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Exploring the Development and Integration of Music in Preschool Settings in Ireland

Thesis presented by

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for the degree of

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University College Cork

Department of Music

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Abstract

This research study focuses on music in early years education, with a particular interest in children's spontaneous musicking, early years educator's perspectives of music education, and the role of music in the early years context; particularly preschool settings. The research study highlights the benefits of music education considering the role of music in children's lives; also revealing the ability, potential and interests that are evident in children from a young age. The study reveals a clear understanding of the inner workings of music education within the context of preschool learning; appreciating that early years educators are the cornerstone of children's early learning and must be supported. As part of the research, creative resource packs were designed in response to surveys, interviews and observations. The research study uses a qualitative approach to data collection, using a combination of literature, surveys, interviews and observations. The findings of this study presented a need for the integration of music training within early years courses and degrees, supports for early years educators to build confidence, access to music experts to encourage the provision of music and incentives for continuing professional development. These findings support the emergent model of pedagogy recommended by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to offer meaningful learning experiences.

Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism and intellectual property. Pseudonyms were added to all research participants to allow for anonymity.

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Acronyms

AIM: Access and Inclusion Model

CECDE: Centre for Early Development and Education

CPD: Continuing Professional Development

DCEDIY: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, and Youth

DCU: Dublin City University

DCYA: Department of Children and Youth Affairs

DES: Department of Education and Skills

ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education

ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care

ELC: Early Learning Centres

LINC: Leadership for Inclusion

MIC: Mary Immaculate College

MTU: Munster Technological University

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NESF: National Economic and Social Forum

QQI: Quality and Qualifications Ireland

STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

UN: United Nations

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UCC: University College Cork

Chapter 1: Context Chapter; An Introduction to the Study

Background, Context and Rationale

This research study will focuses on the value of music for children in early years settings. The study considers music within the preschool context, considering educators and children. The motivation for this chosen area stems from both my interest in learning music since I was a young child and, as part of my time spent teaching music and working in early years settings. I was privileged to grow up in a family and community where music was encouraged and nurtured at all levels. My interest in focusing on music in early years settings stems from my own private teaching background increased my enthusiasm in early years music, as I was continuously impressed by the children's natural interests in music and enjoyment while listening and learning, and also the fact that my mother is an early years educator. During my undergraduate studies, I became interested in learning more about music and children. During my final year, Dr Finnerty informed me of the MRes programme, this instantly sparked my thesis theme throughout the process of the MRes, I became invested in working in the area; during the summer of 2021, I trained as an early years educator.

Early childhood research on music has focused on the benefits it has for a child's overall development, rather than the ways in which music can be used within an early years setting, and how it can be incorporated into a setting's curriculum. Currently, in Ireland, a curriculum framework is in place for the early years sector. Each setting curates their own curriculum based on the Aistear and Síolta frameworks. There is currently no explicit guidance given by the department on facilitating music in the early years setting. Early childhood presents periods of accelerated growth and development, literature has outlined the effects of music on key learning and developmental areas, for example, cognitive, social, physical, language, and emotional development. Barrett and Welch (2020) highlight research findings detailing the benefits of musical experiences in supporting intellectual, social, physical and emotional development. Participating in music during a child's early years also contributes to a child's

musical development (Barrett & Welch, 2020). Welch highlights the importance of music in multiple developmental areas such as language, social, emotional and physical development. Welch describes musicality as "part of our human design" (2022, p. 67), and outlines that "musical development begins pre-birth" (2022, p. 67). Music engagement in early childhood has shown to improve children's communication skills, encourages social cohesion and empathy, has positive psychological benefits, and music development is also optimised, for example, a child's musical vocabulary, their imitation of rhythm, and the quality of their physical movement to music is improved (Welch, 2022).

There are many titles to define personnel working in the early years, such as early years practitioner, childcare worker, early years teacher, etc., for the purpose of the study, I have decided to use the title of early years educator, as it reflects a contemporary representation of the role, and is comprehendible in an international context.

The Research Questions, Aims and Methodological Considerations

This research study aims to understand the role of music in early years settings and to analyse music facilitated by early years educators. I consider how music resources may benefit early years education settings and explore how accessible lesson plans could encourage an early years educator to use music in a more meaningful way in the classroom. Qualitative methods were chosen, as they were most appropriate to address the primary focus of this study. A combination of surveys for early years educators working in the setting, observations within a preschool setting and semi-structured interviews with two early years educators were carried out to gather data. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because an understanding of early years educators, children and their engagement with music is not numerically quantifiable. My research is informed by experiences within early years education, music education, and international studies of early years education and music to provide an important context for this study.

The study examines both music and musicality; Trehub, et al., define musicality as "a prominent and distinctive characteristic of humankind" (2015, p. 1), and outline that there is no definitive cross-cultural definition of music, however establishes music as "universal, transmitted through generations, usually performed in the presence of others and of extreme antiquity" (Trehub, et al., 2015, p. 1). Trevarthen also outlines the process of musicality in childhood as a natural creative process that grows with the child resulting in the product of music, this can be seen through play and communication; Trevarthen also highlights that musicality does not lead only to music, but also stimulates a child's imagination, aids memory, encourages language and other social and cultural skills (Trevarthen, 2012). The study will consider music in the classroom, both educator-led and child-led music experiences, and examine music engagement within play or in a cross-curricular manner to aid learning. I document the materials available for children to use at their leisure to engage with music. My research questions aim to ask; in what ways do children experience music in early years settings? What resources are currently available to early years educators to facilitate music? Finally, how can an understanding of early years settings and early years educators perspectives on music inform the development of (cross-curricular) resources for music in early years education?

Data collection for this study focused on a survey of early years educators, interviews with early years educators and an observational period, which will be discussed in chapter three. The survey focused on early years educator's backgrounds and the use of music on a day-to-day basis, early years educator's backgrounds in dealing with music in their own lives and also how they try to incorporate music into their settings, how comfortable educators are whilst using music in the classroom and how much they engaged with music in their training. Both interviews delve further into educator perspectives on music use within the classroom and examine how educators could be supported further. The observations link theory to practice,

exhibiting how music is used within the setting by educators and children, and also highlights areas where educators can be supported whilst also examining the materials and methods used by the educators for music in this setting.

This study analyses how educators' confidence and experience with music can impact music education in the classroom. It presents research on the value of music during children's early learning experiences, to gain an understanding on how early years educators can support children's musicality. The study discusses music education with early years educators and will cultivate accessible ideas and make suggestions regarding music in early years settings. The study will present resources to support teachers facilitating music in early years settings (resources are presented in the appendices).

Parameters of the Study

This research study focuses on music in early years education settings. It considers how educators engage with music and how an understanding of educator's perspectives can inform how music is used as a support for the developmental needs of children. The use of accessible music resources and research can offer invaluable information for early years educators which in turn will contribute and impact music in the early years setting. This research study highlights the value of music, children's natural interest in musicking and the value of early years educator's perspectives on development of music in the classroom.

The study is limited to research within the early years sector, focusing on preschools. This study also acknowledges that music education in early years within Ireland has not been researched as extensively as other research areas. The fieldwork element of the study took place during Covid-19 and as a result a number of limitations arose, particularly access to carry out research in settings, due to the restrictions in place. Finally, the development of resources was

limited due to equipment available to me at the time of the study, ideally these will be further developed in the future using various forms of multi-media including video and audio.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter detailed the context of the study and provided an introduction. Chapter two gives a historical context of early years legislation and policy in Ireland. Chapter three discusses literature on early years music education. Chapter four outlines the research methodology of the study in detail. Chapter five explores the study's fieldwork on music education in Ireland through the lens of preschool experiences. Chapter six offers a discussion surrounding themes; enculturation and the learning environment, facilitating developmentally appropriate music education, and spontaneous musicking and musical play. Chapter seven concludes the dissertation and brings recommendations to the fore.

Chapter 2: Early Years Education Legislation and Policy

This chapter will provide a historical context of early years education and policies in Ireland, highlighting children's rights, governing bodies, curriculum frameworks, and inspectorates. This chapter discusses policies such as Ready to Learn, White Paper on Early Childhood Education and The National Children's Strategy. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and also strategies such as First 5, Better Start and AIM are discussed. Inspectorate bodies, and the curriculum frameworks are outlined, and arts organisations are specified. The value of music within early years, and music perception in children is also voiced in this chapter.

Early Years Education in Ireland

Since the late 1980s to early 1990s early years education has become an important part of the education system in Ireland. Since the 1990s, policy and legislation has focused on early childhood education and care. Notable policies include Ready to Learn White Paper on Early Childhood Education (Government of Ireland, 1999), The National Children's Strategy, Our Children- Their Lives (National Children's Strategy, 2000), The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1989), and The Childcare Act (2011). This chapter outlines early years education in Ireland, specifically discussing children's rights, policies, government departments, inspections, curriculum frameworks and the types of early years provision in Ireland. This chapter will also consider music in early years education, the value of music, music perception in early childhood and finally consider the arts council, the arts charter, music in early years Ireland and the importance of observation.

Children's Rights in Ireland

The perception of children's rights in Ireland has become more prevalent since the late 1980s. In 1989, the year of the child was commemorated in multiple ways around the world. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was unanimously ratified by The UN

General Assembly in 1989. The convention states the basic human rights that all children are entitled to, which are outlined below:

> · *Survival rights such as nutrition, shelter, and access to medical services.*
> · *Development rights such as education, access to information and freedom of thought.*
> · *Protection rights such as protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.*
> · *Participation rights such as expression of opinions and taking part in social and cultural activities (Children's Rights Alliance, 2010, p. 2).*

The convention has set standards that governments must, at a minimum, meet to protect the rights of the child. These standards fall into sectors such as education, healthcare, social and legal services for children in their relevant countries (Children's Rights Alliance, 2010). In 1992, Ireland agreed to the "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Flood & Hardy, 2013). This supported the rights of children and has also brought a new focus for public policy for children. The convention led to new reports being published and new initiatives were introduced.

In 1998, The National Forum on Early Childhood was founded to bring individuals and organisations who were concerned about early years initiatives together to formulate a plan for early childhood education and care (National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), 2005). In 1999, The National Voluntary Collaborative was founded to promote ECEC in Ireland. In 2000, The National Children's Strategy was published by the Department of Health and Children. This was to improve the lives of children in Ireland over a ten-year period, the strategy also led to the founding of the National Children's Office in the same year. In 2000, Dublin Institute of Technology and St. Patrick's College Drumcondra founded the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE), this centre was established to achieve the aims which had been outlined in the Ready to Learn programme (National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), 2005).

In 2006, the Department of Health and Children produced the Childcare (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2006). These regulations clearly state the requirements that must be met by early childhood education and care service providers for children aged zero to six. These regulations are monitored and sanctioned by inspectors from three departments: Tusla, Pobal and the Department of Education and Skills. The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme, free pre-school period was introduced in 2010 by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. There are criteria which is needed before a provider can enter the scheme (such as qualifications, sufficient planning permission, specific policies, etc.), this has improved childcare provision quality (Flood & Hardy, 2013).

Ready to Learn, White Paper on Early Childhood Education

Early childhood refers to children from birth to six-years-old (Child Care (Amendment) Act , 2011). Since the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there have been recent developments regarding the importance of the formative years for children. This has been reflected in public policy and legislation, many of which are outlined above. One such document was the Ready to Learn, White Paper on Early Childhood Education the main aim was to "facilitate the development of a high-quality system of early childhood education" (Government of Ireland, 1999, p. 40). This policy acknowledged the many ways in which early childhood education and care takes place in Ireland and focused on the wants and needs that children have regarding education and care into account. The policy acknowledged the many ways in which early childhood education and care take place in Ireland considered the requirements children may have regarding education and care into account. The policy emphasised a holistic approach on the blending of education and care (Government of Ireland, 1999). The White Paper policy offers information on how this can be achieved through:

- *Curriculum development*

- *Teacher training*
- *Introduction of a quality system surrounding qualifications (Government of Ireland, 1999, p. 31).*

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

The (previously DCYA, Department of Children and Youth Affairs) Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth or DCEDIY's role is to improve children's lives, an aim outlined in The National Children's Strategy focusing on the provision of clearer, more consistent policies for the children in Ireland. The responsibility for implementing and upholding The National Children's Strategy and integrating government policy for children lies on the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The minister works with three government departments:

- Health and Children
- Education and Science
- Justice, Equality and Law Reform

The main goals of the DCEDIY are to facilitate the means for children to have a stronger voice on issues that affect them and offer children the chance to contribute their opinions on all areas that impact their lives, offer a better understanding on the lives of children, ensure quality services, and supports for children (National Children's Strategy, 2000, pp. 29, 37, 43). The DCEDIY are crucial to mention as they monitor qualifications, wages, and policies for the early years. Their current workforce plan seeks to establish frameworks surrounding early years careers, raise the level of qualification in the sector, develop a CPD system, support diversity, recruitment, and retention within the sector, and further regulate the profession. Therefore, the department is vital in supporting more supports for music use within the early years setting (Government of Ireland, 2018).

The National Children's Strategy, Our Children- Their Lives 2000-2010

The National Children's Strategy, Our Children- Their Lives was a plan of action which was to be implemented over a ten-year period. This action plan was a direct result of the UNESCO Convention on the Rights of the Child. The strategy aimed to include all agencies, formal, informal, statutory, and voluntary which were working to improve the quality of life in childhood (National Children's Strategy, 2000). This was the first all-inclusive national document on policy for Irish children. There were several plans to be implemented across an array of areas which affected the lives of children, one of the main goals was to give children a voice in matters which affect them and to ensure that their views are given weight in accordance with their age and maturity to offer children a chance to mould their own childhood pathways (National Children's Strategy, 2000). The strategy was created through comprehensive exploration with parents, children, and groups with whom are involved with children across various disciplines in Ireland. The three national goals are outlined below:

- *Children will have a voice in matters which affect them, and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.*
- *Children's lives will be better understood: their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services.*
- *Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development (National Children's Strategy, 2000, p. 11)*.

The National Children's Strategy progressed the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Rights of the Child in Ireland. The vision of the strategy stated;

> *An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential (National Children's Strategy, 2000, p. 4)*.

The voice of the child is at the core of this strategy. There is an element suggesting a focus on understanding the role of music in children's lives, the strategy specifies that "children will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood" (National Children's Strategy, 2000, p. 57). This statement gives an opportunity for the provision of the arts in the lives of children in Ireland. It is also important to understand the role for the provision of the arts in the development of children. It is important to take the spaces for music provision into account when exploring music and the lives of children. The strategy offers an opportunity for quality to be improved and supports those working with children, the National Children's Strategy supports this thesis as it invites people working with children to work more effectively with each other and encourages policies to progress.

First Five

The first five strategy aims to create more supports which will ensure children's early childhood experiences are nurtured and to create positive learning, health, development, and wellbeing experiences, which will encourage each child to meet their potential (Government of Ireland, 2019).

> *All babies' and young children's early years will be valued as a critical and distinct period which should be enjoyed. Families will be assisted and enabled to nurture babies and young children and support their development, with additional support for those who need it. Those providing services for babies, young children and their families will be equipped to contribute to their learning, development, health and wellbeing. Community contexts will help babies and young children make the most of their early years and fulfil their potential (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2019, p. 12)*.

The supports in the strategy will include (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2019);

- Facilities to encourage a balance between work and caring for children.
- Dissemination of quality guidance and information.
- A focus on children's health.
- Improvement of accessibility, quality and affordability of early learning and care facilities.
- Addressment of poverty within early childhood.

Inspectorate

The early years sector is monitored by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), through three organisations: Tusla, Pobal and the Department of Education and Skills. Writing about the role of these organisations, Murphy states;

> *Tusla has begun to make the inspection reports from early childhood services more accessible through its online portal, Pobal collects statistics on various aspects of childcare, and the Department of Education and Skills monitors educational matters* (Murphy, 2015, p. 296).

Better Start and AIM

The Better Start service stems from the Access and Inclusion Model, Aistear and Síolta frameworks. The purpose of this service is to ensure that early years services provide high quality care and ensures positive experiences for children, the Early Childhood Ireland organisation discuss the Better Start service, explaining;

> *Better Start Quality Development Service is a national initiative established by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to bring an integrated national approach to developing quality in*

> *Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings for children aged from birth to six years in Ireland. (Early Childhood Ireland, 2021)*.

The Better Start service provides state-funded support and initiatives such as CPD courses, advice, coaching and mentoring (Early Childhood Ireland, 2021).

AIM is a support service to ensure the participation of children with disabilities in early years settings. AIM stands for access and inclusion model and encourages the immersion of children with disabilities in early years settings (POBAL, 2021).

> *The goal of AIM is to create a more inclusive environment in pre-schools, so all children, regardless of ability, can benefit from quality early learning and care (Access and Inclusion Model, 2022)*.

Aistear

Aistear: *The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* was published in 2009 by the NCCA, *The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment*. Aistear is the national curriculum framework for children from zero to six years in Ireland. Aistear's primary aim is to help each child to develop and grow as a confident learner (Aistear, 2009). Aistear organises its curriculum framework under four themes:

- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging
- Communication
- Exploring and Thinking

Each Aistear theme offers sample learning opportunities for adults to provide enriching learning experiences for children. The majority of these samples are laid out for adults to provide enriching learning experiences for children. Sample learning opportunities are intended to be adapted to suit different settings and environments.

Aistear means “journey” in the Irish language; early childhood begins at birth and commences the child’s lifelong learning journey. Aistear;

> *celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold. This early learning also lays important foundations for later learning (Aistear, 2009, p. 6)*.

Aistear, the curriculum framework outlines a philosophy that recognises and understands children as active and constructive learners. A focus on learning through trusting, respectful and loving relationships, these relationships should, in turn, forge opportunities for play, exploration and discussion is also revealed.

Through Aistear, children will learn about languages, interaction with others and their environment, to be adventurous and creative, to be independent in their decision making about themselves and their learning and to develop theories about the world around them. Aistear provides adults with information to assist in the planning and provision of challenging and enjoyable learning experiences. This is to fulfil the primary aim which provides all children with the opportunity to “grow and develop as competent and confident learners within loving relationships” (Aistear, 2009, p. 6). Aistear offers guidelines on how to support children’s learning through play, assessment, partnerships with parent and interactions with others. The framework also offers suggestions to nurture learning.

Aistear:

- *Identifies what and how children should learn, and describes the types of experiences that can support this*
- *Makes connections in children’s learning throughout the early childhood years and as they move from one setting to another*
- *Supports parents as their children’s primary educators during early childhood, and promotes effective partnerships between parents and early years educator*
- *Complements and extends existing curriculums and materials*

- *Informs practice across a range of settings, disciplines and professions, and encourages interdisciplinary work (Aistear, 2009, p. 6).*

Aistear's framework for early learning and development is based on twelve principles which are presented in the following groups:

Children and their lives in early childhood

- *The child's uniqueness*
- *Equality and diversity*
- *Children as citizens*

Children's connections with others

- *Relationships*
- *Parents, family and community*
- *The adult's role*

How children learn and develop

- *Holistic learning and development*
- *Active learning*
- *Play and hands-on experience*
- *Relevant and meaningful experiences*
- *Communication and language*
- *The learning environment*

(Aistear, 2009, p. 7)

While Aistear doesn't directly discuss methods or strategies on how music can be used within an early years setting; music can clearly be used as a support to encourage Aistear's themes. In a 2013 report Shanahan recommends that training should be provided to early years providers

"to nurture and develop creative music making in young children while also cultivating and sustaining" (p. 43) child development and learning through Aistear (Shanahan, 2013).

Síolta

Síolta is the *National Quality Framework* for early childhood education in Ireland. Síolta was designed by the *Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education* (CECDE), it was published in 2006 on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Síolta is made up of twelve principles and sixteen standards. The twelve principles offer early years educators an overview of the expected quality in early childhood education and care settings. The sixteen standards include twenty-four components which includes information on how early years educators can implement the framework into their practice. This framework for quality and standards is important in learning environments as our physical surroundings have an effect on our comfort, our behaviour, and our emotions. Young children learn through active exploration and interaction, it is essential to enhance their holistic learning and development by providing an interesting and well-structured environment.

The Department of Education and Skills and The Arts Council of Ireland are the two major departments where music education policies have been formulated, such policies have been implemented within the provision of music education in Ireland. An examination of education and arts education policies offers a deeper understanding of the ways and means in which music is provided for children in Ireland (Hibernian Consulting, 2007).

The Types of Early Years Provision in Ireland.

Tusla defines the various provision of early years education and care. These settings are expected to follow the frameworks of Aistear and Síolta. The services for the provision of early years education and care are listed below. These services are distinguished by the length of the

session, the time of day and the physical environment of the setting. Types of provisions are listed below.

- Childminding service
- Sessional pre-school service
- Part-time day care service
- Full-time day care service
- Pre-school service in a drop-in-centre
- Temporary pre-school service
- Overnight pre-school service

The Arts Council

The Arts Act was introduced in 1951, this was a momentous milestone in the development of the arts in Ireland. Subsequently, *An Chomhairle Ealaíon, The Arts Council* was founded as an independent agency. This was essential towards a greater development of arts education in Ireland. While the Arts Council is not held responsible for providing arts education formally or informally in Ireland, the Arts Council have helped to provide vital advocacy, have sparked debates, and have commissioned a number of publications and reports to support arts education provision in Ireland. The Arts Council have published a number of reports which look at music education provision in the Irish education context. Many of these publications note the lack of importance placed on the arts within Irish society and in specifically in the education system. This neglect on the Arts has been echoed throughout publications by the Arts Council. In 2003, the Arts Act was established, the act intended to promote and expand the arts locally, nationally, and internationally with a particular focus on improving the ways to obtain a grant and looking at how government arts policies could be incorporated in local arts developments. The Arts

Council published a study in 2006 entitled “The Public and the Arts”. This study focused on public behaviours and attitudes towards the arts. The study highlighted the neglect of arts provision for young children (Clancy, et al., 1994).

As a result of the 2003 Arts Act, a special committee on the Arts was established in 2006 by the Minister for Arts, Sport, and Tourism. This committee helped in formulating a relationship between education and the Arts in Ireland, offering the initial chance for formal co-operation between the Department of Education and Science and The Arts Council. The work of the special committee led to the publication of the report, *Points of Alignment*, 2008. The report details challenges regarding music education for children and young people, going as far to say that the neglect of arts education for children in Ireland, in and out of schools is the “single greatest fault in our cultural provision” (The Arts Council, 2008, p. 3). The report marked a notable step towards accessible, high-quality music education in Ireland regardless of their circumstances. The report offered a four-point proposal, developed by the Arts Council.

1	A structure to encourage communication between funders and policymakers for education and the arts.
2	A development of arts-in-education within existing third-level institutions to build synergy across the board.
3	An influx of resources for the Arts Council to encourage indirect and direct supports.
4	An arts-in-education portal to be developed.

Table 1; Four-Point proposal- Points of Alignment
(The Arts Council, 2008).

The Arts Council continue to advocate for the importance of arts education to be recognised, they continue to build on their developments and strive to achieve the goals set out in *The*

Points of Alignment, 2008; the report discusses that The Arts Council intend to collaborate with the Department of Education and Skills, the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Office for the Ministers for Children and Youth Affairs in order to develop the arts in Ireland. The Arts Council also offers funding targeted towards young groups of or individual aspiring artists. They also run many other schemes which are in collaboration with other agencies which have initiated many programmes, developments and organisations which involve children at primary school level to encourage arts education (The Arts Council, 2008).

In 2012, there was a meeting of Irish early childhood arts and education early years educators with the Arts Council. This meeting ignited research which was needed to improve policy and ensure the provision of early childhood arts. The research concluded with research concluded with a research report commissioned by the Arts Council entitled, "Early Childhood Arts: Three Perspectives". This report gave an overview of *Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC) policy and provision in Ireland, a background on the role of the arts in early childhood learning and development and also an international perspective on early childhood arts and its best practice. During this research, eight early childhood arts projects were carried out. These projects recognise children's innate ability and desire to learn from birth and consider early learning to be highly influential in the lives of children. The eight early childhood arts projects presented evidence of early music education's importance and stressed that policymakers should make this a priority (The Arts Council, 2013).

The Arts Charter

The Department of Arts and Heritage published the *Arts in Education Charter* in 2012. This was a notable step in the arts education policy development for children in Ireland. The charter involves the Department of Education and Skills and also the Department of Arts both in partnership with the Arts Council. This was a positive step towards developing positive relations between the departments and council and it helped to secure a long-term strategy for

the role of arts education and its benefits for children of Ireland within the education system and also outside the system. The preface of the report details the significance of offering creative opportunities to young children, stating:

> *We believe creativity must be placed at the heart of our future as a society and a country. The arts are our first encounter with that rich world of creativity, and we believe in placing the arts, alongside other subjects, at the core of our education system (The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; The Department of Education and Skills, 2012, pp. 3,4)*.

The charter also highlights the importance of allowing children in early years education and care provision to experience and engage with the arts, stating:

> *Universal pre-school provision presents a significant opportunity to enable young children to experience a wide variety of the arts including music, painting, dance and drama (The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; The Department of Education and Skills, 2012, p. 7)*.

The Department of Education and Skills commits to "continue to support the arts as one of the key components of a holistic education at all levels of education in Ireland" (The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; The Department of Education and Skills, 2012, p. 19). To ensure that guidelines are approximately carried out, a high-level implementation group has been created. Socio-economic disadvantages can often avert children from engaging in musical activities at an extra-curricular level as many households cannot afford private music education. In recent years, there have been programmes funded in order to meet the challenges of socio-economic disadvantages, such as Music Network and Music Generation

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses early years education and music education in Ireland. It highlights some of the key moments relating to policy and curriculum that have emerged in Ireland since the 1990s. The increased interest in children's early education and rights internationally have

contributed to increased promotion of early years music and an influx of reports. The arts have been promoted in the Irish education context through curriculum framework, early years initiatives, the arts council and throughout literature.

Chapter 3: Early Years Music Education; Literature Review

In this chapter I will discuss various themes that arose during the literature review of early years music education. This section presents literature focusing on music in early childhood, and in early years settings. This section explores the value of music in early years education and music perception in children. Important concepts relating to early years music are discussed, such as enculturation, cross-curricular integration, STEAM education and multiple intelligence. Developing music education in preschools is explored and play, spontaneous musicking, teacher education CPD and adult-led music education is researched.

The Value of Music in Early Years Education

This section will explore literature surrounding the value of music in early years education. Music is present in early years settings through early years educators' individual practices and through the varying curricula in each setting. In this section, I will discuss the value of music at early years, music pedagogy and some of the organisations available in Ireland that promote musical experiences at early years.

Children learn music spontaneously and naturally. According to Morehouse, preschool aged children display musical interest, musical abilities, and can understand, respond, and recognise musical structure. Morehouse continues discussing that music-making activities and music making behaviour can encourage language and literacy development, and their communication skills. Music activities work to encourage the development of mathematical skills, contributes to children's social-emotional development. Musical behaviours encourage kinaesthetic learning, psychomotor development, and physical development. Morehouse encourages musical behaviours to be supported by an adult (Morehouse, 2013).

> *Young children are not solely music learners. After all, the music they make is real. Spontaneously and naturally, young children produce sounds and rhythms that conform to a song's structure… three-to 5-year-olds enthusiastically*

> *collaborate with me in performing songs or in simply jamming (spontaneously making up music) (Morehouse, 2013, p. 84)*.

Music at early years is clearly valued. Morehouse's idea of considering children as capable musicians reflects the Aistear framework, where children are considered confident and capable learners (Aistear, 2009).

Young discusses the value and future of music education; Young highlights that music education for the early years doesn't gather much interest in comparison to music education at secondary school level; Young suggests that perhaps this is due to the perception on young children's musical ability, and also due to the perception that music is a specialist subject in the wider context of education. Young highlights the lack of funding available for music education in the early years, and also the fact that there is no formal qualification requirement for music education. Music at early years level is considered to be a time of preparation to build a foundation for later, often formal, music education, or else to benefit other areas of learning. Young argues the importance of placing value on music making, participation, and the playfulness that is present within music engagement. Young also highlights the importance of "educated educators", where creativity and critical thinking are placed at the centre of standardised qualifications, and the need for further government funding. Finally, Young suggests that discussions around music education need to be had in order to project and plan for the future of music education at early years education (Young, 2021).

Young (2018) emphasises that music education for children often presents conflicting and confused beliefs regarding how children should engage with music, their musicality, and what they should be learning. Young also argues that while music curricula in the western world promotes creativity and expression, the curricula are often underpinned by neoliberal and conservative views of education which can have a constricting effect on the arts. Young

highlights the importance of learning through play; children frequently engage in musical play (Young, 2018).

> *If their musical play is not provided for and recognised, young children simply do it under their breath, while they sit at tables for snack-time, in free play, in the toilets, whenever they have to wait in line, to entertain themselves and one another, or to manage the varied and often highly emotional situations of their lived. If it is not valued and provided for in education it goes underground (Ilari &Young, 2016, as cited in Young, 2018 p. 5).*

Melville-Clark writes about the value of music in early childhood to encourage children to learn about their worlds, themselves and to encourage expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas; Melville-Clark emphasises the importance of training for educators to provide quality musical experiences for children, and acknowledges that this can be a daunting task for educators who may not have previous music experience. Melville-Clark writes about the value of music and how it contributes to various aspects of child development, such as social, emotional, physical, intellectual, aesthetic and creative development; these developmental areas can be explored through child-led or teacher-led music activities (Melville-Clark, 2006).

Levinowitz (2011) proposes that music is considered an important tool to support non-musical curriculum elements and values. Levinowitz highlights the influx of research since the turn of the twenty-first century that have given insight into the functions and values of music. Research has confirmed that music education is inherently valuable and also supports cross-curricular learning, Levinowitz also argues that music at preschool level supports school readiness (Levinowitz, 2011)**.** Crump Taggart, et al., (2011) argue that music education in early childhood is beneficial for musical development and language development, stating;

> *Parents should be encouraged to enroll their young children in developmentally appropriate music classes, first and foremost so that their children have rich musical experiences and a foundation on which to build future music learning. However, there may be other benefits from engaging in such an environment,*

> *such as enhanced language development. Researchers should continue to study the multifarious benefits of early childhood music instruction and what types of music environments are the most beneficial for young children (Crump Taggart, et al., 2011, p. 212).*

Jordan-DeCarbo and Galliford (2011) discuss the effect of an age appropriate music curriculum for children aged three to five.

> *Most educators would agree that they want children to be successful in a range of academic pursuits, including the arts. A preschool curriculum that includes musical exposure may not only improve music and movement skills but may also have an effect on a child's linguistic and non-linguistic skills, as it relates to the recognition of sound patterns, phonemic awareness, or word comprehension (Jordan-DeCarbo & Galliford, 2011, p. 181).*

Jordan-DeCarbo and Galliford also highlight that music experiences are proven to benefit pre-schoolers classed as disadvantaged in an overall sense and also in many developmental areas, specifically noting the correlation between children's music perception and their early reading development (2011).

Music Perception in Children

This section will discuss music perception in children during the early years. Over the last four decades, research on children's music perception has evolved, children were previously considered as passive and unaffected music listeners, whereas now, children are considered active listeners capable of proficient learning. Early exposure of music is encouraged to promote emotional regulation and social connections (Trehub, 2010), writing on this Trehub outlines;

> *Infants' ease of processing universal or near-universal aspects of music seems to be complemented by a special-typical motivation for music and a keen sensitivity to the distributional properties of music in their environment (Trehub, 2010, p. 79).*

According to research, Liduma (2016) children show a gradual development in music perception from prenatal experiences to the age of three; sensory, vocal, and motor experiences connected with music can be developed through everyday purposeful music activities and in turn promote children's musical perceptions (Liduma, 2016).

Barrett et al. highlight the paradox between the continuous body of research and evidence which emphasises the positive role of music engagement and learning for development in early childhood, and the guidance provided through policy which encourages the provision and value of music within early learning. Barrett et al. found that music engagement can play a compelling role in social inclusion; music also plays an integral role on the emotional and intellectual development of young children, and should therefore be a necessary element of early years practice and policy in its own right and in its multidisciplinary nature (Barrett, et al., 2018).

Dansereau (2011) discusses the human ability to understand and process from birth and prenatally; for children from age two onwards music is proven to become more familiar and becomes an area of curiosity.

> *Young children respond positively to musical activities, including singing, moving, and instrument exploration, and they spontaneously engage in music making* (Dansereau, 2011, p. 40).

Dansereau (2011) discusses that young children present a positive response to music activities, and research shows children between age two and age five are capable of sophisticated musical perception; therefore early childhood proves to be an optimal period for music education.

Understanding the effects of musical engagement on key aspects of young children's musicality, such as developmental music aptitude and singing voice achievement, can enable educators

and caregivers to provide effective and powerful musical guidance during this important developmental period (Dansereau, 2011, p. 40)

Dansereau emphasises that to provide effective musical experiences at this important developmental stage, educators and caregivers should have an understanding of the effect of music engagement on young children and their musicality. (2011).

Enculturation

This section will discuss enculturation, a key element of learning within the early years and an important topic in ethnomusicology, Merriam defines enculturation as

> *the process by which the individual learns his culture, and it must be emphasized that this is a never-ending process continuing throughout the life span of the individual" (1964, p. 146).*

Children's musical worlds are influenced from a very young age, we know that they experience musical enculturation pre-birth (Trehub, 2010), and throughout their various socialisation processes within their homes and extended families. They already have had external influences which may shape their engagement within early years' settings. Writing about children's experiences from pre-birth, Bond (2011) argues that "children are not blank slates when they arrive in school" (p. 73). The quality of children's previous experiences differ significantly. It is vital that children's backgrounds and musical foundations are acknowledged in early childhood and a positive, encouraging, and enabling environment is provided.

Cawley (2013) discusses enculturation through the lens of Irish traditional music, describing the process as a combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning experiences; Cawley proposes the benefits of music enculturation seeing it as most beneficial when musicians "experience diverse and multiple modes of learning" (2013, p. 13). Allowing for multiple forms of learning strengthens the learning process and accommodates various learning styles.

In addition to enculturation, the learning environment also presents as a crucial consideration for early years music education. Síolta, the national quality framework for Early Childhood Education recognises the significance that learning environments have on children. Síolta recommends that indoor and outdoor learning environments that are motivating and appealing for children (Síolta, 2007) recognising the significance of the learning environment.

> *Enriching environments, both indoor and outdoor (including materials and equipment) are well-maintained, safe, available, accessible, adaptable, developmentally appropriate, and offer a variety of challenging and stimulating experiences (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, 2007, p. 1)*.

Síolta not only acknowledges the importance of the safety, accessibility, and maintenance of the learning environment; but also the accessibility, suitability, and the experiences offered. The classroom should provide an encouraging and supportive environment where children can express a positive outlook on identity and belonging. In order to support learning, support relationships, foster play, and implement the curriculum, the physical environment should be considered (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, 2007, p. 2).

Aistear, the national curriculum framework for Early Childhood Education also places an emphasis on the influential role of the learning environment and the idea of "making sense of the things, places and people in their world" (Aistear, 2009, p. 43). Aistear encourages a well-resourced and well-planned indoor and outdoor space for children. The adult's role is to ensure the space is organised and well resourced. The early years educator's organisational role ensures that the learning area includes zoned areas of interest, social spaces and personal spaces, child-level displays, depictions of family, acknowledgment of relevant celebrations, and storage. The educator must also ensure that the learning space has sufficient and effective resources. These resources should be diverse and meet the needs of the children within the setting. Literacy and numeracy resources must be provided alongside a wide variety of open-

ended materials to promote creativity, imagination, and exploration (Aistear, 2009, pp. 56-57). The process of enculturation is supported by Aistear,

> *In early childhood, most children develop physically and cognitively through exploring their environment…They have an innate drive to get to know the workings of their world (Aistear, 2009, p. 43)*.

Consideration of the learning environment, stimulates enculturation, this form of learning is favoured in Reggio Emilia; an approach that thoroughly considers the environment as part of the learning experience. The name of the approach is derived from its originating town in Italy; stemming from a movement towards progressive and collaborative early childhood education. This approach was referenced during the interview for my fieldwork and models the process of enculturation very well. It is important to note that it is not considered a method of teaching; students, teachers, parents, communities, and towns are considered different and therefore, when the approach is used within a setting, it is referred to as Reggio-inspired, as no two Reggio-inspired settings or communities will be the same. Reggio Emilia considers children to have an endless number of learning methods (Hewett, 2001).

A Reggio-inspired school ensures that all tools and materials are available within the setting to facilitate learning. One of the most renowned aspects of Reggio Emilia is "The Hundred Languages of Children", which acknowledges children's many ways to express themselves. Reggio Emilia encourages that each form of child expression, discovery, thought and learning method must be valued and nurtured. The Reggio Emilia approach emphasises a hands-on discovery form of learning which encourages children to use all of their senses and languages for learning (Katz, 1998).

Reggio Emilia considers the environment as a central role when facilitating meaningful learning experiences. The environment is considered the 'third teacher', the learning environment should be one that is flexible and responsive to the needs of children and teachers

in order to have collaborative learning in place (Biermeier, 2015). The environment should foster creativity and reflect the values that are intended to be communicated to the children; a classroom environment is an influential factor during early childhood, it can help shape a child's identity and reflect how and what they learn (Biermeier, 2015). This idea is reflected in Biermeier's article on Reggio Emilia.

> *To foster such an environment, teachers must go deeper than what is merely seen at eye level and develop a deep understanding of the underlying principles and of children's thinking, questions, and curiosities (Biermeier, 2015, p. 72).*

In order to facilitate a supportive learning environment, it is important to recognise the role relationships play within the environment. Biermeier considers the depth of knowledge required of teachers to gain an insight into the lives of children. This deep understanding gives insight into the child's development on a holistic level. This idea can be reflected upon music education in the early years, as educators will know the child's preferences, abilities, and areas where support is needed. The Reggio Emilia philosophy is centred on relationships. The philosophy encompasses the child with three teachers. Biermeier continues to discuss this philosophy, illustrating the three teachers as the parent, the classroom teacher and the learning environment.

> *Relationships are at the very heart of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. That philosophy is reflected in an environment that encircles the child with three "teachers," or protagonists. The first teacher- the parent-takes on the role of active partner and guide in the education of the child. The second is the classroom teacher. Often working in pairs, the classroom teacher assumes the role of researcher and intentionally engages children in meaningful work and conversation. The third teacher is the environment- a setting designed to be not only functional but also beautiful and reflective of the child's learning. It is the child's relationship with parent, teacher, and environment that ignites learning (Biermeier, 2015, p. 73).*

Biermeier (2015) emphasises the importance of relationships and acknowledges that children learn from various "teachers" in their early years. The idea of the three teachers working in tandem, is somewhat reflected in Aistear, throughout the curriculum framework, the importance of relationships and learning environments are emphasised in the below excerpt from Aistear. Aistear outlines the importance of relationships and the environment for a child's learning and development, stating;

> *Children have a fundamental need to be with other people. They learn and develop through loving and nurturing relationships with adults and other children, and the quality of these interactions impacts on their learning and development (National Council for for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) , 2009, p. 9).*
>
> *The learning environment (inside and outside) influences what and how children learn. An inviting environment encourages and helps children to explore and to take advantage of opportunities for fun, choice, freedom, adventure, and challenge (National Council for for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) , 2009, p. 9).*

Aistear reflects many of Reggio Emilia's philosophies in its framework considering children's relationships and interactions, and the learning environment. Reggio Emilia considers the environment on a deeper level than just what the environment looks like visually. Strong-Wilson and Ellis consider learning environments in respect of Reggio Emilia, "not only how they looked, but how the felt from a child's perspective" (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007, p. 41) Strong-Wilson and Ellis continue, encouraging early years educators to question elements of the setting's environment,

> *How the configuration and conceptualisation of spaces work to invite, hinder, or facilitate interaction has been the subject of study for scholars in early childhood (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007, p. 41).*

Strong-Wilson and Ellis recommend that a balance should be maintained between a provision of structure and an encouragement of the child's free exploration (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007).

The Reggio Emilia approach encourages various ways to promote interaction. Educators are encouraged to introduce *provocations* which supports teachable moments, discussion and serves as a surprise to children. Writing about this approach, Thornton and Brunton discuss provocation.

> *A provocation is introduced to the children- this is a stimulus or thought provoker which invites wonder, curiosity and investigation…Children and adults will ask questions and then a period of waiting may occur to enable the children to come up with their ideas and theories (Thornton & Brunton, 2010, p. 81)*.

When educators introduce a provocation, they can carefully observe the children's engagement with the environment. Educators create a visible trace of observation using sketches, recordings (video or audio) or note-taking. Educators reflect and discuss with colleagues or with the children what they saw, felt, heard, or thought to assist in the planning of the next activity. This process deepens the learning experience. This approach to early learning has informed my approach to music education as it creates a deep learning experience through multi-sensory play, for example, a provocation may be a story; the children could then, with the early years educator explore the sounds in the story. In the Reggio Emilia approach, work samples and documentation are displayed in the learning environment;

> *Their story can be told through children's portfolios, drawings, three-dimensional structures, words, photographs, videos, and documentation panels…classroom shelves became a living archive of the interactions that had happened in that space (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007, p. 42).*

This idea can be translated into music education through displaying multi-sensory creations, for example, music-inspired visual art, videos of the children engaging with music or movement, and audio recordings. While Reggio Emilia shows an array of benefits, it can be difficult for educators to maintain control, as lessons are not planned out; curriculum and planning follows children's curiosities and interests. This can often deter educators from using the approach.

In terms of music education, musical environments and enculturation must be considered. It is important to note that frameworks, perspectives, policies, pedagogy, strategy, and curricula are widely varied from country to country. My study is based on music education within early childhood education and care in a contemporary Irish context. I believe that it is important to look at varied contexts and perspectives, as this complexity is often reflected in the musical experiences and environments of every educator and child. Music for children in their early childhood takes place in various environments. The childcare setting, whether home-based, preschool or crèche based, or care from family members or childminders impacts musical possibilities, expectations, strategies, and approaches. Creating a learning environment where vast musical experiences are appreciated is vital in facilitating high-quality music experiences at early years. An ideal environment for music education at early years should be of high quality and should nurture each child's musical development.

> *Music in the early childhood environment offers varying levels of engagement ranging from simply listening or observing to joining in as an active participant (Humpal & Wolf, 2003, p. 103).*

Humpal and Wolf's idea encourages varied levels of participation to be available to children in order to ensure each child's individual development stage is respected, understood and considered.

Musical environments can be created and facilitated by early years educators during their preschool sessions. While dedicated time for music can be provided, music can also be used for transitions from home to school and vice versa, transitioning between activities, encouraging group work, to encourage focus within an activity, or during free play. Achilles (1999) supports this, describing that "musical environments can be located outdoors or indoors and can be designed for large-group, small-group or individual activity" (p. 21).

Cross-Curricular Integration

This section will discuss cross-curricular integration, which is frequently used with music. Cross curricular integration combines elements of multiple subjects through interdependent learning experiences. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment promote music as a tool for cross-curricular integration.

> *Music lends itself easily to integration with other areas of the curriculum , and planning for this integration in advance allows the teacher to reinforce musical concepts in other areas of the curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007, p. 13)*.

Cross curricular integration is frequently used in early years settings, it aids learning in areas such as literacy, numeracy, communication and language; it also helps children to gain an understanding of the world around them, and encourages self-expression. Achilles recognises the value of having a designated time for music interaction to engage the children in interacting with music itself, rather than the focus being on the related areas of learning and development, however also supports this multidisciplinary approach in the context of music education.

> *Musical activities can be connected to other areas of child development such as language and literacy, logic and math concepts, movement, or social relations (Achilles, 1999, p. 21)*.

Music environments can be constructed in such a way that encourages child-led participation by children. Achilles (1999) discusses the benefits of open-ended and flexible activities that are considerate of various developmental stages of children.

> *Most music activities work best if they are open-ended, facilitating the participation of one or several children at a time and providing enough flexibility to accommodate children within a wide range and at all stages of play (Achilles, 1999, p. 21)*.

Facilitating open-ended participation in a musical context allows children to engage and disengage at their own leisure and for as long as they wish. Open-ended musical activities also provide flexibility that accommodates children at many developmental stages. The early years educators in this context can support a music activities and can use Vygotsky and Bruner's methods of scaffolding using the child's zone of proximal development to guide activities within the musical environment (Shvarts & Bakker, 2019).

Observation

Observation will be discussed in this section of the thesis, and also later on in chapter six. Observation plays a vital role when enhancing and encouraging music-making, Bond (2011) supports this, writing that "in order to develop musical potential, one must be aware of musical behaviours" (p. 79). In Bond's article all children are recognised as musical beings, "all children are musical and often share this musicality through spontaneous vocalisations and movement" (Bond, 2011, p. 80). Niland discusses that,

> *Observation is also an important tool in developing a child-centred music curriculum. Our observations should focus on both musical behaviours and play behaviours so that we note the children's interests, comments, and social interactions (Niland, 2009, p. 19)*.

Niland's insight brings forward the idea of observation being a vital element of music education in order to deeply understand the musical and play behaviours of the child. Bond highlights the delicate role of the adult during play;

> *Adults can enhance young children's play by being flexible within play episodes, providing extended periods of uninterrupted play, and valuing all musical utterances made by the child (2011, p. 80)*.

Placing a value on musical behaviours and practicing flexibility provides more opportunities for adults to extend learning for children. Bond (2011, p. 83) continues, discussing the benefit of open-ended activities, and how they are a useful aid when facilitating musical experiences. Music preference is highly dependent on the music our brain encounters through experiences. In today's world, due to technology and access, musical immersion within different environments can be greatly varied. Bond (2011) acknowledges that the learning environment should include exposure to various types and styles of music to appreciate various cultures and uses of music. The open-mindedness of infants should be optimised through musical exposure while they lack bias and have an eagerness to explore sound.

The general ambience of an early years setting should be one that is comfortable, safe, respectful, trusting, enabling, motivating, positive, and encouraging (Achilles, 1999). Some children may not feel confident to share or perform, however their contribution to the classroom environment should still be recognised and respected, perhaps through groupwork or by sharing one of their peer's creations. Their creations could include lyrics, melodies, lyrics, an instrument, soundscape, or any other musical creation. It is important that children feel confident that their work will be appreciated, welcomed, and respected and that they will be listened to. Children should be encouraged to listen to their peers and educators without critiquing or judgement. Creating an open and safe space where children can create and share

without feeling at risk of judgement or disrespect inspires other children to follow their example (Hildebrandt, 1998).

Fostering Developmentally Appropriate Music Education in the Preschool Setting

This section of the thesis explores the provision of developmentally appropriate music education within preschool settings. It is a complex task to decide on the best method to facilitate music for children. There are many theories and ideas on how we can facilitate high quality musical experiences, however, one method may not be suitable for every child or every setting, Flohr and Trevarthen reflect on the development of music education for all children state that "individual differences in children are the rule rather than the exception" (2008, p. 84). According to Flohr and Trevarthen, one of the major roadblocks in determining the best pedagogical approach to music is the lack of music learning, experiences and training that early years educators personally have and the lack of a comprehensive theory for music learning. Flohr and Trevarthen write,

> *Early experiences on the brain may fundamentally shape future personality and mental health, However, while brain research has made large advances, it is difficult to find a neurologist willing to suggest that our present level of the brain and learning is sufficient to provide major changes to music education pedagogy (Flohr & Trevarthen, 2008, p. 84)*.

Although professionals, including educators understand the benefits, they are without the proper supports to facilitate developmentally appropriate music education in many cases.

In Ireland, emergent and enquiry-based curricula are encouraged through Aistear, allowing children to have a say in their education, facilitating learning experiences through the emerging themes within the setting (National Council for for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) , 2009). Throughout the fieldwork process emergent interest's and children 's interests were the focus of the early years educators and setting's planning and lessons. Jones reflects on this:

> *The goal of emergent curriculum is to respond to every child's interests. Its practice is open-ended and self-directed. It depends on teacher initiative and intrinsic motivation, and it lends itself to a play-based environment. Emergent curriculum emerges from the children, but not only from the children (Jones, 2012, p. 67).*

This depiction of an emergent curriculum considers the educator's role in the process, and it's complexity; an emergent curriculum does not oblige children to do whatever they wish. An emergent curriculum allows early years educators to curate unique learning experiences that are specific to the child or group of children, Jones continues:

> *Curriculum emerges from the play of children and the play of teachers. It is co-constructed by the children and the adults and the environment itself. To develop children's questions and invent ways to extend them, document what happens, and invent more questions. The process is naturally individualised (Jones, 2012, p. 67).*

Jones recognises that educators must work in tandem with children to encourage extensive and thorough learning. According to Liberto (2016), child-led learning favours the direction of the child rather than the framework or curriculum.

> *Learner-centred education is an approach that is based on the interest of the student rather than curriculum driven, where someone else has the idea of what you ought to be learning (Liberto, 2016, p. 3).*

Liberto considers the voice of the child in their writing, it is important for educators to keep children's emergent interests and learning at the fore of their practice. Patricia Shehan Campbell reflects on this in relation to music in the book, Songs in their Heads;

> *If our plan is carefully considered, founded on the music of their play and leisure, kindled by the music of their hopes and dreams, and shaped by the specialised skills we can deliver to them in lessons and class instruction, they will fully realise their capacities as musically expressive individuals. Music is for every child, after all: a God-given right to which they all have access. As*

> *they attain their wholeness of being, the musical pieces are some of the brightest, most shining parts of their mosaic selves (Shehan Campbell, 2010, p. 274)*.

STEAM

This part of the thesis discusses STEAM education which has recently been promoted for early years education. STEAM education is an acronym for science, technology, engineering, arts and maths.

> *This new term STEAM can help early childhood educators to build the foundation of science related knowledge using the arts to encourage children to express their ideas in a wide variety of creative ways (Sharapan, 2012, p. 36)*.

Often when something is made child friendly, it is seen as making something easier, less complex or lights. Just because something is aimed at children, does not mean it is necessarily easy (Young, 2016). Children have an ability to appreciate, interpret and pay attention to extremely complex themes, musical ideas, and highly proficient musicians. One such example of this cross-curricular and developmentally appropriate music education being facilitated is through the medium of the PBS television programme *Mister Roger's Neighbourhood.* Sharapan (2012) applauds this programme, as it discusses complex themes in an appropriate manner; the music is based on standard jazz harmony, intricate melodies, and chord progressions, matched with lyrics that tackle difficult situations and emotions all while building self-compassion, esteem and compassion. The delivery of such sophisticated music to children, regardless of their age, ability or circumstance shows the creators' understanding of the emotional and musical intelligence of young children (Sharapan, 2012). This particular television programme excellently highlighted the multi-disciplinary nature of music education. Opportunities to explore this nature of music may introduce children to something they may not have otherwise heard; children may even develop a liking towards it.

Linda Page Neely's work discusses the responsibility caregivers have in incorporating musical conversations in a child's daily routine. Adults who are willing to use flexibility throughout a child's routine are nurturing and encouraging powerful learning connections and engaging in developmentally appropriate practices.

> *As caretakers of our children, we know that these musical conversations are spontaneous and playful ways in which we can enter a child's reality. We not only speak musically to a child, but we also listen and respond to understand a child's personal, cultural and musical realities through our conversations (Neelly, 2001, pp. 32,33)*.

Every child has the capacity to be musically expressive and can gain from learning within the context of musical play. Spontaneous singing, improvising, music making, babbling, cooing, making up "songs" and reconstructing music are all examples of musical conversations and experiences. These forms of music making are all developmentally appropriate for children at early years to make their own musical decisions, actively participate with other children and reflect upon musical choices. These musical conversations lay the foundation for children's emotional, cognitive, physical, and musical development. .

Multiple Intelligences

This section discusses multiple intelligences, a theory on the various ways humans learn. Over the past number of years, the perception of intelligence has changed. The theory of multiple intelligences is a theory by Howard Gardner, describing the various methods one can learn or retain information. Multiple intelligence is said to create a more significant and advantageous learning experience, according to Armstrong (2009);

> *A knowledge of MI theory provides a cognitive map that can help lead a student's personalized learning journey toward a successful and meaningful conclusion (Armstrong, 2009, p. n/a)*.

Emerging views of intelligence include the theory of multiple intelligences. This theory discusses that individuals have different types of intelligences. These intelligences are categorised into the following; bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, naturalistic, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, and musical. Musical intelligence is a multi-faceted intellect; "Musical intelligence has creative, analytical, practical, and wisdom-based aspects" (Sternberg, 2021, p. 1783). There are many aspects to this form of intelligence, and it is heterogenous; a person who is a proficient singer may not necessarily be an able composer or play an instrument. Musical intelligence is defined as;

> *abilities to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch, and timbre; appreciation of the forms of musical expressiveness (Mills, 2001, p. 2)*.

This form of intelligence could be clearly observed from a young age as children begin to navigate their own musicality, musical interests and abilities. Recognising and understanding this form of intelligence is important when designing curricula, and also when curating training for early years educators,

> *Understanding how musical intelligence works may contribute to the societal good of understanding how music makes the world better for us all (Sternberg, 2021, p. 1784)*.

Encouraging children's musicality and facilitating time for them to broaden their musical experiences is important when building on musical intelligence.

> *Musical intelligence encompasses the set of skills involved in musical composition, performance, and appreciation, among other aspects of music; it includes within its purview those skills involved in processing pitches, patterns, and rhythms (Sternberg, 2021, p. 1775)*.

Teacher Education-CPD:

CPD is an acronym for continuous or continuing professional development, to increase skills, knowledge or understanding of a particular role or subject. There are many CPD courses

available to early years educators, these span across many areas of childhood learning, interactions and development, such as; leadership, sensory processing, children's rights and curriculum. Most courses involving music, drama, art or movement include a fee. According to Banks and Smyth, CPD is an important element of early childhood education, however it seems important that CPD courses are curated in a way that reflects their work schedules and circumstances.

> *Research has highlighted the importance of quality professional development. Research shows that where teachers' needs are understood and the content CPD is aligned with their work contexts the take-up of CPD is increased (Banks & Symth, 2010, p. 9).*

Varvarigou, et al. (2012) support the importance of CPD for educators, discussing educator's experiences after a CPD programme;

> *they emphasised that due to the programme they acquired more confidence and more ideas on what to do in their music lessons at school and they talked about their plans for progression after the end of the programme, which included learning to play an instrument and supporting singing in school (Varvarigou, et al., 2012, p. 162).*

Play and Musical Play

Play is considered an important aspect in a child's early years. Síolta's Research Digest highlights that play, exploration, and playful activities should be a principal element of the daily routine.

> *In order for it to be enjoyable and beneficial, young children need to spend a significant amount of time within the setting engaged in play/exploration, and these and other playful activities should be central to the daily routine (Síolta: The National Quality Framwork fo Early Childhood Education, 2007, p. 2).*

In conjunction with this, Reichling (1997), discusses the long-standing connection between play and music. Varvarigou (2016a), highlights the benefits of playful music experiences, discussing it's multidisciplinary advantages;

> *Group ear playing when adopted regularly as part of ensemble activity could not only support creativity, interpersonal and improvisation skills, enabling a lifelong creative practitioner but essentially enhance lifelong enjoyment in group music making (Varvarigou, 2016a, p. 14)*

Play has upheld its prominence among psychologists, philosophers and theorists such as Piaget, Bruner, Froebel, and Vygotsky. Reflecting on theories surrounding play, Pound discusses the vital importance of play in the early years. Pound (2019) considers Piaget who believed "children required long, uninterrupted periods of play and exploration" (p. 144) and stressed the need for open-ended activities and thought them to be of "more value than those that have predetermined outcomes" (p. 144). Piaget placed importance on active learning which involved play and experience. The psychologist Bruner also placed a focus on social and playful interactions between children and adults especially in relation to language development. One of Bruner's most well-known theories is "scaffolding". This theory was developed from Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. Hagaman (1990) defines the process:

> *The adult and/or peers serve the learner as "scaffolding," a vicarious form of consciousness, until such time as the learner is able to consciously and independently control the new function or conceptual system being utilized* (Hagaman, 1990, p. 153).

Bruner discusses the importance of learning through experiences in the context of language.

> *The mother tongue is most rapidly mastered when situated in playful activity… The child is not simply learning language, but learning to use language as an instrument of thought and action in a combinatorial fashion. In order to be able to talk about the world in a combinatorial fashion the infant seems to have to*

> *be able to play with the world in that flexible fashion that the playful attitude promotes (Bruner, 1983, p. 65).*

Steiner education (also known as Waldorf education) also considered play to be necessary in the learning environment as "imaginary and imitation are nurtured through play" (Pound, 2019, p. 103). Nordlund (2013) supports this idea also, detailing Steiner/Waldorf school's emphasis on the benefits of play.

> *Children learn through student-centered physical explorations creative play, and imitation of adult actions… Waldorf school communities promote child rearing inclusive of creative exploration, open-ended play, and problem solving (Nordlund, 2013, pp. 14, 15)*

Steiner Waldorf schools considered play to be beneficial to development, concentration and encourages innovation and adaptation.

The Froebel Trust outline Froebel's philosophy on play.

> *Play helps children to relate their inner worlds of feelings, ideas ad lived experiences with the wider world of things and people to see a connection between them (Tovey, 2020, p. 14)*

Pound (2019) reiterates this detailing that Froebel regarded "play as fundamental to children's development" (p. 53) also stating that Froebel "valued music at all stages of early childhood", considering it "a vital element of education in the early years" (Pound, 2019, p. 53).

Tarnowski defines play as an "intrinsically motivated activity that is pleasurable to the participant" (1999, p. 27). In this article, Tarnowski further emphases the goal of play which focuses on the engagement within the process rather than achieving a final product. It is clear from the national quality and curriculum frameworks, and based on early years education and care theories, that play is an essential element of learning and development during a child's early years. "free musical play gave children opportunities for exploring, improvising, and creating with sound" (Berger & Cooper, 2003, p. 152). It is also important to identify the natural

reactions children have to music. Berger and Cooper also discuss the clear natural and positive reactions to musical play, "children respond naturally to music, lyrics, rhythms, and positive social interactions during musical play" (Berger & Cooper, 2003, p. 152).

Allowing space, time and resources for musical play will help to foster creativity, exploration, risk-taking, and also musical development. Síolta's Research Digest further emphasises the importance of play in early years settings. Incorporating and preparing for music within free play, will support play and facilitate a space for additional advantages.

> *In play, children develop and demonstrate exploration, creativity, spirituality, imagination, experimentation, manipulation, expression of ideas, social and interaction skills, divergence and abstract thinking and problem-solving capacities (Síolta: The National Quality Framwork fo Early Childhood Education, 2007, p. 3)*.

Whilst researching play, development and musical play, the concept of process rather than product was repeatedly discussed. Reading literature from Berger and Cooper, Tarnowski, and Pound, it is suggested that early years educators should understand how beneficial the process of musical play can be.

Spontaneous Musicking

Music is used as a form of natural expression within the preschool setting. Children demonstrate spontaneous singing and musicking throughout the day. Natural expression of children's thoughts and feelings is evident through the use of music in the classroom. Music can be used to support a feeling or evoke emotions. Children also use music as a form of self-soothing or regulation.

Adult-Led Music in Early Years

Tarnowski's (1999) article discusses that many early years educators feel more comfortable acting as the leader or "director" of music in the classroom context, assuming the role of "the

person who demonstrates, models, and gives instructions" (p. 26). Tarnowski further suggests that early years educators should accept the role of the "observer" as "child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported play is an essential component of developmentally appropriate practice" (1999, p. 26). Upon analysis of my fieldwork and literary sources, young children engage with music through playful experiences. Although many early years educators do not consider themselves to be music educators or musicians, many feel comfortable when using play as the vehicle for musical development and growth. Kemple, Batey and Hartle further support the idea of early years educators not only "providing space, time and materials" (2004, p. 32), but also by offering children a space to take risks without the fear of failure,

> *When young children have a rich musical environment along with appropriate guidance from adults, they can learn, for example, to imitate and, with increasing precision, distinguish among rhythm and tone patterns (Kemple, et al., 2004, p. 32)*.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses important themes that are present in literature surrounding early years music education. It explores enculturation, cross-curricular integration, and the role of observation within early years settings. STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematical) education and teacher education CPD are discussed. Curating developmentally appropriate music experiences is investigated. Play, musical play, spontaneous musicking and adult-led music in early years are considered throughout this chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

In this chapter, I outline the research methodology that has been employed in this research study. I discuss research methods and approaches with children and frameworks that support research with children. I also discuss ethnographic methods undertaken for the research study. The practical fieldwork elements consisted of four phases: survey design and distribution, interviews, resource pack curation, and observation. In this section, I outline the methodological approach and ethical considerations undertaken for this study. Fieldwork was carried out in a sessional preschool in the South of Ireland. I outline the nature of the observation, considering any emergent ethical implications and with that the steps taken to safeguard all participants. I provide an analysis of the data, and also of the methods employed. I will also discuss Tusla's guidance on research with children.

Research with Children

The research study involves children as research participants; therefore, ethical approval was required before engaging in research. This research study focuses on children and as a result, all ethical procedures and best practice for research with children were carried out (Tusla, n.d.). Involving children in the research provided a deeper insight into the role of music in the early years sector and the requirements of early years educators and children.

Tusla (n.d.), which is Ireland's statutory organisation for children and families, is responsible for promoting children's welfare and their outcomes, they provide guidance on research involving children. Tusla recognises children as important research participants and emphasises the importance of the ethical dilemmas it brings. Tusla's guidance is informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This philosophy ensures children's voices are heard without distress or exploitation. The convention also advocates that children have the right to express their insights in matters that affect children.

Tusla discuss the importance of including children in research, whilst stressing that children must be protected throughout research processes.

> Researchers have to find the balance between protection and participation to enable children to be heard – without exploiting or distressing them – and protected, without silencing and excluding them *(Tusla, n.d., p. n/a)*.

Tusla acknowledges that an understanding of children's involvement improves the quality of research (Tusla, n.d.). Fergas-Malet et al. (2010, p. 175) explains that "until relatively recently, research was fundamentally *on* children, rather than *with* or *for* children". In a 2012 document by the Department for Children and Youth Affairs the importance of children's participation in research is highlighted,

> *Children have a right to be involved in many aspects of the research process and their participation can enhance the quality of the research (Department of Children and Youth Affairs , 2012, p. 5)*.

After careful consideration and analysis, I thought it was necessary to involve children in the research process. Observation of children in an early years setting allowed me to understand the practical purpose of the policies and frameworks discussed in chapter two and gain a sense of both teachers and children's interests, requirements, perspectives, and experiences within an early years music context.

Qualitative Research

Throughout the fieldwork, I applied a qualitative research methodology. Drawing on research paradigms as informed by Saracho, I examined the qualitative approach.

> *Qualitative studies provide unique insights into the lived realities of young children, their families, and the adults who work with and on behalf of them. They offer conceptual productivity and contextualised understandings that go beyond research based in statistical analyses of rigorously controlled variables. Qualitative research methodologies assist researchers to discover how things actually work for real individuals in actual settings" (Saracho, 2015, p. 12)*.

This research theory informed an in-depth insight into the inner workings of an early years setting and showed me exactly where music education already fits in, and where things can be encouraged or improved. This research method gave a holistic examination and took all persons involved into account.

Methodology Design and Ethics

This study is underpinned by ethnomusicological practice; this practice considers social impacts and cultural backgrounds of music; ethnographic fieldwork is an essential research methodology of studies regarding ethnomusicology. Participant observation is a research method where the researcher immerses themselves in everyday activities of participants. Through this method, the researcher gains a familiarity of individual or group participants within a setting. In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted as understanding children and early years educators' engagement with music is not numerically quantifiable. My research is informed by my experience with the culture of early years education, music education, and international studies of early years education and music to provide an important context.

Ethical approval was granted in April 2021 by the ethical committee at University College Cork, with revisions in December 2021. The ethical process I engaged in required me to focus primarily on the fieldwork plan and the methodological approach used in my study. The following section discusses this plan thoroughly outlining the procedures and safeguards that were undertaken to ensure safety and respect of all research participants. The fieldwork for this research study consisted of four phases, three phases of data collection through surveys, follow-up interviews, and observations of an early years setting, and one phase of curating resources.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions;

- In what ways do children experience music in early years settings?

- What resources are currently available to early years educators to facilitate music in their settings?
- How can an understanding of early years settings and educators' perspectives on music inform the development of (cross-curricular) resources for music at early years?

The study presents four phases, three of which include fieldwork methods the phases of the study are presented in the below table;

Phase One	Method One: Survey Design and Distribution
Phase Two	Method Two: Interviews
Phase Three	Curation of Resources
Phase Four	Observation

Table 2; Phases of Study

The first research question asks in what ways do children experience music in early years settings? The methodology used to answer this question included observations and two interviews with early years educators. The interviews explored music experiences in early years settings in detail with educators, whilst the observations that were carried out highlighted a considerable collection of ways in which children experience music in the early years. The second research question aims to examine what resources are currently available to early years educators to facilitate music in their settings. This was explored through a survey, and through observations. The survey highlighted the equipment and resources available to early years educators, and the observations allowed for time be spent within a setting observing the equipment and resources available to early years educators and children. Finally, the third research question asks, how can an understanding of early years settings and educators' perspectives on music inform the development of (cross-curricular) resources for music at early years. This question was explored through the surveys, interviews and observations. The survey gathered a profile on the educators to assess their relationships with, and their perspectives on

music, a deeper understanding was gained by interviewing practitioners and through having in depth discussions about music use and perspectives on music in preschool settings. The observations gave further insight into understanding early years settings and how educators approach and view music within the day-to-day context of the setting. The insights, perspectives and experiences acquired through these fieldwork methods alongside desk-based research and literature informed the development of cross-curricular resources for early years education.

I distributed the survey to participants who are employed as early years educators by emailing early years childcare settings in Cork city and county. Survey participants were all over eighteen. The sector employs a majority of females; however, my study was not limited to females only, 94% of the survey participants were female, 6% were male. The study is exclusive to early years educators working or qualified within the early years setting. Participants were provided with an information sheet before they took part in the study and could then make an informed decision regarding whether they wish to participate. Should they choose to participate, the participant had to provide their consent before participating in the survey. This survey assisted in formulating a resource pack for educators.

The initial phase of the fieldwork included emailing possible research participants by reaching out to various settings in the south of Ireland to inform them about the survey and generate interest regarding the study. I followed up with the participants who wished to take part in the survey via email, they were emailed the Google Forms survey which had an information sheet attached, participants had to choose the option to consent before participating in the survey, the survey followed after consent was given (see survey below, a sample of the email sent to practitioners and the survey information sheet are attached in the appendices).

Survey Questions

1. What is your highest level of QQI qualification?

• Level 5

• Level 6

• Level 7

• Level 8

• Level 9

• Level 10

2. Briefly discuss your engagement with music in your studies to become an early years educator, please also mention any further musical training you may have had.

3. State the musical resources available in your setting in which you feel are beneficial e.g. instruments such as shakers or tambourines, internet access to music, CDs, speakers, space to sing and move to music etc.

4. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 to which degree do you feel confident in your ability to lead music-time in your setting? 1 being not confident at all and 5 being highly confident.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Briefly discuss any musical experiences, if any, you have had e.g., school choir member,

involvement in local plays, instrument skills, music enthusiast etc.

6. How often is music/ singing used in your classroom?

• Never (not at all)

• Occasionally (1-3 times per month)

• Sometimes (1 time per week)

• Often (3-5 times per week)

• Always (every day, at various times throughout the day)

7. Would you feel comfortable in planning music lessons/ music opportunities for your setting? • Yes • No • Maybe
8. Please mention, if any, resources in which you feel would benefit music and singing opportunities in your setting or nay resources that you feel you have low accessibility to.

Table 3; Survey Questions

Phase two of the fieldwork involved a follow-up online interview as part of my fieldwork. A semi-structure approach was used for the interviews. Questions asked emerged from thematic analysis of data from the surveys, "thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse and report repeated patterns" (Braun and Clarke, 2006 as cited in (Kiger & Varpio, 2020, p. 2). This allowed a space for some of the emerging themes to be expanded out and gave a more discussion-based insight into many of the early years educator's thoughts and opinions. The meeting was conducted via Google Meet; the early years educator returned a consent form in advance of the interview; and was provided with an information sheet (see appendices for information sheet).

During phase three resource packs (see chapter six), were curated, disseminated to early years educators and trialled by an early years educator during the observational period where results were verbally discussed. The resource packs contained ideas, guides, links, and visuals to aid early years educators in facilitating music in the early years setting.

The fourth phase of my research design involved an observational period in one early years setting over the course of two weeks; the study was limited to one setting due to COVID-19. Observations within the preschool setting took place in various spaces, including the

classroom, the outdoor area, and excursions within the school day, for example, a nature walk. An early years educator was always present. I observed children during structured activities, snack time, free play, and during allocated music time. I carried a notepad and pen, camera, and audio recorder during my observations, gathering data from observations through written recordings (audio and visual), fieldnotes and reflections. I recorded reflections immediately after observations or after the session, these audio recordings provided beneficial data to consider and interpret. This data included sounds that made up the children's musical soundscape, short notes or words, narrative observations and thoughts or ideas that were sparked during my time in the setting.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the research methodology undertaken in order to complete the fieldwork element of the research study. The chapter discusses the research with children, qualitative research, methodology design and ethics. These elements were crucial in facilitating a research study that follows best practice. The chapter also displays the information sheets given to early years educators and outlines the phases of the research study.

Chapter 5: Fieldwork in the Early Years

In this chapter I discuss the fieldwork process of my study, analyse the data collected during the fieldwork element of my research. The fieldwork was broken down into four stages: surveys, two interviews, resource pack curation, and observations. The fieldwork was necessary in order to bring theoretical practice to life, and to demonstrate the findings gathered from literature reviews in a practical setting. Data analysis was carried out after each fieldwork phase, this was done using a colour coded system to examine the frequency of themes and subthemes, data analysis software was not used, instead a colour coded manual system was carried out through Microsoft Excel.

Aims of the Fieldwork Phase

The purpose of the surveys was to gather a sense of what music engagement looks like within early years settings, from training to in-setting practice, it also helped to build a profile of the varying levels of training and abilities of early years educators in the south of Ireland. In order to carry out practical research, it was crucial to gain an understanding of educators' confidence levels and musical identities. The survey process' main limitation was gathering participants, however twenty educators took part which offered varying perspectives and experiences. The interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of educators and music within preschool settings. The interviews provided an opportunity to delve into some of the data that emerged from surveys. The interview phase encouraged an emergence of clear themes and had little limitations due to the open nature of both educators who took part. The observations provided an opportunity to see the complex use of music to be analysed in a real-life context. The observations gave a much more detailed insight on themes. The observation phase was limited by the timeframe, however an array of beneficial and practical insights emerged from this phase. The aims of the fieldwork were to answer the research questions and also to inform the curation of resource packs for music education in preschool settings, the resource packs were considered as phase three of the fieldwork, as they were

created after phase one and two of the fieldwork, surveys and interviews. They were finalised after the observations, where they were trialled and tested. The observation phase provided an opportunity for the resource packs to be honed and tweaked in order to be more accessible to preschool teachers.

Methodology

Ahead of creating the survey, extensive desk-based research was carried out in order to ask questions that would be beneficial to the study. The research questions heavily informed this and were helpful in determining the questions needed to be asked. Once the survey questions were finalised, the survey was curated on "Google Forms". The survey was disseminated through social media platforms and by emailing practitioners. Once there were a substantial an amount of survey answers, the data was compiled into a spreadsheet, and colour coded based on any emerging themes. The interview questions were chosen based on a combination of literature, the study's research questions and the survey data. Once the interview questions were decided upon, the interviews were held over a "Microsoft Teams" meeting. The interviews had a relaxed and free-flowing nature, so further questions were asked based on the interviewee's insights. The audio of the interviews was recorded and transcribed subsequent to the interviews. Two interviews were carried out. The resource packs were curated based on a combination of desk-based research, my own experience as a music education teacher with children under six years old and based on the findings from the surveys and interviews. During the observation phase, an early years educator carried out lessons from the resource packs, I observed how they worked for the educator, critically analysed the process and tweaked the packs based on the findings to make them more accessible for an operational setting. The observations were carried out over a two-week period, I observed every session during the period, in total this was ten three-hour sessions. Using a combination of notetaking and voice recordings to collect data.

Twenty narrative observations were collected along with a selection of general observations of music use within the setting.

Survey Design	The survey design was influenced by my original research proposal, my experience as a visiting music teacher and early years educator, and also by my work with children aged three to five in private music education. The survey was distributed through social media platforms and via email.
Interview	Follow-up interviews were conducted with an early years educator. This interview was informed by the survey. The interviews were free flowing, structured by questions and allowed for deeper discussion of various themes.
Resource Pack Curation	The resource packs are a product of the survey and interviews. The curation also drew on my own music education experience and my work in the early years sector. The resource packs serve as a teaching aid for early years educators and should beneficially inform their music practice.
Observation	The observational phase gave me a deeper insight into the sector and also the musical utterances of children. The observations also provided an opportunity to see the resource packs come to life and tested their use in a real time setting.

Table 4; Breakdown of Fieldwork Phases

The observed setting is a privately owned sessional service. The setting caters for children from two and eight months to six years old. The setting facilitates the ECCE scheme. The setting is

a large, single room space with an adjoining outdoor area. The setting employs three early years educators, one of which is an inclusion co-ordinator. The learning environment is colourfully painted, warm and inviting. There are learning charts and children's artwork displayed throughout. Upon entering the room, one is welcomed by a large cabinet area, where the children can leave their belongings. Each child has a designated shelf with a storage box that displays a photo of them. There are large shelving units with toys and sensory stimulating items that are easy to access for the children. The space is very open, one part of the room has tables and chairs, where children can play, or engage in focused, structured activities. There is a blackboard displaying flashcards and visuals of their monthly theme, and learning charts. The reading corner has some wipeable cushions, soft mats, and a beanbag where children can wind down or relax. The home corner includes kitchens, baby dolls and homeware; children typically re-enact home scenarios together. The construction zone has various types of building materials, where children create structures and let their imagination take flight. The arts and craft area, has plenty of materials within reach for the children to make visual art. The music area has some instruments, a speaker, and a laptop (the speaker and laptop are out of reach from children); the area is next to a very spacious part of the setting. Materials, musical and non-musical are well equipped in the setting, and are accessible to children.

Exploring Theory in Practice: Observing in the Early Years Setting

The preschool in which I observed is located in county Cork. It is an ECCE preschool, with two room leaders and one classroom assistant. One room leader has completed LINC (leadership and inclusion) training, and therefore the setting is classed an inclusive preschool. Children in the setting were aged between three and five. Observational fieldwork for this study took place over a two-week period in December 2021. Planning of the fieldwork took place between September 2021 and November 2021. Meetings were held with early years

educators to discuss the details of the research project. These meetings focused on the study's aims and objectives and ethical considerations.

Information packs (as shown in the appendix) were disseminated by the setting manager outlining details of the research in the beginning of December 2021. These information packs were distributed to early years educators and parents in the setting. In these packs, an ethics statement was included. I received consent to observe the children by the setting manager, parents were informed by the setting manager.

Data Analysis:

Phase One and Two: Early Years Educator Profiles; Pedagogical Perspectives

The survey is split into qualitative and qualitative questions. The quantitative survey questions examine practitioners' level of qualification, their confidence levels in leading and planning music activities and also the frequency of music use. The results are outlined below.

Quantitative	Question	Answer	#	%
Q.1	What is your highest level of QQI qualification?	Level 5	3	15%
		Level 6	5	25%
		Level 7	1	5%
		Level 8	10	50%
		Level 9	1	5%
		Level 10	0	0%
Q.4	Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 to which degree do you feel confident in your ability to lead music-time in your setting? 1 being not confident at all and 5 being highly confident.	1	3	15%
		2	5	25%
		3	4	20%
		4	5	25%
		5	3	15%

Q.6	How often is music/ singing used in your classroom?	Never (not at all)	0	0%
		Occasionally (1-3 times per month)	1	5%
		Sometimes (1 time per week)	2	10%
		Often (3-5 times per week)	4	20%
		Always (every day, at various times throughout the day)	13	65%
Q.7	Would you feel comfortable in planning music lessons/ music opportunities for your setting?	Yes	4	20%
		No	6	30%
		Maybe	10	50%

Table 5; Survey Answers

The survey focused on gathering a profile on the research participants, who were all working as early years educators. Question one of the surveys examined the varying levels of QQI qualifications amongst the educators; in Ireland, early years educators must have at least QQI level five to work in a setting, settings receive "higher capitation", a higher rate of pay through the ECCE scheme (which is government funded) when staff have a qualification above level seven (bachelor's degree). The participants showed diversity within their qualifications and backgrounds. Out of twenty participants, ten participants had a level eight degree, five participants had a level six higher certificate qualification, three participants had a level five certificate, one participant had a level seven bachelor's degree, and one participant had a level nine postgraduate diploma; the results are shown in percentages below.

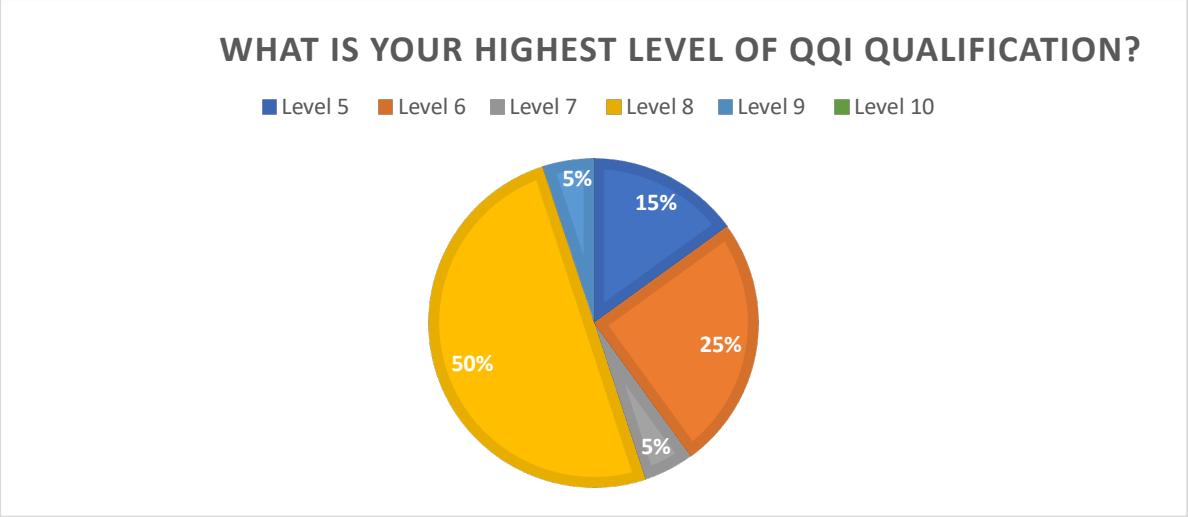


Figure 1; Breakdown of Qualifications

Question four focused on educators' confidence in leading music activities in their settings. Educators rated on a scale of one to five to which degree they felt confident to use music in their setting. Three educators gave themselves a score of one, feeling not confident at all, five educators scored themselves at a two, four educators scored themselves at three, five educators placed themselves at a score of four, and three educators scored themselves at a level of five, feeling highly confident; the results of this survey question showed varied confidence levels amongst the educators.

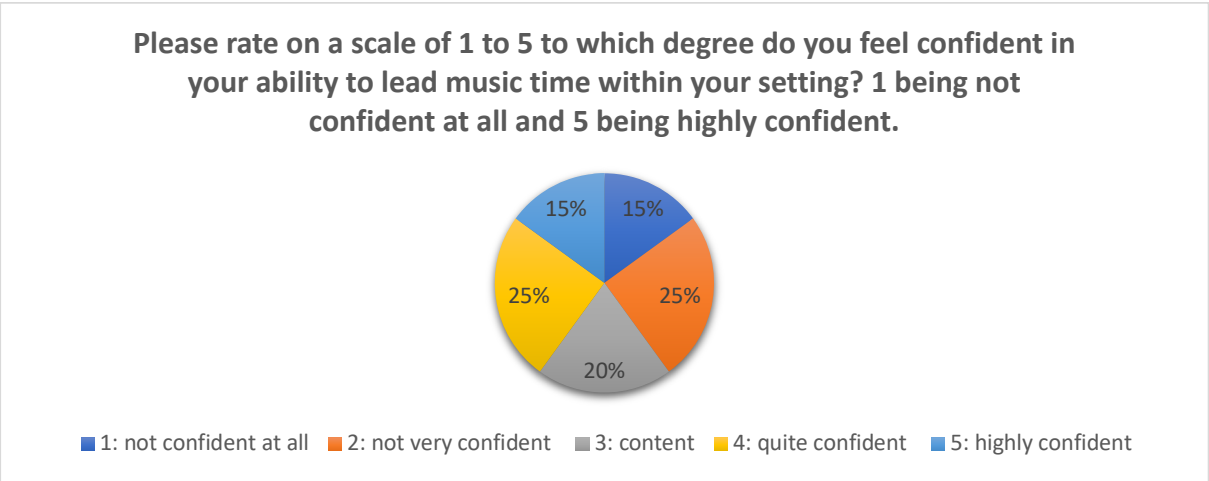


Figure 2; Level of Confidence to Lead Music Time

Question seven assessed whether educators felt comfortable in planning music opportunities or lessons for children in their setting. Ten out of twenty participants answered “maybe”, six answered “no”, and four answered “yes”, the percentage breakdown is shown in the below pie chart. This data shows that the majority of educators are not very comfortable with planning music activities for their setting.

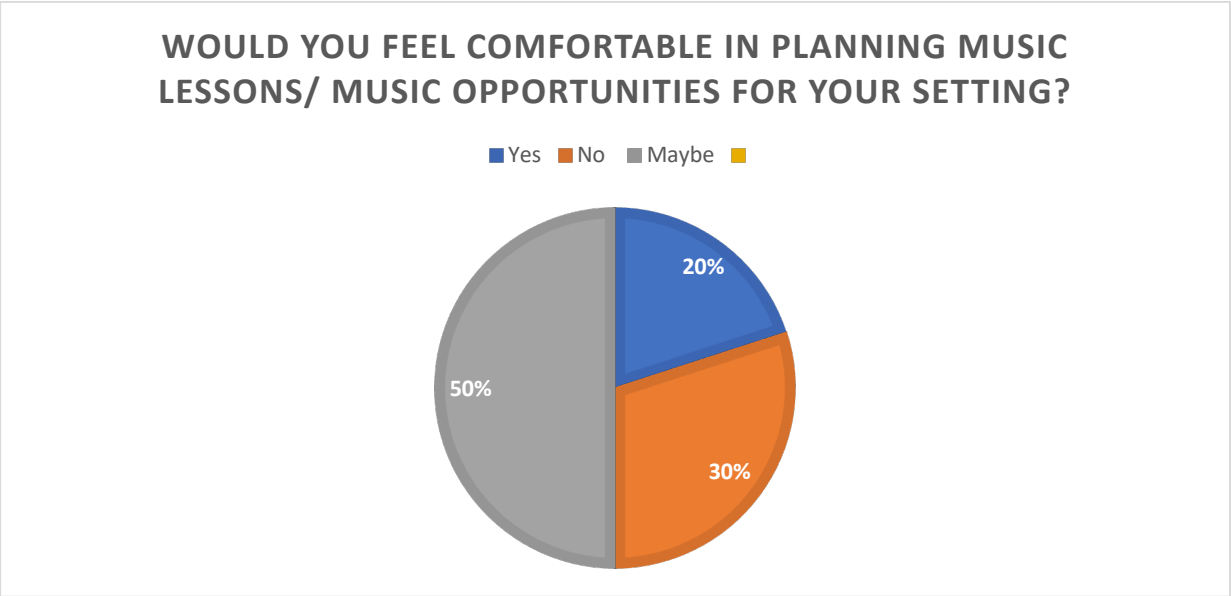


Figure 3; Planning Music Lessons/ Opportunities

Question six asked educators about the frequency of music use in their settings. Thirteen of twenty participants stated that they use music “always (every day, at various times throughout the day)”, four participants answered with “often (three to five times per week)”, two participants answered “sometimes (one time per week), and one participant answered “occasionally (one to three times per month), zero participants answered “never (not at all)”. There is a disconnection between how confident and comfortable educators feel engaging with music opportunities, and the frequency of how often they find themselves engaging with music in their settings; 65% of educators are using music every day, throughout the day,

however only 20% of educators feel comfortable in planning music opportunities, and 60% of educators scored a three or under in their confidence levels to lead music activities in their settings.

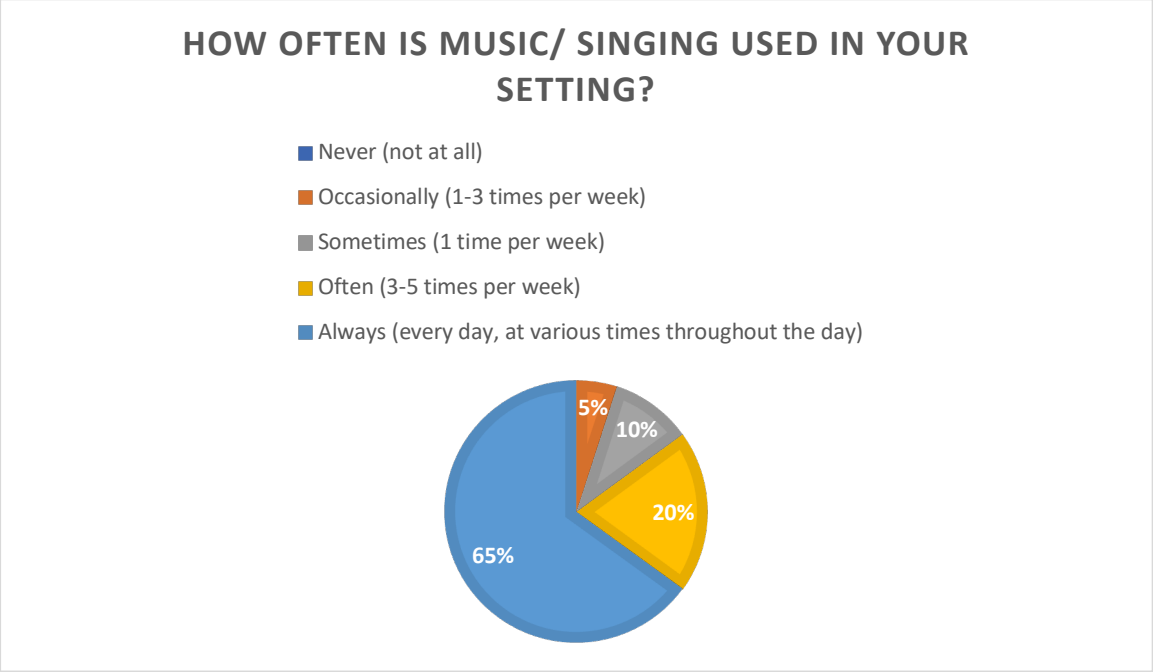


Figure 4; Frequency of Music Use in the Setting

Qualitative Questions		**Answer**	**#**	**%**	**Details**
Q.2	Briefly discuss your engagement with music in your studies to become an early years educator, please also mention any further musical training you may have had, e.g., CPD	No musical training	12	60%	Participants in this category did not discuss any music as part of their training to become qualified or of any CPD
		Limited musical training	3	15%	These participants discuss music being used on placement and featured in their assignment
		Studied music as part of early years qualification	2	10%	Participants spoke about music modules, and learning how music can be used within the curriculum
		Unanswered	3	15%	Participants mentioned their understanding of music's importance, and

					how they use music; however, did say whether or not they engaged with music during their studies
Q.3	State the musical resources available in your setting in which you feel are beneficial e.g., instruments such as shakers or tambourines, internet access to music, CDs, speakers, space to sing and move to music etc.	Internet/ YouTube/Spotify/Alexa	6		A variety of answers emerged from this question; participants gave multiple answers within their individual answers
		Instruments including homemade instruments	20		
		CDs/Devices/Speaker/CD player/TV/Video	13		
		Sufficient space	6		
		Miscellaneous	6		Sing-along books, disco ball, ribbons for dancing, pecs for song choice, outdoor music area, music therapy
		Singing resources	3		
Q.5	Briefly discuss any musical experiences, if any, you have had e.g., school choir member, involvement in local plays, instrument skills, music enthusiast etc.	School experiences	10	50%	e.g., school choir, instrument lessons within school context
		Private music lessons as a child or adult	2	10%	instrument, dance, drama, singing lessons
		Listener or Enthusiast	2	10%	enjoys and has an interest in music within their personal life
		None	6	30%	
Q.8	Please mention, if any, resources in which you feel would benefit	Instruments/ Equipment	6	30%	more variety, more accessibility
		Unsure/ Nothing	7	35%	
		Song Ideas	3	15%	more variety, larger range of songs, songs that explore pitch, encourage

	music and singing				movement and participation
	opportunities in your setting or any resources that you feel you have low accessibility to	Professional advice/ training	4	20%	Access to CPD training, access to professionals who can advise on how to use music resources within the setting

Table 6; Survey Answers- Qualitative Questions

The qualitative questions within the survey brought many of the emerging themes to the fore for discussion. Educators discussed their engagement with music during their training to qualify as an early years educator through an open question; while there were varied answers, educators answered within a range of four categories; twelve participants, 60% had no musical experience as part of their training or through any CPD courses, three participants, 15% stated that their experience of music during their training was limited, only having experience through their work placements or engaged with through assignments, two participants, 10% studied music as part of their training through a dedicated music module, or discussed it whilst studying the curriculum, finally three participants, 15% did not answer the question, while they mentioned their understanding of the importance of music or how they use it, they did not mention if it was studied as part of their training. It was striking to see the lack of music opportunities present amongst the research participants, although this finding was surprising, many of the participants had some musical experiences outside of their training. Ten participants, 50% had experiences in a school setting, such as a school choir or instrument lessons, two participants, 10%, had received some form of private lessons e.g. dancing, singing, or instrumentation, two participants, a further 10%, highlighted their interest in music as a listener or enthusiast, and 6 participants, 30% did not have any notable music experiences.

The survey questions highlighted the theme of nurturing children's musical experiences within early years education; providing educators with the training, tools and resources to facilitate music in the setting is crucial in providing high-quality and positive music experiences in the early years. The theme of enculturation and the role of the environment emerged through some of the open questions asked in the survey; the early years educators described the musical resources available to them in their settings, this was important for the curation of resource packs, as it gave insight into what was available in order to inform realistic lesson plans. There was similarity in the resources available to the educators, research participants gave multiple answers for this question; twenty participants stated that they had instruments available to use in their setting, thirteen research participants said they had access to play music in the setting through CDs/videos/speakers, a further six participants stated they had access to the internet/YouTube/Spotify/Alexa to pay music, six more participants mentioned miscellaneous music resources such as sing-along books, a disco ball, ribbons for dancing, an outdoor music area, and music therapy, and finally three participants listed that they had access to singing resources. The final survey question asked the participants for an insight into what resources they feel would benefit music in their setting. Seven participants were unsure or left this question blank; six participants looked for an increase in equipment and instruments, notably more variety and accessibility to the instruments; three participants felt they would benefit from song ideas, and four participants felt they would benefit from professional advice or training, such as access to CPD training or professionals who can advise them on how to facilitate music within their settings.

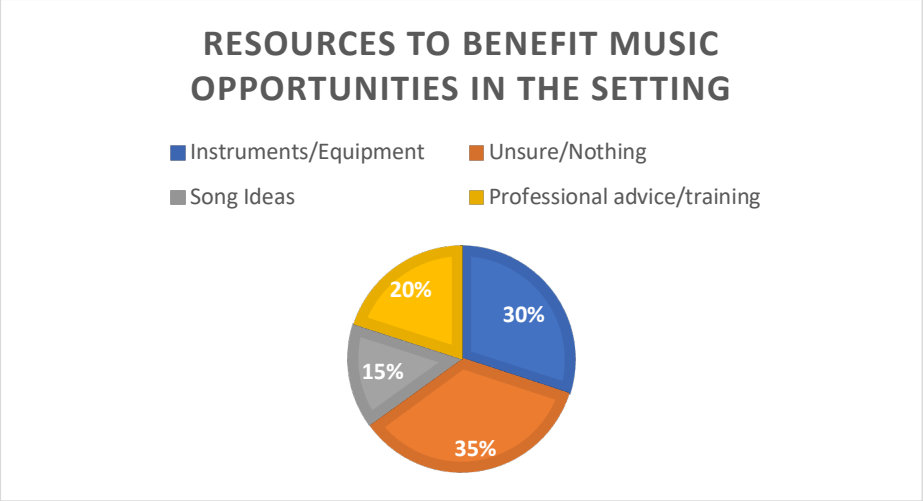


Figure 5; Resources to Benefit Music Opportunities

Phase Two: Interviews with Early Years Educators; Pedagogical Perspectives

Emerging Theme	**The Role of the Learning Environment and Enculturation**
	The impact of a child's environment on their learning
	Understanding children's diverse backgrounds and promoting a flexible learning environment
	The impact music has on the learning environment
Emerging Theme	**Nurturing Children's Music Experiences within the Early Years**
	Music as a teaching or learning tool and to facilitate cross-curricular integration
	Planning and resources
	Facilitating music experiences in their own right
	Confidence building for educators and making links to prior learning
Emerging Theme	**Musical Play and Spontaneous Music Making**
	The presence of music within play
	Vocalisations
	Sound Exploration
	Challenges

Table 7; Breakdown of Emerging Themes

The surveys provided an opportunity to gather an initial profile on music in early childhood education, the emerging themes from the survey could be further discussed through the interviews. During the interview process the early years educators, Emily and Nancy discussed their career paths into the early childhood sector, for Emily, this involved a level five and six

QQI course, followed by Leadership and Inclusion training, to become an inclusion co-ordinator, for Nancy she carried out a level five QQI course and had worked in the sector for over twenty years. The early years educators both detailed the musical equipment available in the setting, such as shakers, xylophones, maracas, toy guitars and microphones. Emily stated that she uses a smart speaker and phone to play music in the setting. Nancy described that music is used mostly as a learning tool for cross-curricular integration in the classroom and is practiced at the end of the day through singing, movement and free play using musical instruments; Emily described music in her setting to be generally initiated by the educators and occasionally used in children's free play according to the early years educator.

Emily discussed how she found it difficult to devise music ideas to promote music education in the early years settings and stressed the need for guidance on music education, especially innovative and cost-effective solutions.

> *I wish Aistear had more ideas for music it's very difficult to come up with ideas or figure out if we're using music in the right way. I'm quite comfortable using music in the setting, but I feel we get very bored of doing the same thing, day in, day out. I would use lesson plans, but they're very expensive and most of them seem targeted at older children. (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

Nancy argued that she felt support was lacking from the curriculum framework, leading educators to feel at a loss when it came to implementing music education in the classroom; to reflect this, in my resource packs, I will ensure that there are user friendly ideas in the resource packs. Nancy highlighted their experience with lesson plans, as above, they believed many were expensive and went on to say they didn't understand how to create their own lesson plans for music.

> *I wouldn't know where to start if I had to make a lesson plan for music, I'd love to be shown how to do it, and be shown some simple musical ideas to bring*

music in throughout the day. Some sample lesson plans, and a method of making a music lesson plan, tips on using music with children who have sensory or communicative difficulties are all things that would be hugely beneficial to bring more music into the setting. (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022).

The financial role of resources plays a large role in accessibility for early years educators. Giving early years educators the tools to create their own lesson plans will play a large role in the resource packs. This will be facilitated through a template inclusive of guiding questions to aid the early years educator. In one of the interviews Emily also touched on the use of music with individuals who experience sensory and communicative difficulties; one of the resource packs will reflect this and offer guidance on offering music education to children with additional needs.

The interviews provided a space for themes to clearly emerge. The main themes that emerged from the interviews are presented in the below table along with the subthemes.

Emerging Theme	**The Role of the Learning Environment and Enculturation**
	The impact of a child's environment on their learning
	Understanding children's diverse backgrounds and promoting a flexible learning environment
	The impact music has on the learning environment
Emerging Theme	**Nurturing Children's Music Experiences within the Early Years**
	Music as a teaching or learning tool and to facilitate cross-curricular integration
	Planning and resources
	Facilitating music experiences in their own right
	Confidence building for educators and making links to prior learning
Emerging Theme	**Musical Play and Spontaneous Music Making**
	The presence of music within play
	Vocalisations
	Sound Exploration
	Challenges

Table 8; Breakdown of Emerging Themes

Phase Three: Curating Pedagogy for the three- to five-year-olds

The resource packs were directly informed by fieldwork carried out for this research study, initially by the surveys and interviews and then honed according to the observations. The survey provided a great deal of information regarding the types of facilities and equipment available to early years educators. The survey also gave a clear picture of each early years educators past and present involvement with music, both inside and out of the setting. The survey asked what type of content would be helpful to early years educators. This information, paired with the more in-depth interview content helped to curate the resource packs, some final tweaks were made after the observational phase. The five resource packs are as follows;

- Found sounds
- Rhythm and Percussion
- Dynamics
- Finding your voice
- Fostering a musical environment

Phase Four: Musicking in Early Years Settings; Returning to the Classroom

Twenty-nine observations were carried out over a two-week period. Throughout the observational period, I aimed to determine how music is used in the classroom in order to inform the resource packs. The observational period provided a space to delve further into the themes that emerged from the surveys and interviews. The observations are displayed in the below table.

Date	**Observation**

08/12/2021	Annie arrives at school today saying, "…Look teacher, look what I learned today…" the educator looked at Annie with excitement saying "…What can you do? Show me!". Annie *whistles* and says, "…Da showed me how yesterday! He can whistle loads of songs…". Conor says, "…I can whistle too, watch…", he whistles. Penny interrupts, "…I can't whistle, but I can click my fingers". The educator said, "…That's brilliant everyone! Annie and Conor, can you whistle Jingle Bells? Penny, you could click while they are whistling…". The children try this out, once they finish the chorus, Annie says, "…Okay, that's enough it's too hard…"
08/12/2021	While the children were colouring, Laura began singing a nursery rhyme; …" Icy toes, chilly nose, Wintertime is here- my teeth chatter, what's the matter? Wintertime is here…" (tune: Jingle Bells). Katie, Niamh and Sean had all joined in by the end. The educator encouraged this, saying "…That's lovely singing- well done! How about we all sing it together?" The educator starts the song, most of the children join in, except for three (two are learning English as a second language, and one child is pre-verbal).
08/12/2021	Five minutes before the end of the session, the children began to put on their shoes and coats. The educator began to sing an end of day song; "…It's time to end the day, it's time to end the day, it's time to shout a big hooray, it's time to end the day…" (tune: The Farmer in the Dell)
09/12/2021	While children are completing jigsaws, colouring, filling pegboards or threading reels, they often will sing to themselves, hum or tap the table. It appears that the children subconsciously use this as a tool for concentration.

09/12/2021	Once the majority of the children arrive to school, the educator sings a song with children, who mumble along, most seeming eager to get to free play, eyeing up their favourite toys; "…Good morning, everyone, good morning, everyone, good morning, everyone, are you ready for some fun? Stand up and turn around, then sit down on the ground. Let's do a great big clap. Put your hands into your lap…" (tune: Shoo Fly Don't Bother Me) Children, once finished singing, run for their favourite toys and become absorbed in free play.
09/12/2021	Children are seated just before lunch time. The educator starts a conversation with them; "…Ok so boys and girls, the last few weeks, we've been talking all about Winter and Christmas time. Today we're going to start learning songs to get ready for Santa! We'll have to sing these songs every day until our Christmas holidays and then we will record a video for all the mammies and daddies!" The children sing through the following songs: Jingle Bells, When Santa Got Stuck Up the Chimney, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Santa Clause is Coming to Town, and a few other winter themed nursery rhymes. The educator sings the songs, children join in at times, however, are not fully familiar with them yet.
10/12/2021	As children explore the setting during free play, they will frequently sing songs, or nursery rhymes, or sometimes even make up their own songs
10/12/2021	Throughout free play, rhythmic musical patterns are observed these include clapping, banging, tapping, knocking. Pitched patterns are also observed,

	including imitation of playing an instrument, making sound effects for their games, and spontaneous vocalisations
10/12/2021	During free play, Tom, Conor and Peter play with cars and figurines. English is Tom's second language. Tom provides various sound effects for their age, such as sirens, car noises, beeping, etc. He also provides melodic and reactive "…oohs…" and "…ahhs…", gasps and sighs. Peter has stepped back from their game and keenly observes Tom. After about a minute, he joins in again with a chorus of crashes and bangs. These sounds made by Tom and Peter are created using Tom and Peter are created using vocalisations, physical body sounds and using non-musical toys.
10/12/2021	During "music time", the educator puts on music through a speaker. She uses a specific playlist, which has been put together over the course of a few years. Children sing and dance along to the songs, children who don't want to sing or dance grab an instrument from the music box and explore the various sounds while playing along to the music.
10/12/2021	The setting uses many songs surrounding their monthly theme; for example the theme during the observations was Christmas and Winter; children and educators sang various songs in relation to the theme
13/12/2021	After "tidy-up time", children are seated for lunch. During this time, the educator goes through numbers and colours with them. The children sing through 3 songs which are used as learning tools; ABC song, 1-2-3-4-5 Once I caught a fish alive, I can sing a rainbow. Flashcards are used along with the

	songs in order to encourage learning further. These visual aids used with musical aids show a multidisciplinary teaching method and cross-curricular learning.
13/12/2021	At the end of the day, the children were starting to argue over things like sharing, wanting to play with other people go home, etc. The educator decided that the children would do a mindfulness activity. This included instrumental music, colouring and a story. The music signalled to the children that mindfulness time was beginning the children became quiet and got a soft mat to sit on the floor. Some engaged in the colouring, some just lay down and listened to the music and the story.
13/12/2021	It starts to rain outside, the educator says, "look boys and girls, it's raining", she then starts to sing "it's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring…" the children join in
14/12/2021	One of the educators brought in bells, the children played along to Christmas songs with the bells
14/12/2021	During free play, Laura, Katie, Annie and Niamh played together. Laura outlined to the others that she was the judge and showed them where the stage was. Katie, Annie and Niamh lined up and took turns singing (with movement). They sang Jingle Bells, Let it Go and We Don’t Talk About Bruno. Laura decided the winner was Katie, because Encanto is her new favourite movie.

14/12/2021	There is one non-verbal child in the setting. Songs and sound exploration are used to encourage speech. Ben prompts this by vocalising “head” (sound like “heh” which prompts the educator to sing “head, shoulders, knees and toes”. Various songs are used, and Ben’s speech is starting to improve saying words such as “Mam”, “Dad”, “Peppa”, “bin”, “what”, and “bye”.
14/12/2021	During circle time, the educators lead the children through a series of songs that encourage learning, the learning songs covered the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, shapes and months of the year
15/12/2021	During “music time” children use bells as percussive accompaniment while singing through Christmas songs. As soon as children are handed a set of bells, they start playing them. The educator repeatedly says “shhh”. Annie and Penny put their hands over their ears and say it’s too loud. Another educator says, “okay, bells on the floor and hands on your lap”. Once everyone is ready, children can pick up bells again.
15/12/2021	After free play, educator announces that it is tidy up time. While cleaning up, the educator and children sing: “clean up, clean up, everybody, everywhere, clean up, clean up, now it’s time to do your share”. This shows the use of music to ease transitions.
15/12/2021	Music was frequently used to ease transitions between activities, and also the transition between school and home e.g., good morning songs, goodbye songs, clean up songs etc.

	Educators often play music during activities or at lunch time, often to create a sense of calm in the setting through gentle instrumentals, and on the flip side, music is used to energise children e.g., at tidy up time, or when children are losing interest in finishing a task.
16/12/2021	The educator was asking the children questions about recognising colours/ numbers/ seasons etc. The children were not engaging- to energise them, the educator played "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" (a version that progressively speeds up) to energise the children, followed by Baby Shark. To ease back into learning, they sing: "First you make your fingers click, then you stamp your feet, both hands slap your knees, and clap on the beat". Children are clearly more focused to engage with learning materials.
16/12/2021	When it came to tidy up time, there were more toys out than usual. To motivate the children and to encourage the tidy up to be done quickly, the educator played the Mission Impossible theme song. The children thought it was very funny and some pretended to be spies while they tidied up.
17/12/2021	During movement time, children danced to songs. Songs such as Baby Shark, Stand Up-Sit Down, Shake My Sillies, Row Your Boat, Head-Shoulders-Knees-and-Toes, If You're Happy and You Know It. Children copied the educator's actions and movements to the rhythm and sang along to parts of the music. Music played using a phone and Bluetooth speaker.
20/12/2021	During free play, some of the children took out music equipment and began to explore sound. The children were using shakers and tambourines. One of the educators complained about the noise. After 2-3 minutes of using the

	instruments, the educator said “okay, ye put those away – too noisy”, she helped the group tidy up and redirected them to another toy.
20/12/2021	During music time the educator guided the children through the songs they had learned for Christmas. Once they had practiced, the educator set up a phone to record the children. The children sang through the songs and performed appropriate actions while the educator mouthed the words and demonstrated the actions.
21/12/2021	During free play, the children’s noise levels had elevated. In order to get their attention, the educator sang the first line of a winter song the children join in. “Icy toes, chilly nose, wintertime is here, my teeth chatter, what’s the matter? Wintertime is here!”. The educator then said “hands on top…” to which the children responded, “everybody stop” putting their hands on their heads. Other call and responses used in the classroom: 1,2,3 all eyes on me… 1,2,3 all eyes on you, To infinity… And beyond, who lives in a pineapple under the sea?... SpongeBob SquarePants!
21/12/2021	Children at times can be negatively affected by particular sensory stimulants. Today Annie said, “teacher, I wish the noise would stop”, when some of the children were playing with noisy instruments.
21/12/2021	Music is used in the classroom to encourage movement

Table 9; Observations

The emergent themes from phase one and two of the fieldwork were evident within the observation period. The learning environment was of clear importance for music in preschool settings, this was shown through music’s role in structuring the day, music as a learning tool,

music for easing transitions, music use for behaviour management, and using music to set the tone or crate a positive atmosphere within the learning environment. Spontaneous music making was observed throughout the time spent at the setting. This happened during unstructured activities, i.e., free play, and also when children were engaging in a task for example while doing a jigsaw, arts and crafts, peg boards, reels, playdough etc. I found various examples spontaneous music making, such as.

- Singing songs and nursery rhymes, or improvised songs
- Humming
- Whistling
- Rhythmic patterns (clapping, banging, tapping, knocking)
- Pitched patterns (imitating, pretend play, reactions, providing sound effects for various activities)
- Dancing

Music was frequently used in the classroom as a learning tool. This was seen mostly as a memory tool for learning things like the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, shapes, months, etc. Music is used in the classroom to complement themes linked to Aistear. Finally, it was heavily used to encourage speech and vocabulary, particularly with a child who communicates non-verbally.

Finally, music was used in a general sense in the daily timetable of the setting, for example;

- To create a sense of structure and in easing transitions
- Background music during snack time, and occasionally during specific activities
- To energise children or to create a sense of calm within the setting

- In tandem with movement

The theme of nurturing children's music experiences in early years was also present. Structured music time was also a large part of the daily timetable at the setting. Early years educators and children frequently sang songs and nursery rhymes. Many were around the theme of Christmas (due to the time of year), others were in relation to prompted moments. Children used bells during Christmas themed activities such as stories and circle time. Children were encouraged to use music box equipment (shakers and tambourines) along to music or while singing nursery rhymes and also to stimulate movement in the classroom. Observations showed children's emergent learning in relation to music, music activities present in the setting and music as a learning tool.

The period spent observing in the preschool dedicated time to actively examine music in an early year setting and provided an opportunity to see the resource packs curated during phase three come to life and aided a space to make the necessary changes in order for them to be as useful as possible.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the fieldwork element of this research project. The chapter gives detail on the fieldwork stages, survey, interview, resource pack curation and observation. This chapter considers the profiles of Irish early childhood care and education early years educators, and also gives a profile of an early years preschool setting in the south of Ireland. Data analysis is presented in this chapter, and findings are included throughout, presenting the core themes for discussion in chapter five;

- The role of music for enculturation and the learning environment
- Nurturing children's music experiences in the preschool setting
- Musical play and spontaneous music making in preschool settings.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter discusses themes that emerged during the fieldwork. The themes included are as follows:

- The role of the learning environment and enculturation
- Nurturing children's music experiences within the early years
- Musical play and spontaneous music making

The discussion draws on literature and data that emerged during the fieldwork.

The role of the learning environment and enculturation

The first theme will explore the role of the learning environment and enculturation. The role of the learning environment is emphasised throughout literature. Children's musical behaviours and experiences are said to be influenced by their learning environments. Young writes on this stating:

> *"children are embedded in sociocultural environments, and their musical actions and experiences are therefore influenced by and contingent upon their environment" (Young, 2016, p. 4).*

Bond further supports this idea,

> *"Regardless of the nature-nurture debate, music educators must focus on what the can affect: environmental influences on musical ability in early childhood" (Bond, 2011).*

Throughout the fieldwork process, the role of the environment was considered to be of vital importance for music provision. In an interview, Nancy discusses the learning environment,

> *Children are a product of their environment. Children learn and grow through exploring the world around them, mirroring the people around them and through the opportunities and experiences available to them (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022).*

Nancy highlighted the importance of learning through experience and exploration in the learning environment, in another interview, Emily further discussed this theme, making connections to Reggio Emilia,

> *Reggio Emilia is an approach that sparks so much joy for me, I love the idea that children, their families, their local surroundings and also their educators are considered in the learning experiences. It makes it so personal, and reflects a lot of the goals that are set out in Aistear (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

During the interview, Emily stressed the need for early learning experiences to be tailored, and personalised to suit the needs and wants of the children and the families in their settings. Something that was striking in the interview and research, was the reflection of educator backgrounds in the learning experience; making the educator much more connected to the musical interactions and content within an educational context.

The theme of enculturation reoccurred throughout the fieldwork phases and in literature. Morrison, et al. define enculturation as,

> *The conscious and unconscious acquisition of culturally fixed understandings has been labelled enculturation…Musical enculturation is the natural development of music schemata – rule-based frameworks within which an individual interprets what he or she perceives – through the shaping influences of the environment (Morrison, et al., 2008, p. 119).*

During an interview, Emily considered the significance of the physical environment for children, linking the physical environment to enculturation. Emily discusses:

> *Children are so influenced by their worlds around them, we want the music to be a reflection of our values and beliefs. The learning and engagement with the setting helps them to learn how to act in society, and instils morals and values- the same would go for music. When we are using music in the setting, we try to use music that is appropriate and familiar, first and foremost. We want the children's parents and caregivers to recognise it so that there is a continuation*

> *of learning in the home. We don't want it to be something that is overly difficult for the child, or the adults to learn! I think that's what has been so off-putting in the lesson plans I've come across, I'm afraid of the songs (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

Emily highlights that early learning experiences should be all-encompassing and consider the whole child, music should be reflected in this method of learning. Music education and experiences in the classroom should reflect the children, families, educators, local community and extended cultures; supporting learning through enculturation. Emily implied that it is optimal for the music to be recognisable, and also that they find the tasks set out in some lesson plans challenging.

Nancy highlights that children have various methods to express themselves, a prominent one being through music.

> *Children express themselves in so many different ways. Even just considering the group in this setting- you can tell that some children are happy by their tone of voice, others by the activities they undertake, and others might skip or sing their way around the setting. It's very important to understand this, and to be mindful of children's various learning methods and techniques (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022.*

During the fieldwork, it became clear that the environment and the process of enculturation must be of paramount consideration when planning and facilitating music in the early years, and also in order to foster spontaneous musical creativity. The learning environment was consistently mentioned, "limited space to move to music" (Jane, survey participant, April 2021), and "it's hard to know what the room should include for music" (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022). Tan (2014) discusses the process of enculturation;

> *Enculturation refers to the acquisition of one's own culture, including its values, behaviours, beliefs, understandings, social norms, customs, rituals, and*

> *languages… It can be thought of as a socialisation process whereby family members, peers, and other members of society help people learn normative social standards… individuals become "insiders" of their own cultures, gain a sense of identity, and are then able to fit into and survive in their societies. Enculturation occurs as a result of both conscious and unconscious conditioning, through formal and informal means, and is often regarded as an ongoing, lifelong process. (Tan, 2014, p. 393)*

Tan continues to discuss musical enculturation detailing how people acquire the ideas and values of their musical cultures through various contexts;

> *From infancy through adulthood, humans are musically enculturated into the musical worlds of the cultures they are born into, grow up in, and live in. Children often form their musical identities due to initial exposure in their families; as they mature, the web of musical influences gradually increases in complexity. Through the shaping of the environment and active participation in the social rituals of music making, as well as formal and informal instruction, humans develop culturally specific frameworks and musical schemata through which they perceive music. They assimilate the values and ideals of their musical cultures, including their expressive and aesthetic norms, as well as the use of music in different social, cultural, and political contexts. (Tan, 2014, p. 394).*

According to Tan (2014), studies have found that musical enculturation occurs through active engagement with one's culture, musical speech, technology and media. Tan continues, outlining that musical enculturation can contribute to one's "value and long-term commitment to making music" (Tan, 2014, p. 394). The article also acknowledges links between musical enculturation and musical memory, Tan also points out studies that have shown enhanced musical memory of one's own culture and suggests that enculturation can influence "the ways in which humans process and recognise musical information" (Tan, 2014, p. 394).

<u>Nurturing children's music experiences within the early years</u>

The second theme presented in this chapter discusses how educators and settings can nurture children's music experiences within early years settings. Educators often face the dilemma of a lack of classroom resources, ideas, and equipment for the learning environment (Kelly, 1998). Throughout my fieldwork, practitioners repeatedly requested an influx of "equipment", "songs" and "instruments". These elements are all beneficial in the provision of music at early years, however educators also highlighted the need for further training, one educator stated that they believed it would be valuable to access "further training in how to use music to fully benefit the children" (Diana, survey participant, April 2021). Throughout the fieldwork process, it was clear that educators had an understanding of the benefits music has during early childhood, however in many cases, educators expressed that they are without proper supports to facilitate developmentally appropriate music education.

> *I would like to have further training in how to use music to fully benefit the children in my care (Julie, survey participant, April 2021).*

Teacher education CPD courses could be utilised to gain further music training. During the interview process educators were asked about CPD courses, Emily recognised the value and importance of the courses, however was conflicted due to the financial strain and lack of recognition of these courses.

> *I have done a few CPD courses, but they are very expensive, and there is no financial merit to doing them. You receive additional money if you complete the level seven early years studies course, but there's nothing for doing CPD; no incentive, no financial gain, no thanks. When an inspector visits, they have one quick glance through the certs and barely even commend you. Not even if you go on to do a masters or anything! (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

Emily continues to discuss CPD courses, pointing out their practical value.

> *CPD can be helpful all the same, they can give you valuable skills and ideas. Even just getting the insights of other people in the profession can be of immense*

> *help. There are a few free ones too, and some cheaper ones. It was one great positive from COVID, having many of these CPD courses available online (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

As discussed in chapter three, observation is an essential tool within the learning environment. During the fieldwork process, the importance of observation, and how insightful it can be was highlighted. For example, during the observation period, I noted;

> *During free-play, Tom, Conor and Peter play with cars and figurines. English is Tom's second language. Tom provides various sound effects for their game, such as sirens, car noises, beeping, etc. He also provides melodic and reactive "…oohs…" and "ahhs…", gasps, and sighs. Peter has stepped back from the game and keenly observes Tom. After about a minute, he joins in again with a chorus of crashes and bangs. These sounds made by Tom and Peter are created using vocalisations, physical body sounds and using non-musical toys (observation notes, 10th December 2021).*

This observation reveals the many contexts where musical behaviour can be present in the early years, the educators or children may not have identified these behaviours during free play as musical without engaging in observation, however these pitched and rhythmic sounds exhibit as musical behaviour. These musical notions allowed communication between children who speak different languages, encouraging social, language and emotional development. The observation period also highlighted opportunities for adult intervention. It also became clear that adult intervention can either enhance, or extinguish child's play, including musical behaviours or musical play, for example, the below observation presented a negative influence on children's musical play;

> *During free play, some of the children took out music equipment and began to explore sound. The children were using shakers and tambourines. One of the educators complained about the noise. After 2-3 minutes of using the instruments, the educator said "okay, put those away – too noisy", she helped the group tidy up and redirected them to another toy (observation notes 20th December 2021).*

This observation was interesting to witness, as the educator displayed signs of being overwhelmed by the music activity. There were no other comments made by children or educators about the noise, however it exhibited, in real time, that not all educators feel comfortable with noisy play in the setting. This identifies as a criticism of practice, as the children could have further explored sound if they had been allowed to continue their play. Bond (2011), highlights the importance of exposure to open-ended music activities, children should be given opportunities open-ended musical exposure to explore sound. This concept was clear during the observation period, when children were left to explore through open-ended activities, these experiences do not require a single objective, goal, or answer. Open-ended activities support creativity and guide children through a natural discovery of musical behaviours.

In contrast to the rare occurrence of negative adult-intervention, children's voices were abundantly clear. Children showed such joy and enthusiasm when they shared something with the rest of the setting. For example, see the observation below;

> *During free play, Laura, Katie, Annie and Niamh played together. Laura outlined to the others that she was the judge and showed them where the stage was. Katie, Annie and Niamh lined up and took turns singing (with movement). They sand Jingle Bells, Let it Go and We Don't Talk About Bruno. Laura decided the winner was Katie, because Encanto is her new favourite movie. Katie, then told the early years educator that she was the winner and wanted to sing for the other children. The early years educator gathered the children around, and Katie sang a verse and chorus. Once finished, everyone clapped and cheered. Katie gave a big smile. It is clear that she feels content, comfortable and respected in the setting (observation notes, 14th December 2021).*

This observation highlighted the importance of facilitating a setting where children are comfortable to share their creations, should they wish. Observation is a vital tool to inform and

develop a music curriculum in the early years. Bresler (2021) supports the use of observation to support pedagogy, stating;

> *"To establish pedagogy requires observation of students in order to pinpoint problems and suggest remedies" (Bresler, 2021, p. 69) page 7*

Early years settings are not provided with a set curriculum, but rather curriculum frameworks, Aistear and Síolta; therefore it is important that educators develop a pedagogy and music curriculum in their setting. Greenhalgh discusses the importance of planning for music in early years settings.

> *Planning both long and short term, is a vital element in supporting and advancing children's music knowledge and skills, and is a process that begins with careful consideration of the areas of learning to be covered by each group of children"*

Greenhalgh continues outlining the benefits of planning and evaluation, stating;

> *Identifying objectives in the short term and over time is important from a preparation perspective, as this gives clarity to the design of the curriculum ensuring that all aspects of musical learning are included in an appropriate and cohesive manner. This not only clarifies the progression of children's learning but also, most importantly, acts as the framework for the necessary assessment, reflection and evaluation of the programme in terms of the: a) children's learning and progression b) content and concepts covered c) approaches to teach and learning used d) leader's/additional adult's personal professional development e) available resources" (Greenhalgh, 2018, p. 53)*

Aistear and Síolta promote an emergent curriculum, which involves children's ideas and choices as they navigate through the world around them (National Council for for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) , 2009). Nxumalo, et al., (2018) outline how an emergent curriculum supports educators and children.

> *Emergent curriculum advocates that children's ideas and processes of meaning-making are critical for the unfolding of curricular processes in which children*

and educators are collaborators in the co-construction of knowledge (Nxumalo, et al., 2018, p. 433).

Emily discussed the emergent curriculum used within their setting;

> *We like to see what the children enjoy or show interests in, and then progress lessons from there. It seems to be the best way to extend their learning. To promote an emergent curriculum, we look at our interests, both children's and early years educators, we also examine the child's developmental progress and needs, and also the environment, both physical and social. We then will take into account the setting, community, family and cultural values, all while observing spontaneous events; these are often used as teachable moments and learning can be extended from there (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

Fieldwork observations presented examples of the use of music with the emergent curriculum within the setting,

> *It starts to rain outside, the educator says, "look boys and girls, it's raining", she then starts to sing "it's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring…" the children join in (observation notes, 13th December 2021).*

> *Annie arrives into school today saying, "…Look teacher, look what I learned today…" the EYP looked at Annie with excitement saying "…What can you do? Show me!...". Annie whistles and says, "…Da showed me how yesterday! He can whistle loads of songs…". Conor says, "…I can whistle too, watch…", he whistles. Penny interrupts, "…I can't whistle, but I can click my fingers". The EYP said, "…That's brilliant everyone! Annie and Conor, can you whistle Jingle Bells? Penny, you could click while they are whistling…". The children try this out, once they finish the chorus, Annie says, "…Okay, that's enough it's too hard…"(observation notes, 8th December 2021).*

Based on the observation period during the fieldwork, much of the daily routine in the setting is child-led and play-based. This was particularly noticeable in the mornings; children came into the setting and were allowed to immediately begin to play with whatever items they

wanted. Most materials were within children's reach, and they could interact with a wide range of multi-disciplinary tools and equipment. Music instruments were also present. Children had access to percussion instruments and tuned instruments. The opinions on child-led musicking varied between the early years educators, while educators appreciated the value of music, some considered music in the classroom to be intriguing, other educators found the process to be overwhelming.

> *It's interesting to see how they interact with the instruments during play-time (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

> *The noise is a bit too much during play-time, it makes the other children shout during play-time, and I can't hear myself think (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022).*

Facilitating music in the early years setting can be daunting for educators. Providing educators with resources and techniques to manage classroom music and noise can support educators to confidently facilitate music in the early years setting minimising feelings of overwhelm or anxiousness. In Ireland, there is no concrete curriculum for early years education; settings use curriculum framework in order to curate their own unique curriculum based on the children and families in their setting and to reflect their community. During the observational period of the fieldwork, children engaged in free-play from when they arrived at the setting until snack-time. Free-play allowed children to engage in whatever activities they wished, after snack-time, children generally engaged in a teacher-led activity, sometimes this was music, other times it was an activity such as puzzles, reel-threading, or sensory play. During teacher-led music activities, the main focus was expanding song or rhyme repertoire, encouraging movement through dancing along to music, and engaging with percussive instruments while moving to the music (i.e. using shakers while dancing along to a song). Within all of the activities throughout the day, children's learning was scaffolded by other peers and the educators.

Music was observed to be used fluidly for cross-curricular integration throughout the daily routine during fieldwork. Music was seen as a memory tool, to aid intellectual learning, to help transitions, and also to enhance an atmosphere such as concentration, focus, relaxation, etc. Educators keenly use observation to further develop cross curricular integration and to plan developmentally appropriate activities for children. Observation serves as a tool to inform early years educators of children's needs, preferences and progression. This can then supplement and advance future learning and development. Niland writes on the importance of observation for music education.

> *Observation of young children's free musical play has shown considerable evidence of skill development through exploration (Niland, 2009, p. 18).*

Assessment within the early years setting was also carried out through observation. These observations consisted of various methods, such as checklists, anecdotal, narrative, time-samples and work samples. The observations gave the educators a sense of children's developmental progression, and their preferred social circles, they also informed them of the children's interests.

> *We use observations for our assessments, and we follow various methods. The observations give us an idea of each child's progression, and also shows us what the child likes and enjoys. It is a great way for us to connect to the child's interests from home and incorporate things they enjoy into our day-to-day activities (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022).*

Musical Play and Spontaneous Music Making

The final theme presented in this chapter considers musical play and spontaneous music making. During the fieldwork, educators highlighted the use of music in play, they established the importance of children spending a considerable length of time within a setting in order to maximise benefits and enjoyment.

> *You will always hear music amongst the children whilst they play. Sometimes it takes them a few weeks for them to settle into the setting before they are comfortable to use music spontaneously (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

Research participants, clearly highlighted the importance of play. One participant stated that they believe "it is extremely important in day to day teaching" (Lisa, survey participant, April 2021) and regarded play as "an essential element of early learning and development that offers opportunities for learning and teaching for both the early years educator and the child" (Diane, survey participant, April 2021). Another participant highlighted how music works as a learning tool, they expressed how "as a special needs assistant, I play songs to children during circle time as a way of learning e.g. weather, days of the week, months of the year and the seasons" (Jessica, survey participant, April 2021). Nancy, one of the early years educators interviewed discussed the emergence of music during play time.

> *I consistently see music stemming from child's play, sometimes it's really obvious; children play around with instruments or sing songs during free play. Other times it's subtle, such as singing a lullaby to a doll, clapping games like pat-a-cake, singing a theme song of a television show or singing and tapping out loud while they are immersed in their own play (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022.*

During an interview, the early years educator frequently cited the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding (Bruner's theory). The Zone of Proximal Development one of Vygotsky's most renowned theories, relates to the concept of an early years educator matching tasks to children's various abilities. Bruner's theory of "scaffolding" relates directly to ZPD.

> *There is a huge emphasis on learning about early years theorists in level five and six training. During my training, I found it really interesting, but sometimes it can be difficult to translate it into everyday practice. A theory that I use constantly is ZPD and scaffolding. We use this in the setting to support*

> *children's learning. It helps them to achieve tasks with the help of us or their friends. The scaffolding becomes less and less as their zone of proximal development grows (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

Ghirotto and Mazzoni (2013) outline the adult's role in an early years setting, stating;

> *For children, relationships with adults are a space for receiving protection and support for self-flourishing: the adult's role is to scaffold the child's autonomy as an essential element of his or her own flourishing (Ghirotto & Mazzoni, 2013, pp. 301-302).*

Kondo further discusses the process of scaffolding, and understanding a learners' zone of proximal development.

> *An essential element of scaffolding in this study is that, through social interaction, participants negotiate or compromise by constantly striving for a shared view of the situation within the learners' zone of proximal development (Kondo, 2020, p. 269).*

A thorough understanding of a child's zone of proximal development supported by scaffolding is a central tool in order to facilitate developmentally appropriate music experiences within an early years context.

Music is used as a form of natural expression within the preschool setting. Children demonstrate spontaneous singing and musicking throughout the day. This was noticed especially during dramatic play and times of deep focus.

> *Áine is sitting at a table completing a jigsaw puzzle. While working out where the pieces go, she hums slowly, monitoring each piece as she looks for the right one. The slow tempo humming continues for a few minutes. Once she has the majority of the puzzle finished and can see a clear path to finishing it, her tempo increases, the tune becomes quick and lively. Once finished, child x melodically vocalises the words 'ta-da'. Áine is very content with their work!* (Observation, December 2021).

Natural expression of children's thoughts and feelings is evident through the use of music in the classroom. Music can be used to support a feeling or evoke emotions. Children also use music as a form of self-soothing or regulation. According to the early years educator during our interview, music is used consistently to reflect a particular atmosphere in the early years setting.

> *We consistently hear children humming and singing during times of happiness and excitement. On the flip side of this, when a child is feeling sad or frustrated, music is often used to cheer them up, or to help them relax (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

> *We see various reactions from children to music. At times children will become energised by the music, we use this during tidy-up time! At other times, we play specific music to calm the children, and at other times we will observe varied reactions amongst them! (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022).*

Exploration and experimentation have been deemed as essential elements for music learning, however seem to be disregarded in some early years settings, educators who took part in this research study discussed "learning songs", their need for "a music teacher" and the use of "familiar songs/music" to signal transitions, different parts of the daily routine, and as a learning tool. There seems to be an unintentional focus on the end product. Shifting the focus from product to process will be beneficial in the child's overall musical development and experience.

> *We follow structured methods for music in the preschool mostly. We learn songs for various themes, and use music as a tool for transition through the daily routine and as a resource for learning (Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

> *When we facilitate exploration or experimentation around music, sometimes it can be noisy, but generally we do see amazing things happen, but we are just a*

bit afraid of the noise! (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022).

Pecaski-McLennan (2010) promotes open-ended activities that are focused on the process rather than the product, highlighting many advantages;

> *Open-ended activities that focus on the process, and not necessarily the end product, provide children with authentic, differentiated, and holistic methods of exploration and learning. Fostering a willing- ness to creatively engage within an aesthetic problem- solving process that allows children to select, represent, and explain their thoughts and actions will help them develop skills necessary for success in an unknown future (Pecaski-McLennan, 2010, p. 81).*

Children demonstrate spontaneous musicking through their play. Shehan-Campbell discusses this;

> *"Clearly, music happens to children. Some of it may be hidden, untapped, and yet spinning within them. Yet much of it is "visible" and surely audible… Children think aloud through music. They socialise, vent emotions, invent and uphold their rituals of play, and entertain themselves through music… Their music can be "seen" and heard in their playful behaviours, some of it a realisation of the songs in their heads. It is almost as if children exude music (Shehan Campbell, 2010, p. 4).*

Fieldwork interviews and observations highlighted spontaneous musicking and musical play within the early years setting. Emily discusses musical play,

> *You will always hear music amongst the children while they play… It's interesting to see how they interact with the instruments during play-time Emily, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 11th January 2022).*

Nancy further discussed her experience with music and play, outlining the various guises musical play can take,

> *I consistently see music stemming from child's play, sometimes it's really obvious; children play around with instruments or sing songs during free play. Other times it's subtle, such as singing a lullaby to a doll, clapping games like*

> *pat-a-cake, singing a theme song of a television show or singing and tapping out loud while they are immersed in their own play (Nancy, fieldwork interview, early years educator, 13th January 2022).*

Observations also highlighted the various forms of musical play and spontaneous musicking,

> *As children explore the setting during free play, they will frequently sing songs, or nursery rhymes, or sometimes even make up their own songs…Throughout free play, rhythmic musical patterns are observed these include clapping, banging, tapping, knocking. Pitched patterns are also observed, including imitation of playing an instrument, making sound effects for their games, and spontaneous vocalisations (observation notes 10th December 2021).*

Spontaneous vocalisations are also present within the setting,

> *As children explore the setting during free play, they will frequently sing songs, or nursery rhymes, or sometimes even make up their own songs (observation notes, 9th December 2021).*

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses themes that emerged during the fieldwork process of this study. The themes include, the role of the learning environment and enculturation, nurturing children's music experiences within the early years, and musical play and spontaneous music making. The themes emerged are explored based on fieldwork findings and also literary sources.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

International and national literature and research supports that music plays a valuable role in promoting cross-curricular integration, encourages development in the areas of physical, intellectual, language, emotional, and social. It is also evident that music can be used to reflect the Aistear themes; well-being, exploring and thinking, identity and belonging and communication. Through researching literature, observations, surveys and interviews, it is clear that music plays a large part in children's lives during the early years.

I initially chose to examine the role of music in early years settings, due to my background as a musician and as a private music teacher. My interest in the areas deepened further during the summer of 2021, when I chose to train as an early years educator. Since beginning to work in the sector, I have encountered the benefits of music use in early years settings, and have witnessed the musical abilities, potential and interest children have from this young age.

The observations I carried out on children's musical activities within an early years settings, and also the thematic discussions shows the diverse ways in which children experience and engage with music during early childhood. Although many themes that emerged during the fieldwork phase of this research study resonate with international and national literature on children's musicality, musical experiences and cultures, other themes brought new perspectives and insights into the musicking of children in the early years, and how best it can be supported.

The research study exposes a closer understanding of the inner workings of music within an early years context. Music is a fundamental element of children's worlds; however, it was clear that there is a disconnect between children's natural interest in musicking, and the comfort level of early years educators. Music during the early years is the foundation for musical experiences throughout a person's whole life. Due to the circumstances when I initially began my research, I focused on early years educators, as due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, it was not possible to undertake research in a physical classroom. Early years educators are the cornerstone of children's early learning experiences and development, this includes children's musical

development. Throughout the research study, it became clear that there needs to be more of a focus on the emerging musical interests and actions of children. Early years educators could act as the bridge between parents and children to the outside community and musical experiences available to each individual community.

During the research study, I discovered that the Aistear and Siolta frameworks, and early years training are steeped in child development, theorists, child psychology, the focus on the whole child, holistic learning, and play. While creative arts are mentioned in the Aistear framework and available on some degree programmes, there seems to be an absence of clear guidance on how to foster creativity and musicality in the information available to early years educators with QQI level five and six training. Some degree level courses include modules on arts education, for example, UCC offers a module which studies creative practice in music, MTU also offer a module on Arts education, MIC have a module available on the creative arts, and DCU also have a module on creativity which focuses on music. The research during the fieldwork showed that many research participants did not engage with music during their training to become an early years educator. During the interview phase, early years educators stressed that they felt a disconnect between their level of comfort in facilitating music in the setting, and children's musical wants and needs.

This research study highlights that music specialist expertise is required to support educators in all areas of music education. This would help educators to feel more comfortable and confident, and would also support the child, allowing for maximum musical experiences, potential and opportunities to be met.

Recommendations

Upon reflection of this research study, I feel that there are some recommendations available that would support educators and children musically in the early years context.

- Continuing professional development should be incentivised for early years educators. Currently it can be costly, and many courses are not recognised by governing bodies. Offering subsidies, or incentives for these courses would encourage early years educators to engage with these courses and keep early years educators up to date with advancements and ideas for musical integration in the classroom.
- Music training should be integrated throughout early years training. Rather than one module, music should be a continuous part of the training, to allow early years educators to build on their musical skills, resources and confidence.
- Since music education can be a performative task, supports should be put in place for early years educators. This support would encourage early years educators' post-qualification to continue to use music in their practice, and would encourage confidence building.
- An amalgamation of parents, early years educators, children, and the wider community; inclusive of music experts would be beneficial to all involved. Building these relationships is reflected in the Aistear framework, and would support the provision of well-rounded, holistic support and knowledge.

These recommendations are key to the emergent model of pedagogy that is encouraged by the Aistear framework which is a holistic approach focusing on the whole child.

In what ways do children experience music in early years settings?

This thesis presents the various ways in which children experience music within early years settings. Music is woven throughout a setting's daily timetable. Music is used with children to ease transitions, helping to structure the day, to support emotions, as a learning tool, to encourage movement, as a tool for visual, sonic and tactile exploration and through play.

What resources are currently available to early years educators to facilitate music?

The fieldwork highlighted resources currently available to educators to facilitate music. The following resources emerged; access to music via the internet, speakers paired with a device or CDs to play music, instruments, materials to create homemade instruments, space to move around to music, objects considered as non-musical were also used to explore and create music, and the human body for singing, vocalisations, body percussion and to create sound.

How can an understanding of early years settings and early years educators' perspectives on music inform the development of (cross-curricular) resources for music in early years settings?

Cross-curricular resource packs are presented in the appendix. The survey and interview phases of the fieldwork gathered educator perspectives which informed the initial curation of the resource packs. Understanding the experience levels, confidence and resources available to educators gave an insight to accurately develop useful and helpful resource packs. Educators utilised the resource packs during the observation phase of the fieldwork. Minor tweaks were carried out and the layout of the resource packs was updated. Understanding and acknowledging educator perspectives was vital in order to create a functional and approachable set of resources.

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Resource Pack Links

https://youtu.be/Pl_non-3YtM

The Singing Mermaid, read by Leah Ahern

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAi8YcCuVnk

Under the Sea: Fearless Flyers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b32vFD5Acrc

Under the Sea: The Little Mermaid/Samuel E Wright

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2uTFF_3MaA

Yellow Submarine: The Beatles

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDb303T-B1w

Surfin' USA: The Beach Boys

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8OlDPqYBLw

Beyond the Sea: Bobby Darin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rafox-9P3r8

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGRvRT0ysFQ

1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqZsoesa55w

Baby Shark: Pink Fong

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DHJ5Fn-Lzw

Five Little Ducks

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tF5kr251BRs&t=48s

Franz Joseph Haydn - "Surprise" (Symphony no. 94)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqof84_WR1s

I Just Can't Wait to Be King - The Lion King Body Percussion

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGkSaIzZtsk

Peer Gynt: In the hall of the mountain king

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIbYCOiETx0

William Tell Overture Finale

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_6sVLat3b4

Loud and Quiet: Lili & Torto's Opposite Show (Sesame Studios)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmpTf7Ala2g

Y.M.C.A. Minion's Song

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaeVQkCZFlI

Classical, Calm Music! Countdown Timer for Kids, Piano Instrumental Music!

Appendix One

Email to Childcare Early Childhood Educators

To whom it may concern,

My name is Leah Ahern. I am a research student in UCC, conducting a Master's by Research on "Exploring the Development and Integration of Music in Preschool Settings in Ireland". I wish to offer researched information on music for early years and music resources to benefit both educators and children. I am emailing you today to gauge your interest in participating in my study.

Participation includes a short interview regarding your experience as a early years educator, looking at any musical background you may or may not have and discussing what was involved in your training. We will also discuss your experiences with music within your role as an educator and what you feel is lacking from a point of view of resources. I will then get a sense of what you might need as an educator to facilitate high-quality music education within your setting. Once this is complete, you will receive a personalised resource pack in which I would kindly ask you to pilot within your setting.

Finally, I will ask you to complete an online survey detailing your experience and feedback regarding the resource pack.

Should you have an interest in participating, please send me an email at 117519833@umail.ucc.ie. If you have any questions regarding my study, you can send me an email at the same address or contact my supervisor via email at m.finnerty@ucc.ie. The results from your participation will be anonymously presented in my MRes thesis, this will be viewed by others, however there will be no revealing information about you or your setting. Your participation will be contributing to the advancement of music education research.

Kind Regards,

Leah Ahern

Appendix Two

Information Sheet for Online Survey

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the work is about and what your participation would involve, so as to enable you to make an informed choice.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of music in early years education settings. I hope to offer researched information on music for early years and music resources to benefit both educators and children. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in an online survey. This survey will be conducted via Google Forms and is expected to take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no obligation to participate, and should you choose to do so you can refuse to answer specific questions or decide to withdraw from the study. All information you provide will be confidential and your anonymity will be protected throughout the study. IP addresses will not be collected at any point, meaning the data you provide cannot be traced back to you. You must consent to taking part in this survey by ticking the box below, before proceeding to participate.

You may withdraw from the study at any time before submitted your entry. After this point your data will be anonymous and collated with that of other participants and can no longer be retracted.

The anonymous data will be stored on the University College Cork OneDrive system and subsequently on the UCC server. The data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years. The

information you provide may contribute to research publications and/or conference presentations. The information you provide will contribute towards my MRes thesis, this will be viewed by others, however there will be no revealing information about you or your setting.

We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from participating in this study. Should you experience distress arising from the survey, the contact details for support services provided below may be of assistance.

This study has obtained ethical approval from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any queries about this research, you can contact me at, Leah Ahern at 117519833@umail.ucc.ie or my supervisor, Dr. Michelle Finnerty at m.finnerty@ucc.ie.

If you agree to take part in this study, please tick the box before continuing.

Support Services

- Crisis Text Line: Text UCC to 50808 to chat anonymously with a trained volunteer. Any issue. Any time.
- Samaritans: Emotional support. 24 hours, Freephone 116123
- Pieta House: Support for people at risk of self-harm: 24 hours, Freephone 1800 247 247
- Aware: Support for people with depression or bipolar disorder. 10.00am-10.00pm Freephone 1800 804 848

Online Survey Consent:

Do you consent in taking part in this research study?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Appendix Three

Interview Information Sheet

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the work is about and what your participation would involve, so as to enable you to make an informed choice.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of music in early years education settings. I hope to offer researched information on music for early years and music resources to benefit both educators and children. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview. This interview will be conducted through Google Meet.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no obligation to participate, and should you choose to do so you can decide to withdraw from the study. All information you provide will be confidential and your anonymity will be protected throughout the study. IP addresses will not be collected at any point, meaning the data you provide cannot be traced back to you. You must consent to taking part in this survey by ticking the box below, before proceeding to participate.

You may withdraw from the study at any time before submitted your entry. After this point your data will be anonymous and collated with that of other participants and can no longer be retracted.

The anonymous data will be stored on the University College Cork OneDrive system and subsequently on the UCC server. The data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years. The information you provide may contribute to research publications and/or conference presentations. The information you provide will contribute towards my MRes thesis, this will be viewed by others, however there will be no revealing information about you or your setting. I will keep a record of emails to follow up with participants. Once research participant's final feedback has been submitted, I will securely delete the email addresses and all data will be anonymised.

We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from participating in this study. Should you experience distress arising from the survey, the contact details for support services provided below may be of assistance.

This study has obtained ethical approval from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee. If you have any queries about this research, you can contact me at, Leah Ahern at 117519833@umail.ucc.ie or my supervisor, Dr. Michelle Finnerty at m.finnerty@ucc.ie.

If you agree to take part in this study, please tick the box before continuing.

Support Services

- Crisis Text Line: Text UCC to 50808 to chat anonymously with a trained volunteer. Any issue. Any time.
- Samaritans: Emotional support. 24 hours, Freephone 116123
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- Aware: Support for people with depression or bipolar disorder. 10.00am-10.00pm Freephone 1800 804 848

Do you consent in taking part in an online interview?

Yes □

No □

Appendix Four

Information Sheet for Observation in the Setting

My name is Leah Ahern. I am a research student in UCC, conducting a Master's by Research on "Exploring the Development and Integration of Music in Preschool Settings in Ireland". I wish to offer researched information on music for early years and music resources to benefit both educators and children.

_____ Preschool has agreed to participate in a research study. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the work is about and what the setting's participation will involve.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of music in early years education settings. I hope to offer researched information on music for early years and music resources to benefit both educators and children. Observation of the setting will be carried out over a two week period.

All observations collected will be confidential and anonymity will be protected throughout the study using pseudonyms. Data cannot be traced back to you.

The anonymous data will be stored on the University College Cork OneDrive system and subsequently on the UCC server. The data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years. The information provided by the setting may contribute to research publications and/or conference presentations. The information you provide will contribute towards my MRes thesis, this will be viewed by others, however there will be no revealing information about the preschool setting.

We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from participating in this study.

This study has obtained ethical approval from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee. If you have any queries about this research, you can contact me at, Leah Ahern at 117519833@umail.ucc.ie or my supervisor, Dr. Michelle Finnerty at m.finnerty@ucc.ie

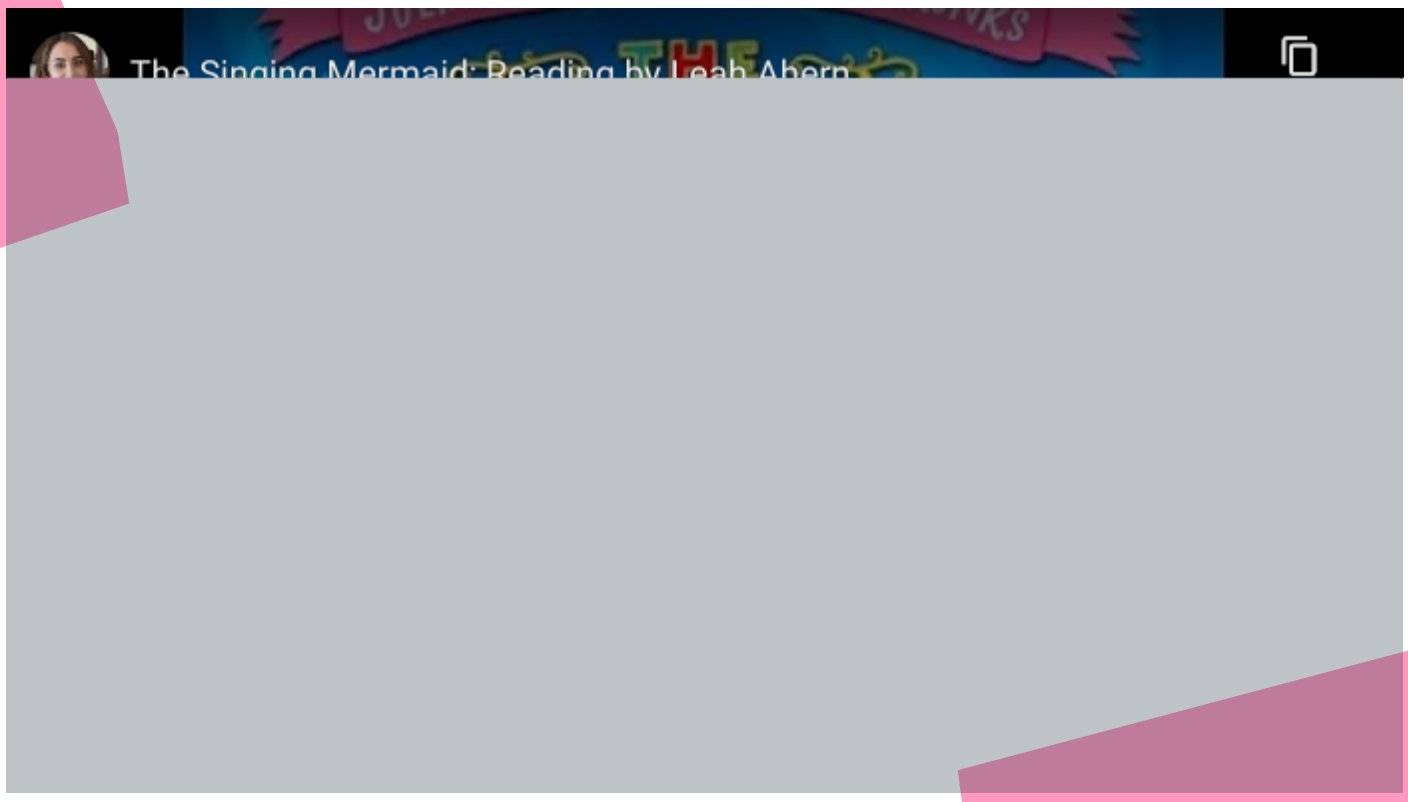
Appendix Five

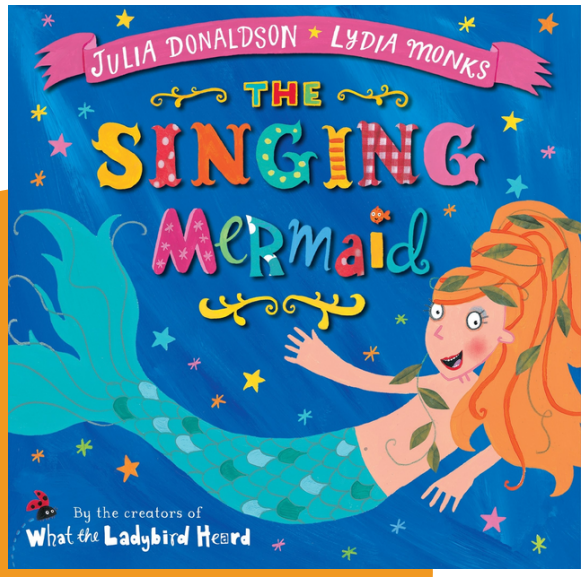
Resource Packs

Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #1

Story Time





The Singing Mermaid: Written by Julia Donaldson, Illustrated by Lydia Monks

Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #1

Suggested Interruptions or Discussion Topics Afterwards

Throughout the story, listen out for the various sounds that are mentioned! Chat about them throughout, or alternatively discuss them at the end!

- Blue: what other things are blue?
- Singing: sing *Oh, Mister Sun* "Let's sing like the mermaid"
- Silver: the silvery shore. Silver items?
- Movement break: Imitate brushing hair
- Movement break: imitate flapping wings
- Sound creation: rubbing hands together, does it make a sound?
- Dogs and Cats: discussion about pets at home/other animals
- Movement break: imitate juggling or tightrope
- Movement break: imitate swimming
- Sound creation: imitate cheering, long and loud
- Conveying emotion: sing *Oh Mister Sun* cheerfully, then see if you can sing it while sounding sad
- Sound creation: what sound does a dog/ cat make?
- Sound creation: imitate snoring
- Make note: Teamwork, Annie the Acrobat teaching mermaid to walk on her hands and the seagull flying in front to guide her back to Silversands
- Movement break: imitate jumping, splashing and dance

Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #1

Discussion Suggestion

Note: This is just a guide, tailor yours to suit your setting

"What a lovely story! The mermaid worked with her friends to get back to where she wanted to be and she was able to sing to everyone at Silversand! Does anyone here like to sing like the mermaid? .....

There were lots of interesting things going on in that story. We had animals, colours, and found lots of sounds! Let's think about what we found...

We had our deep blue sea, the silvery shore and golden hair.

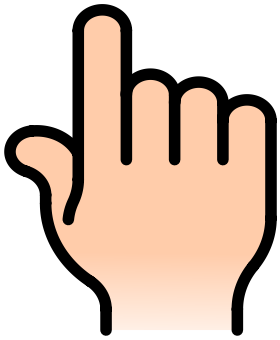
We had cats and dogs who meow and woof and we found lots more sounds.

Sounds to imitate

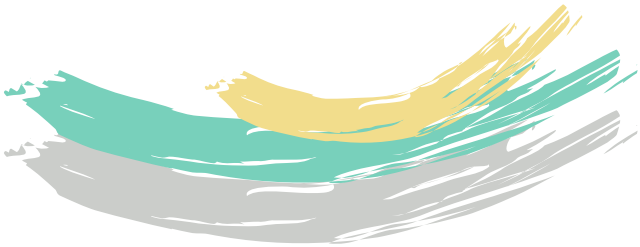
- Rubbing hands together (like when we wash our hands)
- Clapping seashells (clap hands)
- Tapping on the window
- Seagulls flapping wings
- Fish swishing their tails
- Crowd cheering
- Sid Sly snoring
- Laughing
- Jumping
- Splashing





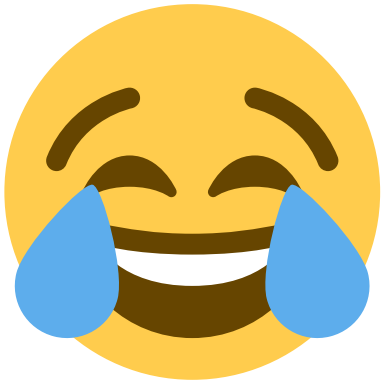






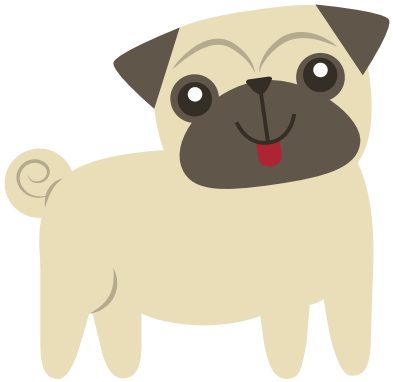














Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #1

Playlist

All songs can be found on YouTube

Under the Sea: Fearless Flyers
Under the Sea: Samuel E. Wright
Yellow Submarine: The Beatles
Surfin' U.S.A.: The Beach Boys
Beyond the Sea: Bobby Darin

Additional Nursery Rhymes to Sing and Move to:

Row, Row, Row Your Boat
1,2,3,4,5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive
Baby Shark
5 Little Ducks



Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #1

OH, MISTER SUN

OH, MISTER SUN, SUN, MISTER GOLDEN SUN, PLEASE SHINE DOWN ON ME



Idea: this can be used as the Mermaid's Song in the story. An idea could be to sing this song each time the Mermaid's singing is mentioned!

Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #1
Bulletin Board

Create your own bulletin board to display some of the things you learned or found in the story. You can be as creative as you want with this. You could also lay out your items in a storage box. I tried to use some sensory materials like plastic, crepe paper, wool, tin foil, card etc. to encourage further exploration!





Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #1

LET'S MAKE SHAKERS!

Note: All activities to be done under the careful supervision of a grown up

You will need:

Water bottles

Materials that remind you of the beach

- Sand (if you don't have sand you can use rice)
- Water
- Pebbles (if you don't have pebbles you could use dried beans)
- Shells (or pasta shells)

Paint/ Paper/ Stickers to decorate

Tape/ Glue

Method

Fill your bottles with the different materials, e.g. sand in one, water in another and so on. You can use a funnel or make a cone shape with a sheet of paper to make filling the bottles easier.

Ensure the bottles are securely closed, safely glue or tape the lid on- for additional safety

Decorate the bottle with paint, glitter, paper or stickers

Play along to your favourite song with a shaker



Resource Pack #1

Leah Ahern



Resource Pack #2

RHTYHM AND PERCUSSION

Discovering patterns in music and sound and exploring how we can create our own!

Leah Ahern

Playlist

Percussive Sing Along (see below)

Stamp and Clap
This is the Way
Clap, 2, 3, 4

Song Link (see below for visual score)

Haydn's Surprise Symphony
0.16-0.48

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tF5kr251BRs&t=48s

Play Along

I Just Can't Wait to Be King- The Lion King Body Percussion

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqof84_WR1s

This is a fun way to encourage children to use percussion with familiar music!

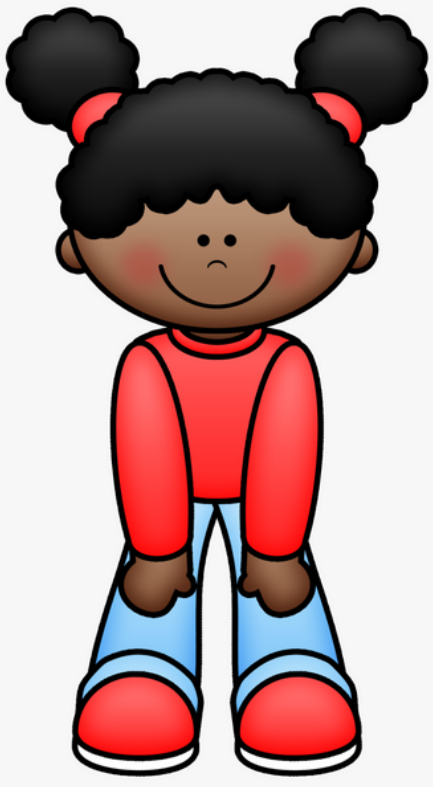
Leah Ahern

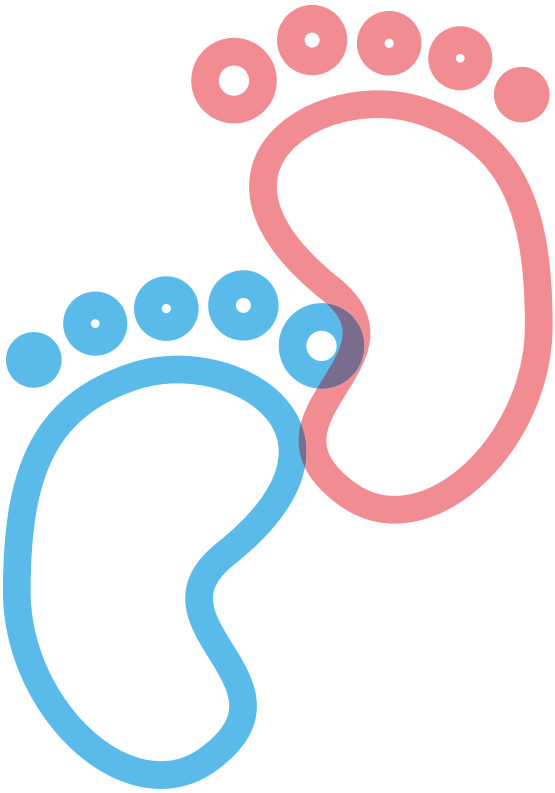
Resource Pack #2

What sounds can we make?









What sounds can we make?

Explore...

Clapping Hands – loudly
Clapping hands – quietly
Tapping palm with two fingers
Clapping cupped hands
Clapping flat hands
Rubbing hands together cupped
Rubbing arms or legs
Rubbing backs of hands together
Slapping knees
Clicking fingers
Tapping fingernails
Tapping fingertips together
Tapping knuckles
Tapping backs of hands together
Flicking fingers in the air
Flicking on the other palm

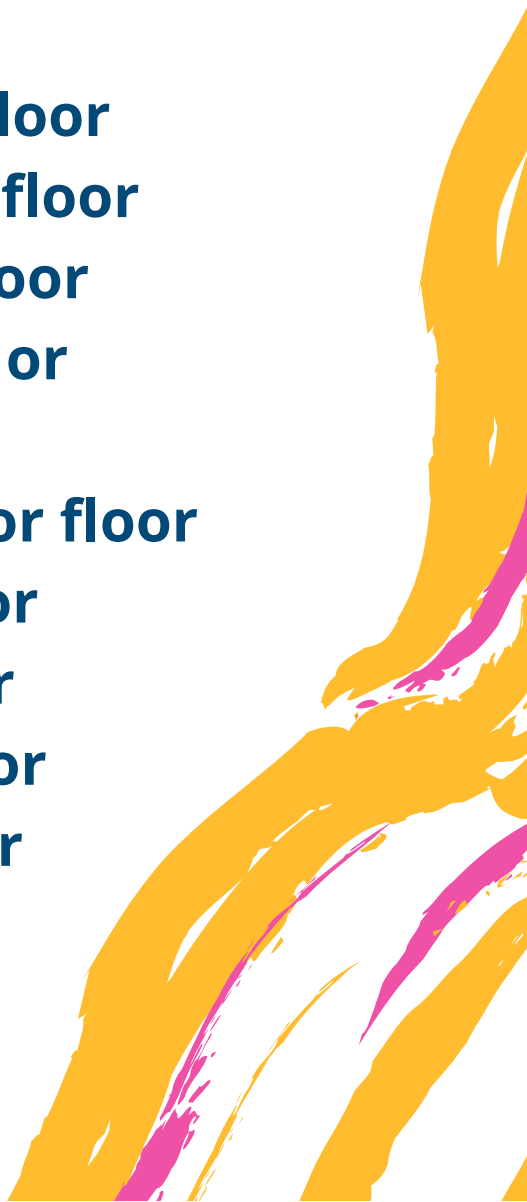
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Resource Pack #2

What sounds can we make?

Explore...

Stroking arm or legs
Popping air filled cheeks gently
Popping inside of cheek
Tapping feet
Stamping feet
Tapping toes on floor
Clicking heels
On table or floor
Tapping fingertips on table or floor
Tapping fingernails on table or floor
Tapping knuckles on table or floor
Tapping whole fingers on table or floor
Tapping whole hands on table or floor
Rubbing fingers on table or floor
Rubbing hands on table or floor
Slapping fingers on table or floor
Slapping hands on table or floor
Banging fists on table or floor
Knocking knees together



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Resource Pack #2

Percussive Sing Along

Stamp and Clap

Tune: London Bridge

Stamp your feet and clap your hands
Clap your hands, clap your hands
Stamp your feet and clap your hands
Stamp and clap together
Other suggestions: click your fingers/ tap your head/pat your knees/ rub your hands etc.

This is the way

Tune; Here we go round the Mulberry Bush

This is the way we clap our hands
Clap our hands, clap our hands.
This is the way we clap our hands.
Clap our hands
....Stamp our feet
....Flick our fingers
....Rub our hands
....Slap our knees
....etc.

Clap, Two, Three, Four

Tune: Frere Jacques

Clap, two, three, four
Clap, two, three, four
Flick, flick, flick,
Flick, flick, flick,
Rub your hands together,
Rub your hands together,
Stomp, stomp, flick,
Stomp, stomp, flick.

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Resource Pack #2

Haydn's Surprise Symphony Visual Score



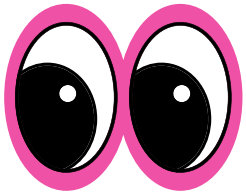
Tip Toe



Tip Toe



Tip Toe



Look



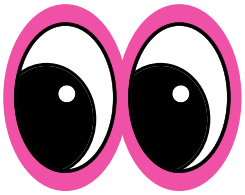
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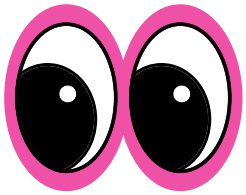
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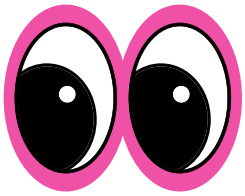
Look



Tip Toe



Tip Toe



Look



FREEZE!

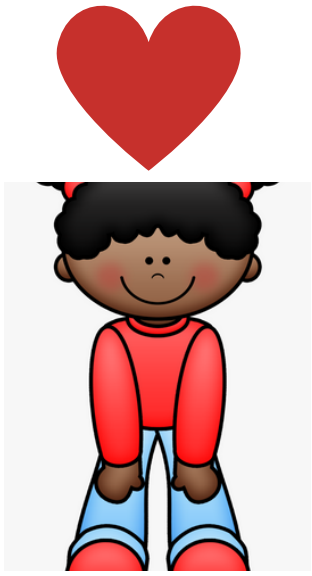
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Making Our Own Rhythmic Patterns

Mix and match from these visuals to make your own rhythmic patterns, you could also represent each sound using a shape



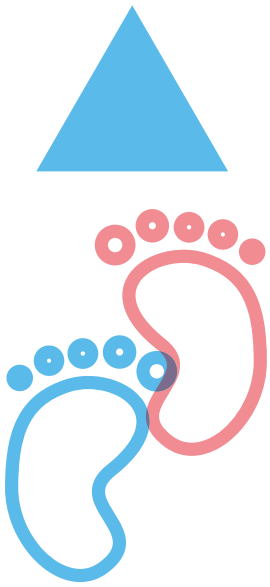
Rub hands



Pat knees



Clap hands



Stomp feet

Make your own patterns...



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Resource Pack #2

Let's make a thunderstorm...

(sing to the tune of Frere Jacques)
I hear thunder, I hear thunder
Can you hear it too? Can you hear it too?
Pitter patter raindrops, pitter patter raindrops
Let's make a storm, let's make a storm!

Methods (pick whichever one suits your setting- or try a few)

Top tip! Make sure you have a clear signal to stop playing! For example, a call and response like, "1, 2, 3, all eyes on me...1, 2, 3, all eyes on you" or "Hands on top... Everybody stop".

a) Have children seated somewhere comfortable and make sure each child has an instrument. Begin quietly and gradually encourage the children to get louder on their instruments.

b) Have children seated somewhere comfortable and make sure each child has an instrument. Begin quietly and gradually introduce each child's instrument. Encourage the children to get louder on their instruments.

c) Have children grouped, assign a body percussion to each group e.g., group 1- rubbing hands together, group 2- tapping the table, group 3- making "whoosh" sounds with their voices (this method works best with a few practitioners in the room).

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Resource Pack #2

Possible Games

Games can be a great way to encourage positive musical experiences in the setting. Keep it simple by trying Musical Chairs or Musical Statues, using the children's favourite songs (ensure these are all classroom appropriate) or use music the children have been learning to help them remember the songs and hear them in a different context.



Dynamics

How quietly or loudly a piece of music is played. We can use dynamics to change the mood of the music



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Resource Pack #3

Leah Ahern Resource Pack #3

Forte and Piano

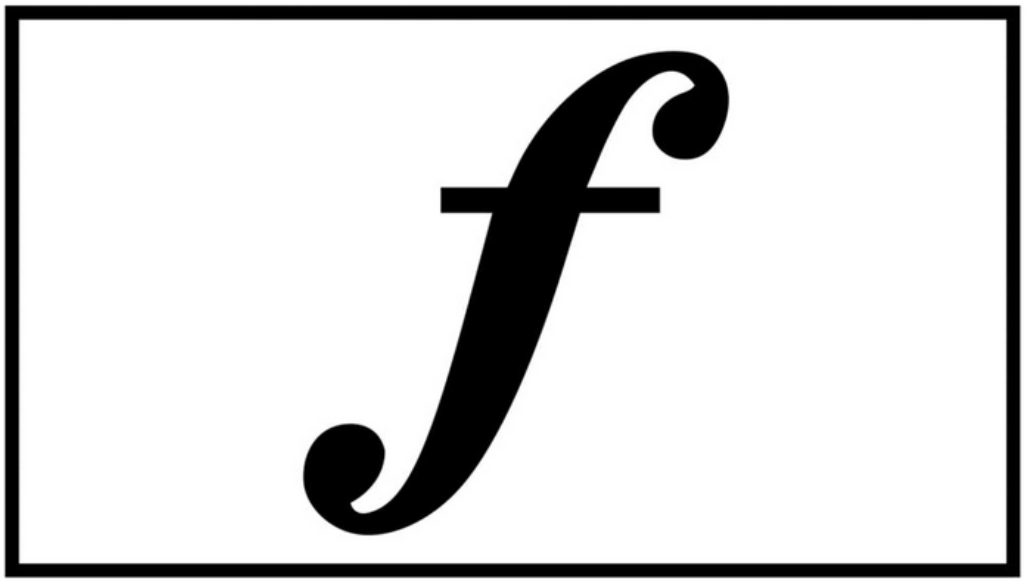
Music can be loud, soft or somewhere in between.

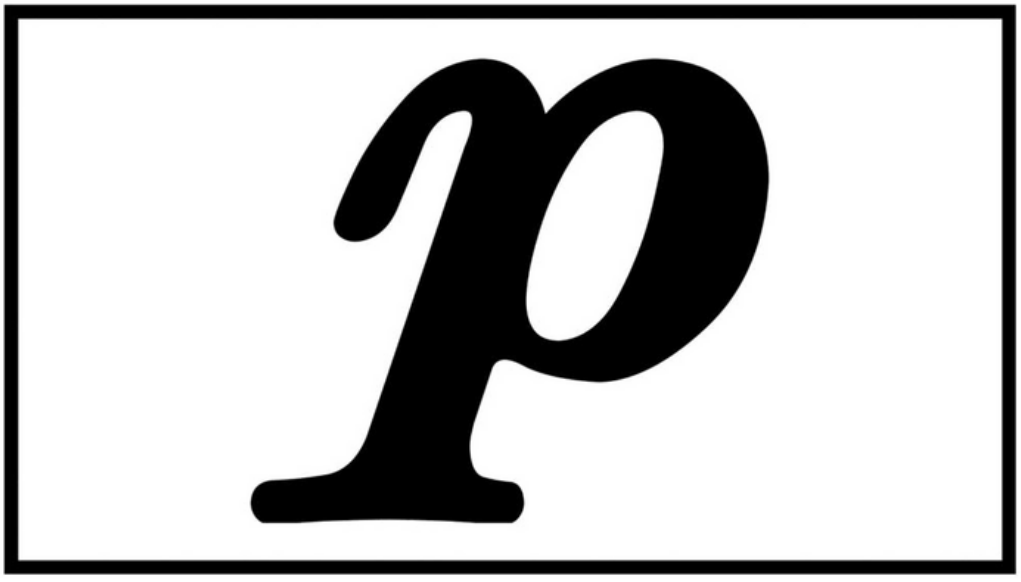
In music, we use the word "dynamics" to describe volume. This resource pack will focus on two dynamic levels, "forte" and "piano"

To describe loud music or sounds, we use the word "forte" (for-TAY.) Forte means loud in Italian. We use a fancy letter f to tell us when to play loud in music.

When describing quiet music, we use the word "piano" (pe-AH-no). Piano is the Italian word for soft. A fancy letter p tells us when to play quietly.

Flashcards





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Listening

Here's a piece of music called "In the Hall of the Mountain King"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGkSaIzZtsk
This piece of music begins soft and gradually gets louder.

Some exercises to combine with this piece would be tiptoeing while the music is quiet and marching while the music is loud.

This piece is called the "William Tell Overture"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIbYCOiETx0
This piece of music alternates between piano and forte.

Children could tiptoe for the quieter (piano) parts and march during the louder (forte) sections, this will encourage movement. Alternatively, play along according to the dynamics with classroom instruments

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Story and Discussion

This is a great activity for circle time.

Listen to the story “Loud and Quiet’ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_6sVLat3b4 with the children. Open a discussion by asking the children if they can think of things that are loud or quiet. Offer suggestions to allow the discussion to flow.

Remind the children that music can be loud or quiet too.
Some sounds are loud, and some sounds are quiet. Think about the sounds below and decide which ones are loud and which are quiet.

- Playing the drums
- Thunderstorm
- Firetruck
- Fireworks
- Hammering
- Clock ticking
- Snow falling
- Fish swimming
- Leaves falling
- A kitten

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Music and Visual Art

Encourage the children to draw two pictures along to the tracks,

For example, “We’re going to draw two pictures. I want you to draw a picture to match the way the music sounds. You can draw whatever you want. Draw something that this music makes you think about’

- Play the "Minions YMCA" and the "Classical Calming Music", they may need multiple plays to allow time to finish each picture.

Notice if there are any differences between the pictures and give children the time to explain what they have drawn.

Minions, YMCA: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmpTf7Ala2g
Classical Calming Music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaeVQkCZFlI

Using the voice in the classroom

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Resource Pack #4

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Remember...

It is important to continue with the recommended holistic approach to early years education when considering music in the setting. Often the aim becomes performing songs, however holistic music education should promote the beliefs recommended throughout Aistear. A holistic approach to music in the early years setting will promote curiosity, develop creativity and boost confidence

Leah Ahern

A word of advice...

According studies, telling children that they are tone deaf can have a negative impact on their self-image.
Children who are told they cannot sing very well are less likely to participate in music in the future.
As adults or young adults, we are not so different. We need to believe in ourselves first before we have the confidence to grow our skill!

Be positive, use positive affirmations, e.g., I can do this/ I am a good singer/ I am improving.
Be prepared, make life easy for yourself and stay on top of your game. E.g., practice ahead of time, if you need to learn things, have it done in advanced- avoid “winging it”. Preparing ahead of time, allows you to enjoy using music in the classroom as the muscle memory is there and the work is done!
Allow yourself to make mistakes!
Be present, try to keep your mind focused on the task at hand

Leah Ahern

Encouraging yourself and the people around you to incorporate music into their lives

Singing is sometimes perceived as something that you either can or cannot do, however, it is a learned skill, and anyone can take part!
The ability to make sense of music is present in early life and can be developed simply by being exposed to music in the early environment.

Being exposed to music or playing instruments can help a person learn to sing well.
Exposing yourself to more music, at any age, will offer so many benefits!
Sing along to your favourite songs in the kitchen, the shower, the car, while you're cleaning the house or whenever you feel the urge!
-Exposing yourself to more music will help to build your confidence, grow your musical interests and influences

Leah Ahern

Building Confidence in your Abilities

This advice is based on my experience as a learner, singer, musician, and music practitioner!

Build a Confidence Tool Kit

Planning: Take pride in organisation and being prepared. When we feel we are prepared, we can eliminate worry and anxiety around a situation or event, and give our lessons the best possible chance of success!

Affirmations: Use positive affirmations to boost confidence and motivation, such as "I can do this" or "I am ready"

Realise your strengths: Recognise your own strengths, and be proud in your current abilities. This will make undergoing new tasks a lot easier to take on!

Feedback: Feedback is your friend! Be willing to both give and receive positive and constructive feedback. This will help inform your lessons, boost motivation, and help you/ parents of children work on areas that may need improvement or investigation.

Patience: Be patient with yourself, and remember that things take time!

Leah Ahern

Keeping your voice happy and healthy

Singing and using the voice in the early years setting is a demanding task. Making sure you give yourself the best chance is down to three things in my experience.

- Hydration
- Warm Ups
- Rest

Hydration: Try to get in at least 2 litres of water per day I have found in my experience that one has to be consistent with hydration to feel the benefits! Keep up this habit throughout the week.

Warm Ups: It is common to start of the day with a "croaky" voice, when we haven't been making vocal sounds throughout the night. A quick 5 minute warm up will help to eliminate this!

Rest: Our voices are used consistently in an early years setting, and often also in our own personal lives. Make sure to get enough rest in general through sleep and relaxation, and also take some vocal rest when you feel the need to!

Leah Ahern

Warm Ups

Warm Ups are sometimes considered only for professional singers, however they are important for anyone who is using their voice for an extended period of time.

About 5 minutes is what I would recommend to make sure your voice is ready for the day ahead!

Leah Ahern

Warm Ups

Physical Warm Up:

Shake out the tension in the arms and legs

Drop the head forward and roll in a circular motion left and right

Move the arms and shoulders in windmill motions

Rotate hips in a circle

Roll the shoulders back and forward

Exercises:

- Humming: Hum (mouth closed, lips relaxed) start on a low note and slide to a high note (sounding almost like a siren)
    - Continue making the siren sound moving up and down through your range on other sounds such as "ahh" / "ee" / "oo" / "vvv" / "zzz"
- Straw: Using a straw in water, start with blowing bubbles, then add sound (humming whilst blowing). You can hum the tune of your favourite song or just hum random notes moving through your vocal range. You can also do this technique without the water when you're on the go!
- The Blowfish: Puff out your cheeks and hum a siren (from above), or a tune of a song whilst lips are (almost) closed and cheeks are puffed out, there should still be air passing through the mouth.
- Lip Trill/ Bubbles: Vibrate lips together, breathing out. Start to make sound at speaking pitch and then glide up and down

Leah Ahern

Choosing Material

Always make sure the songs you pick feel comfortable to sing in your own voice, if they feel uncomfortably high or low in your voice, then avoid them. When singing songs without the using of accompanying music, don't be afraid to stop and start again if a song has been started either too high or too low!
Notice if the children look as though they are struggling with the pitch, a good indicator is if they start shouting or if they stop singing altogether. Use these observations to inform you when choosing more material.

Observation and inquiry is key when choosing material. Observing children's likes and dislikes, and asking them about their preferences, is a great way to gather ideas for new material. Often there could be songs from television programmes or new films that are great to encourage singing, movement and playing along with instruments.

Stay informed on children's interests that are popular at any given time. You will often find playlists and recommendations online for child appropriate music that are updated regularly. This a great way to see what's currently out there, and what's getting the children involved in music. For example, this is how I found, "Baby Shark".

Use the setting's theme's and other areas of learning to generate ideas. For example, if the theme of the week or month is based on the Autumn season, then choose songs that promote the theme, explore the sounds of Autumn leaves etc.



FOSTERING MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #5

EQUIPMENT

Equipment is an important part of music making within the Early Years. Equipment can be made within the classroom setting, or alternatively bought. I have attached a list of recommended equipment, which is helpful when facilitating music in the classroom.

- Speaker https://tinyurl.com/t46ppcud
- Device for playing music e.g., pc/tablet/phone
- Percussion instruments https://tinyurl.com/5a3njcy8
- Tuned instruments (glockenspiel and handbells) https://tinyurl.com/27rrtrxv https://tinyurl.com/5nku6edk
- Craft supplies and recycled materials to make instruments, can also come in handy!

Leah Ahern

Music for Relaxation

Often when we think of music use in the classroom, our minds jump to noise! While music can be a great release for children, it can also be used as a way to create a relaxing or calming environment. This can work well at lunch time, story time; or whilst children are working. Some classical lullabies can work well, or a personal favourite, using instrumental versions of children's favourites (i.e. Instrumental Disney Classics).

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DiMoehAeOU
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLrpTDACFMc
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv_gCa6Bjtw

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Resource Pack #5

Classroom Layout

All classrooms are different, it's important to find what works for you and the children in your setting.

Make sure there is space to move around

Ensure music equipment is available at children's reach, for self-exploration and thinking.

Have visuals scattered around the classroom, so children have a visual representation of their musical experiences. These could be flashcards, children's artwork relating to music, children's artwork of their experiences, or photographs.

Leah Ahern

Instrument Making

Music equipment can be quite costly! Sometimes making your own instruments with the children can be just as useful, and it can also create cross-curricular integration, and facilitate further areas of exploration for the children.

Shakers, maracas and percussion instruments are more feasible to make. For example; shakers can be made using rice/sand/pasta in a plastic bottle. The bottle is easily sealed and children can decorate the bottle. Rainsticks can be similarly made by filling a "Pringles" tin with rice/ sand etc., sealing the tin and decorating.

Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #5

Sensory Sensitivity

Music time can be challenging for children who have a sensory sensitivity/ sensory processing disorder. This doesn't mean the child doesn't enjoy music, however we might just have to be a bit more strategic in our planning.

Having a "relaxation station" or something similar can be helpful, as children will know this is an area they can go where there is more peace and quiet. This area might include fidget toys, or other sensory stimulating objects.

Headphones can also come in handy, they could be noise cancelling, noise reducing, or play relaxing sounds.

It can be helpful to have interchangeable activities. In our classroom we change between; musicking, "shake it out" (movement break), and "sleeping lions" (quiet time)

Leah Ahern

Classroom Control

To ensure music education is as stress-free as possible, having a few behaviour management strategies can be useful.

Call and Response: A few call and response chants are a great way to gain the children's attention. For example: Hands on top- everybody stop/ to infinity-and beyond/ spongebob-squarepants. Finding ones that the children are familiar with seems to work best; e.g. use familiar theme songs like Peppa Pig or Paw Patrol.

Instruments on the floor: Before starting music activities, have children place their instruments on the floor when they are listening to instructions, or waiting for others.

The Conductor: introducing a lesson on the "conductor" teaches the children when the music starts, finishes and changes volume. Allowing the children a turn of being the conductor, gives them some control too!

Leah Ahern

Resource Pack #5

Cross Curricular Integration

Music can be an excellent tool for cross-curricular integration. Here are just a few examples of how we can encourage certain developmental areas through music in an early years setting.

Physical: Music can encourage movement, and also interaction with body percussion and instrumentation can encourage fine and gross motor skills.

Intellectual: Music can be used as a learning tool for learning days of the week, numbers, colours, shapes and the alphabet.

Language: Music encourages singing through various phonetic sounds, it encourages language and sonic exploration; and also serves to broaden the child's vocabulary.

Emotional: Music can be used as an aid to support the child's emotional development. Music can create links to the home which aid transitional periods and can help the children settle into the early years environment.

Social: Music encourages group play and can work to bring children together through shared experiences and interests.

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Resource Pack #5