

A Study of Teachers' Intervention Strategies for Young Children's Free Music Play

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Summary

Rationale

“Play” releases stress from daily life and creates pleasant atmosphere. During play, children are motivated by inner desire and they freely set up play scenes transcending the reality. In music education, literature also documents the importance of free music play in early childhood education. Children are able to develop their music ability at free music play. While children freely explore instruments, short melodic or rhythmic fragments are created and those fragments are later constructed into phrases. Four developmental phases, exploration, improvisation, mastery and re-exploration, were found in children's musical growth at free music play.

Based on the literature stated above, the researcher thus encouraged the nursery school to set up a music center in classroom. However, the 2-3 years old children did not develop their music ability through free music play. After re-examining previous literatures, the researcher noticed that the subjects in the majority of previous studies were the children at the age of 4-5 except for one study including 2-3 years old children. However, that study did not state the difference of music behaviors according to various age levels. Therefore, 2-year-old-children's music behaviors at free play remain unknown. Through further literature review, the researcher realizes that teacher's intervention can facilitate children's involvement and extend the complexity of play to construct their ability. In order to solve the problem found in the 2-3 years old children at free music play, a collaborative action research was undertaken to investigate the intervention strategies.

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Method

This collaborative action research was conducted in a 2-year-old-children's classroom in a private nursery school. There were 14 children in the class. The classroom had a music center with various rhythmic and melodic instruments. The classroom teacher, Xiao-Chin, had 10 years of teaching experiences and was the researcher's collaborator to develop the intervention strategies at free music play.

This research consisted of three cycles to develop intervention strategies. The three cycles are exploring intervention, purposive intervention, and revised intervention. In the first cycle, exploring intervention, the researcher attempted to investigate various intervention roles and children's reaction. In the second cycle, purposive intervention, the researcher attempted to guide children to create rhythmic patterns or melodic patterns to achieve the purposes of mastering duration and pitches. Finally, in the third cycle, revised intervention, two previous cycles of intervention strategies were refined to develop proper intervention strategies.

Data were collected through observations and interviews over a period of 32 weeks which consisted of 7 weeks of preparation for becoming acquainted with children and 25 weeks of intervention. During research, the researcher paid one visit per week to the class for about 50 minutes. The data of observations were taped by an assistant, and the data of interviewing Xiao-Chin were recorded by the researcher. Both data, together with the researcher's reflective journals, were typed and dated for later analysis. The data analysis included induction and deduction approaches. The data in the first cycle were analyzed through the induction approach in the process of constant comparison employing unitizing, categorizing and filling in patterns. The data in the second cycle were analyzed through the deduction approach from intended purposes. The analyzed data were later compared with intervention roles to explain the meanings. The data in the third cycle were analyzed through the combination of induction and deduction approaches which induced children's play activities into several categories and from those categories deduced intervention roles.

Findings

The intervention roles in the first cycle were found to be audience, facilitator, respondent, and director. The role of a facilitator implied teacher as a performer or as an inviter. The role of respondent implied teacher's responding to questions or teacher's

accepting invitation. The role of director implied teacher as a participant, teacher as a demonstrator, or teacher as a commander. Teacher as a performer was a critical intervention role that motivated children to develop profuse music behavior. Although children created rich music behaviors and fun plays in the first cycle, they made little progress in the music ability of pitch and duration. Therefore, the second cycle was revised as purposive intervention to allow for children's employing pitches and various durations to create patterns.

In the second cycle, the interventions did not achieve the purposes as expected. Through data analysis, the relation of children control and teacher control was found in the intervention roles (see Figure 1).

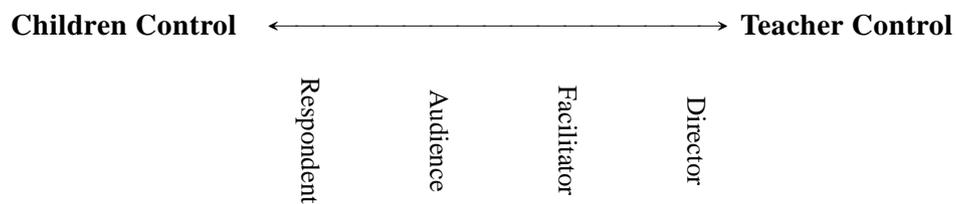


Figure 1 The relation of intervention roles between children control and teacher control

The intervention role of director was highly teacher controlled; however, the intervention role of respondent was highly children controlled. The intervention role of audience and facilitator were set between respondent and director. In the second cycle, the majority of occurred intervention roles were identified as teacher control. If the intervention role was inclined toward teacher control, the children's negative reactions were more likely to happen. Through further analysis, the data showed that not all the intervention roles of director, highly teacher controlled, resulted in negative reactions. Data analysis clarified different contexts including children's play context and learning goal context in play. When teacher's intervention was not coincided with children's intention of play, the conflict occurred. However, when teacher's intervention coincided with children's intention of play, the intervention succeeded in accomplishing the learning goal. Therefore, what matters was not the matter of intervention roles of teacher control or children control, but the coincidence between children's intention of play and teacher's intervention. Through revised intervention strategies, the intervention was employed that children controlled play

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context and teacher controlled learning goal in the third cycle. Teachers intervened under children's play context and shifted various roles to achieve learning purposes, and 2-3 years old children demonstrated high music ability.

Keywords: exploring intervention, free music play, music education for young children, purposive intervention, teachers' intervention