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Music Teachers' Concerns for Fostering Music Creativity of Students with Intellectual Disabilities [ID] in Hong Kong Special Schools

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Abstract

Theoretical and contextual background

Neoliberalism is believed to be effective and efficient for the market to operate. Applying neoliberalism in education results as students' right of free and compulsory education. This ideology has transformed to become the policy of "One Curriculum for All", that respect and parents' choice of sending their children with ID to mainstream or special schools. Under the common music curriculum for all, students with ID in Hong Kong special schools are expected to achieve the learning targets, including "Developing creativity and imagination" that students will develop their music ideas and creating skills, in addition of performing and listening skills. However, the traditional Confucian educational ideology that values achievement and rote-learning is deep-rooted in the socio-cultural context of Hong Kong. Music creativity has been defined by music scholars to be either a process, a product or a flow. Research literature shows that mainstream music teachers may lack of confidence in their content knowledge and pedagogic skills to implement music creativity in school music curriculum. The knowledge about developing musical creativity of children with ID is very limited. The interplay of neoliberalism and Confucianism and music creativity will be applied in explaining the results of this study.

Purpose of the study

This study aims at investigating the concerns of special school music teachers in fostering music creativity of students with ID in Hong Kong.

Methodology

This is qualitative study. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit nine respondents from all types (mild, moderate and severe) of schools for children with ID. Face-to-face interviews was employed for collecting data. Data were analyzed according to the research focus.

Results

The concerns about fostering the musical creativity of students with ID are found to form two categories:

- (1) teachers' needs for (a) more teaching time and (b) subject-specific professional development; and
- (2) students' needs for (a) adequate teaching aids, such as computer software, visual aids, and adapted musical instruments and (b) teachers' guidance, such as physical assistance, design of adapted curriculum and instructional activities.

Teachers' concerns of students' needs demonstrate their mindset of "teacher-led" musical creativity rooted in Chinese educational ideology instead of Neoliberalism.

Conclusions and implications for music education

Musical creativity is embedded in the socio-cultural context of the teachers and learners. New research direction should explore how musical creativity is interpreted and nurtured at the levels of the music teacher education and school music education for children with ID.