

MATCHING MUSIC TEACHER'S SELF CONCEPTION WITH STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN AN UNFAVOURABLE SECONDARY CLASSROOM CONTEXT

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This paper aims at identifying and recording good music teaching practices that promote social inclusion, and at developing effective teaching strategies that incorporate student perspectives into the pedagogies. A music teacher in Hong Kong was selected for this study, and two different classes of Form 2 (ages 12-13) were observed. The teaching process was videotaped and reviewed. Afterwards the teacher and a group of students were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to solicit their ideas towards good practice of music teaching. Findings reveal that the good practices observed were attributed to four factors: 1) teacher's personality, 2) teacher's pedagogy, 3) teacher's musical competence, and 4) teacher's philosophy of teaching.

BACKGROUND

Teaching in Hong Kong schools can be challenging. According to recent studies, teachers are facing many difficulties in different aspects. For instance, parents with economic disadvantages in Hong Kong are found to have weaker parent-child relational qualities, which may lead to deviation in the classroom (SHEK, 2005). CHAN and CHAN (2004) found that new emigrant students from mainland China possess lower level of self-esteem than local Hong Kong students, which may also lead to individual differences and low motivation in class. Hence, inclusive education, i.e., integrating education for special needs in ordinary schools is encouraged yet insufficient resources and teacher training are provided (POON-MC BRAYER, 2004). Hence, teaching gifted students in schools is another challenge. It has been found that gifted students in schools have difficulties in relationship with others, unchallenging schoolwork, intense involvement, concerns for being different, parental expectations, and perfectionism (CHAN, 2003).

More specifically, the training and competence of music teachers is another challenge. Many music teachers feel that they are unconfident in teaching music because they are not competent. According to a survey implemented by the Education Department (renamed Education and Manpower Bureau in 2003), approximately 30% of primary and secondary music teachers in Hong Kong admitted that they feel difficulty in teaching students to create music. More than 40% and 50% of primary and secondary music teachers respectively would like to receive further training in teaching composing and music technology (CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, 1998a, 1998b).

Big class sizes in Hong Kong schools are another important issue that may create tension for music teachers. According to NG and MORRIS (1998), Hong Kong music teachers tend to rely on passive learning activities, such as listening and imparting music theories and knowledge, and ignore active music-making activities including composing and performing. One of the reasons is that the class sizes are too big (35 to 40) to facilitate students to create music during the class. Another study reveals that the big class sizes and heavy workload (six to seven classes daily) in Hong Kong may force the teachers to employ more summative assessment and abandon formative assessment (KOO, KAM, & CHOI, 2003).

Nevertheless, there is very limited research studied on how music teachers should cope with the difficult context that they are facing in Hong Kong. Based on the background, there is a need to seek good practice in music teaching which faces challenging teaching context such as big class sizes. The present study thus aims at investigating effective teaching strategies and good practice of music teaching when facing difficult teaching and learning context in Hong Kong.

GOOD PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Good practice of teaching is closely related to different factors and aspects. For instance, ALEXANDER (1996) proposes an Education Practice Framework in which observable practice and teachers' ideas, values and beliefs are the two main aspects to evaluate teaching practice. The observable practice includes:

1. Context: Physical and interpersonal context;
2. Content: Whole curriculum and subjects/areas;
3. Pedagogy: Teaching methods and pupil organization; and
4. Management: Planning, operation, assessment of learning, and evaluation of teaching.

And teachers' ideas, values, and beliefs include three factors:

1. Children: Development, needs, and learning;
2. Society: Needs of society, and needs of the individual; and
3. Knowledge: Children's ways of knowing, and culturally evolved ways of knowing.

There are several philosophical questions behind the above two main aspects. For instance, what and how children should learn, therefore how teachers should teach, why should students be educated in this way, and what is an educated person? These questions provide a major direction that teachers in all subjects should consider before, during and after teaching processes.

Furthermore, ALEXANDER (1996) proposes five considerations for good practice of teaching. First, the Conceptual Consideration refers to a comprehensive consideration of the essential elements of teaching, learning, the curriculum, and the relationship between these factors. Second, the Political Consideration means the expectations and pressures from the professional hierarchy, and beyond this from parents, community, employers, and politicians. Third, the Pragmatic Consideration refers to an awareness of the opportunities and constraints of particular school and classroom settings. Fourth, the Empirical Consideration refers to evidence about the effectiveness of practice, which is concerned with the capacity of particular teaching strategies to deliver learning. Fifth, the Value Consideration refers to the views and perception towards childhood and the child's needs, of society and its needs, and of knowledge, which inform a coherent view of what it is to be educated. These five considerations provide a comprehensive understanding on how teachers should consider in design and implement a curriculum.

Personality and quality of teachers are another important factor affecting the teaching practice. According to HARE (1993), there are certain virtues and qualities which good teachers should possess as persons in order to provide quality and excellent performance in the process of teaching and learning. They are humility, courage, impartiality, open-mindedness, empathy, enthusiasm, judgement and imagination. All these qualities are defined as the fundamental human excellences in comparing to the superficial and behavioural criteria in defining what "good teachers" are.

Teachers play a significant role in the quality of teaching and learning. Reviewed by TROMAN (1996), the definition of "good teacher" is subject to change at different historical times. However, in the UK, there is an emphasis on teacher competences, technical skills, and managerial attributes in official constructions of the "good teacher".

The perception of stakeholders is another important factor reflecting to the teaching practice. MORGAN and MORRIS (1999) investigated the perceptions of 133 teachers and 207 students on good teaching practice from ten schools in Wales. They found that more than 90% of teachers and students agreed that students learn more in some lessons. About 60% of students' thought that the teacher is an attribute, while only 23% of students thought that the students themselves are an attribute. When asking what affect the teaching quality, three factors were identified: 1) teaching methods (35% out of 60%), 2) teacher's control and order (14%), and 3) teacher-pupil relations (10%). Investigating the nature of good teaching methods, the students further identified four characteristics: 1) suitable lesson material, 2) presentation of materials with sufficient explanation, 3) teaching at an appropriate pace, and 4) the need for variety in lessons.

Further on investigating the students' perception on good practice in classroom, Morgan and Morris (*ibid.*) found that teachers' presentation must be interesting and exciting. The "Chalk and Talk" approach was not welcome by the students while they value the opportunity of participate in various learning activities. On aspect of teacher-pupil relations, students found that teachers' inter-personal style or posture was the most crucial point, while the way they communicate and their expectations, commitment and encouragement are other related issues. Most of the students appreciated a friendly and happy social relationship with mutual respect, humour and fun.

On the contrary, when asking the teachers on the attributions to the success of students' learning, the teachers identified three main factors: 1) the students' themselves and their family background (62%), 2) the teacher (18%), and 3) the nature of the subjects (9%). The factors of students include their psychological attributes (i.e., intelligence, motivation, and concentration), cognitive competences, personality features (i.e., self-confidence, self-reliance, innate personality, physical make-up and stamina, and self-perception), and sociological attributes (i.e., parental influence and home background). Those 18% of the teachers who regarded "the teacher" as one of the attributes thought that the teaching methods (13%) and the teacher-pupil relationship (5%) were the two factors.

Concerning the perception on "successful lessons", the teachers suggested that two points could reflect the lessons are successful: 1) pupils participate, respond positively, show interest, are motivated, interact with the teacher, and 2) pupils have learned, have been extended, and have developed.

In sum, this study reveals some common and different perspectives and expectations of both students and teachers concerning good practice of teaching. First, they have opposite perspectives on the responsibilities for success – the teachers regarded students as the major attribute whilst the students regarded the teachers as the major attribute. Second, a unilateral perspective is that the students always welcomed humour and fun during learning; whilst the teachers never mentioned this specific area. Third, both groups shared the perspective that the pedagogy is important in their definitions of good teaching and successful lessons; whilst the subject nature is not as important as pedagogy. Fourth, the perspectives of teachers and students were found to be different on the importance of teacher-pupil relationship. While both groups admitted that a good relationship between the teacher and students is important, it is more significantly found that students regarded the relationship more important than teachers did. Similarly, both groups agreed that classroom control and order is important, the students regarded this much more important than that of the teachers.

In some quantitative studies the quality of teaching delivery are found to be a significant factor among others. For instance, TEACHOUT (1997) compare the responses of pre-service and experienced teachers on identification of skills and behaviour which are important to successful music teaching. He found that both groups rated personal skills and teaching skills more important than musical skills. HAMANN, BAKER, MCALLISTER and BAUER (2000) found that graduate students perceived that good teacher-delivery skills are more important than the quality of teaching content. Similarly, MADSEN (2003) found that the quality of teaching delivery may have a greater influence on secondary students' perception of effective teaching than the accuracy of the teacher's instruction and social behaviour of students.

Although there are different studies investigating the teaching effectiveness in classroom, very few studies in music education paid attention to unfavourable context, such as big class sizes which lead to lack of student participation and low motivation to learn. This is understandable as those studies were taken place in North America and UK, where a normal class size may range from 20 to 30. However, there seems to be a lack of in-depth studies in investigating the teacher effectiveness when facing the big class sizes and low motivation. This study thus aims to observe a selected music teacher who delivered effective teaching in an unfavourable school in Hong Kong with 40 students in a class.

RESEARCH METHOD

Design

This is a case study focusing on a specific secondary school in Hong Kong. A methodology using qualitative methods including observation and interviews were applied. The qualitative design allows the investigation of both the teacher and her students to reflect on the quality of good practice of music teaching in an unfavourable classroom context. The nature of this study focused on exploring the perception of the teacher and students and there were no pre-specified ideas of how good teaching should exist in the mind of the researchers. Investigator triangulation (DENZIN, 1970; COHEN & MANION, 1994) was achieved by cross check of coding the qualitative data by the two researchers.

Subjects and School Background

A music teacher, Ms. Wong, and two classes of her students were invited to act as the subjects of this study. The school is located in the North-west District of Hong Kong with approximately 1200 students. There were two music teachers in that school and Ms. Wong was the chair of music panel. Music was a subject in that particular school for Secondary 1 to 5 (ages 11 to 16). A music double lesson of 70 minutes was offered to Secondary 1 to 3 while a single lesson of 35 minutes was offered to Secondary 4 to 5 in each week.

Ms. Wong possessed ten years of experience in teaching secondary music. According to an initial interview with Ms. Wong before the observation, the school often received emigrants from mainland China which resulted in cultural and academic individual differences among the students. This was a "problem", according to Ms. Wong, as the emigrants generally possessed lower academic levels when compared with the Hong Kong students, especially in English language. Their incapability in English was an attribute so that they had to attend a junior form which was not fully matched their actual ages. For instance, it was commonly seen that a 15-year old student who was studying in Secondary 1, in which normally 12-year old students were found. Owing to these individual differences, some of the students were found to have low esteem and low learning motivation during the class. This might generate teaching and learning difficulties that students might not behave themselves sometimes. In addition, the number of students in each class was around 40, which was another difficult situation for teachers to manage.

Concerning support from the school administration, Ms. Wong admitted that she felt sufficient autonomy to develop formal curriculum and extra-curricula activities. However, the resources for music were rather limited, which implies that her principal allowed the subject to develop without intervention, but did not value the subject sufficiently by providing abundant resources. Music seemed to be a marginalized subject in this school in terms of resources.

Apart from the teacher, nine students from two different classes voluntarily participated in two separated semi-structured interviews. The first interview was labelled as I and the second as II; whilst the students were represented by different English letters, i.e., I-B, I-C, I-D, I-E, II-B, II-C, II-D, II-E, II-F.

Procedures

The researchers paid two visits to the school in April and May 2005 during which they observed Ms. Wong teaching two different classes of Form 2 (normally aged 13-14) students. After observation, a total of nine students from the two classes were asked to participate in two separated semi-structured interviews with the researchers voluntarily.

The two researchers took their field notes during observation of the classes. These notes were then exchanged and verified to each other so that investigator triangulation was achieved. In addi-

tion, the observation notes were reviewed and interview questions were derived from the observation in order to solicit the feedback from the teacher and the students. The class teaching process was videotaped and reviewed by the researchers. A detailed description has been generated in order to provide a data base for the teaching process.

The semi-structured interviews possessed a number of different structured questions. The questions for both students and teacher were constructed within a similar framework. This comprised different dimensions to be examined:

- Teacher's attitude in teaching, relationship with pupils and reflective ability.
- The content of the teaching, which included aims and objectives, subject matter and the organization.
- The planning and evaluation, which included lesson planning, teaching and learning strategies and evaluation strategies.
- Management and instruction, which included selection and use of resources, and structuring of learning activities

RESULTS

After reviewing the observation notes and transcription of interviews, a coding process (KERLINGER, 1970) was implemented in order to categorize the data and to induct different aspects of good practice of teaching within an unfavourable classroom context. These aspects were derived from three different sources: 1) observation by the two researchers, 2) identified by the students, and 3) identified by the teacher. Four aspects were identified as follows.

1. Teacher's Personality

The personality of the teacher was seen as an important factor affecting the teaching effectiveness, even in an unfavourable teaching context. Ms. Wong showed her personality concerning teaching in four different aspects: 1) sense of humour, 2) high energy and enthusiasm, 3) understanding and caring students, and 4) reflectivity.

Ms. Wong appeared to be positive when interacting with her students. As observed, the students seemed to be lack of motivation to learn. At the beginning most of them were not attentive during class. They tended not to respond to the teacher's questions. Ms. Wong was empathetic when facing this situation; she always expressed an accepting attitude and never blamed the students. She tried to apply a "humorous approach" in order to attract the students' attention. For instance, in one of the lessons, Ms. Wong aimed to teach the students the meaning of some Italian tempo terms including "adagio, andante, moderato, allegro and presto". She pronounced the Italian terms in a funny way so that the students were laughing. She also asked the students to pronounce these funny words to their parents after school. As a result, most of the students were so focused and paid much concentration to the terms and one of the students could rank the order of these terms from slow to fast correctly. It was reflected by the students that the humorous approach enabled them to memorize the teaching content:

The music lesson in this morning was relaxed, the teacher made funny jokes all the times. Especially the way she read the Italian – it was funny. (II-E)

She knows how to use different methods to help us to memorize things... For instance, the Italian [terms] we learned today, the way she pronounced helped us to remember the words. (II-D)

Sometimes I would sleep in the lessons, but in music lessons, I would not. It is because the teacher talks like normal people [who] is not too serious, and sometimes she makes jokes too. She brings us a few jokes every lesson to keep us alive. Some other teachers – when they start teaching they do not talk anything else. Miss Wong would not be too serious, such as when she is reading the words she would make some funny faces and make us laugh, and it helps us to remember. (II-D)

Ms. Wong always appeared to be energetic and enthusiastic when teaching. She understood that when facing the students who were in lack of motivation, she had to be active enough to raise the learning interest. This seemed to be the only way that could further motivate the students to learn. The teacher reflected in the interview that it was her pleasure and satisfaction when she found that she could motivate her students to learn:

When they achieve something [that] I want them to achieve, or they have achieved something that I don't expect, it is a surprise. Then I would be happy and do better.

I am a cheerful person, I like to be happy, and I think it is best for a music lesson to be happy and the students are interested in it, then I will be motivated.

Understanding and caring students was another characteristic of the teacher. She did care her students on their whole being rather than mere learning music. Facing passive students, Ms. Wong reflected that she should employ effective and interesting instructions, rather than blaming the students and leaving the responsibility to them:

If students fall asleep in my lesson, I think there might be many reasons. Maybe they were too tired last night so they could not focus today, or maybe I am not attractive at all today, or they do not feel like having lessons – could be a lot of reasons. Some teachers might punish them, but I usually would not. I would ask them to wash their faces. They have their reasons to act like this. They usually would do better after washing their faces. You cannot force them to listen to you even they are not sleeping; the fact that they are not sleeping does not mean they are listening to you.

Besides, the students reported that their teacher was familiar with their musical competence and did not over-expect.

She doesn't expect too much on us musically, she has reasonable expectations. (II-C)

The caring attitude of the teacher had won the whole-hearted support from the students. Ms. Wong insisted that the students should learn something during the lessons. She would be disappointed if her students have no intention to learn. One student remembered that:

She teaches us seriously. There was a time when she taught us singing, but we were not serious, finally, she cried. I can feel that she really wants to teach us, and she would be upset if we do not want to learn. (II-C)

She never looks down on her students. It is relaxed when there is no pressure if the teacher does not expect too much from the students. (II-F)

Ms. Wong possessed a personality of reflectivity. She kept her daily teaching record in a diary and reviewed the teaching approaches year after year. She would try to modify the teaching approaches in order to strive for the best.

I deliver the same topic in every year but it could be different. Actually I changed every year. First, I think it would be bored if I keep everything the same. I used to think... I have a notebook, which I keep one every year. I would study it every year... If I did something good, I will remember.

Apart from teaching approaches, Ms. Wong also considered other factors affecting the teaching effectiveness. She reflected a comprehensive perception on teaching with different factors. As evident, she knew that she possessed a positive personality which led her to success.

There are a lot of factors affecting the teaching effectiveness one must watch out, such as what kind of students they are, their personality, what kind of teacher s/he is, and his/her personality, is s/he good enough or experienced in that subject? These are all factors. Other factors include the subject itself, the teaching content and the environment.

2. Pedagogy

The teacher always employed different teaching and learning activities to develop musical concepts in students. It was observed that, for instance, Ms. Wong asked individual students to come out from their seats and walk around the classroom with different tempi tapped by the metronome. Afterwards the students were asked to perform a selected song with different tempi in order to

change the musical expression. The teaching aim for this activity was to develop students' concept on musical tempo through active participation. As observed, some of the students found difficulty to follow the metronome's pace in a straight manner. However, those who had the actual experience admitted that they would remember the Italian musical terms such as "andante" more easily.

Ms. Wong seemed to be creative enough to design alternative pedagogy to stimulate her students to learn. In one occasion the students were singing. Perhaps it was because two observers (the researchers) were in the classroom, the students could not sing confidently. They tended to sing with their close throats and tiny mouths thus very unclear voices were heard. Facing this situation, Ms. Wong asked the students to "shout" while singing. Actually the students appeared to be reluctant to adapt the "shouting approach" at the very beginning, as this was normally regarded as a bad way of singing. However, after the teacher's further encouragement, some of the students started to sing aloud more confidently and their voices were more projected. The purpose of this strategy was to encourage students to breath in more deeply and then have a more solid support from the diaphragm while singing.

Another impressive vignette was that the teacher tried to involve the students in experiencing the different tempi by singing a song. The song was in a moderato tempo but Ms. Wong asked the class to sing in "Adagio", "Allegro" and "Presto" tempi, which created a very exciting atmosphere in which the students were trying their best to sing and pronounce the words in a very fast tempo.

These teaching methods seemed to be welcome by the students. They admitted that they would admire the teacher who could involve students in activities so that they could understand more thoroughly:

Knowing how to set the tempo for a song, we had to sing it very fast. Therefore I realized that the tempo is very important to a song, it cannot be too slow. (II-E)

Through the tempo changing activities, I can play it through and test if the rearrangement version sounds good or not. (II-D)

The feeling of working and laughing together is quite good, better than just sitting still. (I-E)

If the activities include some knowledge, we can remember them easier. (II-E)

Learning through the activities is better because I like sleeping in class, so it would be boring if the teacher talks a lot. (II-D)

Ms. Wong reflected on her pedagogy and agreed that this was an effective approach for students' learning:

I think students need to participate not just in music lessons but other subjects. They need to really enjoy, involve and participate in lessons so they can really learn. I doubt if they can learn by sitting and listening.

The music teacher explained that the activity was well designed based on her teaching experience and reflection. She seemed to be satisfied of her students' achievement:

Because the topic of this lesson is dynamics and tempo, and I have talked about tempo before, so I started with something they have already learnt to let them pronounce them [the Italian terminology], to recall their memories. Then we would go to the application of tempo in a song, they know this, then we connect it with 'why' we have to use these. Then we further link it to something more than tempo.

Demonstration and imitation of students' performance were two important strategies that Ms. Wong had applied. As observed, she demonstrated very frequently when teaching students to sing a new song and to play the recorder. Hence, this was an interactive way to act as a mirror when she tried to reflect students' unfavourable performance in order to show the students their weaknesses. These strategies were welcome by the students:

It is important for Miss Wong to show us the fingering through demonstration. (II-E)

Sometimes she imitates us and then tells us what is wrong with us. We will remember it better; sometimes she plays in a wrong way to show us what the problem is and we will have a vivid impression. (II-E)

As shown in this lesson, we blew too hard on the recorder and sounded so bad. The teacher imitated us and played us back with a much exaggerated manner as a negative demonstration. (II-C)

Ms. Wong had reflected on these strategies and further confirmed the teaching effectiveness:

For me the most effective way to teach recorder playing is through demonstration. I think I need to demonstrate once to them, then I will let them try once, and then I will listen to it and see if there are problems. We will further practice and play again... It is good to demonstrate, so they can recall the song, like an example, how to play with a better tone. I think if they are convinced that I have made a good demonstration, some of them would really try to do better.

3. Music Competence of the Teacher

The music competence is a crucial factor to arouse students' interest towards music making and learning. As observed, Ms. Wong possessed high level of musicianship in terms of singing, recorder playing and aural skills. She demonstrated singing and recorder playing frequently when teaching. She seemed like to perform during classes. As a result, the students admired her music competence to a large extent, which appeared to be an indirect contribution to motivate students to learn. Different students expressed that listening to her singing is enjoyable:

She has a beautiful voice. (I-C)

She is so expressive when she sings English songs. (II-E)

She has high pitch. She is good, not because she sounds like Kelly Chan [a Hong Kong popular singer]. (II-D)

She is very good, she can ring her voice when she sings and I enjoy watching her to sing. (II-D)

Apart from singing, Ms. Wong could demonstrate her musicianship through recorder playing. As observed, she could play out a familiar theme on the recorder without music score. She could play by her memory and transfer to the recorder playing. It was highly appreciated by some students:

She knows the music very well. She can pick up the recorder, think for a while and can play through the whole song. (I-D)

4. Philosophy of teaching

Ms. Wong appeared to be familiar with the most updated youth culture in music. For instance, she could sing some recent popular songs that the students were familiar with. She didn't refuse employing popular songs in her teaching as she thought that using these songs could help improving the student discipline and motivating the students to learn:

For instance, they wanted me to sing "Da Cheung Kum" [a local popular song], then I told them to behave, to pay attention, and if they are able to do that, I would sing, something like that... I will treat pop music as a reward, when they are doing well.

As a result, the students appreciated greatly as it really worked in motivating students. One of the students agreed that popular music should be included in the music curriculum:

Not only teaching us music selected by the teacher, in my opinion, teacher can [should] teach us some popular music as well. (II-F)

A friendly relationship is closely connected to the previous point. It would be ineffective if the teacher tries to show her understanding of the youth culture with an estranged teacher-and-student relationship. As observed, Ms. Wong appeared to be a friend of the students when interacting with them. As mentioned, she always tried to make jokes with the students so that the students became more attentive and dare to respond:

It is important to have an enjoyable music lesson. It was a good lesson, no need to be too serious and the teacher did not teach with a long face. You know it is scary to have a serious teacher; we'll dare not to say anything and we would have no response at all. (II-C)

The students would like a teacher who could be viewed as a friend during class time. Hence, the students expect the teacher to treat the whole class in a fair manner rather than focusing only on those students who are musically competent.

...At least you [the teacher] have to talk to all of us, and when students talk, they should share with the whole class, not to be too serious, not to act like 'I am your teacher', I think teachers should try to put their identity aside and get along with the students, this will be better. (II-E)

DISCUSSION

The music teacher proper seems to be the most influential and critical factor contributing to the teaching effectiveness when facing the unfavourable context. It seems that the teacher's philosophy of music education is the core factor contributing to such good practice. However, the teacher's personality, her pedagogy and musical competence are all important factors which help construct her teaching philosophy.

Personality and education of teachers are two major components contributing to the teacher quality and affecting teaching effectiveness (BUTLER, 2001). As evident, a positive personality is crucial in developing good teaching skills and relationship with students. Ms. Wong's sense of humour and enthusiasm led her to be capable in motivating students learning even the students were passive. She cared her students not only in music learning but also holistic development, which had won the heart of her students. And she always reflected on her own teaching, which shows that she has developed her metacognition in which she could well plan, monitor and evaluate her own teaching (JACOBS & PARIS, 1987).

The education background of Ms. Wong is another important element leading to the current success. Education background refers to pedagogy and musicianship, plus the past experience in teaching and learning. Ms. Wong showed her high level of musicianship in terms of singing, recorder playing and aural skills. Hence, her application of experiential approach involved some of the students in active participation, which was well received by the students and had motivated those passive students to change their attitude effectively.

Hence, the specific teaching context of big class sizes with unmotivated students created a passive and non-interactive learning environment. This study suggests that the teacher might be the most crucial factor which can overcome the unfavourable situation. Suggested by MADSEN (2003), the quality of teacher delivery may have a greater influence on secondary music students' perception on effective teaching than the accuracy of teacher's instruction and the social behaviour of the students. Good teacher delivery in this study refers to overall high energy level, which can be expressed in terms of frequent eye contact, varied and clear vocal delivery, confident gestures and body languages, and enthusiastic facial expression. The present study further supports that when the teacher possesses an enthusiastic personality, humours and positive character, a metacognitive thinking style in teaching, and high energy, the students' perception could be affected so that they would behave better.

Whether the expectation of students on good teaching matches the self conception of the teacher is important. No matter how the music teacher evaluates himself/herself in teaching, it would be important for the students to validate the teaching effectiveness of their teachers. The present study shows that there were quite a number of aspects that both the students and their teacher agreed in view of good practice of music teaching. For instance, the teacher and students both agreed that a friendly relationship and a sense of humour of the teacher are helpful in uplifting students' motivation and the teacher's satisfaction. The experiential approach, demonstration and imitating students' performance were all appreciated by the students. It implies that when the teacher understands and tries to address the expectations and preferences of students, the teaching effectiveness would be raised even in an unfavourable teaching and learning context.

In recent decades the student-centred approach of teaching and learning seems to be advocated by different fields of education. For instance, it would be better to nurture students to be more independent learners when a student-centred approach is used (GEORGE, CRAVEN, WILLIAMS-MYERS, & BONNICK, 2003), and greater autonomy over learning environment is more efficient to motivate students in learning (GUEST, 2005). However, these studies might be done in the teaching context that is different from those of Asian, such as relatively smaller class sizes. When facing a big class, it seems that a different perspective should be explored.

According to BRUNDRETT and SILCOCK (2002), the teacher-centred approach refers to a “top-down” model in which the teacher makes the decisions on the teaching process including what and how to teach. The teacher imposes students with a teaching and learning process in order to make the students to learn. As a result, a learning outcome or a product is to be achieved.

KELLY (1989) suggests that the teacher cannot and should not deliver a set curriculum because the learning product is the learning process itself. A student-centred approach, which might be described as a “bottom-up” model, is advocated that the students themselves should make decisions on what and how they should learn. The role of the teacher becomes a “facilitator” rather than a source of knowledge.

However, it seems that both approaches are not the best one to cope with the big class sizes. As observed in the classroom, the limited teaching and learning space with the big number of students in the class were two major reasons which handicapped the teacher to allow students autonomic learning. In addition, when facing a class of unmotivated students with weak music background, the teacher may find difficulties to allow them to learn by themselves within such environment. However, it is evident that the students welcomed the teacher who appeared to take care of their emotion and feeling. Thus a balance between a teacher-directed approach and a student-centred approach seems to be more appropriate for such context.

Suggested by BRUNDRETT and SILCOCK (2002), a “Partnership Approach” might be a better way for the case reported in the present study. Under such approach the teacher makes the decision on what and how to teach. However, s/he expects the students to commit to their learning by negotiation and motivation strategies. According to BRUNDRETT and SILCOCK (*ibid.*), the teacher and the students are not in equal status. It is the teacher who initiates the whole teaching and learning process by identification of a learning issue, designing learning tasks and assessment. However, the students should be encouraged to negotiate with the teacher to what extent they follow the curriculum. In such a circumstance both parties can take the viewpoint of each other on the learning issues.

As evident, the music teacher in the present study seems to have employed, to a certain extent, the Partnership Approach. She developed and revised her own music curriculum with reflection from her daily teaching experience. During the implementation of teaching, she encouraged students to take an active role in experiencing the music content through different activities. She actively reacted to her students' request such as providing them with the notation of a specific popular song for recorder playing. However, it might be better if she allowed her students to negotiate with her on the issues of curriculum design and teaching methods, although she knew that her students welcomed her pedagogy.

Facing the specific teaching context in Hong Kong, a direct application of student-centred approach might not be effective due to the different cultures in education. It is argued that the teacher and the students are two major partners who have to collaborate closely in order to achieve teaching effectiveness and learning satisfaction. In such case, the teacher should take an active role and encourage the students to take part in their learning. This might be a better approach in dealing with the difficulties of big class sizes and low motivation.

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