



## FRESHMEN PRE-SERVICE EARLY YEARS TEACHER-STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MUSICAL ACTIVITIES TO 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

**Eirini Nikolaou<sup>i</sup>**

Senior Teaching Fellow,  
Department of Primary Education,  
University of Ioannina,  
Greece

### **Abstract:**

This study explores the reflections of first-year university students (N=18) at a Department of Early Years Learning and Care in Greece on the implementation of music activities to 4-year-old children (N=16) of a nursery school in the Prefecture of Ioannina who visited the university classroom in the context of the course "Music Pedagogy". The freshmen pre-service early years teacher-students prepared the musical activities with the trainer-researcher aiming to familiarization of the children with the concept of the musical ensemble/orchestra as well as with the means of musical expression (voice, rhythmic and melodic percussion instruments, body percussion). The pre-service early years teacher-students implemented the activities, taking on specific roles. To facilitate their reflections, they were given questions so as to record their thoughts and feelings during their engagement. The qualitative analysis of the teacher-students' answers highlighted their positive view of being engaged with authentic teaching. In addition, they showed satisfaction with their teaching ability, felt that they confirmed their choice of future profession, revised some of their erroneous views regarding the perceptual abilities of young children, and identified the advantages of early years music education both from their current experience in the educational intervention and from the courses in the first year of their undergraduate studies concerning music education.

**Keywords:** early years music education, music activities, 4-year-old children, freshmen pre-service early years teacher-students' reflections, teaching practice

### **1. Introduction**

Music education in early childhood can assist young children's holistic development (Zadnik & Habe, 2017; Forrai, 2006; Teachout, 2005), as it contributes to social development (Ilari, 2016), motor development (Derri *et al.*, 2001; Zachopoulou *et al.*, 2004;

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [enikolau@uoi.gr](mailto:enikolau@uoi.gr)

Brown *et al.*, 1981) and emotional development (Raptis, 2020). Barrett *et al.* (2022) propose nine best practices for preschool music education including: “Singing often”, “Songs are pitched correctly for children’s voices”, “Songs and activities reflect cultural diversity”, “Songs and activities offer a variety of music”, “Variety of instruments”, “Instruction encourages dancing and moving to music”, “Instruction encourages children to express themselves musically”, “Participatory music”, “Instruction encourages musical description” (p. 395). In the above, we could also include practices where music is combined with storytelling, drama and visual arts within a cross-curricular context (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2024a; 2023a).

## 2. The context of the study

In preschool education, more often than not the non-art-specialists who are asked to teach artistic subjects do not have the necessary self-confidence in integrating arts in their teaching. Many times, this issue is connected, among other factors, to their insufficient undergraduate education in arts (Sotiropoulou-Zormpala *et al.*, 2014). Regarding music teaching, preschool teachers often feel “ill-prepared in music education” (Bautista *et al.*, 2022, p. 2) because they have “lower experience and/or educational qualifications” (Bautista, & Ho, 2022, p. 23). The “acquisition of practical experience at an undergraduate level” (Nikolaou, 2023b, p. 400), beyond the official practicum that takes place in the last year of academic studies, could partially help to solve the problem and can contribute to the students’ understanding of “how practice can be better linked to theory” (Korthagen, 2010, p. 669).

In the current study, aiming at first-year university students at a Department of Early Years Learning and Care in Greece gaining initial experience in teaching music, they were given the opportunity to teach or participate in the implementation of music activities to 4-year-old children of a nursery school in the Prefecture of Ioannina who visited the university classroom in the context of the undergraduate course “Music Pedagogy”. The musical activities, which the freshmen pre-service early years teacher-students<sup>ii</sup> prepared with the trainer-researcher, aimed to familiarize the young children with the concept of musical ensemble/orchestra and with the means of musical expression (voice, body, rhythmic and melodic percussion instruments). The activities included simple orchestrations of songs with rhythmic and melodic percussion instruments, body percussion as well as activities that combined music with movement. After the implementation of the activities by the teacher-students, they were asked to reflect individually (Bogo *et al.*, 2011) on the implemented activities and to carry out a self-assessment of their teaching ability. “Self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which it reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise accordingly” (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009, p.13). Also, they were invited to reflect on the teaching ability of their fellow students as well as on the whole process in general. They were given questions (see the Appendix) to facilitate their reflections on the implemented activities (Schön, 1983), and they were

---

<sup>ii</sup> In the rest of the paper, we use the term “teacher-students” to refer to “freshmen pre-service early years teacher-students”.

encouraged to reflect on all stages of the intervention, both on preparation and on the implementation of the activities and to record anything else they wished that was not included in the questions given to them.

### 3. Research purpose and questions

The purpose of the study was to qualitatively explore the experience of first-year university students' ( $N=18$ ) at a Department of Early Years Learning and Care in Greece who had engaged in the implementation of musical activities for 4-year-old children. In particular, the study explores how this experience in music and teaching could contribute to teacher-students having initial contact with their future profession, increase their self-confidence in music teaching, and give them additional motivation to stimulate their interest in their studies in the following years.

The survey addressed the following questions:

- 1) What are teacher-students' perceptions regarding the young children's response to the activities and the satisfaction of the teaching objectives?
- 2) What are their opinions about their own and their fellow students' teaching ability?
- 3) What are their thoughts and feelings
  - i) from their engagement in the implementation of the activities,
  - ii) on their future profession as early years educators?
- 4) What are their beliefs on the benefits of early years music education?

## 4. Method

### 4.1 Participants

First-year university students ( $N=18$ ) at a Department of Early Years Learning and Care in Greece with no previous musical experience, in the context of the course "Music Pedagogy II" which they attended in the spring semester of 2024 of their first year of their undergraduate studies, as a continuation of the course "Music Pedagogy I" they attended in the fall semester, prepared with the guidance of the trainer-researcher the musical activities. The "Music Pedagogy" course is conducted through lectures (180 minutes each time) and laboratory exercises (120 minutes each time) on a weekly basis for an academic semester (13 weeks). The teacher-students implemented the activities to 4-year-old children ( $N=16$ ) of a nursery school in the Prefecture of Ioannina who visited the university classroom. Ninety students attended the course, eighteen of whom volunteered to participate in the implementation of the educational intervention. Their participation was affected by the workload of the other academic courses as well as the needed time for the preparation of the intervention which took place outside the scheduled weekly classes. The educational intervention was carried out after obtaining the approval of the University Department and the consent of young children's parents.

## 4.2 Design of the project

The activities were designed by the trainer-researcher, who is a staff member in a Department of Primary Education (main position) and in a Department of Early Years Learning and Care in a Greek University and specialise in Music Education, in collaboration with the teacher-students. The activities' aim was to familiarize the young children with the concept of musical ensemble/orchestra through simple song orchestrations with rhythmic, melodic percussion instruments and body percussion. The trainer-researcher was present in the implementation of the activities but did not participate. The teacher-students had prepared for the activities and had defined the roles or roles that each would assume during the educational intervention. Moreover, there had been collaboration with the early childhood educator from the nursery school, so that the young children knew the three songs that would be used in the activities. The activities lasted two and a half hours in total.

## 4.3 Presentation of the activities

- **Preliminary activity:** Before the first main activity, a preliminary activity took place where the teacher-students presented all the available percussion instruments to the young children. The children, then, had the opportunity to explore them through musical games that were conducted by the teacher-students.
- **Activity A:** Simple orchestration with rhythmic percussion instruments on a well-known Greek traditional song ("The Crab's Wedding" [Padrevune ton kavoura])/ Introduction to the concept of musical ensemble/orchestra. The young children were divided into eight pairs, and each pair, which corresponded to an animal's character, held a different rhythm percussion instrument and played at a specific part of the song, while all the instruments together played at the refrain of the song. The whole "orchestra" played under the guidance of the "conductor", whose role had been taken over by a teacher-student. The rest of the teacher-students had taken it upon themselves to help the children.
- **Activity B:** Simple orchestration with melodic percussion instruments (xylophones and glockenspiels) on a Greek popular song ("Children paint on the wall" [Ta pedia zografizun ston tixo]) at specific parts of the song using two notes (C and G). The activity was conducted by a teacher-student. The rest of the teacher-students had taken it upon themselves to help the children to become familiar with the melodic percussion instruments. On the xylophones and glockenspiels used for the activity, the previous and next keys the children had to play were removed.
- **Activity C:** Song accompaniment with body percussion on a children's song ("Counting stars" [Metrao ta asteria])/Musical game with the song that combines music with movement. The children accompanied the verses of the song with body percussion combination A (i.e., shoulder-shoulder, patchen-patchen), and the instrumental part of the song with body percussion combination B (i.e., clapping, clapping, stomping, stomping). Two of the teacher-students conducted the activity. The rest of them participated in the activity with the young children. With the third

song, an additional activity was carried out where the children, having been arranged in two lines, after the end of each song's verse ran to the end of the line. The activity continued until the last child became the first. As in preschool education, where music is often associated with storytelling, the songs were connected to each other through short narratives that created a single story (cf., Nikolaou *et al.*, 2024b, for a similar activity) in which the children were invited to participate. According to the plot of the story, the children were invited to participate in three events, as many as the songs, by singing and accompanying the songs with rhythmic and melodic percussion instruments and body percussion. The teacher-students participated both in the singing and in songs' orchestrations. The aim of the short narratives was to create an atmosphere where the children's imagination would be more excited, and to give unity to the whole activity, which would keep children's interest undiminished. Two teacher-students took on the role of narrators.

- **Discussion with the children:** After the implementation of the activities, a discussion with the children followed.

## 5. Data collection and analysis

The present study has qualitative characteristics, since it examines "*humans and their interactions*" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 12). The data was collected through:

- a) teacher-students' participant observation,
- b) a questionnaire (see the Appendix) with open-ended questions which was distributed to the teacher-students to facilitate their reflections on the implemented activities. The questionnaire was completed anonymously after the implementation of the activities.

Data were analysed using thematic content analysis to achieve an "*interpretation of participants' perspectives*" (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016, p.101).

## 6. Findings

Based on the data analysis and interpretation, the findings of our research are represented in the following themes which also answer the research questions:

- a) Teacher-students' perceptions on each implemented activity regarding the young children's response and the satisfaction of the teaching objectives,
- b) Teacher-students' perceptions on their teaching ability (self-assessment),
- c) Assessment of the fellow teacher-students' teaching ability,
- d) Thoughts and feelings from teacher-students' engagement in the implementation of the activities regarding:
  - i) Overall assessment of their experience,
  - ii) Thoughts on the future,
  - iii) Dispelling misconceptions about young children's perceptual and musical abilities.

e) Teacher-students' views on the benefits of early years music education.

**a. Teacher-students' perceptions on each implemented activity regarding the young children's response and the satisfaction of the teaching objectives**

- **Activity A:** Simple orchestration with rhythmic percussion instruments on a well-known Greek traditional song ("The Crab's Wedding" [Padrevune ton kavoura])/ Introduction to the concept of musical ensemble/orchestra.

According to the teacher-students' answers, activity A was rightly chosen to be implemented first as it was suitable as an activity to get to know each other with the children. The children had the opportunity to be acquainted with the percussion instruments that were available in the classroom in a wide variety, something which kept their interest undiminished and entertained them at the same time. According to the teacher-students, young children's concentration during the activity was related to the fact that, as they sometimes played in pairs and sometimes all together, they felt that each of them had assumed a special role as a member of a musical ensemble. If this special role was not in progress, the activity could not be completed. Additionally, this fact made children feel important. The following teacher-students' comments are indicative:

*"In the first activity, the children listened to the story with interest, which was a very good first activity to "break the ice" and get to know both of us, the classroom and the various musical instruments."*

*"The children were introduced to all the different percussion instruments and followed the mood of the story by matching their role to an animal."*

*"The children actively participated and seemed to enjoy the rhythmic accompaniment of the song and the different timbre of musical instruments."*

*"In the activity of the rhythmic orchestration with percussion instruments, each child felt important because their role stood out from the ensemble, without the contribution of whom the song would not progress."*

Regarding the successful rhythmic accompaniment of the song, the teacher-students noticed that some of the young children at first did not follow the rhythmic pattern of the song's accompaniment, but then there was an improvement with the repetitions. The children listened attentively to the instructions of the teacher-students who undertook to carry out the activity and cooperated perfectly with them. The following statements are indicative:

*"In activity A, the children did not correctly render the rhythmic accompaniment at first. But after the repetitions, they understood it and performed it very well."*

*"They listened carefully to us about when to start, when to play and when to stop."*

*"There was a positive response from the children, they followed the "conductor's" instructions."*

*"The children cooperated quite well and carried out every instruction promptly and efficiently."*

- **Activity B:** Simple orchestration with melodic percussion instruments (xylophones and glockenspiels) on a Greek popular song ("Children paint on the wall" [Ta pedia zografizun ston tixo]) at specific parts of the song using two notes (C and G).

According to teacher-students' comments, the children really liked activity B. However, it took more guidance from the teacher-students and more time for the young children to understand what they were supposed to do in comparison to the first activity. Furthermore, it offered a lot of new musical knowledge to children. They were excited by the contact with xylophones and glockenspiels, as they were instruments with which they had not been involved before. In addition, the children were very cooperative and willing to follow the teacher-students' instructions, such as repeating the activity, singing louder, etc. However, there were some kids who were not quite in coordination with the group, but still, everyone had fun and something beautiful was created. The fact that the activity took place on the floor helped the children to feel more comfortable and to get to know the teacher-students who were sitting with them even better. Indicatively, we quote the teacher-students' comments:

*"In activity B, children needed more guidance, compared to the other two activities, to understand where to play the notes and to follow the melodic and rhythmic patterns."*

*"They had their first contact with glockenspiels and xylophones, which they did not know, and this excited them."*

*"Some children were quicker in understanding what they had to do while others needed more time."*

*"The children were very cooperative. They remembered what to play, and they responded to our signals about when to play the notes. They were willing to repeat the activity several times, switch instruments with each other and sing out loud."*

*"Even though some kids did not always play the right note, they still had fun."*

*"It was the only activity where the children sat on the floor with us, so I think they felt more comfortable and closer to us and had a great time."*

- **Activity C:** Song accompaniment with body percussion on a children's song ("Counting stars" [Metrao ta asteria])/Musical game) with the song that combines music with movement.

According to teacher-students' reflections, young children enjoyed activity C, which was carried out in a standing position, because it had a more energetic character and involved the whole body. They saw the activity more like a game, and this gave them joy. Indicatively, we quote:

*"In the activity with body percussion sounds on the song "Counting stars", I noticed that the children enjoyed the activity quite a lot because it was carried out without sitting, and they saw it as an opportunity to play and laugh."*

*"Activity C had a more energetic character because the body was also involved both through the body percussion sounds and the fact that children ran after each verse of the song at the end of the line."*

*"Activity C was the favorite of the children because they saw it more like a game."*

However, according to teacher-students answers, there were some difficulties in the successful coordination of the body percussion sounds both due to the body percussion combinations they had to perform, as well as due to the relatively fast tempo of the song, which often made their performance less successful. Nevertheless, most of the children did it very well, and all the children tried to be very concentrated on performing the body percussion sounds. They had a little more difficulty in the body percussion sounds they had to make in the verses of the song and less difficulty in the instrumental part of it. The teacher-students were led to the conclusion that perhaps they should have presented easier combinations of body percussion sounds to the children. As they commented:

*"I think that activity C was more difficult for the children because they were confused to some extent by the combination of the body percussion sounds that they had to perform."*

*"Perhaps the combination of the body percussion sounds should have been simpler in the part of the song's verses."*

*"Activity C was the most difficult for the children as the combination of the body percussion sounds was more demanding to perform than the song accompaniment with percussion instruments."*

*"In activity C, the children had more difficulty in the body percussion sounds in the verses of the song, while the performance with body percussion sounds in the instrumental part of the song was easier."*



*"Activity C was more difficult for children because there were a lot of body percussion sounds they had to do, and many of them did not achieve very good motor coordination."*

**b. Teacher-students' perceptions on their teaching ability (self-assessment)**

According to the teacher-students' answers, it was an unprecedented, beautiful and fun experience in which they felt they did very well and which they would like to repeat.

They may have been a bit anxious and more cautious around children at first, but they overcame these issues quite quickly. They felt that they met the expectations of the children, who listened attentively and worked well with them. The following comments are indicative:

*"I personally got on well for the first time as I talked to the young children, and we developed a beautiful relationship."*

*"I think I did well, considering that I have never taught young children before, and it was something new for me."*

*"I think that for the first time, I did not do badly. We had a good relationship with the young children, and they listened attentively to what I told them."*

*"I would like to teach them again."*

*"Personally, there was a little bit of creative anxiety at the beginning about how to manage the situation, but in the end, it turned out to be a very beautiful result."*

*"I enjoyed the experience very much. I was quite nervous, but once we started, everything went well. I do not think I did anything wrong."*

*"I think at the beginning, I was somewhat closed and reserved. Very quickly, however, both the children and I opened up."*

*"I think I met the children's expectations."*

*"The children, most of the time, cooperated very well and listened to me. I really enjoyed this kind of interaction."*

*"The experience with the children was quite interesting. They were very cooperative and listened to us a lot, so they made the whole procedure easier for us."*

*"All the children were very cooperative and sweet, so I had no problem teaching them."*

*"The first contact with the children was a beautiful and fun experience."*

*"On my part, the implementation of the activities was easier than I expected and much less stressful."*

### **c. Assessment of fellow students' teaching ability**

Teacher-students had an equally positive opinion about the teaching ability of their fellow students, as they saw in all of them an ability and a willingness to help the children understand what they had to do and feel comfortable. For example, we mention:

*"I think we were all in the mood to engage with the children and help them understand the activities."*

*"I think that my fellow students did quite a good job."*

*"My fellow students did a great job in both presenting and conducting the activities and helping the kids become familiar with what they had to do."*

*"My fellow students did just as well as I did, though some did better than others."*

### **d. Thoughts and feelings from teacher-students' engagement in the implementation of the activities**

#### **i. Overall assessment of their experience**

All teacher-students expressed positive thoughts and feelings regarding their involvement in the activities. It was a unique experience for them, and they enjoyed it. The spontaneity, willingness and extroversion of the children worked positively throughout the whole procedure. Also, as they stated, through teaching children, they had the opportunity to feel like educators who provide knowledge. They also enjoyed the discussion with the children that followed the implementation of the activities.

Indicatively, we mention:

*"Today's experience was truly unique for me as it was my first opportunity to practice, even on a small scale, on my chosen profession. I personally tried to enjoy my engagement to the fullest."*

*"It was a beautiful and fun experience. The children, with their spontaneity and desire to do things, changed everyone's mood for the better. I like helping, playing and teaching new activities to children. I generally enjoy working with them and seeing them happy."*

*"I had the responsibility to assist in all activities, and my experience was one hundred per cent positive."*

*"Today's experience with the children created very nice feelings for me that can only be created through children. We played, laughed, sang, hugged and had a beautiful atmosphere. I believe that they liked it as much as we liked it."*

*"Today was an exciting experience. I finally taught children."*

*"My experience as a pre-service teacher-student, who taught some of the activities today, was special, enjoyable and certainly memorable."*

*"The experience was unique and beautiful. Everything was perfect."*

*"Today, I found the whole process very interesting because it was my first contact with young children as part of my undergraduate studies, and I liked that I had the opportunity to feel like an educator and that the children would learn something from me."*

*"The time we had at the end with the children was quite creative. We talked about many things concerning their interests and their daily lives."*

## **ii. Thoughts about the future**

In their thoughts about the future, the teacher-students stated that they were looking forward to working with young children, as they consider teaching something that suits them, declaring that they are confident about the profession they have chosen. Moreover, from their little experience, they considered that good organization and appropriate material-technical infrastructure are necessary for successful teaching. In addition, they stated that after this experience, they felt less anxious about the future as it was very important for them to connect theory with practice. The following comments are indicative:

*"My thoughts about the future are that I had a great time, and I cannot wait to work with preschool children, and that I feel like it is something that really fulfills me and suits me."*

*"Any doubts about my abilities disappeared, and I have gained a lot of confidence as a future educator."*

*"After today's experience, I was even more amazed by the talent and abilities of young children. I think that I will certainly seek to participate in similar activities."*

*"My new thoughts are very positive as I realized, even from this little experience, that I have chosen a profession that makes me happy."*

*"I was relieved from the anxiety that it would be difficult for me and the children to cope, but I learned that if there is preparation, everything can be achieved."*

*"There must be proper preparation by the educator and the availability of appropriate equipment to do everything as it should be done."*

*"My teaching experience today definitely helped me de-stress and made me even more confident that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life."*

*"This experience was unique and useful for the future."*

*"My thoughts were that I would not have been able to connect what I have learned in the courses for so long if I had not had this experience with the children."*

### **iii. Dispelling misconceptions about young children's perceptual and musical abilities**

Another ascertainment made by the teacher-students was that through their experience, they overturned some of the misconceptions they had about the abilities of young children in terms of the degree to which they understand exactly what they should do, in terms of their ability to work effectively with the educators as well as in terms of understanding musical parameters. Indicatively, we quote:

*"Today, with this experience, I realized that children, although young, are very intelligent and capable of doing many things."*

*"The question I solved today was that children cooperate and understand what we say to them very well even though they are 4 years old."*

*"I did not expect the young children to show so much interest. They seemed to listen to us attentively and were happy to play with so many instruments."*

*"My thoughts after implementing the activities were that I overturned my initial thoughts that the children would not be able to perform the rhythm well and that there would be chaos in the classroom using all these instruments. The fact that everything went well was a pleasant surprise for me."*

### **e. Teacher-students' views on the benefits of early years music education**

Teacher-students' views concerning the benefits of early years music education were also positive and focused on the following:

#### **i. Learning in a pleasant way and easier assimilation of knowledge due to the playful and interactive nature of music**

*"I believe that educational interventions involving music should be promoted and implemented more and more in nursery schools as young children learn in a pleasant way and assimilate knowledge more easily."*

*"I believe that music education, because of its playful and interactive nature, makes learning easier and accessible to children."*

## **ii. Motor development and movement coordination**

*"A systematic education with music has many benefits as through singing, and its performance with movement children do exercises with their bodies which also help them in their motor development."*

*"Through performing with rhythmic and melodic percussion instruments, I believe that the children's gross and fine motor skills are developed."*

*"Through music, the brain and motor coordination are cultivated."*

## **iii. Development of collaborative and socio-emotional skills**

*"The children learn to work as a team through musical activities."*

*"Through music, children socialize and learn to respect and coexist."*

*"The children, through musical activities, learn to be obedient and cooperative."*

*"Through music, teamwork is fostered."*

## **iv. Expression and release of emotions**

*"Music itself is a kind of release of feelings, joy and satisfaction."*

*"Within the courses, music is very important and children like it as it makes them happy."*

## **v. Music promotes multisensory learning**

*"Music education is very important for young children. It helps them develop multiple senses and observe."*

*"In musical activities, children not only use the sense of sound, but also the sense of touch and sight."*

## **vi. Music is a kind of play**

*"Music is a kind of game, and children like to play."*

*"With music, we can create musical games that children like."*

*"Children are released through music because music is a kind of game."*

### **vii. Music encourages creativity**

*"I believe that children should be engaged with music from an early age as their creativity develops, which is very important."*

*"With music, in addition to the knowledge offered to children about the subject of music, a pleasant atmosphere is fostered in which children can be creative."*

### **viii. Music is important in people's lives, and it is necessary that children engage in musical activities and education from an early age**

*"Music is a very important factor both in people's lives and in their upbringing."*

*"Learning music from an early age opens many horizons to children for their later life as well."*

## **7. Limitations**

The present study has some limitations, focusing both on the small number of participants and on the number of teaching interventions, as it was carried out only once. Moreover, teacher-students' participation was voluntary since additional training was needed for the implementation of the activities. However, the fact that the participants were all in the first year of their undergraduate studies with no previous musical experience contributes to the homogeneity of the sample and, to a certain extent, the safe drawing of conclusions.

## **8. Discussion-Conclusion**

This study focuses on exploring first-year university students' (N=18) reflections on the implemented music activities for 4-year-old children in the context of the undergraduate course "Music Pedagogy" in a university classroom. The teacher-students stated that the young children responded positively to the activities and that the teaching objectives were achieved. Teacher-students expressed positive thoughts and feelings about their current experience, as they enjoyed teaching children, they felt that they had made the right career choice, and they stated that they would like to repeat similar activities. Additionally, they resolved questions and dispelled misconceptions about young children's abilities to perceive and respond to specific instructions and understand musical concepts. Moreover, their self-confidence concerning their teaching ability was

strengthened. Furthermore, based on their current teaching experience and the attendance of “Music Pedagogy” courses in the first year of their undergraduate studies, they described the advantages of teaching music to young children, focusing on the following: music can facilitate learning due to its playful character; strengthen movement coordination, encouragement of collaboration, cultivation of socio-emotional skills, expression and release of emotions, fostering multisensory instruction.

Didactic interventions, in which teacher-students are involved from an early stage of their undergraduate studies, can help to connect theory with practice but also with the realization that the correct planning of activities, good preparation of the educator, the definition of clear goals, taking into account age, previous children's knowledge and abilities, the use of quality musical material and the appropriate material-technical infrastructure can ensure the right conditions for a successful music teaching. Furthermore, by boosting self-confidence in music teaching ability, the prejudice that non-music specialists cannot teach music could be remedied to some extent.

The study could be carried out with a larger number of participants and on a more systematic basis, where the teacher-students would initially design the music activities by themselves and, after discussing and finalizing them with their trainers, apply them to young children, who either would visit the university classroom or the teacher-students themselves would go to the nursery schools. Such educational interventions would have a greater benefit if they were carried out in the first and second years of undergraduate studies and before the internship that takes place in the final year. The reason that this kind of intervention would work better in the aforementioned academic period is linked to the fact that there would be the absence of stress that often occupies teacher-students during internships.

In addition, in the context of providing opportunities for teacher-students to get in touch with their future profession and the acquisition of early teaching experience in music as soon as possible, it would be appropriate to implement activities that include visits by artists and music educators in the university classes (see Ballantyne *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, in the aforementioned context, artistic groups of teacher-students could be formed, which would visit nursery schools and perform several musical, kinetic and theatrical events with the children, where music engages creatively with movement and dramatic expression. Finally, continuous training of in-service early years educators who are called to teach music to preschool children can contribute to the renewal of their knowledge about teaching music. These trainings could be done both by music specialists (see Welch, 2021) and in the context of several seminars organized by University Departments stimulating, among other things, the University's connection with educational organizations and society.

The results of the present study should be viewed in the context of how early engagement in music teaching can positively influence the professional development of future early years educators. Gaining early teaching experiences can contribute to strengthening pre-service teacher-students' confidence and interest in their academic

studies along with realizing the importance of integrating art in general and, more specifically, music education into early childhood curriculum.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author**

Dr. Eirini Nikolaou graduated as a musicologist from the Department of Music Studies (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens). She received the Msc degree and PhD degree from the Department of Philosophy-Pedagogy-Psychology of Ioannina University (Greece). Furthermore, she has a Diploma as a Piano soloist and Composer, where she took the first and second awards as well. She is a Senior Teaching Fellow in the Department of Primary Education in Ioannina University, teaching *Music Education* and conducting the *Choir* of the Department. Her special interests include music education in early childhood and primary education, philosophy of music education, music in ancient Greece, arts Integration, ICT in music learning and song composition. She is the author of two books in Greek, in the field of music education, and papers in Greek and international journals and international conferences.

### **References**

- Andrade, H., & Valtcheva, A. (2009). Promoting learning and achievement through self-assessment. *Theory into practice*, 48(1), 12-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802577544>
- Barrett, J. S., Schachter, R. E., Gilbert, D., & Fuerst, M. (2022). Best Practices for Preschool Music Education: Supporting Music-Making Throughout the Day. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(3), 385-397. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01155-8>
- Ballantyne, J., Barrett, M., Temmerman, N., Harrison, S., & Meissner, E. (2009). Music Teachers Oz Online: A new approach to school-university collaboration in teacher education. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(6). <http://www.ijea.org/v10n6/>
- Bautista, A., & Ho, Y. L. (2022). Music and movement in Hong Kong kindergartens: Teachers' preparation, perceived usefulness, confidence, and readiness. *Revista Electrónica Complutense de Investigación en Educación Musical-RECIEM*, 19, 15-25. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/reciem.73976>
- Bautista, A., Yeung, J., McLaren, M. L., & Ilari, B. (2022). Music in early childhood teacher education: raising awareness of a worrisome reality and proposing strategies to move forward. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 125(3), 139-149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2022.2043969>



- Bogo, M., Regehr, C., Katz, E., Logie, C., & Mylopoulos, M. (2011). Developing a Tool for Assessing Students' Reflections on Their Practice. *Social Work Education, 30*(2), 186–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2011.540392>
- Brown, J., Sherrill, C., & Gench, B. (1981). Effects of an Integrated Physical Education/Music Program in Changing Early Childhood Perceptual-Motor Performance. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 53*(1), 151-154. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1981.53.1.151>
- Derri, V., Tsapakidou, A., Zachopoulou, E., & Kioumourtzoglou, E. (2001). Effect of a music and movement programme on development of locomotor skills by children 4 to 6 years of age. *European journal of physical education, 6*(1), 16-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1740898010060103>
- Ilari, B. (2016). Music in the early years: Pathways into the social world. *Research Studies in Music Education, 38*(1), 23-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X16642631>
- Forrai, K. (2006). The influence of music on the development of young children: Music research with children between 6 and 40 months. *Australian Kodaly Bulletin, 24*–36. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.106610619574883>
- Korthagen, F. A. J. (2010). The Relationship Between Theory and Practice in Teacher Education. In: Penelope Peterson, Eva Baker, Barry McGaw (Eds), *International Encyclopedia of Education, 7*, 669-675. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative research for the social sciences*. Virginia Tech, USA: SAGE publications.
- Nikolaou, E. (2023a). Encouraging creativity through music improvisation activities: Pre-service primary general teacher-students' reflections and beliefs. *International Journal of Music Education, 0*(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614231178925>
- Nikolaou, E. (2023b). Issues concerning the integration of arts in education. In S. G. Soulis, M. Liakopoulou, & A. Galani (Eds.), *Challenges and Concerns in 21st Century Education* (pp. 398-407). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Nikolaou, E., Zoi, S., Papageorgiou, A., & Tzalali, K. (2024a). The Project “star-little Star”. Strengthening 4-and 5-year-old Children’s Socio-emotional and Collaborative Skills through Singing and Representing a Song Visually and Dramatically. *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies, 10*(2), 103-115. <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejsss.v10i2.1767>
- Nikolaou, E., Galani, A., & Theodorakopoulos, D. (2024b). The poetic form of haiku as a guide to poetry and music composition: Primary school students' views and attitudes. *International Journal of Education and Research, 12*(2), 49-66. <https://www.ijern.com/journal/2024/February-2024/04.pdf>
- Raptis, T. (2020). A music education project (MEdEC) to strengthen the emotional competence of kindergarten students. *Visions of Research in Music Education, 36*(1), Article 2, 1-36. <https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/vrme/vol36/iss1/2>
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic.

- Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, M., Trouli, K., & Linardakis, M. (2014). Arts Education Offered by Greek Universities to Future Pre-school and Primary School Teachers. *Preschool and Primary Education*, 3(1), 34–52. <https://doi.org/10.12681/ppej.105>
- Teachout, D. J. (2005). The impact of music education on a child's growth and development. *Sounds of learning*. Carlsbad, CA: International Foundation for Music Research.
- Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H., & Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 6(5), 100-110. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/jnep.v6n5p100>
- Welch, G. F. (2021). The challenge of ensuring effective early years music education by non-specialists. *Early Child Development and Care*, 191(12), 1972–1984. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1792895>
- Zadnik, K., & Habe, K. (2017). The developmental benefits of early music education: An evaluation study of the two Slovenian projects. In R. V. Nata (Ed.), *Progress in Education*. (Vol. 46, pp. 123–144). Nova Science Publishers.
- Zachopoulou, E., Tsapakidou, A., & Derri, V. (2004). The effects of a developmentally appropriate music and movement program on motor performance. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 19(4), 631-642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2004.10.005>

## Appendix

### Questionnaire

1. How did the children respond during the implementation of the activities? .....
2. Were the teaching objectives met? .....
3. How do you assess your own teaching ability? .....
4. How do you assess the teaching ability of your fellow students? .....
5. What are the thoughts and feelings from your engagement in the implementation of the activities? .....
6. What are your thoughts regarding the future? .....
7. From your experience during the first year of your undergraduate studies, and from your current experience, what are the positive aspects of an early years music education? .....

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).