

Student Satisfaction with Rhythm and Movement Activities in An Early Childhood Education Course

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the satisfaction levels of second-year students with the teaching methods in the "Rhythm and Movement for Early Childhood" course, which is based on songs, rhymes, and movement. The research aims to provide data for improving future teaching and learning design. The target group consisted of 60 students in levels of second year from an early childhood education program. The research instrument was an 8-item, 5-level rating scale questionnaire designed to measure satisfaction. The reliability of the instrument, calculated using Cronbach's alpha, was 0.98. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The findings suggest that the connection between course activities and their practical application in real-world kindergarten contexts should be strengthened. Furthermore, it is recommended that a set of musical accompaniments and rhymes be developed to support clear learning objectives.

Keywords: Student Satisfaction, Teaching Methods, Rhythm and Movement, Early Childhood Education

1. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) lays the foundational groundwork for a child's lifelong learning and holistic development. Contemporary pedagogical philosophy has increasingly shifted from a narrow focus on academic readiness to a more comprehensive approach that nurtures cognitive, social, emotional, and physical domains. Within this holistic framework, expressive arts—particularly music, rhythm, and movement—are recognized as essential components of a high-quality early learning environment. The theory of multiple intelligences, for instance, identifies bodily kinesthetic and musical intelligences as distinct aptitudes that education should cultivate from an early age. The theory of Multiple Intelligences has shifted the perspective on measuring human potential by proposing that intelligence is not a single entity measurable by IQ tests, but rather comprises at least eight distinct abilities, such as Musical and Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence, which are fundamental to early childhood classroom activities (Gardner, 1983, as cited in Khemmani, 2017).

These activities are not mere recreational diversions; they are powerful tools that foster gross motor skills, enhance cognitive functions, promote language acquisition, and facilitate emotional expression. The Dalcroze method emphasizes that music and movement are inseparable, using the body as the first instrument to express rhythm and sound, which is central to developing a child's muscles, listening skills, and concentration (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1921, as cited in Kururatana, 2006). Given the profound impact of these activities on child development,

it is imperative that early childhood educators are not only knowledgeable about their theoretical benefits but are also competent and confident in implementing them effectively. The training and preparation of these future educators, therefore, become critically important. This aligns with the emphasis placed by Thai educators. For instance, recent research from Prince of Songkla University by Satrianon et al. (2022) underscores the importance of developing pedagogical models to enhance the active learning management abilities of pre-service early childhood teachers, highlighting the critical need to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical classroom application. University and Early Childhood Education programs, therefore, include specialized courses like "Rhythm and Movement for Early Childhood" to provide these essential hands-on skills. Furthermore, the curriculum is an essential component for solving problems in teaching and learning. Teachers need to develop the curriculum, instructional methods, and ways to motivate learners to be curious and eager to learn. This includes developing learner behaviors, increasing academic achievement, and creating a learning atmosphere that fosters effective learning. Additionally, research findings should be used to improve teaching and learning and to develop the learner's learning process to its maximum potential. This also involves the development of the instructor's own teaching to discover new methods, new findings, new techniques, and instructional media that support the development of learners' knowledge and abilities, helping to make teaching and learning more effective. (Pilasombat, P., et al. 2024)

The effectiveness of such preparatory courses, however, is significantly influenced by the students' own learning experiences. Student satisfaction is a crucial metric in evaluating the quality and efficacy of any educational program. It serves as an indicator of student engagement, motivation, and the perceived relevance of the curriculum. Student satisfaction is considered a critical output of the educational process, directly influenced by the environment provided by the institution, such as teaching and learning activities or interactions with faculty and peers. This concept reinforces that active student involvement is a key predictor of their own learning and development (Astin, 1993, as cited in Wongwanich, 2015). When students are satisfied, they are more likely to internalize the content and feel prepared to apply their new skills in a professional setting. Conversely, dissatisfaction may signal a disconnect between the course design and students' learning needs.

While the importance of rhythm and movement in early childhood is well-documented, there is a consistent need to evaluate the pedagogical approaches used to train future educators in these domains. Understanding what aspects of the "Rhythm and Movement" course resonate most with students—and which elements require refinement—is vital for ensuring that the program effectively meets its goal of preparing competent and enthusiastic educators.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the satisfaction levels of second-year Early Childhood Education students with the teaching methods and activities in their "Rhythm and Movement for Early Childhood" course. By analyzing their feedback, this study will provide actionable insights for instructors and curriculum designers to enhance the course's effectiveness, better align its content with practical applications, and ultimately, improve the quality of arts-based education that future teachers will provide to young children.

2. Objective

To assess the overall satisfaction level of second-year early childhood education students with the rhythm and movement activities course

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey research design. The primary goal was to describe and quantify the level of student satisfaction with the "Rhythm and Movement for Early Childhood" course at a specific point in time. The target group consisted of 60 second-year students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the academic semester 2024 the course was offered. Purposive sampling was used, as the entire cohort of students taking the course was included in the study.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. It consisted of two parts: 1) Demographic information (e.g., gender, age) 2) An 8-item satisfaction survey using a 5-level Likert rating scale. The scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Dissatisfied) to 5 (Strongly Satisfied). The instrument's content validity was confirmed by three experts in early childhood education. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested with a pilot group, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.98, indicating excellent internal consistency.

The researcher obtained permission from the course instructor to administer the questionnaire at the end of the course. The students were informed about the purpose of the research and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The data collection process took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The collected data were analyzed using a statistical software package. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean (*M*), and standard deviation (S.D.), were used to analyze the students' satisfaction levels in response to each item on the questionnaire and to determine the overall level of satisfaction.

4. Results

A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed and all were returned, representing a 100% response rate. The overall mean satisfaction score for the course was 4.25 (S.D. = 0.75), which corresponds to a "Very Satisfied" level.

The mean scores for each of the 8 items are presented in Table 1 below. The findings indicate that students reported the highest satisfaction with "Variety of Songs and Rhymes Used" (*M* = 4.55, S.D. = 0.62) and "Instructor's Enthusiasm and Engagement" (*M* = 4.52, S.D. = 0.68). The lowest level of satisfaction was reported for the item "Connection of Activities to Real Kindergarten Applications" (*M* = 3.85, S.D. = 0.88). As shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of Student Satisfaction

No.	Item	<i>M</i>	S.D.	Interpretation
1	Clarity of course objectives and instructions	4.30	0.71	Very Satisfied
2	Variety of songs and rhymes used	4.55	0.62	Highly Satisfied
3	Variety and appropriateness of movement activities	4.41	0.65	Very Satisfied
4	Instructor's enthusiasm and engagement	4.52	0.68	Highly Satisfied
5	Quality of feedback provided by the instructor	4.22	0.79	Very Satisfied
6	Quality of learning materials and resources	4.15	0.81	Very Satisfied
7	Connection of activities to real kindergarten applications	3.85	0.88	Moderately Satisfied
8	Overall learning experience in the course	4.30	0.70	Very Satisfied

No.	Item	<i>M</i>	S.D.	Interpretation
Overall Average		4.25	0.75	Very Satisfied

The analysis of data collected from the sample group of 60 second-year early childhood education students revealed that the Overall Satisfaction with the "Rhythm and Movement for Early Childhood" course was at a "Very Satisfied" level, with a total mean score of 4.25 (S.D. = 0.75)

When examining the results according to the components of the independent variables in the conceptual framework, the details can be described as follows:

1. Course Content and Teaching Methods Component

The component related to course content and teaching methods was clearly the area where students expressed the highest level of satisfaction. The two items with the highest mean scores were "Variety of songs and rhymes used" ($M = 4.55$, S.D. = 0.62) and "Instructor's enthusiasm and engagement" ($M = 4.52$, S.D. = 0.68), both of which were rated at the "Highly Satisfied" level.

Furthermore, other related items such as "Variety and appropriateness of movement activities" ($M = 4.41$), "Clarity of course objectives and instructions" ($M = 4.30$), and "Quality of feedback provided by the instructor" ($M = 4.22$) were all rated at the "Very Satisfied" level. These results indicate that the variables related to high-quality and creative activities, materials, and instructor performance are key factors that directly and positively impact student satisfaction.

2. Practical Application Component

Conversely, the component related to the practical application of knowledge received the lowest satisfaction scores. The item "Connection of activities to real kindergarten applications" had a significantly lower mean score ($M = 3.85$, S.D. = 0.88), which corresponds to a "Moderately Satisfied" level.

This finding reflects a perceived "gap" by students between what is learned in the classroom and the expectation of how to apply it in their future roles as early childhood teachers. This is a key area that warrants further development and improvement.

In summary, the data analysis confirms the research's conceptual framework, demonstrating that the components of the Rhythm and Movement course (the independent variable) directly influence student satisfaction (the dependent variable). There are clear strengths in the areas of course content and teaching methods, yet a significant challenge remains in strengthening the connection to practical application. As shown in Figure 1 below.

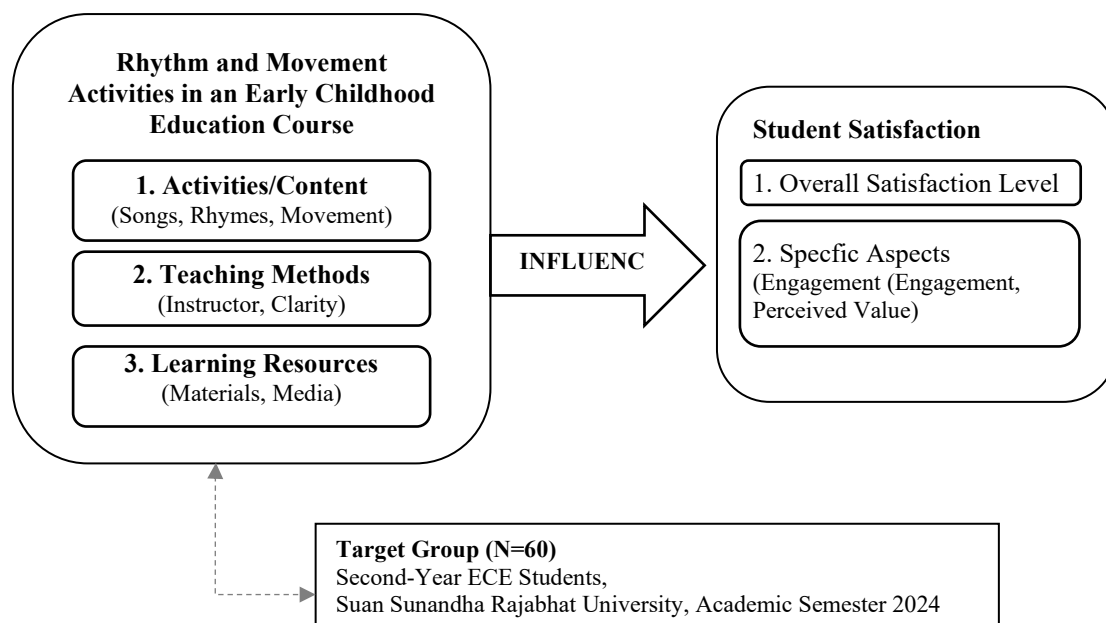


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Factors Influencing Satisfaction in an Early Childhood Education Course

5. Conclusion And Future Work

This study was conducted with the primary objective of assessing the satisfaction levels of second-year early childhood education students with the "Rhythm and Movement for Early Childhood" course. Utilizing a quantitative survey methodology with 60 students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, the research aimed to identify the strengths and areas for improvement within the course's pedagogical approach, which is centered on songs, rhymes, and movement.

The findings revealed an overall high level of student satisfaction (Overall $M = 4.25$), indicating that the course is generally well-received. The key strengths of the program lie in its course content and teaching methods. Students expressed the highest satisfaction with the variety of creative materials, such as songs and rhymes ($M = 4.55$), and the instructor's enthusiasm and engaging delivery ($M = 4.52$). This suggests that the experiential and creative aspects of the course are highly effective and valued by the students.

However, the study also identified a crucial area requiring significant improvement. The lowest satisfaction score was recorded for the "Connection of activities to real kindergarten applications" ($M = 3.85$). This finding highlights a perceived gap between the theoretical knowledge and practical skills learned in the classroom and their direct applicability in a professional context. While students enjoy the activities, they feel a weaker connection to how these activities can be purposefully and effectively implemented to meet developmental goals in a real kindergarten setting.

In conclusion, the "Rhythm and Movement for Early Childhood" course is successful in creating an engaging and positive learning environment. However, to enhance its efficacy and better prepare future educators, a strategic focus must be placed on bridging the theory-to-practice gap. Strengthening the link between course activities and their practical, real-world applications is essential for transforming a satisfactory learning experience into a truly impactful professional preparation. Future curriculum development should therefore prioritize the integration of more explicit pedagogical strategies and context-based examples to ensure students graduate not only with a repertoire of activities but with the confidence and competence to apply them effectively.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1) Strengthen Practical Connections: Course instructors should integrate more case studies, video examples from actual kindergarten classrooms, and micro-teaching sessions where students can practice applying activities to specific child development scenarios.
- 2) Develop Targeted Resources: A curated set of accompaniments, songs, and rhymes should be developed with explicit learning objectives tied to the early childhood curriculum framework. This would help students see the direct pedagogical purpose of each activity.
- 3) Future Research: Future studies could employ a qualitative approach, such as focus group interviews, to gain deeper insights into why students feel there is a disconnect. A longitudinal study could also track graduates to see how they apply the skills from this course in their professional careers, providing valuable feedback for curriculum refinement.

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