



LISTENING TO COLOURFUL VOICES: HOW DO CHILDREN IMAGINE THEIR MUSIC LESSONS IN SCHOOL?*

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Abstract

In this research, it was aimed to illustrate the voices of primary school students about how they imagine their music lessons in school and the classroom. For this purpose, a focus-group interview structure was based on children's perspectives, ideas and imaginations about their music lessons. First, a pilot study consisting of a focus-group interview and a questionnaire was carried out with ten fourth grade primary school students who voluntarily took part in this research. The main study was carried out with nine different fourth grade students. Vernon Howard's 'continuum of imagination' was used to categorise students' statements and Vygotsky's laws of imagination are the key role for analysing and interpreting students' imaginative statements. Students' imaginations about their music lessons were at first about different learning environments and instruments. The statements show the importance for children to do music activities in music rooms that are well equipped with instruments as well as outside the classroom and school. The research findings may help us to understand the problems in primary music education and provide a piece of evidence about the necessity of developing good classroom practices to promote children's imaginative and creative thinking skills. Thus, we can develop an understanding that focuses on the creative needs of children in primary music education.

Keywords: Imaginative-creative thinking, primary music education, children's imagination in music lessons.

INTRODUCTION

Music educators and researchers need more information and reflections on how children imagine their music lessons and how they wish to make music together in schools. Therefore, listening to children's voices has a considerable power to shape music education in the twenty-first century in order to raise a dynamic, creative and thoughtful young generation in a challenging world. Wagner (2014) emphasizes that students need seven survival skills for twenty-first-century life, work and citizenship. These are critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and leadership, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analysing information, and curiosity and imagination. However, placing imagination and creativity in the main focus of education has a vital role in preparing children to be well-equipped and successful in their societies and cultures. According to Sternberg (2007), successful individuals will be those who can use their creative skills to build up new strategies for making the world a better place for all.

In today's society, imagination is seen as a magical power by many scientists, educators, academicians, artists and leaders that allow us to find new ways and techniques of searching for new ideas (McCaslin, 2016). Imagination and creativity are the unlimited potentials of the human being, and by using these effective and powerful potentials, we can change and transform the world. Kokotsaki (2011, p.101) describes the creative process as "the thinking that takes place as a person is planning to construct a creative product" and stresses the definition of Webster (1990): "The creative process is an active, constructed and dynamic mental process which swings between convergent

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(factual) and divergent (imaginative) thinking.” Higgins (2008) emphasizes that creativity is related to the development of imagination. We may think that imagination is the beginning of a human's life. In a more in-depth understanding, it is the beginning of a life that makes us more fulfilled in crossing the borders, in pushing the limits of the present. Imagination allows us to find new possibilities for dealing with the problems we face, and this lets us create products that are useful and valuable to humankind. Professor Dorothy Webb opens a metaphoric window: "Creating a balloon in which we express ourselves differently; once we have entered the balloon, our imagination is no longer dependent on the boundaries we know, and so we have an environment that is suitable for creativity" (McCaslin, 2016, p.13). Imagining something is “to create a mental image, picture, sound, or even a feeling that can be imaginary. It is a thought process that establishes a new idea or image that was not there before” (Joubert 2001, p.18).

Recently, more and more educators and researchers have begun to emphasize the lack of importance and attention given to creativity and imagination in schools (Robinson, 2006; Gajdamaschko, 2005; Joubert, 2001) and its uncertain place in today's education (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008). In one of his talks, “Do schools kill creativity?” Robinson (2006) emphasizes that “we do not grow into creativity, we grow out of it – or rather we are educated out of it.” Gajdamaschko (2005) points out some issues about the imaginative engagement of students and their development during the school years. She mentions that educators talk about the intellectual and personality development of children without referring to the development of their imagination. However, when it comes to talking about socialization of children in schools and society, imagination is the topic that is generally left behind by educators.

Vygotsky's theoretical writings on imagination and creativity show the role of imaginative and creative thinking in childhood and the need to shape today's education in a context that aims to develop children's imaginative abilities. In one of his writings he described imagination and creativity:

... Imagination, as the basis of all creative activity, is an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific, and technical creation alike. In this sense, absolutely everything around us that was created by the hand of man, the entire world of human culture, as distinct from the world of nature, all this is the product of human imagination... (Vygotsky, 2004, p.9).

Vygotsky emphasized the basis of creativity as the ability to combine elements to generate a structure, to connect the old in new ways. He stressed that imagination as a cultural function enables children to master their behaviour and is a part of their cultural experiences:

...One of the most important areas of child and educational psychology is the issue of creativity in children, the development of this creativity and its significance to the child's general development and maturation. We can identify creative processes in children at the very earliest ages, especially in their play. A child who sits astride a stick and pretends to be riding a horse; a little girl who plays with a doll and imagines she is its mother; a boy who in his games becomes a pirate, a soldier, or a sailor, all these children at play represent examples of the most authentic, truest creativity... (Vygotsky, 1987, p.46, as cited in Gajdamaschko, 2005, p.11).

According to these quotes by Vygotsky, we need to consider the importance of imagination and creativity in children's holistic development, but how can we integrate imaginative and creative thinking into children's learning process in schools and encourage them to ‘master their own imagination’? Thus, Maxine Green's (1995, p.19) statement is significant: "When you communicate to children, the excitement of imagination, of seeing new things, seeing possibility. What worries me about schools; children go to school; they do not see the point. If we can make them see, there is a point that takes imagination.” She sees imaginative capacity as the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise.



Imagination is a central part of musical experiences, whether it is composing, listening, or performing (Reichling, 1997). Musical experiences can awaken our imaginations (Green, 2001, as cited in Emberton, 2013, p.30) and enable us to create visual imagery in our minds. Music and musical activities involve creativity in the whole process of imagining, creating, performing, and responding. It is a way to improve children's critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration and communication skills (Kim, 2017), which play a crucial role in their holistic development. Therefore, music education should support students' imaginative and creative learning and allow them to expand their imaginative thoughts and abilities to see new things and different possibilities they might encounter in their stories.

In this research, we aimed to illustrate the voices of primary school students about how they imagine their music lessons in school and the classroom. For this purpose, we used Vernon Howard's continuum of imagination to categorize students' statements. He describes the continuum of imagination in four points: "Beginning with fantasy, imagining the non-existent, imagining what exists but is not present, having an image and imposing it on something, imagining X as Y and ending with perceiving things in general and recognizing them" (Reichling, 1997, p.43). Reichling (1997) uses this continuum of imagination in investigating the role of imagination in play and music and stresses the first steps of developing a framework for music grounded in play theory. Therefore, she emphasizes that the parallels between music and play regarding the real and imaginative, such as the wit and humour of Mozart and Satie, show the dynamic interaction between make-believe and reality. Things which we face in this universe are transported from real life into play by using them differently. In this respect, students' imaginative thoughts and statements about their music lessons in this research show that real-life experiences can be elements in creating their own stories of the imagination. Through the imaginary stories, we may understand the creative and imaginative needs in music education in schools. Vygotsky's writing on the theoretical conceptions of imagination allows us to explore children's creative and imaginative experiences in formal and informal learning environments (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008). Thus, Vygotsky's laws of imagination are the key role in this research for analysing and interpreting students' imaginative statements in relation to their music lessons.

METHODS

Study Design

A qualitative study was conducted in order to obtain an understanding of how children imagine their music lessons in school. The research is designed as a holistic case study which uses a holistic approach to understand complex social events (Yin, 2003). In this type of research design, there is a single unit of analysis, such as an individual, a school, an institution or a program (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008) where the researchers have the possibility to investigate the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events in real contexts such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, school performance, and interpersonal relations (Cohen et al., 2007; Yin, 2012 as cited in Vezne & Günbayı, 2016, p.14).

Participants

The study took place in a primary school in Bursa, one of the biggest cities in Turkey. The primary school is located in the centre of the city and has classes from the 1st grade to the 4th grade. Participants in the pilot study ($n=10$) and main study ($n=9$) were 4th grade primary school students who have an interest in participating in musical activities. The students were listed and randomly selected. The main study consists of nine primary school students.

Data Collection

As a means of qualitative data collection, a focus-group interview structure was based on children's perspectives, ideas and imaginations about their music lessons. First, a pilot study consisting of a focus-group interview and a questionnaire was carried out with ten fourth grade primary school students who voluntarily took part. The purpose of this pilot study was to collect preliminary data for



developing the research instrument, testing the intelligibility of the research questions and planning the main study. We asked students to describe their current music lessons and musical activities in school, and some of the questions were related to the position of the music lessons in their classroom. Some students had difficulties in understanding the questions and also in describing their ideas. We designed a more understandable questionnaire and changed some questions in order to obtain clarified data. The focus-group interview of the main study, as well as the questionnaire, was carried out with nine different fourth grade students selected randomly from the previous list. The interviews were undertaken after school and permission from parents and the school administration was obtained. The reason for preferring the focus-group interview technique was to create a group dynamic and an interaction among the students. Besides, the focus-group interview enabled children to share their opinions, imaginations and ideas on the subjects as well as their responses to the research questions. One of the distinguishing features of focus-group interviews is that the group opinion is as important as the individual opinion (Gibbs, 2012; p.26). The obtained data were categorized under specific codes and themes and analysed through content analysis. According to Arik (1992), content analysis is performed to classify and summarise verbal and written data in terms of a problem or purpose, and to categorise these data to measure certain variables in order to explain the concepts in a specific meaning (as cited in Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001; p.21). Each student was coded with different names.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

Students' Views about Their Music Lessons

Before asking the students how they imagined their music lessons, we asked them to write some information about their current music lessons and music activities by using a questionnaire. According to the students' statements, music activities were listed as singing songs, playing the recorder, creating movements to songs, and listening. The singing activities were explained as singing children's songs in chorus, and sometimes performing outside the classroom, Mert: *"We sing all together in the classroom. Yesterday we went to the principal's room to sing."*, and Serap stated that they had learned the songs by reading the notes.

Playing the recorder was the most listed activity, Zuhal: *"We play four songs on the recorder on April 23rd. First, the teacher reads the notes, then we read them together, and after that we play."* and Engin: *"The teacher shows us how to play the song, then we play"* and Mert: *"The teacher asks us to listen, and then we play."* These statements show how classroom teachers teach students to play songs with the recorder. From these findings, we may understand that some of the classroom teachers teach by sight-reading and others by playing by ear or demonstrating how to play the recorder. Zeynep stated that they memorized the songs and explained how the teacher evaluated their performances in the classroom, Zeynep: *"The teacher asks us to play one by one in front of the class. If we are not good at playing, the teacher calls us later to play. He has a list; if we play correctly, he gives us a plus, if we do not, then we play later again."*

Some students indicated that they played solo in their music lessons (Zuhal, Eda, Arda, Zeynep, Mert, Engin). Zuhal and Eda: *"...when there is enough time, we play solo."* Koray and Arda stated that they created movements to songs in their music lessons: *"There is a children's song; we are doing movements according to this music."* (In the focus-group interview, Koray performed a children's song with movements which they had learned in the music lesson). Emre and Arda indicated that they listened to folk songs in the music lessons, but that mostly, listening activities were not done at all (Serap, Zuhal, Eda, Zeynep, Koray, Engin). According to students' views (Emre, Zuhal, Eda, Zeynep, Arda, Engin, Mert), some of the classroom teachers played the recorder, and Arda's teacher also played the 'baglama' (Turkish folk instrument with three double strings). Serap and Koray's teachers did not play any instruments. Emre mentioned that instruments in the music book were introduced by the teacher. Zeynep stated, *"The teacher introduces instruments such as the violin, piano and drum"* and according to Mert, the teacher introduced instruments but he did not ask students to play. Interestingly, most of the students stated that they did not come across different music instruments in



their music lessons (Eda, Zuhall, Koray, Engin, Serap). Music activities in school were performances with the school choir, competitions, and school festivals such as celebrations of special days and weeks, Mert: *“We have celebrations in school with choir, band, and orchestra on special days”*.

Students’ Imaginations about Their Music Lessons

When we asked the students how they imagined their music lessons in school, first, a variety of places were described as learning environments (Table 1). One of the reasons for this may be the lack of a music room in their school. As shown in Table 1, the students imagined different types of learning environments for their music lessons, such as music halls with all the instruments inside (Eda, Zuhall), music tents (Serap), music halls where the drums were played until the morning (Engin), and music halls with soundproof rooms (Zuhall). Zeynep imagined a music camp near the seaside or in the forest with tents around where every child can play his favourite instrument/s, and Arda wished to play instruments in a music club.

Table 1. Students’ imaginations about the musical learning environment

Codes	Students’ Statements
Music hall	<i>“I wish we could have a music hall, and I’d like to have all the instruments in it.” (Eda)</i> <i>“I wish we could have a hall, and whoever wants to play the drums can come and play all night long...in the summer holidays.” (Engin)</i> <i>“My dream is to have a music hall, similar to a gym. A hall with musical instruments in it. I’d like to have all the musical instruments that we want to play the most. Everyone can play at the same time, but they can only hear the sound of their own instruments. No one outside can hear the sounds... there are rooms instead of tents.” (Zuhall)</i>
Music camp or music tents outside school	<i>“I’d like a music camp (near the sea, stream, or in a forest) where many tents are around... everyone has their favourite instruments in each tent.” (Zeynep)</i> <i>“I dreamed of a music tent by the seaside. I’d like to play an instrument in the open air or inside the tent. I imagine it would be a nice place.” (Serap)</i>
Music club	<i>“A music club where everybody can play instruments.” (Arda)</i>

Table 2 shows how students wished and imagined their music lessons to be. According to the findings, the students imagined playing the piano (Serap, Zuhall, Eda, Zeynep), flute (Zuhall), violin (Emre, Zeynep), guitar (Emre, Eda, Arda), melodica (Kaan), percussion (Mert, Engin) and other instruments rather than playing just the recorder.

Table 2. Students’ statements about how they imagined their music lessons

Codes	Students’ Statements
Instruments	<i>“...I wish we all could play an instrument. I wish I could play the piano.” (Eda)</i> <i>“I dream that everyone plays drums. I’d rather have drum lessons.” (Engin)</i> <i>“I want to play string instruments.” (Arda)</i> <i>“Playing more instruments, playing a percussion instrument...” (Mert)</i> <i>“I’d like to play a lot of instruments. I’d like to know the notes of different instruments.” (Zeynep)</i> <i>“I would rather play the drums, but there are no drums in our school.” (Mert)</i> <i>“I’d love to play the guitar. I’d also like to play other instruments, like the flute.” (Serap)</i>
Atmosphere	<i>“I imagine that music lessons are fun and enjoyable.” (Arda)</i> <i>“I want everyone to play their favourite instrument and create a nice song to play. I imagine it would be fun.” (Koray)</i>
Playing different music	<i>“I would love to play ‘art music’.” (Zeynep)</i>
Type of learning	<i>“Learning fast.” (Emre)</i>
Dance/movement	<i>“I would like to dance ballet while my friend is playing the piano.” (Eda)</i> <i>“...I’d like my friends and I to dance.” (Zuhall)</i>

Arda and Koray imagined their music lessons to be entertaining. This illustration may show the atmosphere they wished for in their classroom. Zeynep would love to play art music. Her desire to play “art music (Turkish art music)” shows her interest in playing different styles rather than just children's songs. This statement may show the lack of playing music from different genres/styles in primary music education. The Turkish Music Curriculum (Ministry of National Education, 2018) has



four learning areas at each grade (1st grade to 4th grade): Listening and Singing, Musical Perception and Knowledge, Musical Creativity, and Music Culture. However, one of the objectives is "to recognize local, regional, national and international music genres and perceive these elements of different cultures as richness". Therefore, classroom teachers need to implement music activities to achieve the mentioned objective.

As seen in Table 2, Emre wanted to learn the guitar fast. This statement can be categorized as a type of learning and interpreted as that he wanted to play songs with his guitar in a short time. In this sense, some students can be very impatient in learning musical instruments. The fact that the student wanted to learn the guitar quickly may indicate the need for learning to play musical instruments individually in the school, maybe via guitar courses in little groups. Due to the large number of students in classes, the learning process and the type of learning may be affected. The students' voices make us think of different music teaching methods that will enable them to learn to play instruments in a way that they enjoy and feel the pleasure of playing in their music lessons. One of the students dreamed of dancing ballet (Eda) while her friend is playing the piano, while another dreamed of dancing with her friends in their music lesson (Zuhal). Children are naturally and physically active. Movement, along with play, is one of the most natural and efficacious modes of learning for young children (Bilton, 2002, as cited in Maynard & Waters, 2007). Children can recognize everything that belongs to them by dancing and moving their bodies. Movement and dance are an expression for understanding the environment. Also, they are an ideal way and tool for children to explore music (Hackett & Lindeman, 2016). Therefore, movement and dance should be integrated into the primary music curriculum. In theory, there are objectives related to movement and dance in the Turkish music curriculum, which refers to the learning topic "musical creativity". The objectives are defined as "to express feelings and thoughts about the music they listen to through drama, dance and drawing, according to the students' choice", and "to transform melody phrases into dance". One of the main issues in primary music education is that teachers have difficulties in implementing creative activities in the classroom. One of the reasons for this could be highlighted as their insufficient musical competencies. On the other hand, putting theory into practice is always a concern in education. In numerous research studies, we may see pictures which show the gap between what is suggested by the curriculum and what is implemented by the teachers (Koutsoupidou, 2005).

Analysis of Students' Imaginative Thoughts According to Vygotsky's Laws of Imagination

Some imaginative thoughts of students were categorized under the four points of Vernon Howard's continuum of imagination and interpreted within Vygotsky's four laws of imagination.

Beginning with fantasy, imagining the non-existent:

"I would like the notes to glide through the air while playing the piano. I would like them to fly one at a time. I wish I could remember again if those notes were flying directly in my mind." (Eda)

Eda was imagining flying notes that do not exist in the real world; notes which were gliding in the air and flying directly in her mind, and therefore, she was remembering (what she was remembering was unclear). She started with this fantasy and imagined what she had not seen before. This imaginative thought may have come from interactions with stories that she had heard in real life or from books, animations, cartoons, movies, songs (lyrics) or other personal narratives. We can create new combinations from our previous experiences, and this allows us to expand our imaginative thinking. Because we are not limited to our own experiences and the narrow boundaries, we can go far beyond (Vygotsky, 2004). Another excerpt is a conversation between Zeynep and Zuhal:

Zuhal: *"Everyone can play at the same time, but they can only hear the sound of their instruments. No one outside can hear."*

Zeynep: *"It is like magic. There is a room, such a soundproofed room."*

Zeynep's imaginative thought about magical soundproofed rooms was based on Zuhal's narration. Zeynep conceptualized something from another person's narration that might be based on life



experiences. Zuhail may have seen, heard or read something about soundproofed rooms in her previous experiences. According to Vygotsky's second law of imagination (2004, p.16) "a person's experience is broadened, because he can imagine what he has not seen, can conceptualize something from another person's narration and description of what he himself has never directly experienced." In this focus group, students had the opportunity to share their ideas and imaginations. They constructed new ideas with the interaction of their classmates. Zeynep's imaginary construction about a magical soundproof room was built by combining elements from reality, and she could make use of the social experiences of Zuhail in this process.

Imagining what exists but is not present:

"On top of imaginary clouds, I would like to play instruments like the piano, violin, guitar, and drum and create a choir, and once in a while, sing a song to people beneath the clouds. I would like to have the musical instruments to glide while I am playing music. I would love everyone to hear me playing music. I would like to have the rainbow open in the air while I play the instrument. My friends and I would dance, and I would like the instruments to be played on their own." (Zuhail)

Zuhail dreamed of playing all the instruments on the top of imaginary clouds, creating a choir and singing a song to the people living under the clouds. Musical instruments were gliding, and a rainbow was opening in the sky while she was playing an instrument. Zuhail was imagining what exists in the real world but is not present. The clouds and the rainbow represent the real world; the choir and musical instruments are also elements of reality. However, creating a choir on a cloud, instruments that are gliding or the self-playing instruments are creative products of the imagination. The imaginative creation combines different elements of previous experiences. For instance, the piano is Zuhail's most wanted instrument in real life, and dancing with her friends is also an expression of reality. She used these elements of reality to create her own story of imagination. Besides this, Zuhail's imagination has a joyful expression. The rainbow in the air, singing songs beneath the clouds and gliding instruments are combined products of the imagination and are associated with the emotions. When we read Zuhail's quote, we would have impressions such as joy, happiness, and pleasantness. These emotions come from reality and may influence our imagination. "The images of imagination also provide an internal language for our emotion", and "psychology has long noted the fact that every feeling has not only an external, physical expression, but an internal expression associated with the choice of thoughts, images, and impressions" (Vygotsky 2004, p.17-18). Vygotsky's third law of imagination stresses the mutual dependence between emotional reality and imagination.

Having an image and imposing it on something, imagining X as Y:

"In the music club, you know, the soldiers have weapon stores; such things, such instruments may be there." (Arda).

Arda had an image of a music club which he described as a weapon store with instruments inside. As we know, these kinds of stores are vast areas where all the military equipment (weapons) is stored. He imagined the weapon store as a place where music is played, and instruments are stored like weapons. Arda had an image of reality that he formed into a vast place which he named the "music club". He was creating a product of his imagination, and this refers to a product that exists in the real world. His imaginative story of the weapon store, which was formed as a music club, shows how imagination becomes reality.

Examples of such crystallized or embodied imagination include any technical device, machine, or instrument. These were created by the combinatory imagination of human beings and did not correspond to any model existing in reality, but they have the most persuasive, active, and practical association with reality in that once they have been given material form, they become just as real as other things and affect the surrounding real environment (Vygotsky, 2004, p.21).

Ending with perceiving things in general and recognizing them:

According to Reichling (1997, p.47), "The role of imagination in perception and recognition is well-grounded." We transport things from real life into play-imagination, but we may use them differently.



The students created different imaginative thoughts and stories about their music lessons with creative products of their imagination like gliding notes, self-playing instruments, and magical soundproof rooms. They created fantasies that combined the imagined and the real, something that was from the real world but entering into something apart and different. They perceived things in general and recognized them. If we had asked the students to write a story that included their imaginative thoughts of music lessons, their stories would have drawn upon reality. Elements of their reality would have been transformed into a product of their imagination by using characters that are playing all the instruments on the top of imaginary clouds, creating a choir, singing songs to people beneath the clouds, and characters who are remembering things while notes are flying directly in their minds. Their stories would be combined with reality to form a product of their imagination. Their imaginative thought may be embodied in reality, and become an object, a material, or such imaginative thought and stories that alter reality. Vygotsky's fourth law of imagination shows the association between imagination and reality. This association refers to a fantasy that may represent a new product without correspondence to any object that exists in reality. However, if this crystallized imagination has been given a material form, it becomes a new object that exists in the real world. Consequentially, imagination becomes a reality, but with a potential to alter that reality (Vygotsky, 2004).

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this research was to illustrate children's voices about how they imagined their music lessons in school. Despite the fact that it is not possible to draw general conclusions from within these research findings, they will give an understanding of how vital it is to give voice to children for expressing their ideas and imaginations about their music education. Before focusing on their imaginative thoughts, we asked students to give information about the current music lessons in their classroom. The students stated that music activities were mostly playing the recorder, singing songs, creating movements to songs, and listening. The students stated that there was no music club in their school, and accordingly, classroom teachers were doing fewer musical activities. While there are many clubs in different subjects at this primary school such as chess, sport and maths, the lack of music clubs and musical activities is remarkable. Yet, based on the observations of the researchers during the focus-group interview, the students were very enthusiastic about the idea of making music together and sharing their opinions, ideas and imaginations with interest. The need for music activities and music clubs in primary education seems evident, according to the students' statements. Classroom teachers are generally responsible for teaching music in this primary school where we conducted our research. In many countries, classroom teachers and teacher trainees have little or no musical training and do not feel competent in teaching music (Seung & Chung, 2014, as cited in Shin & Seog, 2018; De Vries, 2011; Russel-Bowie, 2010; Giles & Frego, 2004; Kocabaş, 2000; Küçüköncü, 2000). Another issue is that music activities are provided by musicians with little or no pedagogical training aimed at young children (Holgersen, 2008). Musical activities in schools can be described as listening, performing improvisation and composition. Improvisation is one of the creative activities where children use their bodies, voices or musical instruments. However, there are some reasons why music teachers do not use improvisation in the classroom. One of the reasons could be the lack of understanding about creativity among primary teachers, their educational background, whether they have experience of improvisation or not, or the over-excitement that improvisational activities may induce in young children (Koutsoupidou, 2005). The fore mentioned conditions cause a wide gap in music education of young learners in terms of promoting imaginative and creative thinking.

Students' imaginations about their music lessons were at first about different learning environments. The statements show the importance for children to do music activities in music rooms that are well equipped with instruments as well as outside the classroom and school. For future music education, we may discuss the possibilities for activities in outdoor learning. According to Dewey's concept of outdoors, the child learns in several ways, for instance, "The life of the child would extend out of doors to the garden, surrounding fields and forests. He would have his excursions, his walks and talks,



in which the larger world out of doors would be open to him.” (Dewey, 1990, p.35 as cited in Rivkin, 1998). Dewey explained the outdoor aspect of his school as “The school building has about it a natural environment. It ought to be in a garden, and the children from the garden would be led on to surrounding fields, and then into the wider country, with all its facts and forces.” (Dewey, 1990, p.75 as cited in Rivkin, 1998). The outdoor environment enables children to move freely in space to explore the world around them and experience natural phenomena such as the weather, the changing seasons and shadows (Maynard & Waters, 2007). Thus, the development and implementation of special music activities in the outdoor environment may be a potential to promote children’s musical learning with a holistic and integrated approach. “Learning outside the classroom should be used as a motivational tool throughout the curriculum to encourage greater engagement from all students” (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2005, p.180).

The research findings indicated that students wished to play different instruments in music lessons, not only the recorder or melodica. The lack of instruments and music rooms in primary schools in Turkey is an obstacle in developing students’ competencies in music education (Sungurtekin, 2005; Sungurtekin & Çakır İlhan, 2015; Özdemir, & Yıldız, 2011; Küçüköncü, 2000). Mawang, Kigen and Mutweleli (2019) stress the socio-economic factors in developing countries (inadequate educational and communication facilities, high illiteracy rates, and high levels of poverty) that influence music pedagogical practices and creativity negatively. According to the students’ imaginative thoughts in this research, students are aware of their educational needs. They want to discover different instruments and learning environments in their music education. Therefore, developing countries should implement appropriate educational policies and strategies for curriculum development in order to meet the priorities of the individual's educational needs.

Vygotsky’s (2004) writings on the theoretical conceptions of imagination allow us to explore children's creative experiences when situated in formal and informal learning environments. Through research on imaginative thinking in learning environments, we can develop an understanding of classroom practices that focus on the creative needs of children (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008). In order to promote imaginative and creative thinking through music education, we as educators and researchers need to listen to children's voices. The research findings may help us to understand the problems in primary music education and provide a piece of evidence about the necessity of developing good classroom practices to promote children’s imaginative and creative thinking skills. Music mentally and emotionally engages children in thinking processes that help them to build imaginative stories (Salmon, 2010) in which they can express themselves uniquely. Through imaginative and creative thinking, children can make connections between reality and fiction, and explore and understand their environment, and this enables them to generate their prior experiences into new ideas. Unfortunately, teachers do not always offer children opportunities to get involved in creative activities (Koutsoupidou, 2005). If teachers encourage children to use their imagination in music education, children will have the opportunity to expand their creative and imaginative abilities through various forms which allow them to enrich their musical and personal experiences. According to Kokotsaki and Newton (2015, p. 491), “Thinking about a student’s creative efforts is not a mechanistic process aimed at producing some measure but is about identifying how a student’s world might be opened to new experiences and alternatives.” Also, students need to have a voice in curriculum decision making in music education, and teachers should give students a chance to shape their music lessons according to their imaginative and creative needs and wishes, like creating their own imaginative stories, their compositions, their plays, their creative dances and more. In Salmon’s (2010) study, the six-year-old Christina was asked how she felt while listening to Mozart. “*I created stories in my mind*” was her answer. This statement is significant in terms of promoting imaginary and creative thinking in music education. Zheng and Bian (2018) emphasize that teachers should encourage children to create simple music, inspire them to exert their thinking ability to complete music activities, and organize teaching within an interaction rather than giving just simple instructions in music activities. The role of the teacher in recognizing children’s creative abilities and fostering the conditions where creativity and imagination can be realized is crucial, and the most important elements of creativity in the music



classroom are the teacher's strong belief in children's creative potential and a supportive climate where creative and imaginative experiences are supported in order to build confidence and competence (Kokotsaki & Newton, 2015). In addition, when only academic achievements are centred in the curriculum, music and music education become marginalized (Kim, 2017).

Well-developed imaginative activities in education lead children to be more conscious and volitional, and gradually they become masters of their imaginations (Gajdamaschko, 2005). Robinson and Aronica (2009, p.xiii) emphasized that "We need to create environments in our schools, in our workplaces, and in our public offices where every person is inspired to grow creatively". In this respect, we need to take new possibilities and perspectives into consideration for a curriculum development where imagination and creativity are appreciated, and students' imaginative and creative needs are centred on. Higgins' (2008, p.46) emphasis is on "understanding imagination as a central aim of education, as a core component of our ideals of the educated person, and indeed, as a vision of human flourishing." He stresses "such a conception that could become the basis of new initiatives to support imaginative education, not only within the arts but across the whole curriculum."

One of the limitations of this study is that we interviewed children from a middle socio-economic background, but what about the children in rural areas? What would their voices be like? Further research about the development of imagination and creativity in music education should be conducted with an extended sample to reach students from different socio-economic backgrounds and different school levels. Another recommendation for further research is to illustrate classroom and music teachers' voices on the development of imagination and creativity in music education. Do teachers consider the students' creative needs and appreciate their imaginative thoughts in their music lessons? How do teachers develop and implement good classroom practices in music education to promote imagination and creativity in school and the classroom? Teachers' perceptions could be examined through interviews, as well as observations in the classroom, in order to understand their attitudes towards imagination and creativity in music education.

According to Blenkinsop (2009, p. xiii) "How, and in what form, might educators consider the imagination and the very act of teaching across cultures?" Wagner (2014) emphasises some essential questions that must be taken into consideration: What changes must be made within the education system to prepare our students for analytic and creative thinking? Nevertheless, first of all, what must teachers do differently to stimulate students' imaginations?

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