

## Musical Diversity: The Differences between Public and Private Kindergartens in China

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**Abstract :** Early childhood music education plays a significant role in an individual's growth. Music can help children understand themselves and relate to others, and make connections between family, school, and society. In recent years, with the development of early childhood education in China, an increasing number of kindergartens have been established, and many of them pay more attention to music education. This research has two main aims. One is to discover how and why music is used in both public and private kindergartens. The second aim is to make recommendations for widening the use of music in kindergartens. In order to achieve these aims, the research uses two main methods. Firstly, it considers the historical background and cultural context of early childhood education in China; and secondly, it uses an approach that compares public and private kindergartens. In this research, six kindergartens were chosen from Qingdao city in Shandong Province as case studies, including 3 public kindergartens and 3 private kindergartens. This research was based on using three types of data collection methods: observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and questionnaires with parents. Participant and non-participant observational methods were used and included in daily routines at the kindergartens in order to experience the situation of music education first-hand. Interviews were associated with teachers' views of teaching and learning music, the perceptions of the music context, and their strategies of using music. Lastly, the questionnaire was designed to obtain the views of current music education from the children's parents in the respective kindergartens. The results are shown with three main themes: (1) distinct characteristics of public kindergartens (e.g., similar equipment, low tuition fee, qualified teachers, etc); (2) distinct characteristics of private kindergartens (e.g., various tuition fees, own teaching system, trained teachers, etc); and (3) differences between public and private kindergartens (e.g., funding, requirements for teachers, parents' demands, etc). According to the results, we can see that the main purpose of using music in China is to develop the musical ability of children, and teachers focus on musical learning, such as singing in tune and playing instruments. However, as revealed in this research, there are many other uses and functions of music in these educational settings, including music used for non-musical learning (e.g., counting, learning language, etc.) or in supporting social routines.

**Keywords :** differences between private and public school, early childhood education, music education, uses and functions of music

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