

Instructional strategies that could foster musical creativity of students with intellectual disabilities

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Background

- In Hong Kong, students with intellectual disabilities [ID] are commonly placed in special schools. They are categorized into mild, moderate or severe ID.
- There are altogether 41 special schools for students with ID. Among these special schools, there are 10 schools for students with mild ID, 14 schools for students with moderate ID, 7 schools for students with mild or moderate ID, and 10 schools for students with severe ID.
- Under the principle of “one curriculum for all”, students with ID are expected to achieve the same learning targets as their counterparts in mainstream schools.

Music Curriculum

- Music is a subject that is offered to all students (Age 6 to 14). According to the *Music Curriculum Guide* (2003), one of the overall aims of music curriculum is “to develop creativity, the ability to appreciate music and to effectively communicate through music” (p. 11). One of the four major learning targets is “developing creativity and imagination”.
- Music teachers in all government-funded schools, including special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, are expected to implement school-based music curriculum that include performing, listening and creating activities.

Rationale for conducting this study

- I am a music teacher educator with over 30 years of experience in teaching.
- According to my experience of working with music teachers of special schools and mainstream schools, I have the following observations:
 - Students with ID in special schools demonstrate that they are capable to learn music through performing, composing and listening like their counterparts in mainstream schools. Music is an enjoyment in their lives and they are interested in making music to express themselves.
 - Music teachers may have reservations in implementing creative music activities in music lessons.
 - Music teachers' perceptions about creativity in music learning may affect their choice of instructional strategies in music lessons.

Literature Review: Musical creativity

- The practice of musical creativity in schools depends on “how teachers act, and how their students participate, how musical creativity is taught as part of school music” (Burnard, 2012, p. 9)
- Development of musical creativity can be influenced by sociological or psychological factors (Kiehn, 2003), formal and informal instructions and prior musical experiences (Burnard & Younker, 2002), and teachers’ use of feedback on students’ work (Byrne et al., 2003).
- Children with developmental disabilities can improvise music with organized structure (Orsmond & Miller, 1995).
- Digital technology can enhance creativity of students with special needs (Adkins et al., 2012).

Literature Review: Music Teachers' views and practices on teaching creative music activities

- Pre-service music teachers felt ill-prepared to teach creative music (Crow, 2008), and lack of knowledge to assess creativity of students' music composition (Kokotski & Newton, 2015).
- Music teachers' educational connoisseurship can facilitate them to adapt creative music activities to suit the abilities and interests of students (Odena & Welch, 2012).

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to explore special schools music teachers' reflections on the instructional strategies that could foster musical creativity of students with intellectual disabilities.

Methodology

- This is a qualitative multiple-case study.
- Purposeful sampling was used to select nine cases of special schools music teachers.
- Face-to-face video elicitation interviews were used for soliciting music teachers' reflections on the instructional strategies that they believe to be useful for fostering musical creativity of students with ID. An identical semi-structured interview guide was repeated to all nine cases.
- During video elicitation interviews, the researcher interviewed participating teachers about the instructional strategies that they thought to be able to foster musical creativity of students with intellectual disabilities in their music lessons to using a video recording of their music lessons as an elicitation tool. Those videos were recorded by the researcher in 4 consecutive music lessons of a group of students chosen by the music teachers.
- All interview data were transcribed and checked by the participants. All data were coded, categorized and analyzed.
- Pseudonyms are used for keeping teachers' identity confidential.

Findings: Music Teachers' personal profile

Case	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Pseudonym	Ada	Ben	Clara	Diana	Eliza	Fanny	Grace	Helen	Ivan
Sex/Age	F/30+	M/30+	F/40+	F/30+	F/30+	F/50+	F/20+	F/50+	F/30+
Type of sp. sch.	Mild ID	Mild ID	Mild ID	Moderate ID	Moderate ID	Moderate ID	Severe ID	Severe ID	Severe ID
Education	B. Ed	B. Mus	B. Mus	B. Ed Sp. Ed.	B. Ed Sp. Ed.	B. Ed Sp. Ed.	B. Ed.	B. Ed. Sp. Ed.	B.A. (Mus)
Music ed.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓
Teaching experience	>10 years	>10 years	>15 years	>10 years	>15 years	>25 years	< 5 years	>25 years	>10 years

Findings: Curricular emphasis & strategies for fostering musical creativity

Pseudonym	Ada	Ben	Clara	Diana	Eliza	Fanny	Grace	Helen	Ivan
Level / number of students	KS 1 / 7	KS 3 / 5	KS 3 / 14	KS 3 / 10	KS 3 / 8	KS 2 / 9	KS 2 / 3	KS 3 / 2	KS 2 / 8
Curricular emphasis & strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sing w/ creative movement - Play percussion instruments w/ music - Improvise rhythm - T demo - Peer leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IT apps - Explore sound effects - Mix sound tracks - Compose melody & rhythm - T demo - Peer sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sing/ listening w/ creative movement / play - percussion instruments - Improvise rhythm - Peer leader - Group perform - T demo & feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IT apps - Re-arrange sound tracks - Explore & record sound effects - T demo & feedback - Peer- / self-assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to music w/ creative movement - Use of props / toys - Play percussion instruments w/ music - IT apps - Perform and explore sounds w/ apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sing w/ microphone & creative movement - Re-arrange melody w/ tuned percussion instruments (limited pitches) - Use of visual aids / numbered / color score 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to music w/ creative movement, improvise w/ percussion instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to music w/ creative movement, improvise w/ percussion instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IT apps - Explore & improvise sound effects along w/ background music - Free play on students' own-choice adapted music instruments

Findings: Summary

- The instructional strategies that could foster musical creativity of students with ID are branched out through various music learning activities, such as listening and performing, instead of limiting to composing activities.
 - Sing / Listen to music with creative movement
 - Play/ improvise with adapted or non-adapted pitched or non-pitched percussion instruments
 - Use of IT apps to explore and/or re-arrange music
 - Use of prompts or toys
- Allow students to make choices, then music making would be meaningful and interesting to the students with ID; otherwise they would not be able to respond nor demonstrate their creative learning outcomes in the music lessons.
- Use of “Assessment as Learning” strategies (peer sharing, peer- and/or self-assessment) to promote ownership of creative music among students.

Conclusion

1. Students with ID are able to develop musical creativity.
2. The instructional strategies that could foster musical creativity of students with ID include listening and performing activities, instead of limiting to composing activities.
3. Allow students to make choices and explore sounds & instruments (including IT apps and adapted music instruments). Making music can be meaningful and enjoyable to students with ID.
4. Use of “Assessment as Learning” strategies can promote teacher-student and students’ peer interaction, as well as enhancing their ownership of creating meaningful music for themselves.