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Music learning outcomes and music teachers' expectations:  
Trialing an adapted music curriculum for  
students aged 15-18 with intellectual disabilities in Hong Kong

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### Abstract

Addressing a gap in the literature about the music learning outcomes of students with intellectual disabilities (ID), this study is designed as a qualitative multiple-case study. The purpose of this paper is to investigate special schools music teachers' expectations of students' music learning outcomes and the observed music learning outcomes of students with ID. Seven cases are reported with focus on special school music teachers' trialing the adapted music curriculum for Hong Kong students with ID. Data analysis confirms the possibilities for students with intellectual disabilities to achieve music learning outcomes in listening, performing and creating; Deno et al (2001) that using curriculum-based measurements as growth standards can help scaffold students' learning outcomes; and Sutherland and Wehby (2001) that repeating opportunities for students to respond can produce positive behavioral outcomes. Further, this analysis supports both Colwell's (2013) view that many music teachers lack an understanding of the music abilities of students with special needs, and VanWeelden's (2007) findings that students with special needs remain a challenging area for music educators. A recommendation is made to address the conclusion that the potential promise of scaffolding tangible development in students with intellectual disabilities remains as yet unfulfilled.

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### **Introduction**

Music learning outcomes of students with special educational needs is an area of research that attracts very little attention in music education. As an experienced music teacher educator in Hong Kong, I observe that while the educational policy of “one curriculum for all” is implemented in Hong Kong (EDB 2017a), special schools music teachers might have hesitations on how such policy could be implemented. In actual practice, music teachers' need to know more about the possible music learning outcomes of students with intellectual disabilities so as to better inform their music curriculum planning in special schools for students.

### **Literature Review**

This section of literature review provides a historical review that outlines how decades-past insights continue to shape our understanding of both ‘learning outcomes’ and ‘intellectual disabilities’. Reflecting a psychological perspective of the theories of cognitive, affective and motor-cycle development, Gagné (1984) differentiate five different categories of learning outcomes. These five categories include intellectual skills (procedural knowledge), verbal information (declarative knowledge), cognitive strategies (executive control of processes), motor skills and attitudes. From a general educational perspective, Spady (1988) succinctly describes educational learning outcomes as “visionary exit outcomes” that identify what we want students to know and be able to do (p. 5).

Most of the research related to learning outcomes was done in the 1990s. This research found that successful implementation of outcome-based education requires significant change across curriculum, instruction strategies, assessment as well as teachers' engagement with

learner-centered curriculum development (Evans & King, 1994; O'Neil, 1993; Glatthorn, 1993). Most of the studies about students' learning outcomes are related to advocates and experiences of implementing various outcome-based education models in schools' core subjects, such as reading and mathematics (Cowley & Williamson, 1998; Galton, 1995).

In the field of music education, there is some literature critiquing learning outcomes that are centrally set by policy makers. Livermore (1997) reported that Australian primary schools music teachers complained about the diversity of music learning outcomes that made teaching and assessing difficult. Watson (1997) criticized that writing music learning outcomes had caused the subject of music to lose its integrity and become confused with other arts. In England, music educators in the 1990's criticized that the unfamiliar, newly introduced assessment descriptors (learning outcomes for assessment) of the National Curriculum had caused music teachers great frustration (Cox, 1999), a frustration enhanced by the new requirement to teach 'creative music' (Green, 1995). Subsequently, these descriptors were removed from the music syllabus of the National Curriculum. In the USA, Sandholtz et al (2004) found that the implementation of National Standards had lowered education standards across all subjects except reading and mathematics. Similar to the experience of music teachers in the UK, teachers in the USA also faced difficulties in implementing National Standards in their curriculum (Byo, 1999; Orman, 2002). Riverire (1999) found that music teachers in the USA were also worried about the National Standards that required students to achieve in tasks related to music composition. In summary, both research scholars and music teachers report negative views about the imposed implementation of outcome-based education in the music subject. Research about learning outcomes in the field of mainstream music education has diminished in the past decade.

In contrast to mainstream music education, the field of special education provides positive and ongoing interest in students' learning outcomes in inclusive classrooms. For example, the

academic learning outcomes of students with learning disabilities reportedly improved in inclusive classrooms (Tremblay, 2012; Klingner et al., 1998; Elbaum, 1999). Deno and his associates (2001) found that using curriculum-based measurements to set growth standards for students with learning disabilities could help them to achieve better in reading. Elbaum and her associates (1999) found that alternative grouping strategies could improve the reading outcomes of students with learning disabilities. Furthermore, positive relationships were reported between the opportunities to respond to academic requests and behavioral outcomes (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001), as well as between career-related experience and the employment outcomes of students with special educational needs (Benz et al., 2000).

Music has been used as a therapeutic medium for students with special needs (Patterson 2003). Research studies about music learning of students with special needs usually focus on extra-musical outcomes. For example, music learning was found to have positive impact on the holistic development of students with special educational needs, such as emotional control (McCavera, 1991), communication skills (Leung & Leung, 2012), social skills (Rickson, 2012) and cognitive processing (Portowitz & Klein, 2007). However, some music teachers are found to hold negative attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities (Gfeller, Darrow, & Hedden, 1990), some display low expectations in musical achievement of students with special needs (Scott et al., 2007), and some music teachers tend to include high therapeutic content (Ockelford, 2000). In summary, many music teachers lack an understanding of the music abilities of students with special needs (Colwell, 2013), and accordingly the development of music curriculum and instructional strategies for students with special needs remain a challenging area for music educators (VanWeelden, 2007). It requires concerted effort of music educators and researchers to further investigate music learning of students with special needs (Ockelford et al., 2002).

### **Analytical Framework**

Good (2014) maps an interaction domino-effect between teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their students' abilities, which then molds how they interact with these students – an interaction that significantly impacts on these students' achievement. Reviewing the available evidence of experiment on teachers' classroom behaviors, Good (2014) shows that teachers' expectations have a self-fulfilling prophecy effect on students' academic achievement:

Teachers who believe that students are capable often interact with them differently than they do with students believed to be less capable" (p. 20).

In the context of Hong Kong, teachers' expectations of students may be influenced by the local culture. Hong Kong's hybrid culture has been shown to reflect both East and West traditions – an aspirational educational ideology inherent in traditional Chinese society alongside an education curriculum that is based on current western educational development (Sweeting, 2004). Combining these cultural influences, Hong Kong's education seeks to interpret "there is a single teaching, meant equally for all classes of persons" (Confucius: 15.39), as being in harmony with the current Hong Kong education aim of "one curriculum for all" (EDB, 2017a). Significantly however, the Confucian educational ideal does not hold the teacher as being responsible for academic success, but instead each individual student (Cheung, Randall & Tam, 2015). This view generates a highly competitive, aspirational view of education in which 'failure' is perceived as being the individual's responsibility and repeated 'failure' will become the justification for negative discrimination. Intellectual disabilities are thus considered to be a cause for negative discrimination and family shame (Scior et al., 2010). In order to minimize 'failure', there is a traditional educational belief about repeated practice inherited from Confucius – "To study and at due times practice what one has studied, is this not a pleasure?" (Confucius: 1.1).

### **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study is address a current gap in the literature by analyzing data derived from observed music lessons in Hong Kong special schools. This analysis will focus both on the music learning outcomes of students with intellectual disabilities and their teachers' expectations. It is hoped that results of this study can reflect current practice and issues when music educators are planning or adapting a music curriculum suitable for students in special schools or inclusive music classrooms. The specific focus of this study is the trialing of Hong Kong's adapted music curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities aged 15-18. To address this study's purpose this paper addresses two research questions:

- (1) What are the observed music learning outcomes of students in elective music lessons of adapted music curriculum for students (aged 15-18) with intellectual disabilities?
- (2) What are special schools music teachers' expectations of students' (aged 15-18) music learning outcomes?

### **Contextual background**

Hong Kong's hybrid culture has been shown to reflect both East and West traditions – an aspirational educational ideology inherent in traditional Chinese society alongside an education curriculum that is based on current western educational concerns with 'inclusiveness' (Sweeting, 2004). Teachers' expectations of students reflect a combination of both Chinese and western ideologies. On one hand, Hong Kong's education seeks to follow the current Hong Kong education aim of "one curriculum for all" (EDB, 2017a), which aligns with the current curriculum trend in western countries as well as the harmonious view of Confucian ideology that regards the equality of educational opportunities (Confucius: 15.39). On the other hand, the local Chinese culture demonstrates a highly competitive and aspirational view of education in which 'failure' is perceived as being the individual's responsibility, in addition to the justification for

negative discrimination of people with intellectual disabilities which is considered to be a cause for family shame (Scior et al., 2010).

### **Educational policies**

There are three educational policies in Hong Kong that guide the education for students with intellectual disabilities: the extension of free education by three years (EDB, 2012), prioritizing ‘inclusive’ education (EDB, 2017b) and third, the introduction of “one curriculum for all” (EDB 2017a).

Prior to 2007 all Hong Kong students were entitled to receive free and compulsory education from age 6 to 15. Students with intellectual disabilities aged 6-15, were usually allocated to study in one of the 41 special schools: 14 provided for children with moderate intellectual disability, 11 provided for children with mild intellectual disability, 6 for children with mild or moderate intellectual disability while the remaining 10 special schools provided for children with severe intellectual disability (CHSC, 2017).

In 2007 this provision changed. First, came the introduction of “12-year free education” to all students aged 6-18 - inclusive of both mainstream and those with special educational needs (EDB, 2017c). Second, the policy of ‘educational inclusion’ now encourages students with special educational needs to “receive education in ordinary schools as far as possible or in special schools when necessary” (EDB, 2017b). Following the implementation of these two policies, the placing of students with intellectual disabilities in specials or mainstream schools is now effectively decided by parental choice (Lian, Tse & Li 2007).

A third policy change was the implementation of “one curriculum framework for all” (EDB, 2017a). This policy allows teachers in special schools to adapt the official curriculum flexibly according to their students’ abilities. The adapted curriculum in schools for students with mild level of intellectual disabilities usually follow the official curriculum closely (Poon-



McBrayer and Lian 2002), but the adapted curriculum in schools for students with moderate to severe/profound intellectual disabilities usually focus on educating students to function properly in daily life - neglecting other areas of learning (Lian, Tse, and Li 2007). This flexible curriculum implementation therefore allows variety across different special schools. In practice, this flexible curriculum implementation is entirely dependent on both the subject expertise and individual choice of each teacher and has been shown to reflect each teacher's educational beliefs, training and pedagogical preferences (Wong, 2015).

### **Music curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities**

The official curriculum documents for schools in Hong Kong are designed for (1) students aged 6-15, the *Music Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 3)* (CDC 2003), and (2) students aged 15-18, the *Music Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6)* (CDC and HKEAA 2007). Both documents share common targets, including “developing creativity and imagination”, “developing music skills and processes”, “cultivating critical responses in music” and “understanding music in context”. Students are to attain these four common targets through performing, listening and composing activities (CDC 2003, p. 12; CDC and HKEAA 2007, p. 6). Under the policy of “one curriculum for all”, teachers in special schools may adapt the ‘common’ curriculum to suit their students’ capabilities (EDB 2017a). Accordingly, a *Supplementary Guide to the Music Curriculum and Assessment Guide for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (Secondary 4-6)* [*Supplementary Guide*] was introduced for students, aged 15-18 with intellectual disabilities attending special schools in 2012 (EDB, 2015). This *Supplementary Guide* provides adapted learning objectives and instructional advice for music teachers to develop school-based adapted music curriculum. Echoing VanWeelden’s findings (2017), the challenge of adapting music curriculum remains. In Hong Kong, music teachers do not have training in music education for students with special educational needs in specific (Wong, 2016).

## **Methodology**

The methodology comprises that of a qualitative multiple-case study (Yin, 2014). To identify suitable case-studies participants were recruited through a professional development programme for music teachers within Hong Kong's 41 schools for students with intellectual disabilities. The professional development programme, funded by the Hong Kong Education Bureau, consisted of three components: workshops supporting the design and implementation of the newly adapted music curriculum, school-based professional support and experience-sharing sessions. On completion, all programme participants (n=85) were then invited to join, on a voluntary basis, a school-based professional support component. It was from this support component that this study derived seven qualitative multiple-case studies.

This research employed typical purposeful criterion sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to select cases. Sample selection criteria comprised: The participant should

- (1) Be an in-service music teacher in a Hong Kong special school that offers music as an elective for students age 15-18.
- (2) Be willing to trial the new adapted music curriculum.
- (3) Permit the researcher to observe his/her teaching the new adapted music curriculum in any two music lessons during the period of research (January – June, 2011). The choice of observed lessons is as selected by the participant.

From a population (n=85) only seven special schools music teachers consented to participate in this study (8% of the professional development programme participants of workshops). This low uptake reflects both a reluctance of special school music teachers to open their classrooms for observation and their lack of confidence in their students' music learning outcomes. According to my observation, music teachers who participated in this study were more out-going in character and showed confidence in their instructional strategies as well as their

students' work.

To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms (Amy: Betty: Candy: Diana; Eva, Flora and Gigi) are used. Profiles of these seven cases are shown in Table 1.

#### Insert Table 1

All seven participants were in the age range of 25-35 at the time of the study. They were all female. Six were degree holders while Candy had a three-year teaching certificate. Five had trained as music teachers within mainstream schools while Diana and Gigi held BA degrees in Social Science instead of music and no teacher-training. Among the seven schools where these seven participants taught, there were five schools for children with mild intellectual disabilities, one school for children with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities and one school for children with moderate intellectual disabilities. Among the 41 special schools for students with intellectual disabilities, only 28 of them offer music as an elective as elective for students for students at age 15-18. These seven schools represented one-quarter of the special schools for students with intellectual disabilities that offer music as an elective for students at age 15-18. The class-size of classes for observation ranges from 6 to 13.

Two music lessons were selected by each participant for observation and simultaneously video-recorded. The duration of every lesson was 40 minutes. Field notes which focused on students' music learning outcomes were taken during each classroom observation. Each observed lesson was then followed by a post-observation interview. All interviews were audio-recorded. The language of instruction of all observed lessons and post-observation interviews was Cantonese – the most commonly used spoken language in Hong Kong. All interviews were then transcribed for coding with selected coded-verbatim being translated into English for report purposes.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection includes music classroom observations. These observations were conducted by the author as a non-participant observer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and focused on documenting students' music learning outcomes. Face-to-face interviews followed a semi-structured guide to solicit music teachers' views on their students' observed learning outcomes. The interview guide covered areas such as teachers' education and experience, teachers' views on students' characteristics, teachers' reflections and expectations on students' music learning. The duration of each post-observation interview was around 45 minutes.

## **Data Analysis**

Content analysis, within case analysis (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) and cross-case analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) were used to analyze the data of this study. All data were analysed according to the two research questions. Three major categories were generated: 1) the observed music learning outcomes of students in listening, performing and composing activities; 2) teachers' perceived strengths and weaknesses of students' music learning outcomes in listening, performing and composing activities; and 3) teachers' strategies for helping students to develop their music learning outcomes.

## **Findings**

Participants' views on the music learning outcomes of students with intellectual disabilities are reported in the following seven case studies. Quotations cited are extracted from the interview data collected. The observed learning outcomes reported here refers to the learning outcomes that the majority of students achieved in the observed lessons. When reporting the observed learning outcomes, Table 2 summarises five case studies of students with mild intellectual difficulties; Table 3 then summarises two case studies of students with moderate intellectual difficulties.

Insert Table 2

Insert Table 3

### Case 1: Amy

Amy showed video excerpts of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake and told the story in brief. She played two different versions of the theme of Swan Lake, an original orchestral version as heard in the video and the other version was arranged for electronic sounds in pop music style. She guided her students to sing the theme with solfeggio and to compare these two excerpts, including the use of timbre, dynamics, articulation and tempo. She also encouraged students to move with music. Amy's students recognized the theme, remembered the name of composer and title of the theme. They could tell the differences in dynamics, timbre and tempo of the two versions of Swan Lake theme. They enjoyed it very much.

Besides comparing different versions of Swan Lake, Amy also guided her students to compare different versions of Butterfly Lovers' violin Concerto jointly composed by Chinese composers He Zhanhao and Chen Gang in 1959. Amy played the original version and told the story of the ancient Chinese tragedy that this work was based on. She guided her students to sing the main theme in solfeggio. After students became familiar with the theme, she played the recording of a version of Chinese instrumental ensemble for Erhu, Zheng, Yangqin and Dizi. Her students recognized the timbre, shapes and material of instruments. They could tell the differences in timbre and articulation of the two different versions of Butterfly Lovers' Concerto. Some of her students compared the stories of Swan Lake and Butterfly Lovers. Amy was very contented with her students' music learning outcomes in music listening and singing. Her students had difficulty to sing accurately with lyrics and needed a lot of practice.

Amy: My students are good at listening activities. They have training in music lessons ever since they entered the school at the age of six. Besides asking them to identify the musical elements in the music excerpts, we also encourage them to talk about their feelings and their ideas about music. Their ideas are very unique and creative. I'm very contented with their learning outcomes of music listening. ... We have singing activities in

every music lesson and they sing well. They usually prefer singing Cantonese popular songs than singing traditional Chinese folk songs. They had difficulty to sing the lyrics correct. Singing in solfeggio may be easier for them. They needed more practice before they can sing the songs accurately.

#### Case 2: Betty

Betty's focus was on performing activities. She designed a wide range of performing activities for her students, including singing, melodica playing and dancing. Her students could recognize the titles of local Cantonese popular songs and could sing along with karaoke of Cantonese popular songs, though their intonation was not too accurate. When playing melodica, her students could read music scores with colored notes which were corresponded to the colored stickers on the keys of melodica. She provided colored desk bells for students with weak finger mobility to play with their palms. With the help of Powerpoint slides that showed the colored-score, Betty's students could play melody together with their melodicas and colored desk bells.

Before Betty taught her students to dance, she played an excerpt of Chinese folk dance tune and guided her students to identify the sound of Dizi (Chinese flute) that played the leading theme. She showed a video of a Chinese folk dance tune and asked her students to imitate the dance steps or create new dance steps that fit the beat. After watching the video, she played the recording of the Chinese folk dance tune and her students danced in front of mirrors. Some of her students could follow some of the dance steps while some moved freely without following the music. However, all of her students enjoyed watching their images of dancing through mirrors.

Betty commented that her students were weak in music performance. In order to help her students to succeed in music performance, she employed colored scores and selected music with simple rhythm and shorter tunes.

Betty: Some of my students can sing with words. Some of them have verbal disability and cannot sing. I'll teach them melodica or desk bells according to their finger mobility. They can read colored scores and can match with the keys of melodica with colored stickers and colored rainbow desk bells. Anyway, they are weak in rhythmic accuracy. ...

I usually select very short tunes for my students to play on the melodica because they said that their fingers would feel tired when playing long melodies. I usually select very simple nursery tunes for them to play because those tunes are short and the rhythm patterns are very simple.

### Case 3: Cathy

Cathy's students sang a local Cantonese popular song that had the same tune as a piece originally composed for Zheng, a Chinese plucked string instrument. Her students also recognized the tune because it was frequently used on TV as music background. They sang the song eagerly along with Karaoke. Cathy played an excerpt of the tune played by a Chinese instrumental ensemble. Her students recognized the shapes and sounds of Chinese instruments used in the ensemble, including Suona, Pipa, Yangqin, Erhu and drums. Cathy guided her students to compare the instrumentation of the Cantonese popular song and the instrumental ensemble. Her students could tell the similarities (use of Chinese drums) and differences (use of non-Chinese instruments) in instrumentation between the two pieces of music.

Cathy's students liked Chinese drums and she demonstrated how to make different sound by striking different parts of the Chinese drum. Her students followed her to try various drumming techniques with short rhythm patterns provided by Cathy. Assisted with computer software, she guided her students to rearrange short rhythm patterns for accompanying the Cantonese pop song. Some of her students sang along with the Karaoke, while some of her students played the rhythm pattern with Chinese drum and other classroom percussion instruments. Her students made quite a lot of mistakes in performing activities, but all of them were very happy with their performance.

Cathy was contented with her students' music learning outcomes in performing, listening and composing activities. She commented that her students were very supportive to their peers' performance and they were eager to create music with computer software.

Cathy: As I expected, they needed to listen to the excerpt many times before they can get the answers. However, many of students can identify the musical characteristics of the piece. I'm happy that they were able to select percussion instruments to play their rearranged version of rhythm accompaniment for the song. They are quite weak in playing musical instruments. They were unable to get all pitches and rhythm correct. I had to practice with them many times before they can get it right. Students with ID are very supportive to each other they won't laugh at their friends even when they are making mistakes. ... They were very interested in arranging music with computer software though they might be uncertain of what to do at the beginning of the lesson. They like listening to the effect of their arrangement on the computer, though they couldn't perform the arrangement with real instruments. I think they can overcome the difficulty in future when they become more skillful in using the computer software. I'm confident that they have the ability to create music. What really matter is time; they just need more time to think and do their work.

#### Case 4: Diana

In Diana's music lessons, she showed portrait of Mozart and told life-story of Mozart with picture cards. Diana's students recognize the portrait of Mozart and could arrange the picture cards of Mozart's life-story in the correct order. When she played "Twinkle, twinkle little star" with colored-bells and her students could recognize the tune and sang along with her. She guided her students to play colored bells with a colored music score. Diana played a recording of Mozart's 12 Variations in C Major 'Ah vous dirai-je, Maman' for piano, K. 265 and discussed the musical features of this piece with her students. Some of her students recognized the timbre of piano; some noticed the changes in dynamics and tempo. Some said that this piece is a cradle song and could think about moon and stars while listening to it. All of them said that they liked the piece. Diana's students could recognize quarter notes and eighth notes. Diana guided her students to compose ostinato patterns with quarter notes and 2-eighth notes. They worked in groups to compose short rhythm patterns that made up of quarter notes and 2-eighth notes. When Diana played the recording of Mozart's 12 Variations in C Major 'Ah vous dirai-je, Maman' for piano, K. 265, they played the rhythm patterns with classroom percussion instruments while listening to the recording.



Diana was discontented with her students' music learning outcomes. She commented that her students always like dreaming and were weak in music achievement.

Diana: It's difficult to keep their attention. They were not well-prepared for listening activities. Some of them like dreaming and did not respond to me. Whenever I tried to move on to talk about a bit abstract meaning of music, they didn't respond to me and made me very frustrating. ... I think they don't really know what they were doing when I asked them to compose rhythm pattern for accompanying the melody. ... I think they could not read music scores. I think they recognized the colors instead of the notes on scores.

#### Case 5: Eva

In Eva's music lessons, Eva prepared microphone and karaoke music background for her students to sing Chinese folk songs and local Cantonese popular songs. Her students took turn to sing along with the microphone and karaoke. While waiting for their turns, Eva's students danced and use classroom percussion instruments to tap the basic pulse along with their classmates' singing and the karaoke music background. In addition to singing, Eva guided her students to listen to the instruments used in the music background. Some of her students recognized the tone colors of some Chinese instruments, including Erhu and Guzheng.

Eva was satisfied with her students' music learning outcomes. She emphasized enjoyment in music learning. She commented that lesson time was too short for students to enjoy music. Her emphasis on singing and dancing was perhaps her way to explain her negative belief in the musical ability of her students.

Eva: My students like using microphone to sing along with karaoke. They could sing mostly accurately. They like dancing along with music. The lesson time was too short for them to enjoy. Lesson time was too short for me to try any creative work with my students. It's difficult to plan creative work for them. ... I don't think they can do that.

#### Case 6: Flora

Flora's students sang the same "greeting song" in Cantonese whenever they started a music lesson. Flora played the piano accompaniment for them. The greeting song was a very

short melody that based on a major chord, for students to say “good morning” and the name of the every individual student. After singing the “greeting song”, Flora guided her students to review rhythm patterns. Her students used classroom percussion instruments to tap the rhythm patterns while Flora played recordings of music excerpts. Her students followed Flora to tap rhythm patterns. Flora let her students select their favorite percussion instruments. Her students recognized the sound of percussion instruments and could tell the names of the percussion instruments. Flora also played rhythm games with students and her students could recognize the rhythm patterns and picked out the correct rhythm cards. She also guided her students to re-arrange the rhythm cards or solfeggio cards and made new rhythm patterns or new short tunes. Flora also used computer software to assist students in selecting colored notes for making up melody. Flora played recordings of various music excerpts and her students recognized the tone color of the instruments and matched picture cards of musical instruments correctly. Flora encouraged her students to move freely with music whenever she played music recordings.

Flora commented that her students were weak in performing activities but enjoyed listening and composing activities, especially when they were assisted by information technology. She was contented with her students’ music learning outcomes.

Flora: My students are weak in performing music instruments. They seldom play accurately. They usually delayed a bit in rhythm. Some of my students could sing along with the music excerpts. Some are non-verbal, but I’m contented that they could express themselves through communication tools to show their answers. ... They were eager to arrange the solfeggio cards to create short tunes. They were so happy after I played the tunes arranged by them. I’m not sure whether they really know what solfeggio means, but obviously they enjoyed arranging the cards and listen to the new tunes. They usually need a lot of time to think and need visual aids to help them understand the idea of rhythm and pitch. I found that using the computer to help them arrange colored pitches is a very effective way to help them in composing melodies. I usually video record their music movement and show it to them. I found that this strategy can stimulate them to think about how to create music movement.

Case 7: Gigi

Gigi taught her students to play and sing African drums and tunes in music lessons. She showed how to play the drums and also prepared Powerpoint slides to show the positions of hands. Her students took turn to play drums. She also prepared costumes for her students to pretend to be rural Africans. She practiced call-echo songs with her students. After practicing the songs and drums for two lessons, her students recognized the names of the African drums that they played. They could sing the call-echo songs and echo Gigi's melodic and rhythm patterns.

Gigi was satisfied with her students' good attention and music learning outcomes. However, she commented her students were weak in creative work and did not show much interest in improvisation.

Gigi: My students are mild ID. Most of them are autistic. They don't have much confidence in learning, but they responded very well when they sang the African call-echo song. I'm very contented with their singing. The tune was short enough for them to memorize. They were so attentive. Perhaps it's because they had to echo after my singing. I don't know whether they really know what a call-echo song is. They just follow. They have done what I expected. When I play call-and-response with them, it took quite a long time before they could respond with a different rhythm pattern. This African drum game is an elementary creative work for them to improvise rhythm pattern, but some of them could not get it at all. They just copy what I did. They didn't think much about what I expected them to do. It seemed that they were not very interested in this game.

### **Discussion**

Discussion of the above data will focus on the "observed music learning outcomes" and "teachers' expectations of students' music learning outcomes, so as to address the two research questions.

#### **Observed music learning outcomes**

All participants trialed the adapted music curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities. Accordingly, the observed music learning outcomes are categorized according to the adapted music curriculum's three music learning activities: listening, performance and creativity.

#### **Listening outcomes.**

Students with mild intellectual disabilities (Cases 1-5) could recognize familiar tunes, identify shapes, materials and timbre of music instruments, dynamics, tempo and articulation of music excerpts. Students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Cases 6-7) could recognize a familiar tune and identify timbres of some musical instruments.

Common across all seven cases was the key role of the teacher. Given sufficient learning scaffolding, such as repeated listening and questions for guided listening practice, then these students demonstrate music learning outcomes, such as recognizing familiar tunes and identifying timbres of instruments.

### **Performance outcomes.**

The observed performance activities include singing and playing classroom percussion instruments, desk bells and melodica. Students with mild intellectual disabilities who have verbal abilities can sing with solfeggio or lyrics; learn to sing by ear instead of reading music scores, and may be assisted to read colored music score or percussion score. Students with moderate intellectual disabilities who were reported to be non-verbal, could not sing but could play percussion instruments: those with verbal ability sang with solfeggio.

Successful performance support strategies include using Karaoke and microphone to arouse students' interests in singing; reflecting students' music preferences when selecting performing activities repertoire, and the use of colored music scores.

### **Creative outcomes.**

Observed creative activities include body movements, exploring sound effects and creating rhythm patterns. Excepting Gigi's (Case 7) students, all other cases produced creative outcomes e.g. music-inspired movements. For students with intellectual disabilities including reading difficulties, the use of flash cards and computer software reportedly facilitates the accomplishment of simple tasks such as creating rhythm patterns.

As the above discussion illustrates, students with intellectual disabilities can demonstrate music learning outcomes if teachers provided them with adequate opportunities and appropriate adapted strategies. This phenomenon provides an encouraging response to Colwell's (2013) worry about music teachers' lack of knowledge in teaching students with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, the learning scaffold of repeated opportunities to respond, as reported above, can produce positive behavioral outcomes (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). Perhaps, this phenomenon can be explained with the Confucius' ideology that emphasizes the positive educational effect of repeated practice (Confucius: 1.1).

### **Teachers' expectations and students' music learning outcomes**

These case-studies present teachers holding a spectrum of expectations which impact on both the quality of their learning support and learning outcomes. For example, where a teacher voices high expectations, the evidence suggests this can produce both quality learning support and high learning outcomes:

Amy (Case 1): My students are good at listening activities ... Their ideas are very unique and creative. We also encourage them to talk about their feelings and their ideas about music. I'm very contented with their learning outcomes ...

However, as high expectations become eroded, this reduces both the quality of support and learning outcomes:

Betty (Case 2): As long as my students are happy, I don't have any specific expectations on their music achievements.

Cathy (Case 3): As I expected, they needed to listen to the excerpt many times ... They are quite weak in playing musical instruments. ... they just need more time to think and do their work.

Diana (Case 4): It's difficult to keep their attention ... I think they don't really know what they were doing

Eva (Case 5): My students like using microphone to sing along with karaoke. They could sing mostly accurately. They like dancing along with music. The lesson time was too short for them to enjoy. Lesson time was too short for me to try any creative work with my

students. It's difficult to plan creative work for them. ... I don't think they can do that.

Flora (Case 6): My students are weak ... They seldom play accurately ... Some are non-verbal, but I'm contented that they could express themselves

Gigi (Case 7): My students are mild ID. Most of them are autistic ... They just follow ... They just copy what I did.

As illustrated above, the evidence here, on one hand supports Good's (2014) statement about the effect of teachers' expectation on students' learning outcomes, i.e. when teachers hold high expectations on students' learning outcomes, they would provide students with more opportunities and students would have a greater chance to achieve teachers' expected learning outcomes. On the hand, teachers' low expectations supports Colwell's (2013) view that many music teachers lack an understanding of the music abilities of students with special needs, and VanWeelden's (2007) findings that students with special needs remain a challenging area for music educators.

### **Conclusion**

Analysis of data obtained from these seven case studies, comprising music teachers' trialing an adapted music curriculum for Hong Kong students with intellectual disabilities, focused on two research questions. Addressing the question "What are the observed music learning outcomes of students in elective music lessons for students (aged 15-18) with intellectual disabilities?" The analysis supports Good (2014) that students with intellectual disabilities in special schools are able to demonstrate music learning outcomes as their counterparts in mainstream schools. Furthermore, the learning scaffold of repeating opportunities for students to respond can produce positive behavioral outcomes (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001).

Addressing the question "What are special schools music teachers' expectations of students' (aged 15-18) music learning outcomes?" The data analysis here supports Colwell's

(2013) view that many music teachers lack an understanding of the music abilities of students with special needs, Scott and his associates (2007) about music teachers' low expectations on students' learning outcomes and VanWeelden's (2007) findings that students with special needs remain a challenging area for music educators.

From such findings, the potential for music teachers to scaffold tangible development in students with intellectual disabilities is promising but perhaps not yet fulfilled. To fully realize this potential, further research may help focus teachers beyond such labels as 'intellectual disabilities' and so scaffold individual learning-support thus enabling students to surmount their own current challenges. In addition to adding courses on music education for students with special educational needs in music teacher education programs, music teacher educators and policy makers should consider collecting more examples of adapted instructional strategies and curriculum design evidenced with corresponding music learning outcomes which may be helpful for music teachers to build up more reasonable expectations on music learning outcomes when developing adapted music curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities.

(6,425 words)

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