



# Music Education In Jordan: Between Curriculum And Teacher Preparation

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## ABSTRACT

This study concludes that the educational dimension of the goals of music education among educational practitioners in Jordan and in many different departments within the Ministry of Education is unclear. Thus, there is a necessity to develop music education curricula that take into account the psychological and social factors of students' physical and mental growth, as well as the nature and characteristics of theoretical and practical music. Upon examining school music activities, the researcher found that they are limited to the immediate practical performance aspect, without focusing on the theoretical aspect, which is considered a fundamental basis for sustainable practical aspects. When utilized appropriately, both the theoretical and practical aspects complement each other, providing educational value when a teacher is able to incorporate them to serve gifted students in nurturing their musical inclinations and preparations.

**Keywords:** Music, Music Education, Music Curriculum, Music Teacher, Music Teaching

## Introduction

Undoubtedly, music is one of the important arts that captures the interest of individuals across various characteristics, whether age-related, cultural, social, or other distinguishing traits. Music has accompanied all life developments since the dawn of history until today. However, there are numerous factors influencing the spread and acceptance of music among people, and there seems to be some unacceptable blending around the concept of music. There is a clear ambiguity in distinguishing between music as an activity and music as a subject of study from an educational perspective. In Jordan, this blending of concepts has distorted the general perception of music as an art in terms of its role as a recreational activity or as an educational subject, carried out by a teacher capable of identifying the musical abilities of students and providing them with joy, knowledge, and opportunities for their development.

## Study Problem

The problem of the study lies in exploring the musical reality in school education in Jordan, clarifying its importance and the associated value system, and establishing the foundations and standards upon which curricula should be based, as well as preparing teachers responsible for the music education teaching process.

## Significance of the Study

The researcher perceives that the topic of school music curriculum suffers from a lack of studies. Additionally, there is a need to adopt the contents of music curricula in school education for their societal and cultural values, whether cultural or religious, which instill qualities in the emotional, cognitive, and motor formation of students. These qualities are considered essential pillars of human society in human communities in general.

## Objectives

The study aims to identify and uncover the reality of music education teaching in Jordan. This study will answer the following questions:

- What are the foundations on which music education curriculum should be based?
- What qualifications and skills should music education teachers possess?
- What standards should be present in the nurturing environment for music education teaching?

## Methodology

The researcher employed historical and descriptive methodologies to examine the reality of music education in Jordan. This study belongs to the category of research studies associated with obtaining information related to the research problem and even the fields associated with it. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with experienced individuals related to the study topic to understand their opinions and ideas that may not be available in conventional data sources.

## Study Population

Music curricula in Jordan and educational institutions in Jordan under the Ministry of Education.

## Terminology

**Music Education:** It is the systematic process aimed at developing the child in all aspects of his personality through playing, singing, and listening to music. The term “music education” in this study is used with the following operational definition: the educational process through which individuals are prepared to listen effectively, play instruments, and sing by developing their musical predispositions and inclinations (Hilat & Qushoa, 2002, p. 78).

**School Music Education:** It refers to the teaching of music to students in the basic school education stage, extending from the first grade to the tenth grade.

**Music Education Curriculum:** It is the purposeful and important direction in developing musical culture in general, and musical learning capabilities in particular, ensuring the development of students' emotional response to music, understanding it, and interacting with its content (Al-Darras & Ghuwanmeh, 1997).

## Theoretical Framework

In 1965, the Curriculum and Textbooks Department issued educational curricula for music. However, they were considered inadequate in achieving the desired goals at that time due to their departure from Arab music education, relying entirely on teaching Western music. The teacher's guidebook for teaching art education falls into the same methodological error. Despite being a guide for teachers in Jordanian schools, it is far removed from Arab and Jordanian music in particular. It can be said that our curricula and teacher guides have remained stagnant for a long time because the Ministry of Education did not assign music specialists who could develop curricula that serve music in Jordan, benefit our students and communities, and encourage our children to engage in it. This would have a positive impact on the musical scene in the country, encourage generations to study music at universities, pursue it professionally, and teach it. Despite some recent attempts made by the National Curriculum Development Center, where a committee was formed to develop arts curricula, we have not seen its outputs until now.

Dr. Abdulhamid Hammam says: “When an educational coordination was established between Syria and Jordan, committees from the Syrian Ministry of Education visited Jordan in 1976. A committee was formed to develop music curricula for compulsory primary education. This committee balanced between the data of Arab and European music, and it focused on incorporating musical notation and aural training. It also balanced between Arab musical modes and Western scales. However, these curricula were not implemented due not to a lack of resources, but rather to the absence of qualified teaching staff. This problem prompted the Ministry of Education to take a positive step by opening a department at the Teacher Training Institute in Amman for music education. However, this attempt remained unsuccessful due to the lack of specialized teaching staff.”

## Music Education Curriculum in Jordan

The Ministry of Education took measures to adopt a plan to include music education as a class in schools during the First Educational Development Conference held in Amman in 1987. The Ministry began outlining the broad lines of the music education curriculum for the primary education stage. The Education Council made its decision (17/89), whereby the Jordanian Ministry of Education formed specialized teams tasked with developing music education curricula for both primary and secondary education levels at the end of the last century. The national team prepared the music education curriculum for primary education, which was approved by the Education Council in its decision No. (26/90) taken at its thirteenth session held on January 3, 1990 (Naseerat, 2010).

Music education in Jordan is to be taught within the Ministry of Education's curricula in the form of classroom sessions, with an average of one session per week. These sessions are taught in kindergarten. The music education curriculum includes teaching music theory, songs and chants, musical instruments, musical forms (both instrumental and vocal), the history of Arabic and Western music, a basic part of harmony and music analysis, and musical composition (Haddad & Sadah, 2016).

## Principles of the Music Education Curriculum

Based on the recommendations of the First Educational Development Conference, the national team for music education established principles grounded in the philosophy of education in Jordan. These principles emerged from psychological and social factors that consider the physical and mental growth characteristics of students, as well as the nature and characteristics of music theory and practice. The principles include:

1. Advocating faith, love of the homeland, glorification of its heroes, and the preservation of the community's virtues.
2. Utilizing local, Arab popular, and traditional music, which constitutes an integral element of national heritage.
3. Exploring the music of other peoples, which has proven its authenticity throughout the ages, to understand these peoples and benefit from their experiences.
4. Directing individuals towards the aesthetics of music and its expressive capabilities, which develop aesthetic sensibilities, refine musical taste, and contribute to the refinement of individuals' behavior and the enhancement of their positive qualities.
5. Engaging in collective musical activities through musical and vocal groups, reinforcing musical and educational information in minds, and teaching individuals the principles of interacting with and respecting others.
6. Encouraging music practitioners as, despite its seriousness, it is considered a positive element in entertainment and education, positively impacting students' learning processes and developing their motor skills.
7. Guiding youth towards quality production, as it provides a respectable livelihood and is significant in raising the standard of living for individuals and increasing national income. Additionally, it instills perseverance in individuals to work diligently, master their craft, and complete it with high precision.
8. Performing Arabic musical heritage and familiarizing oneself with its theoretical musical output, and studying the history of Arabic music, highlighting the role of their musical production in art and civilization.
9. Focusing on teaching musical reading and writing and explaining their concepts for self-improvement, increasing knowledge, and acquainting oneself with the works of other musicians.
10. Using modern laboratory and technological experiments as much as possible in music, as it allows generations to have a direct relationship with modern science and encourages them to benefit from it.
11. Encouraging individual musical competencies and talents and developing their capabilities, guiding them towards the right path.
12. Developing a curriculum that is appropriate for and evolves with the physical and nervous development of children, parallel to different ages.
13. A good teacher is the guide to true knowledge, with the student being its focal point (Sadek et al., 1991).

### **The Core Axes of the Music Education Curriculum in Jordan**

The music education curriculum includes four fundamental axes: Musical History and Appreciation, Music Theory, Musical Reading and Notation, and Musical Performance in singing and playing instruments. Unfortunately, music classes have been absent from the curriculum of schools under the Ministry of Education, and the ministry has not provided students with this important space for joy, to showcase their abilities through a specialized music teacher. Thus, these abilities, potentials, and preparations could not be nurtured into professional musicians who would contribute to the Jordanian and Arab music scene.

The appointment of specialized music teachers with academic qualifications, capable of teaching music, uncovering talents, and developing them, has halted. The ministry has not paid attention to the infrastructure needed by the curriculum, teachers, and students in its schools, such as dedicated music classrooms or school musical instruments.

### **Preparing Music Education Teachers**

The preparation of teachers has become a political priority in most countries around the world. In advanced industrialized nations, there is an increasing emphasis on ensuring the availability of the required number of teachers to address the growing retirement cases while ensuring the quality of preparation. In developing countries, there is a growing need to raise the qualifications of teachers, especially at the elementary level, with a focus on quality in preparation and training (Nabawi, 2007).

Music education teachers, like other educators, must excel in all areas of professional development to advance the profession and make the most of its resources, ensuring their ability to perform teaching tasks, contribute to the design and application of music curricula, and utilize modern technological means to contribute to knowledge development for appropriate development that serves the educational process to provide better outcomes to the market. The areas are as follows:

**Axis 1:** Development for the Teaching Field: This includes enhancing the teaching performance skills of the teacher, training them on modern teaching methods based on dialogue, discussion, self-learning, critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving.

**Axis2:** Development for the Curriculum Field: Refers to the processes of professionalizing teachers to develop their ability to contribute to the design, implementation, and evaluation of curricula in light of the desired objectives of higher education and the needs of students and the changing requirements of society.

**Axis 3:** Development for the Research Field: Training teachers to master the principles and skills of scientific research.

**Axis 4:** Development in the Technological Field: Training teachers to deal with technology and enhancing their ability to benefit from technological advancements and from the information and computer network in teaching and scientific research.

**Axis 5:** Development in the Evaluation Field: Introducing teachers to the concepts of measurement, evaluation, written, practical, and oral examinations, and what should be considered when preparing assessment tools.

Music education in Jordan has not received the attention it deserves in proportion to its importance, which has affected both public and private education. Despite its significance in education and in the holistic development of individuals emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially, as well as fostering aesthetic sensibility and creative thinking in students, unfortunately, the disciplinary and educational role of music has been neglected. It is worth noting that music is not less important than other academic subjects; rather, on the contrary, it plays a distinct role in building a balanced personality intellectually and emotionally. Music education has its own goals and mission that distinguish it from other academic subjects, and no other subject can fulfill the role that music education does. Music academics, specialists, and experts, along with the majority of those involved and interested in music, observe a marginalization of the educational message of music. Many entities contribute to this marginalization, including, for example, the Ministry of Education. Music education contributes to the development of children by providing them with information and facts about music, musical skills, aesthetic inclinations, and artistic trends. Additionally, musical activities can facilitate the means through which children learn concepts through other subjects.

Music education is considered a structured practical process aimed at the holistic development of the child through playing, singing, and listening to music. It contributes to directing the individual to be capable of listening well, playing instruments, and singing, by developing their musical readiness and inclinations. It remains to this day one of the important academic subjects that still face numerous obstacles due to being considered a classroom session like any other academic subject. Often misunderstood as merely a musical activity, it is more complex, involving two important aspects: the educational aspect with its cognitive, skill-based, and emotional dimensions, and the practical application aspect as a musical artistic activity. Is this misunderstanding due to misconceptions formed by officials or the educational plan in Jordan, resulting in the absence of music classes from the curriculum in recent years? Or is it a plan to raise generations unaware of their heritage or the culture of dialogue and respecting others' opinions? What kind of generation do we want to build, and how can it play a positive role in society without music, without a weekly or more music class? The problem extends to the misunderstanding of the meaning, form, and needs of music education classes. Perhaps we have overlooked all of this, as the prescribed curriculum by the Ministry of Education has not been implemented, and specialists in music have not been appointed as teachers in the Ministry of Education, resulting in a shortage of music teachers on one hand and a shortage of educational supervisors on the other. Schools have not been prepared for this class in this subject.

Music education is a subject characterized by its academic and artistic content, where it stands out from other academic subjects by addressing both the psychological and physiological aspects of the learner. In fairness, the Jordanian Ministry of Education attempted to prioritize music education at the end of the last century by forming specialized teams to develop music education curricula for primary and secondary education. However, these curricula did not find a place in students' schedules, nor were suitable spaces provided for them in schools, such as dedicated rooms and musical instruments. Consequently, enthusiasm for implementation waned among music teachers in schools under the Ministry of Education.

Music is not limited to playing and singing for entertainment purposes, as some perceive it in musical activities, where they overlook the educational, social, cultural, and other aspects that help in developing thinking and building character, especially if music education is activated in the early stages of schooling or before school. It is important to emphasize that music has an important and central role. This is because school life will become unenjoyable for students if it lacks the fun and joy that music undoubtedly provides. Music is the lung and the outlet of school life, besides its role in training the muscles, lungs, and throat that students use when practicing music (Hamam, 1996).

Music, which unfortunately was absent from the schools of the Ministry of Education for long periods during the first hundred years of the Jordanian state's existence, develops creative and critical thinking skills. It helps learners to express themselves and communicate with others and with other cultures through collective playing, collective singing, and participating in various celebrations and events. Learners can communicate and work with others to achieve individual interaction within the group. No one can deny the role of music and our songs in instilling national identity in learners through acquainting them with their musical heritage.

### **The musical activity in the Ministry of Education**

Regarding musical activity in the Ministry of Education, Dr. Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Za'abi wrote an article on music education and musical activity entitled "An Analytical Study of the State of Music in Jordan" in the Jordanian Arts Journal (Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 477-488), in 2013. Through this article, he noted that music specialists generally interpret musical activity as any musical artistic work performed by a teacher without adhering to a specific class session or curriculum. The teacher teaches and memorizes students' various chants and songs often related to specific occasions. They know what they want from one side and know what school administrations want from the other. Most often, the highest ambitions are achieved by participating in events, competitions, and winning any position in these competitions. Therefore, the tasks of music teachers in government schools under the Ministry of Education, which provide music teachers, are limited to:



**Firstly:** National occasions for which preparation is made based on a fixed plan from the Ministry of Education. Music teachers are provided with them annually at the beginning of the academic year, and they have become known to the teachers without any modification or change in terms of time and subject.

**Secondly:** Annual competitions organized by the Ministry of Education under the supervision and follow-up of the Educational Activities Department in the Ministry of Education, and these competitions are supervised by the activity departments in the directorates of education. These competitions include instrumental music, singing, chants, folk songs, national songs, hymns, and operettas, as well as solo and ensemble performances.

**Thirdly:** Annual celebrations held by schools, usually on the occasion of the graduation of general secondary students or students from another stage in the school.

All of these activities come at the expense of the actual implementation of music education curricula, as musical activity is limited to the immediate practical performance aspect, without focusing on the theoretical aspect, which is considered the essential foundation for sustainable practical application. When utilized properly, both the theoretical and practical aspects complement each other. It is worth mentioning here that the weekly schedule does not usually include a music class. And if it does, all specialists know that this subject is not like the others. It requires more time for the music teacher to form a band that meets the minimum requirements of school music bands. Therefore, working in music takes on the character of an activity more than an educational subject, regardless of its importance compared to other subjects, especially regarding personality building and intellectual and emotional development (Al-Zu'bi, 482).

In Jordan, there appears to be a lack of clarity in distinguishing between musical activity and music education, not necessarily among specialists but among non-specialists who make administrative decisions regarding music. There is no distinction between activity and education in implementation except in some private schools. The child needs music as it constitutes an important part of his life. He needs it in various stages of his life as it brings him joy and freedom, helps him in thinking, innovation, and self-expression (Sadek & Ameen, 1985). Teaching music education at an early age plays a significant and vital role in education, as it assists the child in making the right choices, whether in academic specialization or social life. Early artistic education is considered a foundation for the artistic renaissance in many advanced countries. Focusing on music education does not necessarily mean neglecting pure musical aspects; on the contrary, implementing music education sessions will be the first step in discovering musical artistic talents. To ensure the activation of music education as it should be, there must be essential components that collaborate with each other and work integrally, and these components are:

- 1- The existence of music education curricula in the hands of students starting from the early elementary stages.
- 2- Emphasizing the inclusion of a music session in the weekly lesson plan and ensuring its implementation.
- 3- Having dedicated and isolated music rooms in each school.
- 4- Music education grades, like other academic subjects, should be fundamental in the student's overall GPA.
- 5- The availability of a music education teacher, who is the most important element, in the process.

If these elements and components are not available, music education cannot be activated, and it is not possible to modify the societal perception of it or even the students' interest in attending music classes and engaging with them.

### Music Education in the Ministry of Education

**First:** Music in Jordanian schools has been limited to musical activities that take the form of collective singing or solo performance, often relying on the student's personal activity outside the school and participation in local competitions organized periodically by the Ministry of Education. This is considered a musical activity.

**Second:** The lack of clarity regarding the educational dimension of music education objectives among those responsible for the educational process in Jordan, as well as among various departments within the Ministry of Education.

**Third:** The lack of clarity regarding the true message of music education for music education teachers, as they hold artistic qualifications rather than educational ones. They have not realized the importance and role of music education and the philosophy of its theories during their university studies in music departments at our Jordanian universities.

While the Ministry of Education in the seventies of the last century sent students to study music education in the Arab Republic of Egypt, to return as teachers for Jordanian students, including Mr. Ali Abu Khadra, Dr. Sobhi El-Sharqawi, Mr. Atallah Hindileh, and others; now, in the third millennium, with Jordan having universities that graduate music specialists, the Ministry of Education does not appoint any of them. Music education classes have disappeared from the weekly timetable.

Why doesn't the Ministry of Education coordinate with Jordanian universities to send teachers to study music education in Jordanian universities to cover the shortage of teachers? The Ministry of Education should pay more attention to music education as a weekly classroom session and make music education a graded subject on student report cards at all educational levels. Additionally, special training programs should be developed for teaching music education to music teachers, specifically for the first three grades.

### Recommendations

1. Activating the music education curriculum by assigning specialized music educators in their respective fields to all schools in the kingdom, and linking the music education subject with a designated grade on the report card.
2. Developing a clear school curriculum in the Ministry of Education schools that is suitable for the era and its generation, for all age groups.
3. Enhancing the teaching performance skills of teachers, training them on modern teaching methods, and on teaching new curricula that are in line with the pace of the era and its children.
4. Appointing new music teachers in schools where there are no music teachers.
5. Allocating a music session each week for every class for listening to and appreciating music.
6. Activating the roles of music supervisors in the Ministry of Education.
7. Creating a suitable environment for music class in all ministry schools, including providing a dedicated room and school musical instruments.
8. Establishing a general music secondary branch similar to industrial and agricultural secondary schools, and it can start with King Abdullah Schools for Excellence.

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