

## **Music Teaching Readiness among Non-Specialised Music Teachers in Government Preschools**

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### **Abstract**

Music education plays a very important role in children's lives. Music can be used to assist children in learning other subjects such as language, mathematics, science and physical movements. Although teachers may be aware of the benefits and significance of music for children, they are not necessarily able to conduct lessons effectively. Many studies have revealed that preschool and primary school teachers lack skills in teaching music. This study sought to investigate three main components of music teaching readiness—content knowledge, professional development and instructional strategies among non-specialised music teachers in government preschools in the state of Perak. A questionnaire was used to collect data in this cross-sectional survey. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The results of this study indicated the music teaching readiness of the non-specialised music preschool teachers (N=48) in Perak is average in terms of content knowledge (M=3.35 on a 5-point scale); and instructional strategies (M=3.33) used in the music classroom. The professional development component indicated only 25% of the total number of teachers participated in courses, workshops, seminars, observations and other teacher development programmes. To maintain and develop effective teaching, teachers who lack confidence in teaching should take the opportunity to participate in professional development programmes fostered by Government policy, to discover new learning tools and strategies, assessment methods, find new resources and expand their network towards aiming for the best music-learning environment for children.

**Keywords** content knowledge, instructional strategies, music teaching readiness, preschool, professional development

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers with sufficient knowledge and skills create a positive learning environment and leave significant impact on children in music classes. Effective teachers demonstrate a variety of teaching styles and strategies to make the learning process more meaningful. According to Masnan (2014), although preschool teachers in Malaysia are likely to have a good academic background, they may still lack in their pedagogical skills in real-school environments. As qualified preschool

teachers, they should be able to apply their knowledge and skills, which are the important assets in the process of teaching and learning. In addition, they are also required to master skills that are appropriate to the students' level of cognitive development.

Many studies have revealed that teachers in preschool and primary school feel that they are not competent enough to teach music (Scott, 1999; Chan & Kwan, 2010; Ehrlin & Wallerstedt, 2014; Ming, Liu, Lin & Tang, 2003). Scott (1999) mentioned that although many teachers are aware of the importance of music to children, but they are unable to conduct music lessons effectively.

The two main learning core elements in the Malaysian National Preschool Curriculum that emphasises music as creativity development, which comprises music education activities, are: 1) singing early experience to play percussion, music production through the materials or objects, improvisation and music appreciation; and 2) physical development and healthcare which comprise physical activities including playing music. Unfortunately, most of the teachers did not receive any music education or training prior to their admission into the teacher training programme (Chan & Kwan, 2010). There were also problems of a lack of teaching resources. Their research showed that only 7% out of 96 qualified teacher trainers received significant formal education in instrumental skills, while 22% others described that the courses were limited to only music with creative movement.

In preschools, music can be used as a tool to develop language, mathematics comprehension, improve motor skills and bring in different cultural elements while providing an enjoyable experience for children (Ehrlin, 2014) as well as develop speech and language skills (Knight, Bowmer & Welch, 2016). Therefore, teachers need to have sufficient skills and confidence to teach music, but unfortunately, this area is not given emphasis in the curriculum. Koutsoupidou (2010) explained that the current curricula of preschools encourage a creative approach, but teachers are not always prepared to provide creative, student-centred teaching approaches in music classrooms. One way to assist teachers in solving this problem is to implement professional development programmes, such as online courses and seminars that would be opportunities for non-specialised music teachers to enhance their capabilities to improve their teaching and learning skills and strategies.

Campbell (2008) mentioned that both training and experience play an important part of a music teacher's life. A music education degree and/or a teacher certification programme, enrolling in pedagogical methods courses, seminars on professional issues, field experiences in schools and supervising students, as well as real-world experience are likely to educate them to have the foundations for being excellent teachers of music. It is not the same for non-specialised music teachers because integrating music into teaching may be difficult when teachers have limited knowledge of the subject. Kraay (2013) stated that if non-specialised music teachers do not have a high level of self-efficacy in teaching music, they eventually avoid or minimize the lesson content. As a result, the students will not receive appropriate music education. In her study, Kraay discovered that there were two main issues that emerged in the data analysis. First, low self-efficacy arises from lack of knowledge and skills, resources and practice. Secondly, the music preparation courses offered in institutions do not provide adequate preparation for the non-specialised music

teacher to teach with confidence. Previous literature suggests that classroom teacher's confidence in incorporating musical concepts is linked to content knowledge. Having practical teaching experience in music helps non-specialised music teachers develop their confidence and passion in teaching music (Kim & Choy, 2008; Stunell, 2010).

Professional development activities are required to develop the quality of teaching and learning in music classrooms (Standerfer, 2007). Teachers learn to apply new knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes in all situations to be implemented into their routines. Collaboration with teachers of other disciplines can generate new ways on how to strategize the lessons. Koutsoupidou (2010) in her research on undergraduate general kindergarten teachers indicated that the teachers wanted to learn about methods of music education, such as Dalcroze, Kodaly and Orff music methods; design a lesson; and acquire practical experiences rather than teaching children to sing or play instruments. They also desire to gain confidence in teaching music. The author believes that they need further support, an environment conducive for teaching and educational support from specialists providing teachers with professional development opportunities.

### **Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Referring to the music education in Malaysian preschools, Chan and Kwan (2010) and Augustine (2013) affirm two major issues: (a) low awareness of music and music education by society; and (b) music teachers' lack of readiness and teaching skills. Chan and Kwan (2010) discovered that the questions pertaining to the confidence level of the music teachers' teaching skills showed only 30% of the total number. In such instances, the teachers are not likely to be skilled or capable enough to perform their duties as music teachers (Chan & Kwan, 2010, p.20).

In another study, Holden and Button (2006) mentioned that only 6% of non-specialised music teachers were found to be confident in teaching music, with 52% less confident and 39% non-confident, while the remaining three percent did not respond. Even though 58% of the non-specialist teachers had some level of confidence to teach music, unfortunately music as a subject area was ranked last compared to other subjects in terms of confidence level. The basis for this problem appears mainly because their initial training did not equip them to teach music effectively.

The purpose of the current study is to identify the level of music teaching readiness among non-specialised music teachers who are expected to teach music in preschools in the state of Perak. Specifically, this study investigates the teachers' music teaching readiness that is designated into three main components: content knowledge, instructional strategies and professional development. In addition, it was carried out to investigate the teachers' needs, which could help them to improve their pedagogical knowledge in the teaching of music education. This study was carried out to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the non-specialised music preschool teachers' content knowledge in teaching music in government preschools in Perak?

2. What is the level of their personal and professional development in teaching music in the preschool?
3. What are the instructional strategies and activities used in the music classroom?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Music is important in children's developing years. Numerous studies have proven the advantages of integrating music with other subjects, such as literacy (Ng & Yeo, 2012) and mathematics (Geist, Geist, & Kuznik, 2012), to mention a few. According to Abril and Gault (2007), the perceptions of music education are shaped by people's values that influence music teaching and learning. Other than that, the instructional time for teaching music and other arts has been reduced, that also influenced their teaching time because of financial and legislative factors. Music as a subject has also been going through challenges in maintaining its status as an 'essential' subject in many countries including Malaysia. The normal practice or activities in the preschool includes singing in large groups followed by movement activities, instrument playing, listening and few creative actions (Scott, 1999; Chan & Kwan, 2010). Less time is given to preschool children to explore and create their own music. In addition, music as a subject is often substituted by other subjects.

The current study is based on the constructive theory where each concept is presented using various instructional strategies that gives the learner an opportunity to make their own connections. Webster (2011) explains that constructivism is not a curriculum, but is based on what we know and need to know. He stressed that certain approaches to music listening, improvisation and performance involves the construction of knowledge. Erhlin and Wallerstedt (2014) pointed out that teaching and learning in preschool are seen to be dependent not only on the syllabus, the objectives and methods used, but also on the experiences made by teachers and children in practice. This theory promotes social and communication skills as children learn to have discussions with others. Rinaldo and Denig (2009) indicated that teachers should not continue being the sole source of musical knowledge. They must also participate as learners so that they will be able to engage themselves with the students to promote active learning in and through music.

Holden and Button (2006) stressed that the number of music teachers are limited, but if non-specialised music teachers are assisted through training, access to resources and given professional support, it should make a difference in their teaching process. The teachers' confidence levels will increase if they are exposed to appropriate pedagogical skills, content and knowledge. Scott (1999) also stressed that music educators ought to make an effort to develop or train preschool teachers by introducing different approaches and creative strategies in order to elevate music education so that it is taught in a fun and effective way.

## **Content Knowledge**

Teachers' content knowledge is crucial in the teaching and learning process. Music teachers must possess a comprehensive understanding of the skills and knowledge in what they teach. The skills and knowledge are crucial for teachers to provide essential training in forms of theory as well as practical aspects, such as musical knowledge and performance skills using music instruments (Millican, 2008). Holden and Button (2006) and Byo (1999) in their studies found that non-specialised music teachers agreed that greater knowledge content has the potential to develop the teachers' confidence in teaching music by working with specialists of the area. They also assert that teachers are confident in their pedagogical skills, but weak in subject matter, content and knowledge.

Darling-Hammond (2006) in Millican's study mentioned that students' knowledge, general teaching skills and awareness of efficient learning are vital to an educator's success. The knowledge a music teacher should have includes a range of skills, passion and understanding their role in the students' lives. The knowledge of performance skills strengthens the ability of becoming a successful music teacher. Thus, it is important for teachers with lesser experience to improve/enhance their knowledge through observations and familiarise/engage themselves with real experience in schools.

## **Professional Development**

Professional development has helped teachers and educators to enhance their abilities to improve the quality of their knowledge, skills and competence. According to Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher (2007), policy makers, school and district leaders are apprehensive about the quality of the professional development outcomes. The authors assert that many studies have shown the positive impact of professional development on teachers' knowledge and practice. Conway, Hibbard, Albert and Hourigan (2005) reported that teachers benefited from attending music conferences because they had the opportunity to observe ensemble performances, and attend workshops to enhance their knowledge and skills. However, they felt that they are often not supported by the local district. Moore and Griffin (2007) stated that it is essential for music educators to develop new skills and strategies in their respective fields in order to sustain effective and long-term success. This can also accommodate those teachers with little experience to keep up with the latest trends in the field of music education especially in technology, new tools, innovative teaching strategies and deeper knowledge in child development and psychology.

According to Conway et al. (2005), the main areas frequently chosen by respondents for their professional development are technology, assessment, music literature, standards, creativity and writing. Other leading categories suggested by the respondents are community relations/support/advocacy; advanced vocal and instrumental pedagogy; writing curriculum; specific methodologies; brain research; scheduling; composition; instrument repair; and student/teacher supervision. Haack and Smith (in Conway et al., 2005) mentioned that it is important to make

professional development training part of teachers' career goals, and this includes collaboration with other institutions. Through this, music teachers can improve their music education and also cope with the latest development in the music education world. Moore and Griffin (2007) indicated that most of the teachers who attended the training shared their experiences and accomplishments with other teachers. This training also assists them to lead presentations at meetings, organise festivals and become leaders, conductors as well as composers, arrangers and performers in the professional field of music.

### **Instructional Strategies**

All content and methodological knowledge is of no use if a teacher or educator is unsuccessful in organising the instruction in order to provide effective learning experiences. Townsend (2011) stated that the learning process continues with essential planning of the components, implementation of lessons and the assessment of learning. Instructions can be planned in many ways but the planning approach is crucial.

Teachers vary in their teaching styles and in choosing their own materials and strategies that they use. These variances are influenced by their own musical experience and training, preferences for repertoire and techniques and the context they teach (Campbell, 2008). Children learn music in schools through strategies or methods that teachers acquire in their training. Activities such as singing, playing, moving, listening and improvising are customary and accomplish the goals of music literacy, aural skills, vocal and instrument playing. Many musical methods with American applications such as Dalcroze eurhythmics, the Kodaly sequence, the Orff-Schulwerk (the Orff method) and Edwin Gordon's Music Learning Theory, have been introduced to teachers. Some teachers even combine or include localized approaches based on their preferences. Campbell stresses that these methods require observations, demonstrations and do-it-yourself experiences in order to understand them thoroughly.

According to Miyamoto (2007), various instructional methods can be to: (1) facilitate attention, perseverance, music achievement and parent and teacher support (Suzuki); (2) improve correct use of descriptors in Kodály method (loud/soft, fast/slow); (3) facilitate higher levels of interest and attitude, and enjoyment of rhythmic activities and part singing, such as in the Orff method; (4) provide adequate pacing and variety of instructional activities, recognition of individuals, involvement of parents and inclusion of dramatic play (Yamaha); (5) provide successful instruction and assessment (computer); and (6) cue a learned song and teach a song (movement followed by melody produced on 'loo') (p. 35).

Townsend (2011) indicated that the fundamental aspect in gathering information about students is through communication skills. By communicating with students, teachers can identify their backgrounds, social and education levels. This way, it will help the teacher to meet the needs of diverse student populations and strategise their teaching effectively. He added that the teachers' instructional effectiveness will improve as they improve through reflection, reading, research, involvement in professional organizations and discussions with their peers.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

This study was conducted in 28 government preschools in seven districts of the northern, central and southern regions of Perak, Malaysia. Before conducting this study, the researchers obtained consent from the pertinent authorities of the Education Ministry. The respondents were non-specialised music teachers who teach music in government preschools. These teachers are of mixed genders; both males and females from the three main races—Malay, Chinese, Indian and a minority group, the Orang Asli. Each respondent has different a social background and teaching experience. Schools were chosen randomly based on locations and the availability of the teachers.

### Research Instrument

This survey was conducted to investigate the non-specialised music teachers' readiness in teaching music in government preschools. A pilot study was carried out with teachers from three other states of Malaysia. After the pilot study, the researchers examined the data and reviewed the comments posted by each teacher who participated in the pilot study. A questionnaire was used in this survey to collect the data. The participants chose answers to questions and provided basic personal and demographic information. Additionally, the researchers designed the questionnaire using closed—(Likert scale) and open-ended questions to measure perceived confidence levels.

The pilot test was conducted on a sample of  $n=35$  preschool teachers. The results from the pilot test were used to amend the items of the questionnaire. The reliability of each component in the questionnaire indicated the *Cronbach coefficient alphas* ( $\alpha$ ) ranging from .76 to .94 with an average of .85. The content knowledge component had a relatively high internal consistency (.81); Part A on professional development indicated an acceptable consistency (0.76), followed by a relatively high consistency in Part B (.93); and Part A of instructional strategies and activities (.83) and Part B (.94). Overall, the pilot data indicated that the questionnaire had good reliability and could be used without major revision.

The content validity was established with a panel of three reviewers. All three had different backgrounds and levels of experience and expertise. The panel, which consisted of a music educator, early childhood educator and language educator, reviewed the measures, revised, critiqued and offered suggestions for improvement. Based on the comments, some items were revised and rephrased for accurate wording or removed to suit each component of the study.

### Data Collection

The researchers obtained approval from the Higher Education authorities and the head teacher of each school. The researchers then approached each preschool teacher. In the data reporting, Section A, demographic details of the preschool

teachers are described using percentages following the number of teachers (frequency). Section B with the three main components of the study is described using the mean and standard deviation. Finally, in Section C, participants provide their own responses to three open-ended questions.

## RESULTS

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: Section A consists of demographic data; Section B shows the results of the non-specialised music teachers' teaching readiness in response to specific questions. This section revealed the results of the non-specialised music teachers' content knowledge, personal and professional development in teaching music and the instructional strategies they used in their music classrooms. Finally, Section C consists of open-ended questions that required teachers to give their recommendations to improve the quality of music subjects in preschools.

### Section A: Demographic details of the participants

The participants originated from seven different districts of northern, central and southern Perak. There were 48 preschool teachers (n=48) who took part in this study—46 females and two males. The teachers were from a diversity of races—Malay (n=40), Chinese (n=2), Indian (n=4) and Orang Asli (n=2). Academic qualifications of the participants ranged from Master's Degree to Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) qualification. The teachers graduated from 11 institutions in the east and west of Malaysia while 12 other teachers did not provide any response to this section. The number of years of teaching experience ranged from one to 15 years.

### Section B: Research Questions

**Research Question 1.** These questions describe the non-specialised music preschool teachers' content knowledge of music teaching in their classrooms (see Table 1). The mean scores of the question range from 1.96 to 4.38, using a five-point scale. The overall mean from all the items in this section is 3.35, which is between *3-somewhat agree* and *4-agree*.

The highest score is beyond the mean score of 4.0 (marked \*). The items indicate that the non-specialised music teachers either agree or strongly agree that music is a useful teaching strategy to help preschool students retain their knowledge and the understanding of content subjects(4.38); believe that music education is important for their students (4.29); preschool curriculum has sufficient music content for current students learning (4.21); consider music as an important subject in the preschool curriculum (4.15); and access music resources from the Internet (4.04). Unfortunately, two items demonstrated a low score below the average mean of 2.5, where the teachers did not receive the appropriate training to teach music (2.38) and were not able to read music notation efficiently (1.96).

**Table 1** Content knowledge of teaching music

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have sufficient skills to teach music	2.56	.920
I am able to implement the teaching of music	2.83	.808
I have received the appropriate training to teach music	2.38	1.044
I am able to read music notation efficiently	1.96	.849
I am comfortable teaching musical instruments in a classroom	2.96	1.071
I am able to plan appropriate music activities for my class	3.25	1.139
I consider music as an important subject in preschool curriculum	4.15*	.743
I find music a challenging subject to teach	3.50	1.052
I feel comfortable whenever I sing to my students	3.79	1.031
I am able to explain and demonstrate the concept of music	3.10	1.096
I can access music resources from reference books	3.63	1.044
I can access music resources from the Internet	4.04*	.898
I am able to play chords to accompany my students	2.56	1.109
Music is a useful teaching strategy to help preschool students retain memory content subjects	4.38*	.815
I believe that music education is important for my students	4.29*	.771
In my opinion, the preschool curriculum has sufficient music content for current students learning	4.21*	.713
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.35</b>	--

*Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat Agree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree*

The results indicate that out of 16 sub-questions, 14 items showed a mean value greater than 2.5 which indicate that the non-specialised music teachers agree that they are aware of the importance of music and have an average level of content knowledge to teach music in preschool.

According to Townsend (2011), good music teachers will commit to the effort of developing their content knowledge to form a solid foundation in the field, and assist students in their learning. The content they possess and well-planned lesson plans will thrive by the way music subjects are presented and how they react and communicate with students daily.

**Research Question 2.** This question investigates the non-specialised music preschool teachers' participation in professional development programmes in music, as well as the impact of these programmes on the teachers. The results indicate that teachers who participated in professional development programmes, such as courses, seminars, conference, workshops, music qualification programmes, observation or training, is less than 50% in all items. Impact, which influences their development in music understanding/knowledge, is also very low. Overall, this outcome demonstrates the inactive level of participation by non-specialised music teachers in the state of Perak (see Table 2).

Barrett (2006) explained that educational change requires holistic, fluid and integrated approaches to teacher learning that support their work in school settings and communities. Innovative forms of professional development will help music teachers meet changing roles and responsibilities, but traditional venues must also be changed to support their goals and needs (p.19). According to Hazri, Nordin, Reena and Abdul (2008), the 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought greater demand for Malaysia to produce quality teachers. However, some of the challenges include: 1) teachers need many hours of training to acquire a high level of competency using technology in teaching; 2) allocated time for professional development is limited because teachers are burdened with duties and tasks besides teaching; and 3) programmes need to be implemented both in the Malay and English languages so that teachers will be able to access relevant material and journals to keep in line with the imminent changes in education. Koutsoupidou's (2010) also mentioned that many steps have been taken for teachers to attend professional development programmes, to enhance their teaching abilities. However, the majority of preschool teachers find it difficult to participate because programmes are only conducted at certain locations.

**Table 2** Professional development of teachers

Professional Development	Frequency (F)	Percent (%)	Impact	F	Percent (%)
Course/Workshop					
No	35	72.9			
Yes	13	27.1	Small	1	2.1
			Moderate	6	12.5
			Big	6	12.5

Conference/seminar						
No	43	89.6				
Yes	5	10.4	Small	2	4.2	
			Moderate	1	2.1	
			Big	2	4.2	
Music Qualification Programme						
No	36	75.0				
Yes	12	25.0	Small	0	0	
			Moderate	5	10.4	
			Big	7	14.6	
Observations						
No	34	70.8				
Yes	14	29.2	Small	1	2.1	
			Moderate	6	12.5	
			Big	7	14.6	
Participation in Teacher's Circle						
No	28	58.3				
Yes	20	41.7	Small	2	4.2	
			Moderate	5	10.4	
			Big	11	22.9	
Appointed as mentor/trainer						
No	39	81.3				
Yes	9	18.8	Small	1	2.1	
			Moderate	3	6.3	
			Big	5	10.4	

**Research Question 3.** This question analyses the non-specialised music preschool teachers' teaching strategies conducted in their music classes. Part A of this question stated eleven types of tools utilised by teachers.

**Table 3** Tools used in music classroom

Tools	Mean	Std Dev.
Video	3.44	1.253
Computer	3.63	1.196
Whiteboard	4.04	4.307
Compact Disk (CD)	3.52	1.130
Orff Instruments (tambourine, small drum, castanets, triangle)	2.79	1.110
Music instruments (keyboard/guitar)	1.81	.982
Puppet	2.75	1.139
Recycled tools (bottles, wood, paper)	2.69	1.095

Magnets	2.10	1.153
Smartboard	1.92	1.088
Light Emitting Diode (LED screen)	1.02	.144

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*Note: 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Occasionally; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Very frequently*

In Table 3, the mean scores of the questions range from 1.02 to 4.04 using a five-point scale. The outcome demonstrates that the top four tools used in the music classroom includes whiteboard, computer, CDs and video, whereas the use of smartboard, music instruments such as keyboard/ guitar and LED screen are either rare or never used.

According to Chan and Kwan (2010), preschool teachers frequently used audio-visual equipment such as CDs, cassettes, video, television and non-pitched percussions in their music classes. It is contrary to the preschool curriculum that encourages the utilization of materials from the environment to produce melody that was found to be moderately effective. Koutsoupidou (2010) stated that the shortage of teaching equipment is a common problem for teachers in preschools, yet music instruments such as percussions are necessities for simple musical activities.

Part B indicates whether the teachers were able to use various strategies in their music teaching. The mean score of this question ranges from 1.65 to 4.23 using a five-point scale. The overall mean from all the items in this section is 3.33 which is between *3-somewhat agree* and *4-agree* which indicates that teachers are fairly capable to teach music with various strategies in the classroom.

Table 4 indicates that the non-specialised music teachers agree that music is an effective strategy to help children develop psychomotor and basic social skills; teachers are able to communicate well with their students and they use nursery rhymes to teach music. They also find that the students enjoy learning music. Greata (2006) mentioned that the most beneficial songs for helping children learn how to use their singing voices are generally short, simple, narrow in pitch range, repetitive and sung in the range of the young child's voice. Folk songs and nursery rhymes have stood the test of time and there is a good chance the child will be able to sing them at home with family members (Greata, 2006, p.127). The lower mean indicates that teachers are not familiar with music pedagogical approach such as Orff and Kodaly methods, and practice varieties of teaching strategies in music education. Teachers are also not able to play and accompany songs with instruments such as keyboard or guitar.

Townsend (2011) suggested that teachers should provide students with the necessary tools to succeed. If one approach or tool does not work, use another. Eventually, even if the use of multiple tools resulted in only modest gains, students will at least understand and appreciate the fact that the teacher is spending time with them in a sincere effort to help them succeed (Townsend, 2011, p. 76). Townsend (2011) also stressed that planning is important because it serves as a written record of the teachers' day-to-day teaching and provides a clear map of the journey the teacher and the students will take. (p. 62).

**Table 4** Instructional strategies used in music classroom

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev
I am able to use varieties of teaching strategies in music education	2.27	.869
I am able to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities	2.54	.944
I am able to play and accompany songs with keyboard	1.90	.751
I am able to play and accompany songs with guitar	1.65	.699
I am familiar with Orff / Kodaly pedagogical approach	2.08	.986
I use folk songs to teach music	3.10	1.134
I use children's songs (nursery rhymes) to teach music	4.17*	.907
I find my students' involvement is satisfactory in playing the musical instrument	3.81	1.085
I encourage group activities in the music class	3.81	.842
I am able to motivate students to get involved with music	3.54	.967
Other than utilizing written lesson plan, I make modifications and adaptations in response to different learning climates	2.94	.976
I use music to teach other subjects (e.g. English/Malay language)	3.88	.937
I am able to communicate well with the students	4.10*	.857
I encourage students to take part in creative activities	4.13*	.789
Students enjoy learning music	4.23*	.778
Music is an effective strategy to help preschool students develop psychomotor skills	4.23*	.778
Music is an effective strategy to help preschool students develop basic social skills	4.19*	.825
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>(3.33)</b>	<b>--</b>

*Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat Agree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree*

**Section C: Open-ended questions.** Suggestions to improve the quality of music teachers in preschool were provided by open-ended questions. The responses revealed that 60.4% of the 48 teachers suggested that they need exposure in music teaching by attending courses, workshop or seminars, followed by exposure to

music instruments and how to read notation. Seven teachers stated that they needed to be exposed to music instruments, such as keyboard or guitar, while another three stated that theory music or notation reading is necessary in teaching music. Additionally, one teacher stated the importance of knowing nursery rhymes and children's songs, and another stated that teachers should have access to music resources. Seven teachers did not respond to this question.

## CONCLUSION

According to the overall results, there were three different outcomes following the research questions of the study. The outcome of the first research question demonstrated that non-specialised music preschool teachers are somewhat ambivalent that they have sufficient content knowledge in teaching music in preschool. The second research question demonstrated that only a quarter of the total number of participants had attended any form of professional development activity and that were likely to have no or little impact on them. The third research question demonstrated an average effect where non-specialised music preschool teachers somewhat agree that they vary their teaching styles, activities and strategies in their music classes.

In order to maintain effective teaching, teachers who lack confidence in teaching should take the opportunity to participate in professional development programmes supported by Government policy initiatives that value such support. Teachers could discover new learning tools and strategies, assessment methods, find new resources and enlarge their network towards aiming for the best music learning environment for the children. In terms of music teaching readiness, it is the responsibility of the non-specialised music preschool teachers to take the challenge and promote music teaching and learning, and for Government agencies and senior school managers to promote such engagement as an official staff development policy.

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