



## Music Education in Early Childhood in Türkiye: How Do School Types Affect the Implementation of Musical Activities?

### Türkiye’de Erken Çocuklukta Müzik Eğitimi: Okul Türleri Müzik Etkinliklerinin Uygulanmasını Nasıl Etkiliyor?

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**Article Type**<sup>3</sup>: Research Article

**Application Date**: 15.04.2023

**Accepted Date**: 19.10.2023

**To Cite This Article**: Pektaş, S. & Elmacı, D. (2023). Music education in early childhood in Türkiye: How do school types affect the implementation of musical activities? *Anadolu University Journal of Education Faculty (AUJEF)*, 7(4), 1174-1189.

**ABSTRACT**: This research aims to determine how the implementation of music in early childhood differs by the types of preschool institutions. The sample of the study, which was conducted with the qualitative research approaches, consists of 22 participants, 18 preschool teachers, and 4 school administrators working in four different types of public preschools. Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The school types in the study are 1 independent kindergarten, 1 primary school with preschool classes, 1 girls’ vocational high school with practice preschool classes, and 1 special education kindergarten. According to the research findings, music is used in all types of preschool institutions, and similar musical activities are carried out. However, while richer musical activities are carried out in independent kindergartens, the use of music in special education kindergartens is more limited. Independent kindergartens seem more advantageous than other school types in terms of implementing musical activities. Individual efforts of preschool teachers and their interest in music are more important in implementing musical activities. Although the participants highlight the importance of music in special education, the low skills of preschool teachers regarding the use of music in early childhood special education and the special needs of children make it difficult to use music in special education kindergartens.

**Keywords**: Music education, music in early years, early childhood education, school type, preschool settings.

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**ÖZ:** Bu araştırmanın amacı, okul öncesi kurum tiplerine göre erken çocuklukta müzikal etkinliklerin uygulanmasının nasıl farklılaştığını belirlemektir. Nitel araştırma yaklaşımlarına göre yürütülen araştırmanın örneklemini dört farklı tip kamu okul öncesi okulunda görev yapan 18 okul öncesi öğretmeni ve 4 okul yöneticisi olmak üzere 22 katılımcı oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmadaki okul tipleri 1 bağımsız anaokulu, bünyesinde anasınıfı bulunduran 1 ilkokul, bünyesinde uygulama anasınıfı bulunan 1 kız meslek lisesi ve 1 özel eğitim anaokuludur. Araştırma bulgularına göre tüm okul öncesi kurum tiplerinde müzik kullanılmakta ve benzer müzikal etkinlikler yapılmaktadır. Ancak bağımsız anaokullarında daha zengin müzikal etkinlikler yapılırken özel eğitim anaokullarında müziğin kullanımı daha sınırlıdır. Müzikal etkinliklerin uygulanması bakımından bağımsız anaokulları diğer okul tiplerine göre daha avantajlı görünmektedir. İlkokullar bünyesindeki anasınıflarında okul öncesi öğretmenlerin bireysel çabaları ve müziğe ilgileri müzikal etkinliklerin uygulanmasında daha önemli hale gelmektedir. Katılımcılar tarafından özel eğitimde müziğin önemi vurgulanmasına rağmen erken çocukluk özel eğitiminde müziğin kullanımına ilişkin okul öncesi öğretmenlerin becerilerinin az olması ve çocukların özel gereksinim türleri gibi nedenler, özel eğitim anaokullarında müziğin kullanımını güçleştirmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Müzik eğitimi, erken yaşlarda müzik, erken çocukluk eğitimi, okul tipi, okul öncesi eğitim ortamları.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Music is a tool to support the early childhood years. Hence, research on the benefits of music for the early years has recently started to increase (Pestana, 2022; Young, 2016; Welch, 2021). It is accepted that music has positive contributions in early childhood in terms of sensory development, listening, preparation for reading and writing, and the development of language and speaking skills (Büyükgönenç-Polat, 2018). It is emphasized that music education in early childhood is not only an effective tool for children to develop their musical abilities but also to explore the world musically (Niland, 2009). In their study, Ruokonen, Tervaniemi, and Reunamo (2021) found that music in early childhood contributed significantly to children's learning and well-being in terms of participation in activities, developing positive emotions, and social cohesion. Ultimately, music is directly or indirectly included as an indispensable reality in early childhood education programs due to its benefits.

As a result of the contributions of music, preschool teachers benefit from different musical activities to support different developmental areas of children (Aydıngöz-Çaylı & Bulut, 2021). Activities such as dance and movement, singing, playing a musical instrument, and listening to music are frequently used in early childhood education (Denac, 2008). The study by Bozan, Demir, Karahallı and Bay (2021) revealed that preschool teachers mostly benefited from music as an auditory strategy in classroom activity transitions. Another research by Rajan (2017) inferred that preschool teachers use music daily and value music significantly because of its contribution to children's learning and development. Similarly, Kirby, Dahbi, Surrain, Rowe and Luk (2023) concluded that preschool teachers use music daily for both academic and social-emotional development.

Although these positive contributions of music are widely known, unfortunately, it is not possible to provide suitable conditions for music education. Even music teachers have problems such as the incompatibility of the education they receive with the music education in schools, and the inability to find suitable materials and environments for music education (Bulut, 2008; Umuzdaş & Levent, 2012), while preschool teachers who are not directly trained to be music teachers experience similar problems (Lee, 2009; Rodríguez & Álvarez, 2017). For example, Salı, Akkol and Oğuz (2013) reported that preschool teachers faced problems such as not being well-equipped in music education, the school's inability to provide a suitable environment for music education, and the inability to find suitable musical instruments. On the other hand, problems such as the inability to set sound limits appropriately and the school administrators not giving the necessary importance to music education (Özal-Göncü, 2010) make it difficult to achieve the goals of music education in early childhood.

The problems encountered in music education suggest the idea that preschool settings can be effective in music education. There are various studies on the relationship of school type with music education and musical activities. Freer and Evans (2019) concluded that school type does not affect students' motivation toward music. In their research, Kelley and Demorest (2016) compared music practices in charter and traditional public schools. According to the research findings, charter schools include more music activities than traditional schools, and there is a relationship between school size and music education. Csíkos and Dohány (2016), in their study with students at different high school types, concluded that school type affects students' musical literacy. Teklos (2011) concluded in his research that there is a difference between the attitudes of middle school and high school students toward music. Accordingly, middle school students' attitudes toward music were found to be more positive than high school students.

Temmerman (2000) investigated the music activities in two different preschool settings and found that the music programs in both preschool institutions have common features, that preschool children are

willing to participate in all musical activities, and that they prefer dance-movement, playing musical instruments, singing and listening activities among the musical activities. Gawlick (2004) investigated the effects of four different early childhood education environments on students' musical development. According to the main findings of that research: (1) the child's home environment has a strong influence on his musical abilities, (2) children from wealthy families perform better musically, (3) the musical performance of children receiving music education is high, (4) music education given in early childhood education institutions is far from meeting national standards, and (5) music education knowledge and skills of parents, teachers, and school administrators are insufficient. The findings of this study show that the environment, opportunities and cultural background affect musical development.

Although there are studies related to music education among school types at different education levels, studies that directly examine how music education differs by the types of early childhood education institutions are limited. To this end, this research aims to examine how the implementation of musical activities in preschool education differs by the school types in the context of Türkiye. Thus, it is thought that the research will contribute to improving early childhood education and music education in early childhood.

## **1.1. Literature Review**

### **1.1.1. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Institutions in Türkiye**

ECEC in Türkiye is basically structured in two different ways: under 3 years old and over 3 years old (European Commission, 2019). The Ministry of Family and Social Services has the main responsibility for ECEC services under 3 years old, and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) / Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) has the main responsibility for the ones over 3 years old. A significant portion of ECEC provision for under-3s consists of the private sector, which is self-financing under the Ministry of Family and Social Services supervision. The institutions where children under 3 receive service are crèches and daycare centers. Crèches serve children aged 0-24 months, and daycare centers serve children aged 25-66 months. Most ECEC institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Family and Social Services provide a combination of crèche and daycare from birth until the compulsory primary school entry age.

ECEC service for children over 3 years old in Türkiye is in the form of preschool education under the responsibility of the MoNE. According to the Preschool Education and Primary Education Institutions Regulation (Okul Öncesi ve İlköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği) (2014), preschool education institutions affiliated with the MoNE are of 3 different types: independent kindergarten, preschool class, and practice preschool class. Independent kindergartens are schools that have their own separate school building and garden and serve children aged 36-68 months. There can be 6-10 different preschool classes within an independent kindergarten. Preschool classes are located in primary or secondary schools and serve children aged 45-68 months. There may be 1-4 different preschool classes within a primary or secondary school. Practice preschool classes are for girls' vocational high school students to practice and are included in these vocational high schools. These also serve children aged 36-68 months. In a girls' vocational high school, there may be 1-4 different kindergarten classes. Although not defined as a separate preschool institution type in the relevant regulation, special education kindergartens defined in the Special Education Services Regulation (Özel Eğitim Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği) (2018) are like independent kindergartens. Special education kindergartens serve preschool children with special needs starting from 36 months. A special education kindergarten may have 6-10 different classes. There is also

flexibility in the relevant regulations according to the number of groups of children and the needs of the child. Accordingly, 36-68 months old children can be enrolled in the same kindergarten class in schools where there are not enough children to form a group. With the written request of their parents, 69-, 70- and 71-months old children are directed to preschool education.

According to the Preschool Education and Primary Education Institutions Regulation (Okul Öncesi Eğitim ve İlköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği) (2014), in preschool education institutions, it is essential to conduct normal education for 6 uninterrupted 50-minute activities per day, including the times of starting the day, playing, feeding, cleaning, activity, resting, and evaluating the day. The number of children in a group should be not less than 10 or more than 20. However, the number of children can be increased if there is demand and the school's facilities are sufficient. According to the Special Education Services Regulation (2018), preschool education institutions opened for students with special needs can have a maximum class size of 5 students. Although it is essential that students with the same needs be in the same classes, children with different needs can also study together in case of necessity. The curriculum prepared by the MoNE is applied to children with special needs in the preschool period. In special education kindergartens and special education preschool classes, 6 activity hours of 50 minutes each are taught. These activities should be carried out jointly by the preschool teacher and the special education teacher.

In schools where double-shift education is not provided in Türkiye, preschool children are usually at school between 9.00-14.00. In schools with double-shift education, the morning group is at school between 8.00-12.30, and the afternoon group comes between 13.00-17.30. Most independent kindergartens have a kid's club option, and parents can also pay kids' club fees to keep their children in school from 8:00 to 17:30.

While preschool education is optional and free in public schools in Türkiye, parents are charged for education materials for children's nutrition, cleaning services, and implementing the curriculum in public schools. It is stated in the relevant regulation that the fee to be charged should be determined by taking into account the economic situation of the environment and should not be kept high in a way that would prevent the expansion and development of preschool education in any way, and that would force the economic situation of the parents. However, special education is compulsory for children with special needs in preschool, and they are not charged any fees such as food and materials.

### **1.1.2. Early Childhood Music Education in Türkiye**

There are two main programs in ECEC in Türkiye, which were last updated in 2013, which are the Education Program for 0-36 Months-Old Children and the 2013 Pre-School Education Program. These programs are implemented in public and private ECEC institutions throughout the country. Music-related goals and activities are also an important part of these programs. The 2013 Pre-School Education Program is directly or indirectly intertwined with music. One of the learning centers recommended to be in preschool education institutions, according to the 2013 Program, is the music center. The music center is accepted as a learning center where activities are held that enable children to gain experience by supporting their knowledge and skills related to music. It is emphasized that the existence of a music center in the preschool education institution could both enable the formation and development of children's individual knowledge and skills related to music education in the early period and contribute to the formation of a general music culture. Having the necessary instruments and equipment in this center and their effective use by both children and teachers are considered important in terms of

developing a sense of rhythm and stimulating auditory perception (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2013).

Music activities are one of the activities in the preschool education program. Types of activities can be applied separately, or integrated activities can be applied by combining more than one activity. In the 2013 Pre-School Education Program, music activities are regarded as activities that support children's cognitive, language, motor, social, and emotional development and positively affect the musical development process. These activities consist of activities such as listening to and distinguishing sounds and music, rhythm exercises, breathing and voice exercises, singing, playing an instrument, creative movement and dance, movement accompanied by music, and creating musical stories. It is argued that music activities not only help children acquire the habits of listening, singing, and playing correct and qualified music but also support the recognition of local, national, and universal children's music. It is also suggested that these activities bring responsibilities such as making music, listening to others, and cooperating individually and in the community (MEB, 2013).

In Türkiye, there are two different early childhood special education programs for children with special needs, one for children 0-36 months and the other for children aged 37-78 months. There are no targets and achievements directly related to music in the special education program for children aged 0-36 months. In the special education program for 37-78 months of childhood, music takes place together with the creative arts development area and includes objectives such as listening, singing, dancing, movement, distinguishing sounds, and expressing feelings about music (MEB, 2018a; MEB, 2018b).

## 2. METHOD

This research was conducted based on qualitative research approaches. Although qualitative research is classified in different ways, the basic qualitative research design in Merriam's (1998) classification is preferred in this study. Basic qualitative research focuses on the main objectives of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, instead of focusing on any qualitative research design, the basic qualitative research design was preferred because the paper simply tries to understand whether the use of music in early childhood differs by the type of preschool institution.

This research has full ethical clearance from Amasya University Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Date: 24.02.2022 and Number: E-30640013-108.01-58446).

### 2.1. Participants

The study group of the research consists of preschool teachers and school administrators working in early childhood education schools in a small city in Türkiye. 4 of these participants are school administrators, and 18 are preschool teachers. In the determination of the participants, besides the convenience of accessing the schools, the representativeness of the public preschool education institutions in Türkiye was also considered. In this regard, 1 public independent kindergarten, 1 public primary school with a kindergarten, 1 public high school with a preschool practice class, and 1 public special education kindergarten were determined. Interviews were held with the teachers and school administrators in these designated schools, and a total of 22 participants had experience in the research subject and were willing to participate in the research. Since the research was conducted in a small city with a limited number of preschool education institutions, detailed information identifying the participants was not included.

### **2.1.2. Data Collection Tool**

A semi-structured interview form was prepared to collect the research data. While developing the interview form, expert opinions were used as well as the information in the literature; the interview form was finalized in line with the opinions of two early childhood educators and one music educator. After a preliminary interview with a preschool teacher, it was decided that the interview form was working. The following basic questions were included in this interview form: (1) Do you use music in your activities? If yes, why? (2) What kind of musical activities do you do? (3) Does the type of school have any effect on the implementation of music activities? If yes, what kind of effects does it have? If not, why not? and (4) What are the challenges and suggestions you encounter regarding music education in early childhood?

### **2.1.3. Data Collection Process**

Research data were collected in the academic year 2021-2022. After obtaining ethical approval and research permission, the schools included in the study were contacted. These schools were visited whenever the school administrators deemed it appropriate, and interviews were held with teachers and administrators who were willing to participate in the research. During the school visits, observations were made by visiting the sections of the school and participating in classroom activities. The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

### **2.1.4. Data Analysis**

Although there is no common rule for all research, qualitative data analysis aims to reduce the volume of raw information, to distinguish necessary information from unnecessary information and to convey the essence of the data (Patton, 2018). Similar considerations were taken into account in the data analysis of this study, and the data that emerged from the analysis of the interview records were coded by the researchers and analyzed descriptively in line with the interview questions. The data were read and reviewed repeatedly, and a consensus was reached on emerging codes and themes. MS Excel and MS Word programs were used for coding and classification of the data.

### **2.1.5. Validation and Trustworthiness**

Some validation and trustworthiness measures taken in line with the criteria stated by Creswell (2021) are as follows: Since the researchers are working in the early childhood education teacher training program, they are in constant contact with early childhood institutions and visit these institutions frequently. In addition, one of the researchers had previous experience as a music teacher and the other had experience working in early childhood institutions. These experiences facilitated better interaction with the participants and helped to check for misinformation. In addition to interviews, observation notes were also used to collect data, thus diversifying the data collection source. The research methodology and findings were reviewed by a colleague experienced in qualitative research, and his suggestions were taken into account. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researchers coded the data separately and reached full consensus on different codes.

### 3. FINDINGS

Four main themes were determined as a result of data analysis: the purpose of using music, opportunities based on the school type, child profile-generation difference, and teacher's interest in music.

#### 3.1. The Purpose of Using Music

All participants expressed that they use music in early childhood education regardless of school type. Considering the musical activities used, these activities include songs, roundels, Orff activities, rhythm exercises, singing, and dancing to video music. Emphasizing the importance of music in early childhood education, the participants highlighted the importance of concept teaching, skill teaching, self-care skills, self-confidence development, attention, classroom management, making learning fun, intertwining music and play, and integrating and reinforcing the subject with music in the early childhood education program. They stated that they use music for reasons such as reaching related gains. The statements of some participants regarding this are as follows:

*I use (music) actively. Especially in small age groups, when giving all kinds of concepts, colors, numbers, everything, with music, songs, and dance, it is easier, visuals and perceptions are more open, and then by hearing, seeing, and coding. In other words, teaching songs by coding them with our body language is more enjoyable, and children also like it. I try to use more music in every field (P22).*

There was no difference in the purpose of using music and types of musical activities by the school types, but it was observed that the use and variety of musical activities in special education kindergartens were more limited.

#### 3.2. Opportunities Based on the School Type

All participants said that the opportunities of independent kindergartens are more than preschool classes, practice preschool classes, and special education kindergartens. This is because independent kindergartens are established directly for the purposes of preschool education and can focus directly on early childhood education. Besides, the number of school children and the support fee received from parents are higher in independent kindergartens than other types of schools. This situation ensures that the budget that independent kindergartens can use is more. Some of the participants' opinions that independent kindergartens have better opportunities are as follows:

*Independent kindergartens have much more opportunities. In other words, as administrators, they have comfort and convenience in meeting the demands of the teachers or in carrying out the activities they want. Whatever they want is provided at every event, be it this music event or other events. ...I always think that independent kindergartens and teachers working there are luckier in this regard (P20).*

The number of teachers is also higher in independent kindergartens due to the higher number of children and classrooms. Therefore, it is easier for teachers to interact and cooperate with each other. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

*Many teachers see different musical activities interact with each other in a shorter time. For example, there are 4 age groups with common programs; they use a common program.*

*5-year-olds are using a joint program. But everyone walks at their own pace. Now, if a teacher teaches the subject in music differently using music, the other teaches it differently by using songs, and the other by using rhythms. They are affected by each other (P1).*

The existence of children's clubs in independent kindergartens allows these schools to provide trainers in the areas needed. It is understood that from time to time, schools also assign educators related to music in children's clubs:

*We have club lessons, as you know. For example, our values education teacher was playing the nay there last year. The music teacher before that was playing the guitar. When we find such teachers, we immediately welcome them with pleasure. We try to give opportunities to such activities in music activities in club activities (P1).*

According to the participants' opinions, it is understood that the profile of the parents is also effective in the fact that independent kindergartens have more opportunities. Participants reported that parents who send their children to independent kindergartens are more conscious about early childhood education and are at a higher socioeconomic level. Emphasizing that the difference in school types is due to the parent profile, one participant expressed this situation as follows:

*Actually, I don't think there is much difference between independent kindergartens and primary schools with preschool classes. It stems from a structure that originates only from the parent group. It can be explained in a way that working mothers or parents with a little better economic independence support their children better (P4).*

It is understood that the difference in the parent profile is also observed within the independent kindergartens themselves. According to the statements of the participants, children with both working parents are mostly sent to school in the morning and stay at school until the evening (between 8 a.m. and 5.30 p.m.), with the activities of the children's club besides the preschool program. Families with one of the parents not working (usually the mother) send their children to school more often in the afternoon. This also applies to preschool classes. Thus, sending children to school in the morning or the afternoon indicates a difference in socioeconomic level. The statements of a participant regarding this are as follows:

*For example, kids coming in the afternoon for half a day are usually the children whose mothers are housewives. The families of kids coming from the morning till evening are working parents. For instance, our club teacher wanted wooden sticks to use in the first term, and they brought sticks to my class the next day. The expectation of your parents also makes teachers' opportunities easier and more difficult or helps you roll up your sleeves a little more (P5).*

On the other hand, some participants highlighted that primary schools with preschool classes are not fully understood by the school administration. In other words, the subjects that the school administration gives priority to are mostly for primary school education rather than preschool education. Preschool children can be ignored in the functioning of the school and the activities to be carried out. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

*It is the comprehensibility. This is a primary school; the focus is on that point... That's exactly what I mean. The school administration is not aware of my practices (P15).*

Participants emphasized that it is an advantage that all services are provided free of charge by the state to students with special needs in special education kindergartens. Therefore, it may be easier for

special education kindergartens to provide educational materials, including musical materials. However, the lack of sufficient information about the use of music in early childhood special education and the individual needs of students with special needs limit the use of these opportunities. In this regard, a participant stated that they previously worked in a preschool classes with limited opportunities, but they performed better musical activities there than in the special education kindergarten.

According to the participant statements, the practice preschool classes within the girls' vocational high school are advantageous in providing musical material because many materials needed by the practice kindergartens in these schools' practice courses are conducted with the help of high school teachers and students. In this context, the participants stated that some of the musical materials they needed were designed by the girls' vocational high school students. Additionally, the participants also pinpointed that they interact with the teachers at the girls' vocational high school and exchange their views with them in musical activities.

### 3.3. Child Profile/ Generation Difference

According to the participant statements, the use of music includes significant differences according to the years in which the children were born and age groups. The pandemic is one of the important factors in this situation. A participant, who stated that there are differences in every generation of children, except for the pandemic, said:

*For example, the 3-age group I worked with this term is the most difficult 3-age group, and they are very different. ... I mean, I think the period has a lot of influence. Sometimes some children come with such a sense of teaching that we can perform a dance in three days. Other times, we cannot produce the same show when we work with some bands for a month. I think the periods of the children and the harmony of the group are more effective (P3).*

Participants expressed that it is more difficult to do musical activities with young children. One participant expressed this as follows:

*Since I've been working with young children this year, we're having a little difficulty with the rhythm. In the rhythm, both the children get bored and the body movements and music or something. For instance, we use maracas or something, of course, but the rhythm is not exactly one-to-one like in a 5-year-old (P17).*

In special education kindergartens, besides the special needs of children, daily mood changes can occur. These obvious changes also affect musical activities. Regarding this, one participant stated the following:

*As I said, among our students, this is about the profile; if the child wants to say it that day, they try to repeat it with you. For example, Ahmet repeats it even though he doesn't want to talk to you. We don't experience many rejections, but there is a distraction that day due to the drugs that Burak sometimes uses. We use the song to wrap it up, but the student doesn't give it any feedback either. Singing, his favorite activity, doesn't give his much feedback either. Medication affects. If the child has had a good diet that day and has taken medicine, we can get some better feedback (P10).*

### 3.4. Teacher's Interest in Music

A point emphasized by some of the participants is the interest of preschool teachers in music rather than the difference in school types. Participants stated that teachers, who believe in the importance of music in education and show interest in musical activities, include musical activities regardless of the type of school. The opinions of some of the participants on this subject are as follows:

*It's all about teacher self-development. It's all done right there. So, nobody tells us what to do. The state does not tell me what to teach them. I'm not saying it's not my thing; it doesn't say you have to give them in my curriculum. There is a music lesson; for example, you can teach singing. You can work with rhythm sticks. Advancement is in the teacher's own hands (P16).*

### 3.5. Challenges and Suggestions Related to Early Childhood Music Education Shared by the Participants

The main challenges and suggestions of the participants regarding early childhood music education are given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Challenges and Suggestions

Challenge	Suggestion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music education is insufficient in preschool teacher training.</li> <li>• The teacher cannot play a musical instrument.</li> <li>• No music room.</li> <li>• Music materials are insufficient.</li> <li>• No music teacher.</li> <li>• Variety in the student profile.</li> <li>• The use of music in special education is insufficient.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be more qualified music education in preschool teacher training.</li> <li>• Preschool music teachers should be able to play a musical instrument.</li> <li>• There must be a music room.</li> <li>• Music materials should be made sufficient.</li> <li>• There must be a part- or full-time music teacher.</li> <li>• Music education should be given considering the individual differences of the students.</li> <li>• Music should be used more often in early childhood special education.</li> </ul>

The challenges and suggestions in Table 1 are similar for all early childhood education institutions, regardless of school type.

## 4. DISCUSSION and RESULT

These research findings show that music is used in preschool education institutions regardless of school type. It is widely accepted in the literature that music is important and used in early childhood (Aydingöz-Çaylı & Bulut, 2021; Bozan et al., 2021; Kirby et al., 2023; Rajan, 2017). Therefore, such a finding is consistent with the literature as well as an expected one. This research concluded that preschool teachers mostly use musical activities such as song games, roundels, Orff activities, rhythm exercises, singing, video music, and dancing. When music studies with preschool teachers are examined in the literature, it is seen that similar musical activities are used in early childhood education (Yılmaz-Bolat,

2017; Yücesan, 2021). However, these research findings show that while the use of musical activities is richer in independent kindergartens, it is more limited in special education kindergartens. But, literature shows the benefits of music for children with special needs have become more important (Darrow, 2011; Pektaş, 2016). Expressing that music education is important in early childhood education, the participants underlined that they use music for purposes such as teaching concepts and skills, classroom management, attracting attention, making learning fun, reinforcing the subject, and developing self-confidence in children. Studies in the field also report that preschool teachers use music for similar purposes (Aydingöz-Çaylı & Bulut, 2021; Kirby et al., 2023; Rajan, 2017).

In this study, all participants expressed that independent kindergartens have more opportunities than primary schools with preschool classes, practice preschool classes, and special education kindergartens. The biggest reason for this is that independent kindergartens were established with a direct focus on early childhood education. Participants emphasized that music activities differed by the child profile. However, it is understood that independent kindergartens are also advantageous in terms of child profile because in Türkiye, children aged 57-68 months are usually enrolled in primary schools with preschool classes, while children aged 36-68 months are enrolled in independent kindergartens and practice preschool classes. On the other hand, since there are more classes in independent kindergartens, separate class branches can be formed as 3 years, 4 years, and 5 years old. Since there are few classes in primary schools with preschool classes and practice preschool classes, it is more difficult to create such homogeneous class groups. There may be more heterogeneous age groups, especially in preschool classes located in rural areas. Hence, independent kindergartens, where it is possible to create more homogeneous class branches in terms of age group due to the high number of class branches, can be more advantageous in implementing musical activities. However, it is difficult to suggest that creating a homogeneous class according to age groups always reduces individual differences. Within the same age group, different children may have different interests, abilities, and personality characteristics. Musical activities will inevitably be affected by such a situation. It is observed that these individual differences are more prominent in special education kindergartens, thus making musical activities more difficult. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that preschool teachers do not receive adequate training in the field of special education. In Karatağ's (2020) research with music teachers working in special education schools for the mentally disabled, it was concluded that music teachers face difficulties according to the special needs of children.

The findings of this research indicate that apart from age and individual differences, there may be differences in music education according to generation. This suggests that the musical interests and needs of children in early childhood 10 years ago may differ from those of today's children. However, as Miksza (2013) argues, the effects of popular culture and the fact that the music curriculum in schools does not comply with musical values and standards may also have an impact on the changes in the musical tendencies of generations.

A good teacher-child-parent rapport has an extremely important effect on the musical development of the child (Leu, 2008). The findings of this research reveal that the parent profile affects music education in early childhood. In other words, music education is about parent involvement. Although education is free in independent public kindergartens, parents are required to pay a certain amount to the school for reasons such as food service and the possibility of a children's club outside of normal school hours. Therefore, the school has a budget to manage, and independent kindergartens can act more comfortably in line with the goals of early childhood education. This is also reflected in musical activities. Additionally, the parent profile is crucial both in terms of supporting their children, their

interest in their children, and cooperation with teachers and school management. For a parent, it is more costly to send their child to an independent kindergarten due to facilities such as catering and children's club services. Therefore, families from higher economic conditions generally prefer independent kindergartens. Besides, independent kindergartens may be perceived better by parents as they focus directly on early childhood education, and parents who attach more importance to preschool education may prefer independent kindergartens. This may result in better parent support and parent-school cooperation in independent kindergartens. These findings are in line with the findings of Gawlick (2004) that report that children from wealthy families perform better musically.

The musical knowledge and skills of preschool teachers are positively reflected in practice (Ehrlin & Wallerstedt, 2014). The findings of this study also show that the teacher's musical inclination reduces the disadvantageous situation of the school type. In other words, a teacher who is prone to music and attaches importance to music education can carry out successful musical activities even if they are in a preschool class with limited opportunities or in a rural school.

### **3.1. Implications for Policy and Practice**

The findings of this research point out that ECEC settings should be established and run with music education in mind. When considered in terms of Türkiye, the establishment of music rooms in ECEC institutions and the appointment of music educators is an important need. In order for preschool teachers to be better in music education, it is first necessary to provide good music education to prospective preschool teachers by linking music education in teacher training programs more with early childhood. Additionally, in-service training should keep preschool teachers' knowledge about music alive. On the other hand, employing part-time or full-time music teachers in early childhood education schools could be more beneficial both in terms of supporting preschool teachers and children's development.

Research findings also conclude that the interaction of teachers with each other in independent kindergartens contributes positively to the implementation of music activities. However, on the contrary, in primary schools with preschool classes, preschool teachers are more alone and on their own. For this reason, organizing events such as training and workshops, which could enable teachers in kindergartens in primary schools to get together with other colleagues from time to time, can be helpful.

Many factors, including socioeconomic levels, affect parents' school preferences (Goldring & Phillips, 2008). However, the findings of this study suggest that economic reasons are more prominent in school selection in early childhood education. Therefore, policies must be developed to provide equal free early childhood education to all. Although we focused on the differentiation of musical activities according to preschool school types in this research, the findings also give clues about the differences in early childhood education between schools. These clues show that independent kindergartens are generally more advantageous than other schools and the individual efforts of the role of the teacher are critical in early childhood education.

### **3.2. Limitations and Further Research Implications**

In addition to its contributions to early childhood education and music education, this research also has some limitations. This research was carried out in public preschool institutions serving children aged 3-6 and affiliated with the MoNE in Türkiye. Private preschool institutions for children aged 3-6

and other public or private ECEC institutions serving children under the age of 3 are not included. The participants of this research are preschool teachers and school administrators. Preschool teachers work with special educators in special education kindergartens, but special education teachers are not included in this study. The use of music in early childhood special education can be better understood by involving special education teachers. Better results can be obtained by including more schools from different private and public sectors and different age groups. This study attempted to understand how the use of music differs in preschool education institutions with a basic qualitative research design. By using more data collection methods and by conducting a more in-depth case study, the aims of the research can be revealed more in-depth.

### **Author Contributions**

In this study, we contributed equally.

### **Acknowledgements**

No.

### **Conflict of Interest**

We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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