

A Report of Survey on Conditions of Preschool Children's Family Music Education

Yujuan Bi

School of Education, Dezhou University, Dezhou 253023, China

Tel: 86-534-898-2209 E-mail: dzbyj@163.com

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Abstract

The author composes a questionnaire about conditions of preschool children's family music education. The survey includes 280 preschool children in a city of Shandong province. It finds that most parents have recognized the importance of early childhood music education, but there is the tendency of utilitarian. The content of family music education emphasizes on profession instead of life. Parents lack of enthusiasm for family music education. They do not care about the family music education of 0-3 year-old children.

Keywords: Preschool children, Family music education, Present condition

1. Introduction

In recent years, many researches are about children music education, and most focus on kindergarten, the specific environment, but seldom concerns family music education for infants and little children. Preschool children are at the stage of rapidly developing nervous system, physiological system, and psychological system. The family plays an irreplaceable role in the physical and psychological development of preschool children. This survey means to investigate the current conditions of preschool children's family music education in Dezhou, a city in Shandong province.

2. Objects and Methods in the Survey

2.1 Objects

In this survey, the author gives questionnaires to 320 parents of children from 8 kindergartens and 2 parent-child gardens and takes 280 effective questionnaires back. The ratio of effectiveness is 87.5%.

2.2 Tools

Based on documents and individual understandings, the author composes the questionnaire for conditions of preschool children's family music education. It mainly covers three aspects: parents' opinions and attitudes to family music education, contents of family music education, and strategies of implementing family music education.

2.3 Process

Review documents and files, interview parents personally, design an original questionnaire, test the original questionnaire and delete improper parts, and form the formal questionnaire. Establish and train the chief interviewer. Perform the survey strictly. Make data analysis of results by statistic software.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Parents' Opinions and Attitudes to Family Music Education

3.1.1 Parents' opinions of family music education

From Table 1, we can notice that most parents have correct recognitions to functions of music. 5.3% of parents think music is useless for infants and little children. Most parents have sufficient recognitions to the educational function of music. 57.5% of parents think that the main objective of music education is to promote intelligence, cultivate sentiments, and develop interests, but 26.8% of parents agree that the main objective is to learn certain skill and expertise.

3.1.2 Parents' recognitions to the importance of family early music education

Most parents agree that music education is very important or relatively important for 3-6 year-old children, respectively 36.4% and 51.3%. Only few parents think that music education is very important or relatively important for 0-3 year-old children, respectively 3.8% and 8.5%.

3.1.3 Parents' understandings and attitudes to family music education

Table 2 shows that most parents, accounting for 69.3% of total, will ask their children to learn how to play instruments. In addition, reasons for the choice ----- learning or not learning instruments ----- are mostly utilitarian. Only 37.9% of parents mention that the reason is to improve the quality of child.

3.2 *The Contents of Family Music Education*

Table 3 shows that parents neglect the significance of natural sounds to children music education. Most parents still take traditional ways, focusing on music knowledge and skills. Seldom parents give children music education by going to concerts.

3.3 *Strategies for Implementing Family Music Education*

The survey shows that most parents agree that the better way for giving children music education is to join in activities together with them, but only mothers take the responsibility of music education at home. And most parents, sometimes or occasionally, invite kids to join in music activities. In music activities, most parents, sometimes or occasionally, may stimulate kids' interest in music and help them to express the music or instruct them with characters or events in songs. Most parents arrange music activities by listening, singing, and showing at the same time, but seldom roles playing or designing different lyrics and moves. Only 12.8% of parents design music activities that reflect life and company with singing and knocking. These results indicate that parents can recognize the value of music education, but the enthusiasm for music and the diversity of methods are poor.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

4.1 *Most Parents Have Already Known the Importance of Children Early Music Education, but There Is a Tendency of Utilitarian.*

The survey shows that about 57.5% of parents think that the main objective of music education is to improve children's music appreciation, perfect their personalities, and inspire their wisdom, and 26.8% of parents think that the main objective is to learn a skill and possess an expertise. Particularly, many parents' understandings to family music education focus on utilitarian. For example, 26.6% of parents think that learning how to play instruments is unnecessary since China has already canceled the policy of adding scores in high school entrance exam and college entrance exam if with music skills. 47.1% of parents agree that learning how to playing instruments is to make children more competitive in society and help them earn money easily. These recognitions of parents are affected mainly by two factors. The first is the society. Social competition tends to be fiercer. In parents' opinion, children must learn some skills in order to live better in the future. It will inevitably lead to a tendency of utilitarian as for children music education. Secondly, many parents do not completely recognize the objectives and functions of music education. They have no idea of music education promoting the harmonious development of bodies, intelligence, emotions, personalities, and socialization of children. The utilitarian of music education may make it hard for children achieving success in music. Besides, it may kill children's original interests in music. So, we have to improve parents' understandings to the function of early music education.

4.2 *Emphasize on Professional Contents of Music Education but Ignore the Music in Life*

For most families in this survey, the family music education is limited to professional contents, such as taking some traditional music activities, listening to videos and VCD, and watching TV, as the main contents. Besides, parents may listen to children singing or playing instruments, or just sing together with children. Seldom parents choose to perform music education from the nature. These facts indicate that most parents ignore the idea of "Life is education". They can not recognize or understand family music education from a wide angle. As a matter of fact, life music education is more interesting than professional music education. The former can better trigger children's curiosity and innovation. Parents should starts from life to perform family music education.

4.3 *Parents Lack of Enthusiasm for Family Music Education and the Methods Are too Simple*

In practice of family music education, most parents are just sometimes or occasionally take part in children music activities. They seldom invite kids to join in music activities at spare time. And the fathers' participation is definitely insufficient. It shows that parents lack of enthusiasm for family music activities. And the methods for family music education are also poor. Parents seldom take some lively and interesting way to perform music education at home. Actually, parents should often ask children to join in music activities and integrate them into life, which can not only coordinate the parent-child relationship, but also help to improve children's interests in music, promoting the healthy development of bodies and minds.

4.4 *The Serious Empty of Family Music Education for 0-3 Year-old Children*

Nearly 90% of parents agree that family music education is meaningful for children above 3 year-old. Less than

15% of parents think that family music education for 0-3 year-old children is necessary. On one hand, most parents hold a narrow understanding to family music education. On the other hand, they do not recognize the importance of family music education to 0-3 year-old children. Experiments prove that infants and little children have initial sensitive and interests in music. Newborns can not only hear sounds but also distinguish some differences of sounds. Therefore, it is feasible to perform family music education for 0-3 year-old children. Surely it has to be implemented according to different development stages.

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Table 1. Parents' understandings to music and family music education.

Question	Options	Number of persons	Percentage
In your opinion, for preschool children, music:	a. has an unconscious and potential effect on children's intelligence, morals, and aesthetics	183	53.7
	b. can satisfy children's lively nature and make them happy	135	39.6
	c. is totally useless in practice	15	4.4
	d. does not matter	8	2.3
In your opinion, the objectives of music education for children:	a. learn knowledge and promote intellectual development	43	11.1
	b. develop good characters and cultivate noble sentiments	112	28.9
	c. accumulate music experiences and develop interests in music	68	17.5
	d. learn certain skills and have expertise	104	26.8
	e. promote the parent-child communication	56	14.4
	f. kill time	5	1.3

Table 2. Parents' attitudes to children learning how to play instruments and the reasons.

Questions	Options	Number of persons	Percentage
Will you ask your child to learn playing certain instrument?	a. Yes	194	69.3
	b. No	68	24.2
Reasons for No	a. China has already deleted the regulation about adding scores in high school entrance exam and college entrance exam for music	45	26.6
	b. nobody knows music or gives assistances in family	20	11.8
	c. limited by family economic conditions	64	37.9
	d. the child is too young to learn music	8	4.7
	e. parents do not like music	6	3.6
	f. the child does not like music	26	1.5
Reasons for Yes	a. improve the quality of child	145	37.9
	b. be good at music, the child will be more competitive in society	121	31.7
	c. be good at music, the child has more chances getting a nice job	25	6.5
	d. be good at music, the child can earn money easier	59	15.4
	e. parents like music	8	2.1
	f. the child likes music	24	5.4

Table 3. The contents of family music education

Questions	Options	Number of persons	Percentage
The contents of music activities between you and our child	a. seek for the sound of nature and life (such as imitating the sound of bird and car horn, etc.	39	9.5
	b. listen videos	24	5.8
	c. listen VCD	56	13.6
	d. watch TV (music programs, listen-and-watch combination)	5	1.2
	e. go to concerts	4	1.0
	f. sing together with the child	23	5.6
	g. listen the child singing	139	33.8
	h. listen the child playing instruments	121	29.4