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The Ecology for Fostering the Musical Creativity of Students With Intellectual Disabilities

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The ecology for fostering the musical creativity of students with intellectual disabilities

Abstract

Students with intellectual disabilities in Hong Kong are placed in special schools in their neighborhoods according to their categories of intellectual disabilities. Music teachers in these special schools implement a school-based music curriculum that includes the learning objective 'creativity and imagination'. Reporting a qualitative multiple-case study with purposeful sampling and face-to-face interviews, this study poses the research question" "What are the ecological elements for fostering the musical creativity of students with intellectual disabilities?" Respondents identify five elements as essential in fostering their students' musical creativity: (1) opportunity for play and exploration; (2) providing support guidance and demonstration; (3) opportunity to develop a sense of engagement; (4) opportunity for making choices; (5) providing positive reinforcement and feedback. A discussion of this data reveals how the dual impact of lacking professional training in music education for students with intellectual disabilities and cultural perspective diminishes respondents' expectations of their students' creative capacity.

Key words: Music Education, Special Education, Intellectual Disabilities, Ecology, Creativity, Hong Kong.

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Introduction

The variety, meaning and reasons for creativity reflect both the individual's practices and the prevailing social, cultural, and activity systems (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Percolating out from this matrix, an individual's creative performance is further influenced by the level of support available in the social environment, its processes, and its structures (Hunter et al., 2007). One key social environment is the school, a site with its own processes and structures, mixing both subject and social learning. Within the school, this subject and social learning plays out within the classroom – a sub-set environment which crystalizes how individual students develop their creative potential (Runco, 2014).

Assigning values to this interaction between individual creativity and the larger society, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009), identify four levels of creativity: Big-C, pro-c, little-c, and mini-c. Big-C refers to those who create a new genre of creative works, such as in the Arts or Music. Pro-c refers to the creative work of professionals, such as the new recipes of a Michelin Star chef. Little-c refers to the creativity in daily life, such as a rap-talk passage created by chemistry teachers to help their students memorizing the periodic table of chemical elements. These three levels of creativity reflect judgments of their societal value. Mini-c refers to a person's creative construct, which is personal and self-meaningful, and therefore independent of societal judgment. Such a hierarchical classification however falters for failing to explain how creativity can be engendered.

How creativity can be engendered has been shown to be independent of traditional intelligence (Runco, 2014). Young children are innately creative – an ability that adult perceptions frequently need support and understanding to recognize (Glăveanu, 2011). Likewise, students with intellectual disabilities are innately creative – despite the societal-label of 'disabilities' inferring otherwise (Fard et al., 2014). Explaining this inclusive view of

creativity, Runco (2014), shows that creativity emerges in multiple ways and processes, some of which are conscious and some may be unconscious.

This study aims to investigate special school music teachers' perceptions of the music learning environment that could foster their students' musical creativity. Addressing this aim, first this study outlines a theoretical framework of creativity in the classroom environment, then the context of the special school music curriculum in Hong Kong and third, the Hong Kong cultural perspective. Data is then presented identifying five elements that respondents regard as essential in fostering the creativity of students with intellectual disabilities. A discussion of this data reveals the dual impact of lacking professional training in music education for students with intellectual disabilities and cultural perspective.

Related Literature and Analytical Framework

Reflecting an evolving understanding of what promotes classroom creativity, Beghetto and Kaufman have sought to guide teachers to protect students from school-based extrinsic motivators, such as studying only to pass exams, by using his "immunization" approach (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2011). Replacing extrinsic with intrinsic motivators, he then encouraged that classrooms provide learning-choice, facilitated students' imagination and exploration, with teachers that both modeled and supported creativity, encouraged students to share their creativity, and provided supportive feedback. (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014). This role of teacher as supportive and facilitating, was not entirely egalitarian, being directly linked to the hierarchical view that positive teacher feedback nurtures students' little-c creativity; that allocating classroom-time engenders student's personal mini-c creativity (Beghetto et al., 2015). Marking a shift from a hierarchical to an ecological view of creativity, are the correlations highlighted by Soh (2017). Based on his use of the Creativity-fostering Teacher Behavior Index, Soh (2017) correlated students' creativity with classrooms that exhibit ecological characteristics, such as 'independence', 'integration',

‘motivation’, ‘judgement’, ‘flexibility’, ‘evaluation’, ‘question’, and ‘opportunities’. However, correlation need not infer causation, and Soh’s long list of ecological characteristics lacks conclusive evidence (Cremin & Chappell, 2019).

Where hierarchy and correlation fail to explain classroom creativity, they do serve to highlight the conundrum that if creativity is innate, what is it about the school classroom that makes its appearance there so deceptive? Kettler et al., (2018) addresses this question by noting that even if teachers value students’ creativity, teachers may be not themselves be attuned to observe students’ creativity where the context of the traditional school culture remains one that values order and obedience.

In the field of music education, the development of musical creativity has followed a slightly different trajectory. As early as 2002, Burnard and Younker recognized that musical creativity can be influenced by both formal and informal instructions and then by Byrne et al., (2003) how teachers use feedback. Research has also identified negatives: that creativity often emerges as a by-product of the lesson objective instead of an objective of teachers’ curriculum planning (Kokotsaki, 2011); that even though music teachers may want to develop students’ musical creativity, they were not well prepared to do so, hampered by being immersed in the traditional pedagogy of practice and performance (Cho & Vitale, 2019).

Most recently, the role of the learning environment has come under scrutiny (Kladdler & Lee, 2019):

> A safe, welcoming environment was essential for creativity to occur. A “safe” environment was defined as a space where mistakes are accepted, risk taking is supported, students are not judged for their ideas, fearlessness is encouraged and modeled, multiple student perspectives are supported, and students are able to exist outside their comfort zones” (p. 402)

Following this scrutiny of the learning environment, pedagogic practice that enhance creativity in music classrooms have been identified, including (1) student engagement, (2)

autonomy, (3) classroom environment, (4) teacher facilitation, and not least, (5) curriculum and lesson plan development (Kladdler & Lee, 2019).

Informative as these findings appear, their Occidental perspective is prone to cultural distortion (Kwan et al., 2018). Correcting this perspective, Chan (2020) states:

> It should be remembered that the Chinese learner is an individual, albeit one of 1.4 billion people who comprise a civilization that has evolved in culture and learning over five millennia (p. 36).

Explaining the Occidental "Paradox of the Chinese Learner", a dichotomized view that assumes a "rote-silent-passive learner" produces only surface learning yet paradoxically and also high achievers, he observes that Chinese learners understand the teaching-learning situation in a non-Occidental way: an example of this non-Occidental way is preferring to ask questions, not spontaneously in class as it comes to mind, but informally, after thoughtful reflection (Chan, 2020). Other notable non-Occidental perspectives include the East Asian cultural preference to harmonize conflicts and compromise contradictions, a preference for 'harmony' that may counter the Occidental alignment of creativity with 'change', individualism and student autonomy (Kwan et al., 2018; Wang & Greenwood, 2013).

The East Asian perspective is itself prone to distortion. For example, Guo and Pang (2020) show that East Asian teachers have a bias towards underestimating low achievers' creativity – a value-judgment that can lock low-achievers into non-creative expectations. Where low-achievers are also identified as having intellectual disabilities (ID), this cultural value-judgment may be seen as explaining why, in the East Asian context, there is an absence of research on how music teachers nurture the creativity of children with ID.

Explaining the importance in Hong Kong, of research on how music teachers nurture the creativity of children with ID, the following outlines the contextual background of this study.

Contextual background

Following 150 years as a British colony, Hong Kong returned to being a special administrative region of China in 1997. The culture of Hong Kong reflects both its colonial history where East-meets-West, and its current development as Asia's premier international financial centre. As part of this transition and equally as part of a global-trend, the Hong Kong education system underwent a series of reforms (EDB, 2014). In particular, promoting creativity through a new school curriculum (EDB, 2018). These reforms, marking a change to student-centred learning, were challenging for those teachers holding teacher-centered beliefs (Chan, 2007). Even quite recently, reported findings indicate that amongst pre-school teachers, some are strongly teacher-directed while others are strongly child-centered – a divide that shapes both pedagogic practice and efficacy in fostering classroom creativity Cheung (2016).

As part of the above education reforms, admission to special schooling requires a parent's request, followed by two psychiatric referrals and a formal Education Bureau assessment. Under this system, students are categorised according to the level of their intellectual disability, i.e. mild, moderate, or severe intellectual disability. Students diagnosed as having mild ID can learn some degree of academic skills and receive pre-vocational training: students with moderate ID may be able to learn skills for everyday living to be independent in familiar surroundings; students diagnosed as having severe ID may acquire limited, basic communication and self-care skills (Hong Kong: ID). As this categorisation may not be directly related to a student's musical potential, it is left to the individual music teacher to provide adapted instructional material and pedagogy in classrooms with students who may be similarly intellectually disabled, yet varied in terms of their musical potential.

Once assigned a category, students are then placed where possible in a matching special school within their neighborhood. Hong Kong has 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 (EDB, 2015). Implementing the principle of 'one curriculum framework for all', all students, including those with intellectual disabilities, follow the same official school curriculum (EDB 2018). Across all student abilities, adaptation and implementation is the responsibility of individual music teachers.

Music lessons are offered in all schools (mainstream and special schools for students with intellectual disabilities), from Age 6 to 18, under the 12-year free education policy. Accordingly, students diagnosed with intellectual difficulties will have been enrolled in music -lessons from the age of 6. As reported by the music teachers of this study, commonly the music curriculum in special schools is adapted to provide integrated music activities, including listening and performing.

In this 'one curriculum framework', music is offered to all students (Age 6 to 14) and is ascribed with four major learning targets: (1) Developing music skills and processes; (2) Cultivating critical responses in music; (3) Understanding music in context; and (4) Developing creativity and imagination (CDC, 2003, p. 11).

Initially, music teachers were required to meet these targets without further guidance – an initiative that appeared to offer music teachers implementation freedom and classroom autonomy. However, research findings indicated two negative impacts; first, that music teachers experienced professional isolation (Li et al., 2009; Chau & Forrester, 2010) and second, they felt professionally challenged by the task of adapting curriculum to cater to their students' abilities (Author, 2015). In 2017, the Education Bureau then supplemented Music's four learning targets with *Suggested Learning Objectives for Music Curriculum for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (P.1 to S.3) (Draft)* (EDB, 2017).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1 displays both the original (CDC, 2003) and the supplemented (EDB, 2017) 'Learning Target: Developing Creativity and Imagination'. This paper now reports how Hong Kong music teachers of special schools for students with ID responded to this mandated requirement.

Research Question

What are the ecological elements that music teachers use for fostering the musical creativity of students with intellectual disabilities?

Methodology

This is a qualitative multiple-case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Purposeful sampling was used to select from Hong Kong's special school music teachers' nine cases. These nine cases comprised three from each category of special schools for mild, moderate, or severe intellectual disabilities. The criteria for purposeful sampling were set to select cases that can offer insights into the research question (Patton, 2002): (1) The participant of this study must be an in-service teacher who teaches music in a Hong Kong special school for students with intellectual disabilities, regardless of their age and gender; (2) The participant allows the researcher to conduct a face-to-face interview during the period of research (AY 2018-2020). A semi-structured interview guide was used for the face-to-face interview conducted by this study's sole researcher. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese, the most commonly spoken Chinese in Hong Kong, and the medium of instruction in all special schools. All interviews were transcribed and checked by the participants before the interview data were organized for analysis. The data were coded according to emergent categories that illustrated the essential elements of a creativity-supported music learning environment. Pseudonyms are used to maintain respondents' confidentiality.

As a qualitative multiple-case study, purposeful sampling was employed to recruit participants willing to provide in-depth information rather than generalizing the findings to

represent the views of all music teachers in special schools for students with intellectual disabilities (Carminati, 2018). The participants recruited for this study were contacted by direct phone calls to all special schools for students with intellectual disabilities. After explaining the purpose of this study, nine music teachers from eight special schools were recruited. Among these nine cases, three music teachers were recruited from three special schools for students with mild intellectual disabilities, three music teachers from three special schools for students with moderate intellectual disabilities, and three music teachers from two special schools for students with severe intellectual disabilities. The personal profiles of these nine cases are shown in Table 2.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

All but one of the music teachers of this study were over 30 years old and had over 10 years of teaching experience except for Flora and Helen who each had taught for more than 25 years. In contrast, Grace, was the youngest and had less than 5 years of teaching experience. All were university graduates and, apart from Grace and Helen, had training in music education. Only four had training in teaching special education. As is the norm in Hong Kong, no participants had any formal training in music education for students with special educational needs.

Research Limitations

The research focus reports teachers' expressed ideas on the ecological contexts for fostering students' creativity, not on how students are treated from the social critical perspective of disability studies (Connor et al., 2008; Lubet, 2011; and Plucker et al. (2004).

Findings and discussion

Music teachers in this study report five ecological elements for fostering musical creativity of students with ID: (1) opportunity for play and exploration; (2) providing guidance and demonstration; (3) opportunity to develop a sense of engagement; (4)

opportunities to make choices (5) providing positive reinforcement and feedback. Table 3 presents a summary of these elements. Discussion of these findings suggests respondents' increasing doubts that students with ID have the capacity to benefit from such elements.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

Respondents' verbatim reports now follow along with in-depth discussion.

1. Opportunity for play and exploration

The opportunity for play and exploration as an essential ecological element was commonly voiced by all respondents:

> Ada: Exploration is important. My students need to try and play with the instruments, like toys. In the process of play and exploration, they'll make some new sounds for themselves. The process of play is like a preparation to composition. They need mental space during exploration and we should not limit them.
>
> Ben: My students need to move around. They will enjoy playing and exploring sounds if they are allowed to move around. Besides, they may be motivated to explore if I provide sensory stimulation in the task design to engage them in the process of exploration.
>
> Cara: Play is important for my students. They like playing music games. If I set the music creativity tasks like games, they'll create their music like playing games.
>
> Diana: The freedom to explore and play with sound sources can help students to develop their ideas of creating music. Though sometimes my students may break instruments, I'll continue to encourage them to discover how they can play with it. It's a process of learning and they'll find new ways to interact with the instruments.
>
> Ella: I allow my students to explore sounds and ways of making sounds in the music classroom. They learn from experiences, no matter successful or failure, these experiences help them to develop their personal choices of creativity.
>
> Flora: Depending on the level of intellectual abilities, those who have a higher level of ability can perform self-directed exploration; for those who are emotionally unstable or have a lower level of intellectual ability, they may not be able to explore much even if I provide them with more individual help. Keeping them safe is an important issue. As long as they are safe, it's ok for them to explore.
>
> Grace: There's no right or wrong in exploration, as long as I allow students to explore freely, they'll enjoy it. When they are free to play, they are exercising their self-directed learning within the limit of their intellectual ability.
>
> Helen: It's important to allow them to have time and space to explore and play freely with whatever kind of sound source. They'll show their creativity while playing with

> the instruments or sound sources. Due to their low level of intelligence, they are unable to tell us their ideas about creating music. I have to observe them and explore how they react with music to stimulate them to show more of their creativity. Thus, it requires more time and space for me and the students. … Those with higher physical ability and intellectual ability may have a higher motivation to explore how to create sounds. Otherwise, they may not be too active in exploring sounds.
>
> Ivan: My students explore sounds through play. Sometimes they may throw away instruments or other things. That may be part of their play or ways of exploring sounds. They are non-verbal to express their ideas and choices. They can show it through their facial expression. If they are interested in the sounds of an instrument or sound source, they'll keep playing with it. Then I'll let them play with it as much as they want.

All music teachers of this study, regardless of their education, experience and type of special school in which they are serving, report that the opportunity for play and exploration acts as a learning spring-board.

For Ada, 'play and exploration' provides a spring-board into preparation for musical composition; for Ben and Cara, 'play and exploration' provides motivation to explore and create music. As Ada, Ben and Cara teach students with mild intellectual disabilities, their interpretation of 'play and exploration' is framed within the context of formal classroom instruction - aligning with Burnard and Younker (2002) view that musical creativity can be influenced by teachers' formal instruction.

In contrast, teachers of students with moderate intellectual disabilities frame their use of 'play and exploration' as supporting learning about sounds (Diana), developing personal choices (Ella), all with an expected base line of safety (Flora). For respondents who teach students with severe intellectual disabilities (Grace, Helen & Ivan), their use of 'play and exploration' is framed in terms of observing both physical safety and student creativity.

Respondents' framing of 'play and exploration' as a learning springboard, to observing student's physical safety and demonstrations of creativity, expands the concept of a "safe" nurturing environment as defined by Kaddler and Lee (2019). For students with intellectual disabilities, the ecology of 'play and exploration' provides a physically safe

environment within which they can exhibit their novel and personally meaningful (mini-c) interpretations of musical creativity (Beghetto et al., 2015).

2. Providing guidance and demonstration

The importance of guidance and demonstration is not voiced by all respondents.

> Ada: Instead of telling them that it's wrong, I'll give them some advice, guide them to think about their work, and ask them to try another version.
>
> Ben: My students can think critically. However, they won't be able to do it unless I guide them to try creating music in a step-by-step approach. It may be easier for them to imagine if I connect the music creativity tasks with some specific contexts, e.g. festivals, picnic, beach, movie etc. The use of puppets and dramatized sounds can also stimulate their imagination for music creativity too.
>
> Cara: My students may find it hard to follow if the tasks are too complicated for them. Therefore, my demonstration is important for them to imagine how the products of music creativity could be. I have to demonstrate in a step-by-step approach so that they can tune in the tasks smoothly. Their abilities are diverse, and I have to provide individual guidance from time to time.
>
> Diana: My students may have generative ideas for creating music. They need my guidance to learn other possibilities so that they'll know what works better for them.
>
> Ella: My students need hints. I have to provide hints that are concrete or associated with visual aids, and then they may be stimulated to respond in their ways to show their creativity. They need clear guidance and instruction before they know what to do. In the process of doing, they may generate ideas. They also need guided practice until they can manage a learning task.
>
> Flora: When I guided my students to discover the connection between learned materials and new materials, and then it may be easier to stimulate them to find a new connection to new materials or their ways of making music. My guidance has to be specific, otherwise, they won't get it. I also provide them with individual help as far as the classroom environment allows.
>
> Grace: My students need my guidance before they can make new connections between creating sounds and the concrete concepts of their daily living, for example, rain and the sounds of rain, and create music to represent rain, etc.

Teachers of students with mild ID note the importance of guiding students to think (Ada), and step-by-step guidance (Ben and Cara). Teachers of the students with moderate ID identify a more detailed form of guidance including suggesting alternative possibilities (Diana), providing concrete, specific hints, visual aids, and learning materials (Ella and

Flora). In addition, guided practice is considered to be helpful for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to accomplish learning tasks of musical creativity (Ella). For teachers of students with severe ID, only one (Grace) mentioned guidance – guiding students to connect sounds with e.g. rain. These findings suggest support for Occidental research that point to the importance of providing instructions, model and feedback for students with ID (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014; Burnard & Younker, 2002; Byrne et al., 2003). However, an alternative interpretation is that providing guidance can be seen as a teacher-centred pedagogy, which is common in the context of Hong Kong's Chinese culture with its Confucian educational beliefs of teachers' providing both instructions and serving as a role model (Author, 2015). This same cultural context may also account for the absence of 'guidance' by two teachers of students with severe ID (Helen and Ivan): where students' disabilities impair learning by observing, their Confucian-minded teacher may see role-modeling or guidance as being redundant.

3. Opportunity to develop a sense of engagement

The opportunity for their students to develop a sense of engagement is referenced by all but two respondents.

> Ada: When I praise my students, they'll be proud of their work of musical creativity and have a greater sense of engagement in the next task. Positive reinforcement can help my students to develop their ownership of learning when their ideas are put into practice.
>
> Ben: It's important to develop a sense of engagement so that my students will be more willing to participate in creative tasks.
>
> Cara: My students love music. If I integrate music listening activities and performing with creative work, it's easier to engage them with music creativity tasks.
>
> Diana: They won't be able to show their music creativity if they don't have a sense of engagement.
>
> Ella: Not many of my students may have a sense of engagement in their performance or sounds because of their low level of intellectual disabilities. Some of my students with higher abilities may have a sense of engagement in their creative learning activities and they enjoy it very much.

> Flora: My students are non-verbal. I can only observe how they react with music and musical instruments. It's my responsibility to observe them and guide them to create music; otherwise, they won't have the opportunity to develop their sense of engagement in musical creativity.
>
> Grace: my students can develop their sense of engagement in exploring sounds and music listening.

Two teachers of students with mild ID link levels of students' creative participation with their sense of engagement (Ada and Ben). For three teachers of students with moderate ID their students' engagement demonstrates musical creativity (Diana and Flora), and increases student enjoyment (Ella). These descriptions assign 'engagement' to being a holistic feeling of music learning, whether through music listening, performing and creating activities (Cara, Flora and Grace). This interaction between engagement and creativity illustrates these students' construction of personally meaningful moments of creativity – the mini-c level of creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). This interaction also serves to illustrate the importance and dilemma of teachers allowing their students to have the opportunity to develop a sense of engagement: the importance stems from allowing students to develop their mini-c level of musical creativity; the dilemma is that, once given this opportunity, can the teacher's perspective always recognize a construction that, from the student's perspective, is 'personally meaningful'? This dilemma perhaps explains why some teachers (Helen and Ivan) of students with severe ID do not mention their students' sense of engagement.

4. Opportunity to make choices

Respondents differing views on providing opportunity to make choices reveals a dilemma of perception.

> Ada: It's very important to allow them to have a choice in the instruments and ways of making creative sounds. My students will be motivated to create if they have choices.
>
> Ben: My students may not be very eager to choose, but it's good to let them have a choice of their musical instruments and ways of creating music.

> Cara: My students like to have a choice of musical instruments. Many of them don't know what type of method they are using for creating sounds; they find their ways to interact with their chosen instruments.
>
> Ella: I allow them to have a choice of musical instruments for creating music. When they can make choices, they will enjoy their choice.
>
> Flora: I allow them to choose their instruments and observe how they interact with music and musical instruments. Even if some of them may throw the instruments away, it's only a way to let me know whether they prefer playing with that instrument or not. Then I'll give them another instrument to play with.
>
> Helen: There's no right or wrong to create new ways of playing drums. If I allow them to have a choice in the sound source or instruments for making music, then they would be more enthusiastic to participate in creative activities.

Beghetto and Kaufmann (2014) advocate that students have the opportunity to make choices – a view shared by six respondents. In contrast, students with moderate ID and severe ID are held by some (Diana, Grace and Ivan) as unable to imagine, make choices, comprehend motivational messages nor share creatively with others. These contrasting value judgments, based not on evidence but on respondents' opinions, highlight the dilemma of how accurate is an observer's perception? Where small-c creativity is a personal construct, the accuracy of an observer's perception of such constructs perhaps reflects their empathy. The professional decision (as made by Diana, Grace and Ivan) to deprive students of the opportunity for making choices, should be an informed one, based on trial, careful observation and experience.

5. Providing positive reinforcement and feedback

Differing views of providing positive reinforcement and feedback highlights a key role for teacher-student interaction in musical creativity.

> Ada: I use verbal and nonverbal feedback, demonstration, role play, and visual aids to help them to reflect on their creative work. It takes quite a while before they get the meanings of my instruction and create their music. Positive verbal feedbacks are very important to motivate them to conduct music creativity work. When I praise them, they'll be proud of their work. I also guide them with peer assessment activities, so that my students can appreciate the works of others.

> Ben: It's important to support their music creativity with more verbal and non-verbal compliments to encourage them. They can learn through sharing their musical works with others
>
> Flora: My students show me their preferences for music and activities through facial expression or expression cards. We have been teaching them to express their feelings ever since they started school here. My students' confidence to create music is based on my support and reinforcement. They need verbal and facial encouragement. I also guide them to do peer assessment and self-assessment on their music performances. They show their appreciation through clapping hands and giving thumbs up.
>
> Helen: My students are non-verbal. What I can do is only observe them, guess their ideas, encourage them with words and body language, and until they show me a smile or until they calm down or they start to play or explore music on their own. That's all I can do to support them.

To promote students' musical creativity only four respondents (Ada, Ben, Flora, and Helen) employed positive reinforcement and feedback, a remarkable finding given the literature on consensus that verbal and non-verbal feedback are important strategies for enhancing students' self-confidence and for motivating students to participate in music creativity activities (Byrne et al., 2003). The absence of positive reinforcement and feedback by Cara, Diana, Ella, Grace, and Ivan, and across all special school levels: Mild, Moderate and Severe Disabilities, suggests a firm, if inhibiting belief by some respondents, that teacher-student interaction has practical limitations. Such a belief is inhibiting when it becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy, condemning some students with mild, moderate or severe ID to a learning ecology apparently devoid of feedback. In reality, even the absence of feedback can itself become feedback; the most severe ID student may note non-verbal signals, and thereby inform that student's personal construct and small-c creativity. In contrast, students with mild, moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, who receive non-verbal compliments, such as positive facial expression and body language, can enhance their teacher-student interactions, build trust and empathy and thus enhance recognition of their small-c musical creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014).

Conclusion

Music teachers in this study report five ecological elements for fostering the musical creativity of students with ID. Discussion of these findings revealed respondents' increasing doubts that students with ID had the capacity to benefit from these five elements. Respondents positively frame 'play and exploration' as offering a learning springboard, a means both to ensure student's physical safety and to observe demonstrations of their creativity. 'Guidance and demonstration' revealed both Occidental concerns with nurture and Confucian ideals of teacher as instructor or role model. This Confucian perspective then cast doubt on whether or not students with ID had sufficient capacity to 'develop a sense of engagement'. Similarly, 'opportunities to make choices' was perhaps a capacity beyond students with ID; while giving 'positive reinforcement and feedback' revealed a firm, if inhibiting belief by some respondents, that teacher-student interaction has practical limitations.

Teaching students with ID requires both a professional skill-set and a practical perspective of what such students can achieve. In Hong Kong, there is no formal teacher training in music education for students with special educational needs and, as these findings suggest, teachers' perspective of their students' capacity casts increasing doubt on the practicalities of fostering musical creativity of students with ID.

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