

Summary of the STUDY ON EFFECTS AND CONDITIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC EDUCATION



An examination taking place at 18 German public music schools involving 205 six-year-old children, who have gone through the „Early Childhood Music Education“ („Musikalische Früherziehung“) programme for two years, as well as comparable groups of six- and four-year-old children from day care institutions has yielded – amongst other things – the following results:

Basic conditions:

- On average, eight children participate in one group.
- Girls are signed up for Early Childhood Music Education slightly more often than boys; gender ratio is three to two in favour of the girls.
- Around ninety percent of the teachers are women.
- About one third of the children have lessons with a teacher who has successfully completed relevant university studies. Roughly half of the children are being taught by teachers, who, although not having studied the subject, have taken part in relevant further training. At least nine percent of the children have lessons with a teacher who has a degree in Music Pedagogy, but no specialized training for Early Childhood Music Education.
- About half of the groups are being taught at day care institutions.
- At present, almost one third of the children are being taught from the teaching book „Musik und Tanz für Kinder“. Frequently, several books are being used at the same time. In almost two thirds of the groups own concepts are being employed.
- On average, teachers change the course of lessons every two to three weeks, following feedback from the children.
- Laid out separately (Dartsch, 2002a) and highly regarded by teachers the Principles of Elementary Music Pedagogy are modelled on playing, experimenting, creativity, process-orientation, a variety of means of expression including that of body/character expression, establishing relationships and – last but not least – a fundamental openness of the teaching itself.

Family background:

- Early Childhood Music Education predominantly reaches families with a comparatively high professional qualification.
- Only roughly every seventeenth child, i.e. just under six percent of the children, comes from parents whose first or second mother tongue is not German. About one percent of the children are Muslim, one percent has at least one Turkish-speaking parent, while in the population as a whole, about one third of the children of the same age-group in Germany have a migratory background.
- In most cases the families of children attending have a musical instrument at home, too.
- Every ninth child attending Early Childhood Music Education takes advantage of siblings' fee reduction scheme, every hundredth child benefits from social security related reduction. Although in these cases one has to take into account the relatively reasonable fees.
- On the whole, under the current basic conditions, Early Childhood Music Education does not succeed in passing on music to children from less favouring social spheres to a desirable extent.

Effects:

- Early Childhood Music Education is able to acquaint the children with instruments often learned after elementary training, thus enabling them to recognize them from their sound.
- While the children – after Early Childhood Music Education – on the average will have acquired a sound basis as far as coordination of movement and music is concerned, their success on the average at vocally imitating plain sequences of notes and at playing simple rhythms with clap sticks after someone is rather mediocre. The standard achieved in terms of fundamental understanding of notation as well as precise listening to musical parameters remains insufficient.
- On the basis of domestic observations, almost half of the parents report that the child has benefited from Early Childhood Music Education, additionally affecting personality areas unrelated to music.
- However, barely half of the parents say the child has learned much, which may speak well for the need of kindling more of a parent's consciousness for the children's learning process than up to now.

Causal relationships with basic conditions and family background:

- It seems men have more „drive“ in lessons.
- Teachers who have completed relevant studies design more enriched lessons. Nonetheless, children tend to prefer going to lessons with teachers who have gone through relevant further training.
- In smaller villages lessons often take place in day care institutions.
- Teachers who teach freely or follow own concepts seem to be in danger of neglecting contents and means of action.
- In longer lessons more and various activities are on the programme.
- The children's motivation to busy themselves with music more often and more creatively at home increases with the size of the group.
- Stimuli from music schools seem to unfold more intensive effects than those from day care institutions, for children from groups being taught at music schools, busy themselves with music more often and more creatively at home.
- Teachers frequently put instrument-making onto the programme for groups with many boys and they deem experiencing through the body and including many media of expression to be comparatively more important when there are many girls in one group.
- After having finished Early Childhood Music Education, girls busy themselves more with music at home and have a better relationship towards movement.
- Lessons for children from families with a high professional qualification seem to be somewhat more enriched.
- Altogether, children from families with a comparatively high professional qualification have a more precise and frequent approach to music, they are more creative, which is attributable to the significance of the familiar background for the children's disposition to learning.

Causal relationships between lesson characteristics and effects:

- A comparatively strong orientation of teachers towards the individual learning processes of the children is accompanied by enriched lessons, while a rather strong orientation towards practicing, learning, understanding and tradition involves a greater frequency of conveying activities and corrections as well as increased practising of sections.
- Children singing on their own, improvising with instruments, building instruments as well as introducing technical terms after relevant experiences proves conducive to achieving precise results in the respective fields of content.
- Formally structured movement exercises seem to have a rather inhibitory effect. The more the playing of melodies on instruments is involved, the less the children like to go to the lessons.
- Conveying directly does not always seem to be the best way to reach goals in Music Pedagogy. It is in active handling that the child acquires uninhibited access to musical activities, which can manifest itself in all kinds of good results.

- The above-mentioned principles of Elementary Music Pedagogy have to be counterbalanced with the opposite poles of practising, learning, understanding and taking over. If principles are made absolute there is a threat of failure to meet goals. Particularly sensitive impulses for improvement and differentiation seem essential.
- A strong orientation towards practising, learning, understanding and tradition may have a detrimental effect on looking forward to the lessons as well as on the children's inner relationship to the meaning of music.

Comparison with control groups:

- Children from Early Childhood Music Education do significantly better than other six-year-old children concerning precision and creativity of dealing with music.
- Altogether, four-year-old children, for whom participation in Early Childhood Music Education is being considered, deal distinctly less precise with music than children who have taken part in Early Childhood Music Education for the duration of two years.
- Children, for whom participation in Early Childhood Music Education is being considered, tend to come from families with a high professional qualification. However, there are indications that these children's disposition to music does not differ significantly from that of other four-year-olds.
- Therefore, the effects of Early Childhood Music Education can be proved clearly in almost every area, although not for the interest in dealing with music.