

Preschool teachers can participate in musical play, but they refrain. A qualitative study on musical emancipation.

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Keywords: musical play, voice, sound, emancipation, preschool teacher, preschool-teacher educator.

In my dissertation, I assumed that music making in preschool has changed surprisingly little over time and that preschool teachers' vocal expression is rarely colored personally. Music in preschool is generally understood as a practice that ought to be governed by normative presuppositions about voices and sounds. The current dissertation questions this normative stance by examining the views of preschool teachers and preschool teacher educators on musical play. Musical play can be understood as a spontaneous musical exploration and form of communication that an individual conveys through his or her voice and body. Musical play can be surprising, and it can evolve through interaction with others. Noting the emancipatory possibilities inherent in musical play, the current dissertation aims to provide more knowledge about what facilitates and what impedes musical play among preschool teachers and preschool-teacher educators. Data were collected through orchestrated sessions of musical play during meetings with preschool teachers and preschool-teacher educators, respectively, where I as a researcher actively participated. Informed by their experiences from the musical-play sessions, the preschool teachers and preschool-teacher educators discussed their understandings of musical play in subsequent group talks. The discussions were recorded, transcribed, and analysed through a qualitative and reflective thematic analysis. The results indicated that the participants provided contradictory accounts of their own enthusiastic musical play and the difficulties of having musical play in preschool and preschool-teacher education. Preschool teachers and preschool-teacher educators are able to participate in musical play, but they choose to abstain. I conclude that both the preschool teachers and the preschool-teacher educators are hindered from participating in musical play by their reiteration of a repressive argumentation that suggests that only some distinguished individuals are able to create music. Furthermore, the participants suggested that the purpose of music in preschool is to create communal singing and consensus, while they considered musical play as merely frivolous. The results of the current dissertation highlight that it is difficult to engage in musical play in both preschools and preschool-teacher education due to this argumentation and these normative restraints. Inspired by Habermas' and Rancière's theoretical oeuvres, the dissertation theorizes about ways of reasoning that may facilitate musical play in preschool and in preschool-teacher education.