

DOCTORAL THESIS

Adaptations of the Music curriculum for students with severe intellectual disabilities in Hong Kong: teachers' perceptions and practices

Ip, Fong Lap Flora

Date of Award:
2019

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ABSTRACT

Under the principle of “one curriculum framework for all”, all students in Hong Kong are eligible to have access to the same curriculum framework regardless of their level of intellectual functioning. Teachers in Hong Kong special schools have to adapt the central curriculum to cater for the learning needs of their students with intellectual disabilities.

Since the guidance of music curriculum adaptations for students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities (SID) is scarce in Hong Kong, teachers with limited subject knowledge and inadequate understanding of their students’ music development face considerable challenges when adapting the curriculum. Teachers’ perceptions of music education for students with SID and their roles as music teachers influence the way the music curriculum is adapted and enacted.

This study aims at exploring the perceptions and practices of music teachers concerning the adaptations of the music curriculum at the Basic Education level in a Hong Kong special school for students with SID. The method of qualitative multiple case studies was employed to investigate the perceptions and practices of two music teachers with similar backgrounds.

Findings from interviews, class observations, and review of documents suggest that music teachers’ perceptions, practices, and reflections are closely related to one another. The two cases showed similar perceptions toward the values of music education, but diverse perceptions of the learning priorities of students with SID and their roles as music teachers, which contributed to variations in their practices and reflections.

The cases showed differences in the design of music activities, adaptations of music instruments, the focus of assessments, and collaboration with paraprofessionals. Findings indicate that although both teachers commonly employed two instructional strategies, the aims and emphases of using the strategies were diverse. It suggests that with different perceptions of the learning priorities of students, the same strategies are used differently.

Reflections of practices among the two teachers differed due to the variations of their styles of attribution and perceived roles of music teachers. They defined and framed problems in the process of teaching and learning differently,

therefore leading to contrasting ways in handling the problems. The two teachers' reflections in return affected their perceptions and the subsequent cycle of practices.

Keywords: Teachers' perceptions and practices, curriculum adaptation, music curriculum, severe intellectual disabilities, multiple case studies

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