as to gain deeper understanding pertaining the advantageous and impacts creative music and movement can bring about in enhancing literacy learning among the Indigenous children (Augustine, 2016).

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is firstly, to establish the importance of the common field of this study. Identifying, evaluating and exploring related theories, models of past studies from researchers, scholars and practitioners aids in the needs of assessment on teachers' perception in teaching early reading by integrating music and movement as a means of delivery (Labaree, 2014). Understanding the importance of creative music and movement to enhance literacy learning among Indigenous children, early childhood educators will be able to know, understand better and be aware of the key aspects on educational development systems not forgetting problems faced by teachers, Indigenous children and their families pertaining these issues. These provide an insight for teachers on how to come up with various strategies to assist young Indigenous children enhance their literacy learning (Ball, 2010).

Children are able to expand their language skills, do better in school, and feel great about themselves (Satomi Izumi-Taylor, Vivian Gunn Morris, Cathy D. Meredith, & Claire Hicks, 2012). Therefore, in order to achieve these results, teachers, educators and caregivers need to arouse children to the joy of learning by providing an environment that encourages creativity which helps in literacy learning among Indigenous children. There is no single quality or skill that teachers need in order to nurture the natural creativity of young children (Satomi Izumi-Taylor et al., 2012). However, having amalgamation of knowledge, attitudes, experiences and skills will help teachers set a stage in which Indigenous children are able to reach their creative potential. An environment that supports creativity takes into account the strengths, interests, and needs of individual Indigenous children. Adaptations are made in the environment so that all Indigenous children, including those with disabilities be included in the activities and experiences provided (Cohen, 2000).

Creativity, self-assurance, responsibility, cooperative, resilience, knowledge and skills for fostering creative thinking in relation to learning and thinking scientifically are just some of the advantages of the Reggio Emilia Approach. This approach which from its point of time in post-war Italy has evolved to set off as a well-known leader who based in multiple regions of the world in innovative and highly effective childhood teaching (Westlake Pricilla, 2017).

The Reggio Emilia school has made the single largest point of difference where the child has rights to education. Children are competent of obtaining knowledge within themselves through their natural curiosity and creativity. This approach categories them as active participants in constructing their own knowledge and have considerable control over the direction of where their

learning leads them to. What they are and what interest them, becomes an essential component in their own learning process (Rain Forest Learning Centre, 2016).

Methodology

This research design conducted for the purpose of obtaining relevant information from the informants who consists of a principal and two preschool teachers with more than five years working experiences in the early childhood field. The data collection using questionnaire as an instrument retrieved from the one-on-one interview and bring about the purpose of gathering information from the three informants. The purpose for doing so, is to bring out the essence of a certain concept and display how these concepts integrals naturally which arise in some integral equation governing the physical situation of the problems (Rahman, 2007).

Dealing with young Indigenous children can be very demanding at times for those new or inexperienced teachers therefore, special attention needed to be given due to the fact that Indigenous children social and economic position locates them among the disadvantaged minorities, the majority living beneath the poverty line and marginalized (Rabahi, Yusof, Pusat, et al., 2016). Since teachers play an important role in nurturing these children, they have to be equipped by coming up with various strategies and have a great deal of understanding on how to focus in keeping these children engaged more than their counterparts in urban preschools. Teachers are required to work aimlessly to create fun and effective learning environment while keeping the students involved (Mumpuniarti, 2017). Incorporating creative music and movement to enhance early literacy is considered to be natural and most often use instructional component which performed to strengthen children's understanding of new vocabulary within meaningful, active and expressive contexts (Hallam, 2017).

According to Rahi (2017), acquiring pertinent corroboration necessitates in identifying the type of corroboration needed to answer the research question, to assess a program, test a theory or to accurately describe some phenomenon. The evidence obtained for this research allowed the researcher to answer the initial question in a manner which was not open to more than one interpretation only (Rahi, 2017). In short, when the research was being done, the researcher managed to answer questions in a valid way as part of the procedural plan to be adopted by the researcher (Nassaji, 2015). The researcher listed down the strengths and weaknesses then came up with the researchers own decisions. The researcher has taken one of the best approaches in getting a good research design by conducting a one-on-one interview with the experienced teachers as stated below:

Informant 1. Principal was chosen by the researcher on the basis of information searching from academic management perspective to see the feasibility of creative music and movement approach in teaching and learning.

Informant 2 and 3. Teachers chosen by the researcher on the basis of information as they will be the ones who will be applying the teaching and learning approaches using creative music and movement to achieve collecting goals that will enhance literacy learning among the preschoolers.

Teachers were chosen by the researcher for this study as teachers are directly connected in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, before implementing the intervention of creative music and movement in teaching and learning, there is a need for the researcher to gain an understanding of creative music and movement and the level of optimism at the implementation level.

Results and Discussion

The data collection method is dependent on the method used and is very crucial in carrying out qualitative studies. For this research the researcher used one-on-one interview with three informants as one of the data collection techniques for qualitative researchers. Recognizably different from other methods, interviews have unique features that make them superior (Peersman, 2014). As such, the current study explores relevant issues that are connected to interviews, especially aspects that make them central to qualitative data collection. Besides the historical appeal, the discussion covers the advantages a researcher experiences while using interviews to collect data. They require a personal commitment of both the participant and researcher (Nassaji, 2015).

According to Peersman (2014), data can be gathered from a number of sources including interviews, surveys, observations, written documents, records, workplaces, the Internet. For this study the researcher collected the data through interviews with three preschool teachers using protocol questions and produced field notes.

(i)   Interview Protocol:
A skilled interviewer knows how to ask questions and knows the right questions to ask and in what order. Here we focus on the writing of an interview protocol to gain in-depth information from users, stakeholders, or experts to guide design decisions. The researcher explained the importance of interviews in design processes and decisions making by creating a thorough and effective interview protocol. A variety of questions were drafted to elicit high quality information and organized interview questions in a structure that facilitates gaining the most useful and meaningful information (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

(ii)   Validation of Interview Protocol (Face Validity):
In social science the problems with reliability are more difficult than in other scientific areas. To deal with those problems Jacob and Furgerson (1993), introduce the following idea: "Face validity is where a group of experts or referees assesses whether the measuring instrument measures the attribute of interest (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). One of those is face validity. The others are internal validity, when variations in outcomes are checked.

(iii)   Instruments of the study: Protocol Questions
Data collection instruments used for this study is accurate and collected systematically. The data collection allows the researcher to collect information or study objectives regarding creative music and movement to enhance early literacy learning among pre-schoolers. Depending on research type, methods of data collection include: documents review, observation, questioning, measuring, or a combination of different methods (Abawi, 2013). For this research, the researcher collected the data using the questionnaire as this instrument consistency of series of questions and prompts for the purpose of gathering information from three informants.

(iv)   Ethical Concern
The researcher sought permission from the school management to conduct research concern through the administration of the permission letter issued by the Education Faculty of University Malaya. Upon completion of the interview sessions with the informants involved, the researcher enclosed a letter of appreciation to the school management for the permission granted.

(v)   Data Analysis:
The researcher analysed the data which provided factual information during the interviews held with the informants and used them as a basis for reasoning, discussion and understanding. The data was sufficient and easily available, the information retrieved from the interviews with the informants, voice recording and field notes were very useful and relevant for this study purpose.

Many believe that data on its own has no meaning, only when interpreted does it take on meaning and become information. By closely examining the data the researcher found patterns to perceive information, and then information used to enhance knowledge.

The documentation and analysis process aimed to present data in an intelligible and interpretable form in order to identify trends and relations in accordance with the research aims. In turn, the identified trends and relations in accordance with the research aims, in accordance with the diverse needs of creative music and movement in teaching and learning (Flick UWe, 2013).

(vi)   Data Validation: Triangulation method

For this research, the researcher used triangulation data for example interview protocol, questionnaires and voice recording from three preschool teachers to gain a better understanding of their perception on the employment of creative music and movement in teaching and learning from the academic perspective which facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources. It mainly refers to the application and combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon.

Results

The researcher constructed the open-ended questions particularly in exploring the depth and the breath of information regarding teachers' perception on the employment of creative music and movement to enhance literacy learning among Indigenous children. Three main themes were derived from the interview session held with the informant conducted by the researcher.

Based on the notion or concept of creative music and movement through the interviews from all the informants, there is significance of how movements is being transmitted from music through sound waves to the listener (Burton, 2017). Augustine (2016), believes that a child uses language to interact with others, learn about the world, and solve problems. One way to develop language acquisition is to include music and movements in the learning instruction. Teachers should encourage children to participate actively in music activities but they must also ensure that the activities are incorporated equally in the educational process (Augustine, 2016).

By providing a conducive learning environment incorporating creative music and movement as an approach in teaching and learning, teachers are able to support non- English-speaking preschoolers mainly Indigenous children enhance their language and literacy skills.

Conclusion

To make sure these theories and cultural methods work for Indigenous children, we need to incorporate creative music and movement to enhance their literacy learning. As we know that Indigenous children are inherently musical according to past studies. Indigenous children respond to music and learn through music. Music expresses Indigenous children's identity and heritage as a whole. Music also teaches them to belong to a culture and develops their cognitive well-being and inner self worth (Ockenden Lucy, 2014).

Teachers need to diversify the learning strategies by incorporating creative music and movement to accommodate the indigenous preschoolers learning skills. Early childhood programs could learn from past studies and assimilate motivational principles in an attempt to expand the quality of the educational environment. Assessing and implementing the overall program, coming up with various approaches compatible with Loris Malaguzzi's Reggio Emilia Approach that incorporate play and learning in creative modes of expression.

Teachers and educators need to encourage parents to expose their children and themselves in order to create awareness about the importance of early education and the impact of creative music and movement in acquiring knowledge. As for the Indigenous children, proper guidance from both parties they will definitely help them to become more proactive and eager to gain knowledge so that they gained a wider perspective pertaining the outside world.

Acknowledgements

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