

# Proposal of a Design Direction for a Music Curriculum Through Analysis of Korean Elementary School Students' Perceptions of the Goals, Contents, Methods, and Evaluations of Music Classes

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## Abstract

The curriculum must be structured at the level and perspective of the students because the it is for students' learning. In this regard, the purpose of this study is to propose a design direction for the elementary school music curriculum by analyzing the perceptions of elementary school students in grades 5-6 toward school music classes. For this purpose, observation, interview, and checklist methods were conducted for 16 elementary school students to analyze students' perceptions of the goals, contents, methods, and evaluations of school music classes. The learning attitude of the students participating in the school music class was observed for one month, and an interview was conducted in groups to collect the students' free thoughts about the music class. Then, a checklist method was implemented to check the contents and methods of things that should be emphasized or preferred in the music class. The recognition results of students are as follows. First, they wanted music classes that were closely related to their lives. Second, listening to music was preferred along with performing music. Third, they wanted to experience a variety of music genres. Fourth, they wanted a fun music class. Fifth, they wanted the class to be more active when using digital devices. In conclusion, it is necessary to organize all music areas to be connected to life, to experience various genres of music content, and to use more active and interesting methods such as digital. In addition, it was confirmed that the curriculum should be composed of music learning linked to life and various fields.

**Keywords:** music class, elementary school, music curriculum, music content, digital method

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Necessity of Research

Music classes are conducted differently depending on the learning level of elementary, middle, and high school students (Park, 2020; Seung et al., 2018). Elementary school is the first period to learn music, and it is very important for interest in music and basic learning (Oh et al., 2017). Many music educators have emphasized that music education appropriate to the level of elementary school students should be properly conducted because auditory sense is formed and musical development is maximized in elementary school (Park & Yang, 2016; Zaffini, 2018).

Many studies have been conducted on how music classes are conducted in elementary schools and have provided various implications (Park, 2019b; Min, 2020). Elementary school music learning emphasizes basic learning such as the formation of basic habit of music, formation of attitude to enjoy music, understanding of basic knowledge of music, and acquisition of basic functions of music. In recent years, research has been conducted on various types of music such as practical music, various aspects of music application, and various learning methods such as digital, expanding from the existing nursery rhymes. In addition, it is mentioned that elementary school students should be able to learn music in school in a more fun and diverse way.

However, since these studies are mainly conducted through the study of teachers' preparation of teaching-learning guidance, there is relatively little research on what students actually think and what requests they are making. In other words, there are few studies from the perspective of students who actually learn compared to those from the perspective of teachers who practice education. In order to better understand the music learning of elementary school

students, it is necessary to analyze more closely what the students actually think and what kind of music class they want.

The OECD Education 2030 project, which is mainly cited by the education community, emphasizes ‘student agency’ and pays attention to the education made by learners (OECD, 2021). In other words, it is moving away from the existing teacher-centered education, and is aiming for education that helps learners, education that is implemented by learners on their own, and education that is student-centered. Accordingly, the movement to educate students about various competencies is being emphasized. In order to lead learners' independent education, research that converges and analyzes their learning needs from the learner's point of view is urgently needed.

### 1.2 Theoretical Background

In education, student initiative and independent learning have been continuously emphasized. In this regard, the OECD, which has a great influence on global education, presents a learning compass as shown in Figure 1 below, emphasizing students' individuality in learning (OECD, 2021).

In the lower left of the figure, learners with different appearances are presented, which express learners living various lives with various interests and career paths. They learn with student agency and cooperative (co-agency) with peers/teachers/parents/community. And in the end, this picture shows that they are doing well-being by going through various paths they want and living well on their own in an uncertain future. At this time, students must take the 'compass' in the middle and carve out a new path for the future by themselves. At the very center of this compass lies a variety of competencies and transformative competencies. In other words, this figure shows that students will exercise various competencies composed of knowledge/skills/values/attitudes to continuously repeat and learn the cycle of predicting, acting, and reflecting on their own, moving toward a well-being that everyone can relate to. In the end, education plays the role of a compass. In education, learner's subjectivity, diversity, autonomy, and empathy are emphasized, and actions and reflection in real life are important.

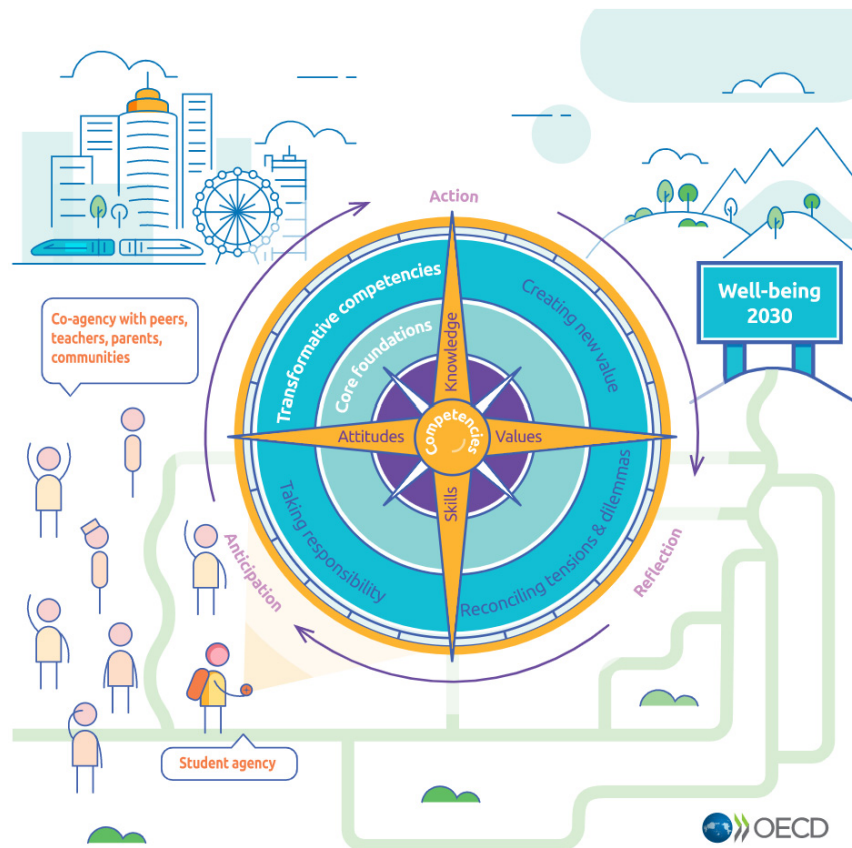


Figure 1. OECD Learning Compass 2030

Therefore, in understanding the school music class, how the learner perceives it is the most important thing. In other words, how the school music class should be structured needs to be revealed through the learner.

Then, it is necessary to examine the theoretical background of how school music classes are generally structured. The EU and OECD, world-renowned associations, present the main music contents as shown in Table 1. In general, when it comes to music education, basic music knowledge and expressive activities such as creation/performance are important, but more independent activities such as contribution/contribution/value related to real life, one's own ideas/experiences/thoughts, and others other than oneself are important. It shows that interaction/communication/influence from a broader perspective such as art/culture/society other than music is more important than anything else. In other words, the goal is to focus on performance-oriented competency education in connection with real life rather than just learning within music (EU, 2018; OECD, 2021).

**Table 1.** Music Content in the OECD and EU

Category		The Details
OECD		Contributions and contributions of musicians, composers, and works of music to cultural heritage History and knowledge of music, including major musical styles, different compositions, and more Production and creation of musical works and performances of works composed for various purposes Activities related to feelings and ideas expressed through music How to think and listen like a musician, how music contributes to and relates to life Moral, ethical and legal issues in music, such as copyright
EU	Knowledge - Skill - Attitude -	Knowledge of various cultures and expressions, including languages, cultural heritage, traditions, cultural products, etc. - Understand how expressions affect each other's ideas - Understanding the different ways of communicating ideas between creators, participants, and audiences - Understanding one's identity and cultural heritage in the midst of cultural diversity Expressing and interpreting ideas, experiences, emotions, and empathy in art and various cultures - Knowing and realizing and creating personal, social, and commercial values through art and various cultures - Individually & collaboratively participating in creative activities and processes With ethics and responsibility, open attitude and respect for the diversity of cultural expressions - Positive attitudes such as curiosity about the world, imagination and openness to new possibilities, and willingness to participate in cultural experiences

*1.3 Objectives and Problems of Research*

In this regard, this study aims to examine the actual perceptions of elementary school students on their music classes and to diagnose the direction of the elementary school music classes based on this. In addition, the direction of improvement of the music curriculum is suggested by analyzing what kind of music classes students require from the viewpoint of the goals, contents, methods, and evaluations of music classes. In that this study is based on the practical needs of learners, it is meaningful to share the current emphasis on student-centered learning and learner subjectivity with the educational flow and context.

Specific research questions include:

- 1) How do elementary school students perceive the goals of school music classes?
- 2) How do elementary school students think the content of school music classes should be structured?
- 3) What do elementary school students think the school music class should be like?

- 4) How do elementary school students think that school music classes should be evaluated?
- 5) What is the direction for elementary school music classes?

## 2. Method

The research subjects, research methods, and research procedures for conducting this study are as follows.

### 2.1 Study Subject

The subjects of this study were a total of 16 students in grades 5-6 of an elementary school located in Seoul, consisting of 8 male and 8 female students. In order to closely check the students' perceptions, a small number of students were targeted. The subjects of the study were limited to cases where not only consented to participate in the research according to the research ethics regulations, but also their parents and teachers consented.

### 2.2 Research Methods

As a research method, observation, interview, and checklist methods were used. Considering the level and characteristics of the research subjects, the survey may not be suitable for elementary school students. Of course, responses can be elicited through the questionnaire, but in order to induce richer results, the focus was placed on capturing the main characteristics while observing the researcher participating in students' music classes and school life together. In addition to observation, interviews were conducted after school classes to collect students' opinions on music classes in more detail. In addition, by preparing a checklist for major matters, it was attempted to secure quantitative data by checking the preferred content.

The main research methods and contents are as follows Table 2.

**Table 2.** Research Methods and Content

Research method	Main point of view	The details
Observation method	School music class Learning Attitudes of Students Participating in Music Classes	Learning objectives presented in class, music content, teaching-learning methods, learning tools, textbooks, teacher questions, evaluations, etc. Motivation, interest, interest, attitude, etc. of students
Interview	Collect students' thoughts about school music classes Semi-structured free interview format	What kind of music activity do you like? What kind of music do you like? What kind of learning method do you like? Is it better to teach in conjunction with other classes besides music? What classes would you like to see more of?
Checklist method	The main points about the goals, contents, methods, and evaluation of school music classes	The goals of the music class, the activities or music genres that should be emphasized in the music class, the digital learning method you want to use, your preferred distance learning method, the appropriate evaluation method for on-off classes, etc.

### 2.3 Research Procedure

First, research ethics were reviewed and confirmed for elementary school students who could participate in the research. In other words, the consent of the research subjects, parents and teachers was obtained through guidance on the study period, contents, methods, and degree of participation.

Second, to form a rapport, the researcher participated in the music class of the target students and observed the students' attitudes and reactions to the music class and class. Observations were made for one month in December 2021, and were performed 1-2 times a week. Out of a total of 6 class observations, 3 classes were held in the classroom and 3 classes were held online.

Third, a rapport was formed with the students through observation, and the students' attitudes and responses to the classes and classes were collected, and an interview was conducted based on this. Interviews were conducted twice

in January 2022, and each group was divided into 4 groups of 4 people each. The reason for the division of the group was to apply the guidelines for the number of people due to the corona virus, and the small-scale interview was the basis. The interview time was less than 50 minutes per session considering the learner's concentration time.

Finally, during the second interview, the checklist method was implemented to structure and converge students' perceptions about the goals, contents, methods, and evaluations of music classes. In other words, based on the perceptions gathered through observation and interview so far, the students were asked to check the preferred content by items such as the goal of music class, the content of music activity or genre, the method such as digital learning, and the evaluation as shown in Figure 2.

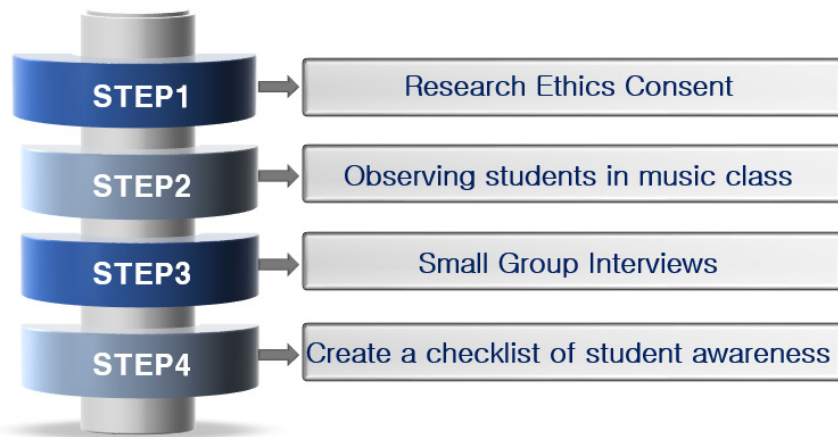


Figure 2. Research Procedure

**3. Results**

The results of the survey on the perceptions of elementary school students on the goals, contents, methods, and evaluations of school music classes are presented as follows.

*3.1 Consequences of Perception of the Goals of Music Lessons*

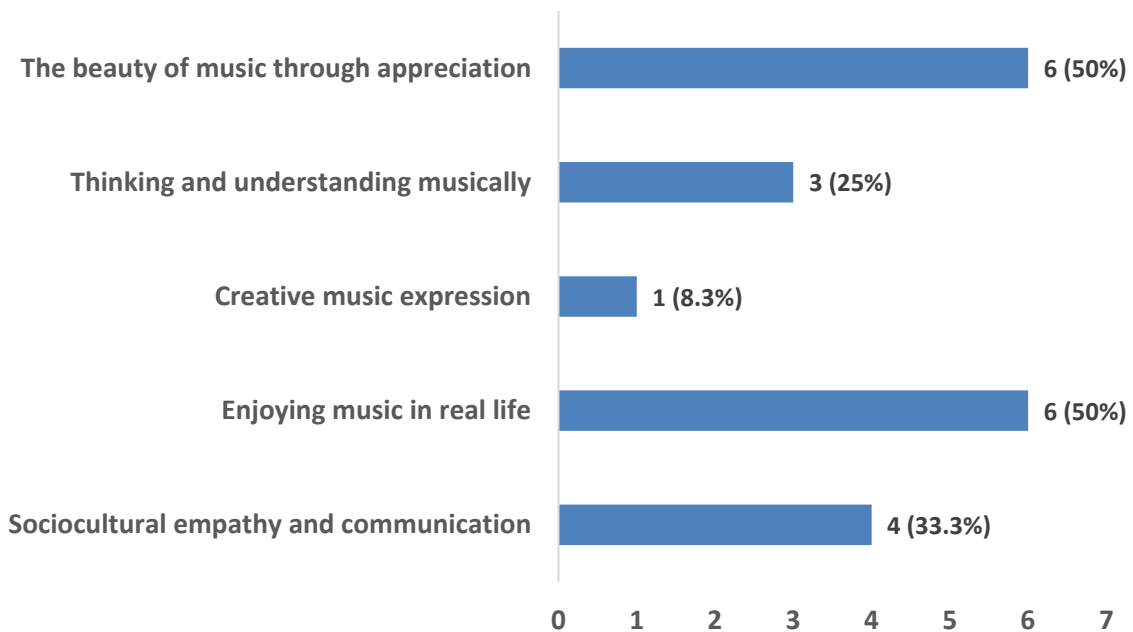


Figure 3. Consequences of Perception of the Goals of Music Lessons

The students were generally performing well in the various learning goals suggested by the teacher. Among the various goals, they thought that it was important to feel the beauty of music while listening, and they answered that they would like to enjoy music in their lives as a more important goal. In addition, it was found that they wished to set more musical goals in the socio-cultural aspect by further expanding the internal goals of music, such as socially and culturally empathizing with and communicating with music. On the other hand, it was found that the goal related to creatively expressing music was relatively less preferred as shown in Figure. 3.

The students' responses regarding the goals of music classes are as follows. In particular, the students said that the activity of making music was difficult, but it can be seen that the creation itself was not preferred because it was difficult rather than disliked.

"It's good to enjoy music in our daily life. (Student C)"

"The music is so beautiful and the sound is pretty. (Student L)"

"Creation is difficult. I want to make music in an easy way. (Student M)"

"I hope that the music in my life is important in school music classes as well." (Student A)

### 3.2 Consequences of Perception of the Content of Music Lessons

Regarding the content of music classes at school, perceptions were examined by dividing the content into internal music and non-music content. That is, in terms of music content, music activities such as appreciation and performance, and music genres and types such as traditional music and Western music were examined. On the other hand, in terms of content outside of music, the perception of connection with other subjects or areas other than music was examined.

#### 3.2.1 Music Activity

In studies reporting the results of experimental manipulations or interventions, clarify whether the analysis was by intent-to-treat. That is, were all participants assigned to conditions included in the data analysis regardless of whether they actually received the intervention, or were only participants who completed the intervention satisfactorily included? Give a rationale for the choice.

First, in terms of what activities should be emphasized in music class, it was found that the students preferred the activity to listen to music the most. Next, it was found that they liked to understand music concepts such as rhythm and melodies, and to play various instruments based on this. In addition, they answered that they wanted to learn activities about using music in their lives, and showed relatively less preference for singing or making music (Figure 4).

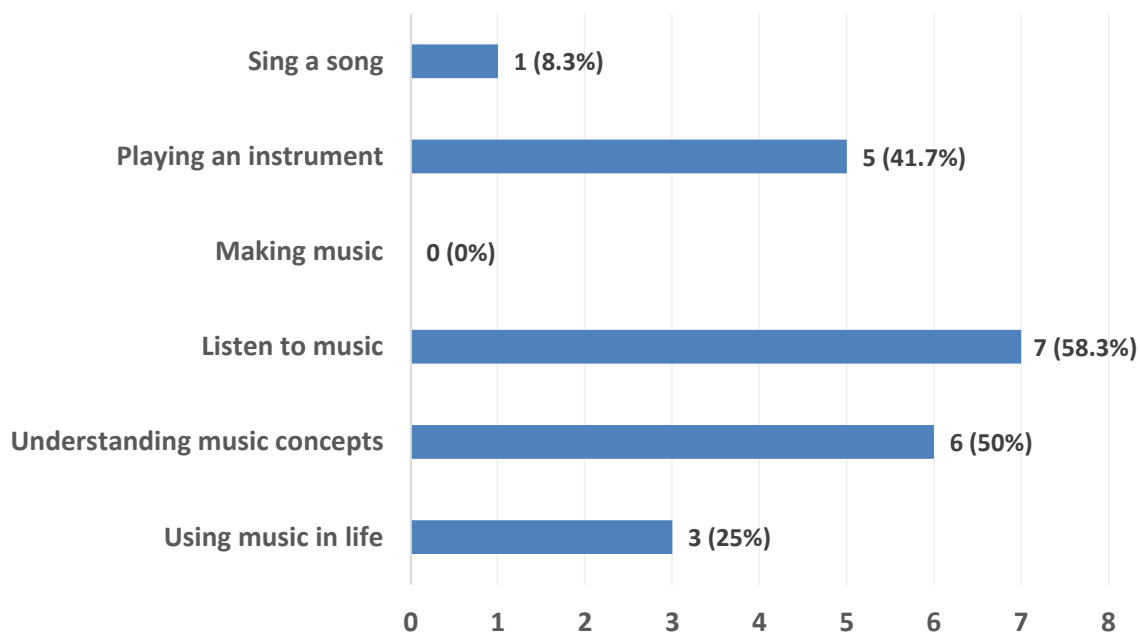


Figure 4. Perception Result of Music Activity

In addition, the students showed the following responses.

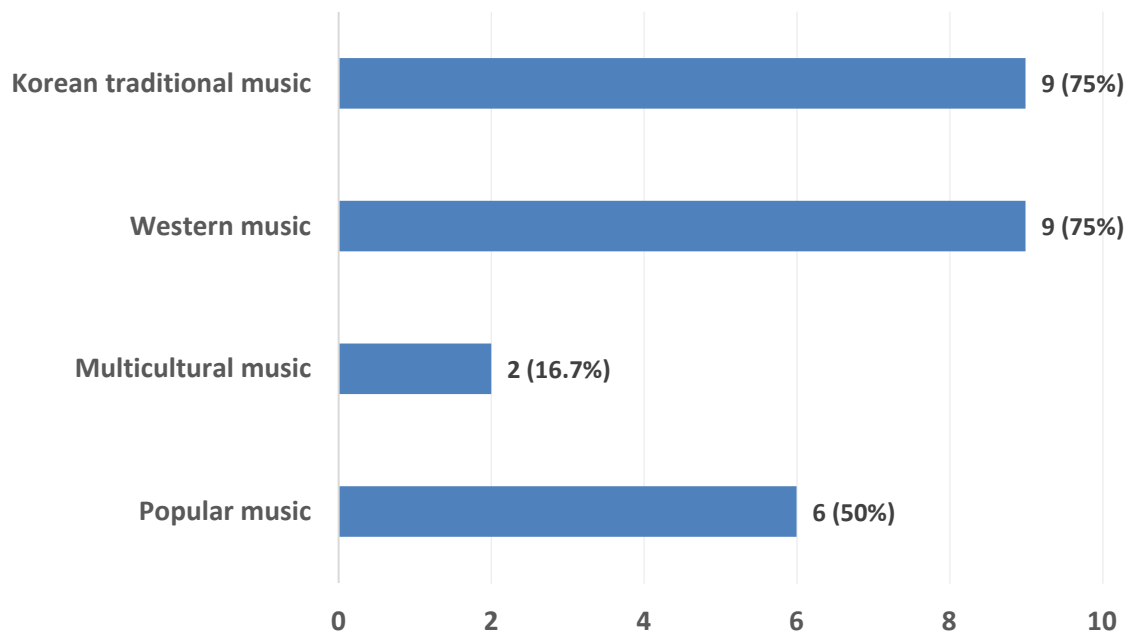
“I usually listen to music in my daily life, so I hope that I can listen to music in a variety of ways at school.” (Student K)

“I want to learn important elements or concepts in music without difficulty. I want to apply the concepts I understand to my favorite music.” (Student N)

“I want to have fun playing various instruments.” (Student G)

### 3.2.2 Music Genre

In terms of music genre, students answered that Western music and Korean traditional music should be emphasized, followed by that they wanted to learn practical music such as popular music and movie music, and finally, they wanted to learn music from various countries. Because students enjoy various types of popular music in their daily life, it was expected that they would prefer such popular music in school classes. However, it was noteworthy that they responded that they needed to learn more about Korean traditional music or Western classical music in class. In other words, it was confirmed that it is necessary to allow students to experience various music genres in school learning in that they distinguish between ‘like music’ and ‘important music’ even if they are relatively less liked as shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Perception Result of Music Genre

“I listen to a lot of popular music. By the way, the traditional and classical music that I learn at school is also interesting. I want to learn a lot of different kinds of music. Please teach in a variety of genres. (Student A)”

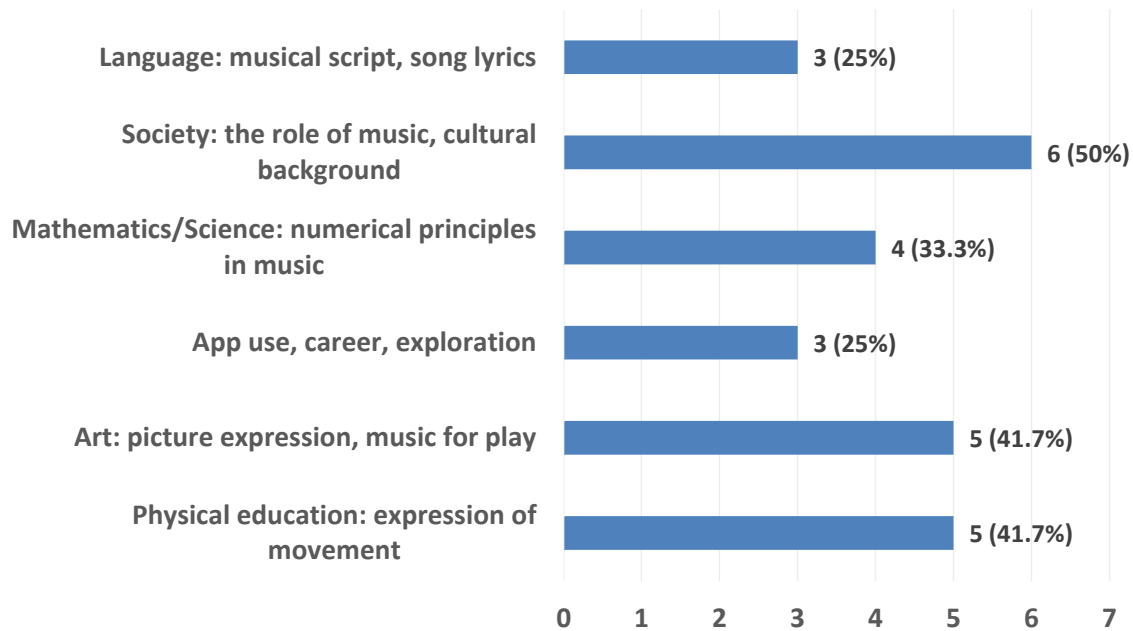
“I want to listen to a variety of music and sing as I like without distinguishing between genres.” (Student O)

“I also want to experience music that I can't hear outside of school in class.” (Student J)

### 3.2.3 Connection with Other Domains

In addition to the content and activities of music itself, students' thoughts about conducting music classes in connection with other areas or subjects other than music were asked. It was found that students had a high preference for linking with social subject areas, such as exploring the social role and cultural background of music. Next, it was found that they liked to take music classes in connection with art subjects such as physical education and art, such as listening to music and expressing with pictures, exploring music suitable for plays, and expressing music through movement. Next, it was considered necessary to link with mathematics or science fields, such as finding the principles of mathematics in music and making musical instruments using recycled materials. Lastly, it was found

that they preferred activities related to language, such as writing musical scripts and making song lyrics as shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** Perception Result of Connection with Other Domains

“I hope that the music is connected with other classes a lot.” (Student C)

“There are many different backgrounds in music besides music. Why was this music made? Isn't this music made only by digital development? I need to know the background outside of the music as well.” (Student E)

“Music class is very connected with physical education and art class.” (Student H)

### 3.3 Consequences of Perception of Methods of Music Lessons

Regarding the methods of school music classes, students' perceptions of digital learning methods and distance learning methods that are being practiced recently were reviewed.

#### 3.3.1 Digital Learning Methods

Students' perceptions of digital learning methods used in music classes were examined. They liked to listen to various kinds of music using websites, etc., and they said that virtual music learning was necessary through VR or metaverse. In addition, it was considered necessary to use apps for music activities, use of coding such as instrument development and programming, and use of artificial intelligence such as music lab. It was confirmed that students' demands for digital learning methods were very high as shown in Figure 7.

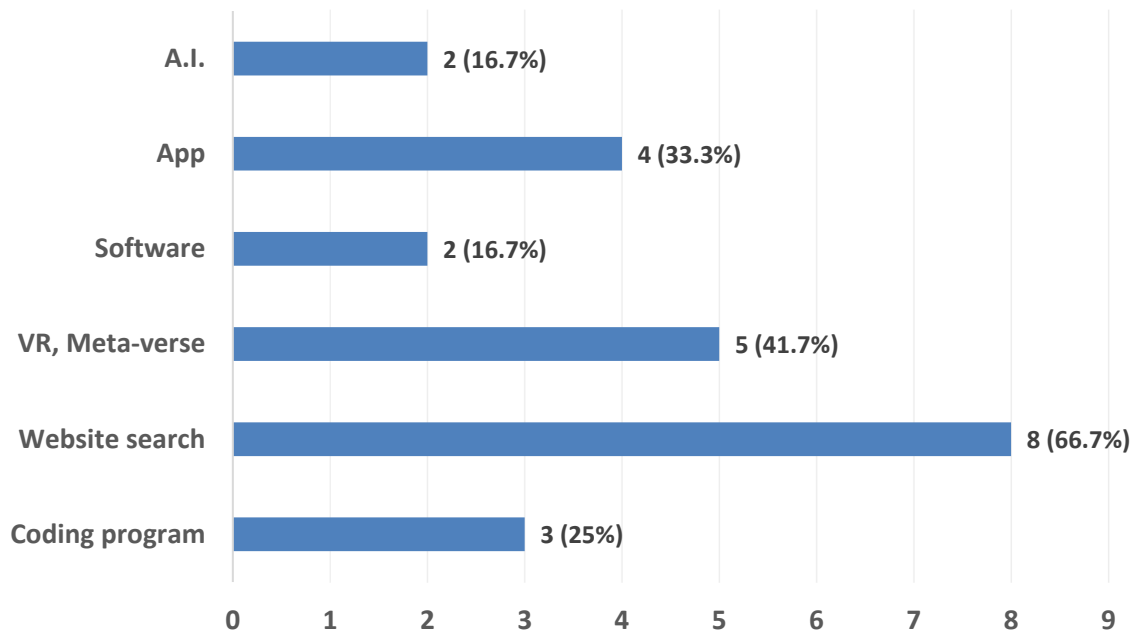
“Playing music is easy and fun with a software program or app. (Student N)”

“It's nice to make music with a program because it's easy and fun to do.” (Student F)

“I wish I could take music classes using artificial intelligence or metaverse.” (Student I)

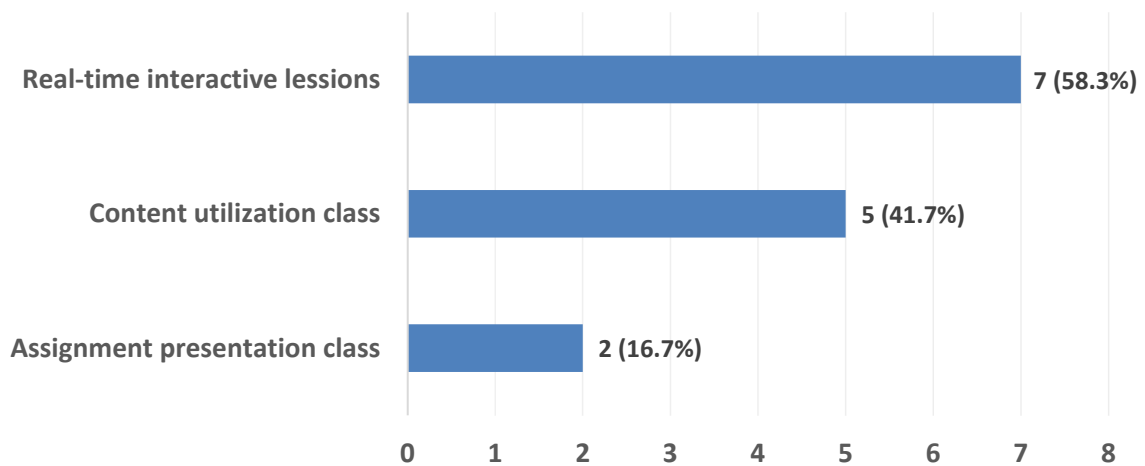
“What would Beethoven look like if he were alive today? Wouldn't it be possible to meet them in various digital ways? So what a fun music class would that be?” (Student K)





**Figure 7.** Perception Results for Digital Learning Methods

3.3.2 Distance Learning Methods



**Figure 8.** Perception Results for Distance Learning Methods

Since online classes have become a daily routine due to Corona, etc., the researcher reviewed students' perceptions of what distance learning methods are suitable for music classes. It was found that students preferred real-time interactive classes such as Zoom and Google Meet the most. Next, they answered that they liked classes using contents such as online classes. However, relatively, it was found that the task presentation type classes such as homework writing were less preferred as shown in Figure 8.

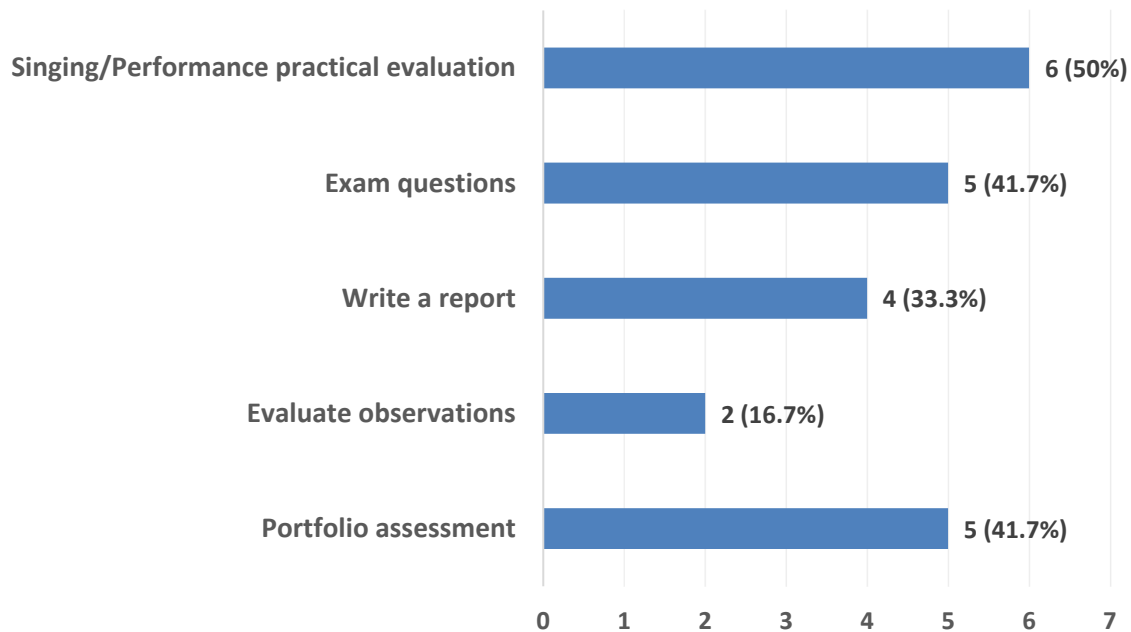
“I like various remote classes like Zoom or Google Meet.” (Student O)

“I don't think you have to meet the teacher in person to have a class.” (Student L)

“I wish there were many different online classes.” (Student B)

### 3.4 Consequences of Perception for Assessment of Music Classes

As online and offline classes are conducted together, the evaluation method of students' learning is also changing. It was found that students preferred practical evaluations such as singing or playing musical instruments the most, followed by paper-based tests using music or portfolio evaluations. It was found that writing reports such as music appreciation and observation evaluation were relatively less preferred as shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 9.** Perception Result of Evaluation

In addition to the above responses, the students presented various opinions as follows. The students said that they wanted to be more fun and creative overall, whether in music content or method, and they wanted to do more musical activities that could be carried out in collaboration, such as projects. Through this, they realized that they wanted music classes that were freer, more enjoyable, and enriched their lives.

“I hope it will be a fun class. (Student B)”

“I want the class to be creative. (Student G)”

“I would like to do a music project. (Student H)”

“I hope it will be a music class that enriches life in a free and enjoyable way. (Student K)”

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, the perceptions and thoughts of 5th and 6th graders of elementary school music classes were investigated. And what kind of music education goals, contents, methods, and evaluations they prefer were identified. In order to bring out the awareness of elementary school students more abundantly, observation and interview were conducted with a minority group, and through this, it was possible to confirm their thoughts and wishes for music classes. The results of students' perceptions are summarized as follows.

First, students wanted music education closely related to their lives. In other words, they wanted music learning to be meaningfully interlocked in their lives.

Second, they wanted listening activities rather than performing music such as playing or singing. It can be interpreted that this is because it is relatively easier to listen to music than to play and sing all types of music in terms of learning level.

Third, they wanted to learn and experience various music genres in a balanced way. In other words, they recognized that they needed a variety of music experiences, even if they liked it somewhat less.

Fourth, it was hoped that it would be a rich and fun music class in connection with various fields other than music. In other words, they wanted to expand learning rather than staying only within music.

Fifth, it was hoped that the class would be more active by using various digital methods and real-time execution of face-to-face during online classes.

The following implications were obtained through the students' perceptions as described above. First, it is necessary to change the composition of the music domain. Currently, the Korean music curriculum consists of expression, appreciation, and daily life. When composing the curriculum in the future, it is necessary to present it in an integrated manner with all areas, rather than putting it into a separate area (Park & Kim, 2021b). This is because if the lifestyle of music is presented separately from areas such as performance or singing, it may be misunderstood as not performing music in connection with life in other areas. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the level of music activity in daily life to the final target level of music education and to organize it so that all music fields can be made into daily life. This is also the direction of the composition of the music curriculum in other countries (Park & Kim, 2021a).

In addition, the preference for appreciation was high, but at the same time, more active music classes were also preferred. And the students wanted a fun and creative teaching method. These results can be interpreted as answering that they prefer listening to music because the music performance class was not interesting or because it is relatively easier to listen to than to perform. Therefore, it is necessary to strive for meaningful music learning while emphasizing all areas of music such as listening, singing, and performing. In addition, performance or singing should be structured so that it can be learned through more interesting material and teaching methods, going beyond simply learning the functions of music.

Students wanted to learn all kinds of new and varied music. They want to be able to enjoy all kinds of music regardless of type, whether it is traditional music, classical music, or popular music. Therefore, the curriculum should be broadly structured so that various genres of music suitable for the learner's level can be included in the textbook (Park, 2019a). For example, if a specific genre is presented in the curriculum, it may be misunderstood as not teaching an unspecified genre. Therefore, so that various types of music can be learned without restrictions in schools, the contents of music types should be comprehensively presented in the curriculum. Therefore, rather than focusing on some selective learning of music types, it should be composed of a curriculum that can improve various learning methods.

Lastly, music classes should be organically linked with students' lives or other subject areas. Students also prefer these classes more, so it is necessary to try various contents and methods of music classes in connection with various other fields such as art, physical education, language, and engineering. The above various directions should be meaningfully presented in the music curriculum.

The above results are similar to the results of previous studies and are more specific. In other words, a study (Jang & Cho, 2011) examining middle school students' perceptions of music classes reported that there should be more discussion of student-centered active education environment than teacher-led classes. Also, another study (Woo & Shin, 2021) examining middle school students' perceptions of music classes reported that when various methods and contents such as media were used, students' interaction in class became active and their satisfaction with learning was high. Therefore, it is meaningful in that this study revealed what specific music classes are for a student-centered environment and to increase interaction through the use of various methods.

Music education is a teaching-learning process in which students and teachers interact with music. Learning trends are increasingly leading to an emphasis on learner identity. In this regard, this study is significant in that it aims to closely examine the learners' perceptions of music classes. In the future, in composing the music curriculum, efforts should be made to reflect the needs of learners more than those of teachers.

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