



A creativity-supported music learning environment for students with intellectual disabilities

Dr. Marina Wong

Hong Kong Baptist University

Email: marina@hkbu.edu.hk

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Contextual Background

- In Hong Kong, students with intellectual disabilities [ID] are placed in special schools in their neighborhood according to their categories of ID, i.e. mild, moderate or severe ID.
- There are 41 special schools for students with ID:
 - 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.

Music curriculum in special schools for students with intellectual disabilities

- 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 and music education researcher. According to my experience of working with music teachers of special schools and mainstream schools, I have the following observations:

1. 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 like to make music to express themselves.
2. Music teachers may have concerns in implementing creative music activities in music lessons.

Literature

- part of their role is to draw out and support the development of students' potential (Beghetto, 2010)
- Runco (2003) goes so far as to say, “The basic idea is that any thinking or problem solving that involves the construction of new meaning is creative.
- Beghetto and Kaufman (2007) mini-c approach to creativity to be completely consistent with the perspective on creativity that we found in the teachers that we interviewed. Mini-c ideas basically form the seeds of creativity that teachers can nurture and grow into more readily recognizable forms of creativity.
- Process-oriented models focus on how creativity happens – what are the steps involved? look at how the phases are realized in creativity (Cropley and Cropley, 2008) “six thinking hats.”step-by-step approach to enhancing creative thinking and is rich with metaphors and examples (De Bono, 1992)
- To be creative, something has to be appropriate to the situation (relevant) and new or different to that person (Smith, J. K., & Smith, L. F. (2010)
- helped teachers protect student creativity from extrinsic motivators is the “immunization” approach – developed by Beth Hennessey and her colleagues (Hennessey, Amabile, & Martinage, 1989 ; Hennessey & Zbikowski, 1993 ; Hennessey, this volume). protect them from the negative consequences of reward expectations (Beghetto, R. A. (2010)

- beliefs provide students with the confidence necessary to share and develop their ideas. Creative self-efficacy is a self-judgment of one's imaginative ability and perceived competence in generating novel and adaptive ideas, solutions, and behaviors. (Beghetto, R. A. (2010))

Theoretical framework:

- The meaning and reasons for creativity vary according to every individual's practices that are embedded in their social, cultural and activity systems (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).
- It requires a 'creative ecosystem' (Harrington, 1990) or a creative classroom (Cremin, 2009) to nurture students' creativity.

Purpose of study

- The purpose of this study is to explore special schools music teachers' perception of the music learning environment that can support their students to develop music creativity.

Research questions

What are the characteristics of a music learning environment that music teachers of special school regard as the essential elements for fostering 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 interviews were used for soliciting music teachers' perceptions on the characteristics of a music learning environment that they regard as the essential elements for fostering musical creativity of their students with intellectual disabilities. An identical semi-structured interview guide was repeated to all nine cases.
- 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 special 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

References

- Beghetto, R. A. (2010). Creativity in the classroom. In J. C. , Kaufman, & R. J. , Sternberg (Eds.). *The Cambridge handbook of creativity* (Cambridge handbooks in psychology) (pp. 447-463). Cambridge [U.K.] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.