

A Project entitled

**Effects of musical production as an extra-curricular
activity from music teachers' perspective**

Submitted by

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Declaration

I, *Mo Yuen Ting Nicole* , declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Lecturer II, Dr. Lee Cheng*, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

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11/5/2018

Abstract:

This research aims to investigate the effect of musical production on school music education from the teachers' perspective, in terms of the workload, musical knowledge, relationship with students, and effects on the students' learning process. Case study is used as a method to investigate a primary school, Tsang Mui Millennium School. It produces original musical every academic year, which is very rare for a school with students in learning stage one and two. Interviews with two music teachers from the school were conducted individually to understand the effect on their teaching from the experience. The interview questions were designed based on the four aspects mentioned above.

Both of the teachers agreed that the workload was very heavy, and stated that the experience had significant effects on their knowledge and relationship with students. The knowledge enhancement could not aid the teaching directly, while the better relationship can help. For the students' learning process, they expressed that the students' learning motivation had increased, also their musical skills were improved. The implication of this research is to explore possibilities for schools to include music as an extra-curricular activity in order to train students' musicianship.

Introduction:

Musical is a form of performing art that combines different art forms, like singing, dancing, and acting. From Stempel (2010), musical is a form of theatrical performance that is similar to opera and dance, while the dialogue weigh the same as the other elements; and musicals serve as a comical version compare to opera when it firstly appeared. In educational context, it can practice students' different skills. Not only skills of performing arts, language and social skills can also be enhanced. Learning the lines and the lyrics can help a student's reading, and vocabulary, especially when students are not familiar with the theme. More training in rhythm can also help their speaking. They also have to learn to communicate with other members in the company.

The production is a huge workload for the teachers, but it can also enhance the musical knowledge of the teacher, and improve the relationship between teachers and students. In context of music education, when a student participates in a musical, it can help students learning different forms of art altogether, as well as their other skills. For example their language and social skills can also be practiced from the performance. These can aid the development of a student, with educational, emotional and expressive benefits (Reason, 2010). Hence currently there are more schools producing musicals to train their students.

Literature Review:

Musical in school involves a lot of teaching and learning elements. For example -- the factors this research is focusing on -- the workload, musical knowledge, the relationship between students and the teachers, and students' learning process through theatre.

-The Workload-

A teacher's expected workload should include teaching, lesson preparing, exam and test papers making, mentoring students etc. The teacher should be able to maintain work-life balance, and live healthily (Bubb & Earley, 2004). But if the balance can no longer be maintained, such as the workload has increased because of some school activities, then the teacher's health is at risk. As Johnstone (1993) explained, teachers feel stressed when their working hours are fully filled with works; the work reduces their time to rest, and the stress affects their sleep, these make their mental status unstable. Therefore the quality of teaching would drop. For events that could affect the school's reputation, the more stressful the teacher can possibly be. Since the teacher has to report to different parties for every events, the stress build up, from time to time it reduces the passion of teaching (Naylor, 2001). These extra activities may reduce the lesson preparing time, despite the teacher has already reduced the time to rest.

-Musical Knowledge-

The amount of knowledge the music teachers process is important, and especially to young students. According to Ames (1992), classroom structure – always described as methods to make learning outcome significant, and grow different patterns of motivation. If the teacher is not able to show enough musical knowledge, they cannot plan a coherent lesson. Then the students may be unentertained and hence lost their motivation. Teachers are constantly learning as new knowledge keeps emerging, students also ask new questions and have new issues (Bresler, 1993). When producing the performance, the teacher needs to do their research on musical. Teachers need to learn basic techniques and theory to compose songs. They also need to be familiar with singing pedagogy to instruct the students to sing better. They have to understand the content thoroughly in order to explain it to the students, other teachers, school board, and parents.

-Relationship between Teachers and Students-

Besides the regular music lessons, the students who take part in the musical production would spend more time meeting the teachers. The more time students spending with teachers can alter their view towards the teachers because they have more chances to observe the teachers; the teacher's behaviour would either be their role model or ruin their image (Brothy & Good, 1974). Cooperation of students is one key factor of a smooth lesson. As Roorda, Koomen, Spilt and Oort (2011) stated, the more students feel affective to the teachers, the more the students will be engaged in the class. If the students dislike the teacher, they would be less obedient and less willing to pay attention in classes. Classroom management was more stressful for music teachers than teachers of other subjects; this can greatly affect the teaching process (Gordon, 2002). Therefore, the rehearsal time can either enhance or worsen the relationship between students and teacher, which has a great influence to how successful a lesson can be delivered.

-Students' Learning Process through Theatre

The music learning process is different from the other subjects like language or science. Practical skills like listening, performing, and composing skills will be trained, rather than paperwork. According to Bresler (1993), new questions require new methods than the traditional one; now the students are more capable. Hence there are more schools producing musical. From Lebler (2008), students learn pop music better because it is usually learnt with interaction with peers, rehearsals give students an environment to self-learn. Students naturally learn by observing peers, since they spend more time with each other, they act like mirrors to each other (Green, 2005). The rehearsal environment is different from the regular classroom setting. According to Jaffurs (2004), informal environment can enhance students' learning motivation, it shows greater effect on students who perform poorly in academic subjects. Learning experience outside the classroom can help raising motivation, as musical allows students to improvise, they feel they are in control, and more willing to learn (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010).

For students, it is a challenge to sing and dance at the same time, but they learn a lot from the process. From Jackson (2002), students can learn skills, and gain experience that a classroom could not provide, namely acting and overcome difficulties; their motivation roots stronger than in the classroom because theatre gives stronger sense of success. What students believe to be the cause of success will determine how they approach the task in the future, if they understand success is related to effort, they tend to give more effort and have higher motivation (Asmus, 1985). According to Reason (2010), students can gain excellent teamwork skills, and understand the social and culture backgrounds from theatre; it is also a method to get them engage in music from young. According to Ruppert (2006), art contributes a lot in a students' achievements, learning experience of art urge students to learn and by themselves, like observing and self-evaluating; large group of participants also provide chances to work across learning stages, and so they can learn from each other.

Aim & Research Question:

This study aims to investigate the effect of musical production on school music education from the teachers' perspective, focusing on workload, their musical knowledge, their relationship with students, and students' learning process from their perspective. The following questions were set to achieve the aim.

- 1) How does the experience of producing a musical affect the classroom teaching of a music teacher?
- 2) How does the experience of organizing a musical affect the relationship between the teacher and students?
- 3) From the teacher's perspective, how does participating the musical helps the students learn more about musical knowledge?

Methodology:

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were also used to collect data. According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), it has the following characteristics: interviewer designs and follows an “interview guide”; it includes a set of questions and topics that will be covered in a particular order during the conversations; while the interviewer follows the guide, extra questions based on the topics can be added when it is appropriate in order to collect more data.

-Background-

Tsang Mui Millennium School is a subsidized primary school located in Sheung Shui. The school conducts a wide variety of art courses, including drama, dance, and percussion. Each academic year the school produces a musical, and it is performed by the end of the second semester. Teachers from different panels, and around 200 students are involved each year.

New production starts with board meeting at the beginning of academic year, then deciding the theme. The language panel will write the script and some lyrics. Then music panel will compose music for the lyrics, and arrange the music for the music ensembles. Rehearsal starts after auditions are done, sometimes Saturdays would be used for rehearsal. After the students have learnt the songs, music panel will design choreography. Towards the end they will plan the lighting and stage walk, while the art panel will make the props and backdrop.

The musical is an original production, which is very uncommon among schools in Hong Kong that only produce standard musicals, especially for primary schools. The teachers will have to create a new set of original script, music, and songs every year. Each year the school will decide a new theme. For example, last year the theme was Cultural Day; the musical performed was a new version of the *Journey to the West* (西遊記). This process leads a huge workload, and it is larger than other schools. It is because the production repeats and needs new materials every year. Besides, the performers are very young, they need more care and time to learn the songs and the movements.

-Participants-

The interviewees are two female music teachers from the school.

- Teacher (1) has worked in the school for two years. Her teaching practice was also conducted in this school. In the production process, she composed songs, designed lighting and stage walks, and conducts rehearsals. Last year she was invited by the principal to write scripts for some scenes.
- Teacher (2) is the music panel teacher in the school, and this is her fifth year. Currently she is in charge of the administration work. For instance having meetings with the school board. She also helps teacher (1) to conduct rehearsals. Before being the panel teacher, she used to compose songs like teacher (1) as well.

Although the production includes many panels in the school, namely the language panel, art panel, and music panel. The language panel is in charge of script writing and lyrics writing. The art panel mainly is in charge of props creating, and backdrop designing. The music panel has to compose songs, design choreography, design lighting and stage walk, also conduct rehearsals. Among all panels, music is in charge at the most. Hence they spend the most time with the students during the production.

-Interview guide-

The interview questions start with the teachers' background, their actual duties, and the effect of the workload. Then their enhancement of musical knowledge, and any changes of the relationship with their students. The questions also cover the difference of teaching objectives and strategies, and the students' improvement from their point of view. See the appendix for the questions.

-Administration of interview-

Before the interviews were started, the participants were invited through email. They had already received the questions to prepare. The interviews were conducted individually, in a room at the Education University of Hong Kong, and a cafe. Both of the interviews took around 30 minutes, in late February and mid-March. The conversations were recorded by a phone. The phone and the recordings can only be accessed by the researcher. All data collected will be deleted after this research has finished.

-Data analysis-

Open coding (Charmaz, 2004) was used to analyze the data. The researcher read all of the interview transcripts and edited a set of recurring “themes” that generated from the data. An inductive approach was used to read through and analyzed the interview texts with theoretical interpretations, based on the theoretical framework of this study (Burnard, 1991). Six themes were generated from the data collected. These themes were used to categorize the interviewees’ statements and facilitate the data analysis. A total of 362 words were quoted from the interview transcripts, which accounts for 6% of the total number of words in the transcripts.

Findings:

Findings from the interview was gathered and divided into six main themes.

-Workload-

Both of the teachers stated that the workload of producing a musical is very heavy. The working hours had become longer, because there were many meetings, and the song-writing had used up time other than teaching and lesson preparing. As a result, the teachers could not have enough time to rest.

“in terms of workload I think it was really heavy, heavier than I used to have”

“the working hours would be much longer therefore I had less time to rest”

-- teacher (1)

“I think it was just more working hours besides from normal class preparation”

“Now it was like meetings after meetings”

--- teacher (2)

-Teacher’s musical knowledge-

Both of the teachers agreed that their musical skills have improved, namely in composing, singing, and arranging. They knew more about chords because of the frequent use in composing. They also thought they had sung better after the production, because they more time to practice. They also knew more about arranging.

“The more I compose the more familiar I became with the use of chords”

“I would say practice makes perfect. The experience provided me a lot of chances to sing”

“I knew more about arranging”

--- teacher (1)

“I would say my arranging skill is somehow improved”

“The rehearsals give us more time to practice, hence I think my singing skill is improved”

--- teacher (2)

-Teaching process-

The teachers only gave little explanation about the songs, either the background, or the theory behind. They explained that because rehearsals had less time to spend than in the classes. Moreover, the goal in the musical rehearsals was to be able to sing the songs, not to understand how the songs were composed. Sometimes, in order to get the result in the shortest time, they would give direct, and order-like instructions.

“in the classroom we have more time to teach them the musical knowledge behind everything”

“in the musical our goal is to sing the songs, not to explain too much”

--- teacher (1)

“I would not explain a lot when I am in the musical rehearsals.”

“Relatively I gave more order-like instructions”

--- teacher (2)

-As a teaching context in music classroom-

Both of the teachers would only mention the production a little in class, only when it was related to the topic at the time. The teachers mentioned it based on all students' knowledge. For instance, all of the students knew that the musical performance took part in the Yuen Long Theatre.

“I am teaching the P.5 students about operas and musicals, I will mention the students' experience to compare with what they know”

“I do not talk much about it in class.”

--- teacher (1)

“not bringing it into a full topic”

“They knew the school has a musical performance every academic year, and that's it”

--- teacher (2)

-Relationship with students-

The teachers agreed that they now have a closer relationship with students. They noticed that the students from the musical had become nicer. They would befriend, admire, and respect the teachers after the performance in the previous year.

“they would become nicer to us”

“students who I did not teach would become friendlier because of the musical”

“they would start to admire me and respect me”

--- teacher (1)

“(students) in the musical seems to become more friendly because they ... would think that we are friends now”

“they would respect the teachers more”

--- teacher (2)

-Learning process of students-

Both of the teachers thought that now the students are having higher motivation to learn music. They had listed examples like, the students were more active in class, they had better exam result than others, and they were more patience during class.

“they are more willing to participate or to demonstrate in class”

“They would be more active”

“And they usually had a better result ... both in singing and recorder playing exam”

--- teacher (1)

“they are willing to do”

“for the students who participated, yes (the experience helped raising their motivation)”

“Those students would be a bit more active in class”

“in the class they will listen more”

--- teacher (2)

-Learning process of students-

From the teachers, they agreed that the students had gained more musical skills. They were in the field of singing skills like pitch, rhythm, diction.

“For their singing skills there are surely some improvements”

“Their diction has improved”

“those students can perform syncopation better because they are used to it now”

--- teacher (1)

“it was quite clear (there are improvements in rhythm)”

“Generally they all improved, mainly the pitch and diction”

--- teacher (2)

Discussion:

Q. 1 - effects on the classroom teaching of the production

-Musical Knowledge-

The teachers have stated that they have learnt more about composing and arranging, but very little in singing pedagogy, and nothing in conduction. This is because during the rehearsals, the teachers have limited time to achieve the goal. Hence sometimes they would give order-like instructions in order to get the result as soon as possible. Since the musical rehearsals were unlike choir rehearsals, the teachers did not have the chance to conduct the chorus line. They had no chance to practice their choir rehearsal skills.

Primary students did not have to learn about composing music with a score writing software, or arranging music. The new knowledge has no direct relationship with the students. But according to Ames (1992), a good classroom structure can make learning outcome significant and raise motivation. If the teachers can include their new knowledge into the classes, it may add more energy, and can keep students being interested in music. The enhanced knowledge can help reducing the time for next production since the teachers are now more familiar with the music theory and techniques.

-Learning Objectives and Strategies-

The learning objectives and teaching strategies were very different among the two occasions. In the classroom, the teachers would spend more time to explain the music knowledge and theory behind the songs. The students' learning process is very important during class, and the teachers wish the students can enjoy music through their lessons.

In the rehearsals, the teachers are pursuing the production because of the limited time, the learning process is not as emphasized as that in the classroom. The teachers gave little explanation about the songs, like the compositional techniques or the use of instruments. In order to get the result in the shortest time, they would give order-like instructions.

The hurried rehearsal schedule may make the students more stressful, and make the task seems more challenging. However to perform, they need to put more effort, this believe drives them to work hard (Asmus, 1985). Through this experience, this can also raise their self-confidence because they had overcome the stress; in the long term it can aid the students' whole-person development (Ruppert, 2006).

-Bring it into Classroom Teaching-

The teachers were only taking little reference from the musical into the classroom, mostly used to raise students' motivation. For example, when they are learning opera and musicals, the teachers would mention the school musical performance as an entrance. But not mentioning the content of the production as not all of the students were involved. From the interviews, there were only some students from each class were chosen. Bringing it into a topic would be unfair to the others because they did not understand. This is also preventing the feeling of favoritism, that the teachers only gave attention to students who joined the musical. This can cause damage to the relationship between them.

If the relationship is damaged, some students may turn rebellious towards teachers, and lose their interest in music. According to Roorda, Koomen, Spilt and Oort, affection is related to the students' engagement in class (2011). They would less likely to be as obedient, and start to have behavior problems. This will disturb other students, and even influence others to join them. From Gordon (2002), music teachers feel stressful over classroom management, because it uses time that can teach, hence failing to meet their teaching objectives.

-Workload-

Music panel is responsible for most of the work, they are engaged from the board meeting till the final performance. These are not included in a teacher's expected workload as stated by Bubb and Earley (2004). However, most of the duties, such as song-writing and arranging, could not be done during lesson time and preparing time. The teachers need to use up the time that is supposed to rest. With more workload would lead to more stress (Johnstone, 1993). Also with less time to rest would lead to unstable mental status. As Naylor has stated, the teacher's teaching quality may receive negative effects from these (2001). This can turn into a vicious cycle, gradually the teacher would lose their passion to teach.

Q. 2 - differences of relationship with the students before and after

-Effects in Difference Occasion-

There were no main difference of relationship shown in classroom, the largest difference is found out of the classroom. The students who were not taught by the teachers would greet them and befriend them, because after a lot of rehearsals, the students turned to be more affective. As Brothy and Good stated (1974), more time the students spending with teachers allows them to observe their behavior, and change their viewpoints based on their observation and understanding. In this case, the students respect and admire the teachers after knowing that they composed all the songs, which were lots of hard work. Believing hard work can achieve goals can boost their motivation to learn (Asmus, 1985). Besides, if they can grow a habit of naturally greeting other teachers, and then other elderly, their morality can be higher. Their manner can also be enhanced since they observe each other and decide what behavior is correct together (Green, 2005). Guiding students to develop as a whole-person is the ultimate goal in education, a proper manner is one of the elements. Hence according to Ruppert (2006), learning experience in art acts an important part in a student's achievements.

Q. 3 - students' learning from the teacher's perspective

-Effects on Students-

As Jackson has stated (2002), theatre experience let students learn to tackle difficulties, and overcome stage-fright; these experience raise their self-confidence. From the interview, both of the teachers agreed that the students who were in the performance engaged more in class, and were active to demonstrate in music activities. They also did better in the music exam, not only in singing but also recorder playing. It shows that the students have gained more interest to music learning after the experience compare to others. The teachers assumed that the students felt more affectionate towards them and they were not afraid to show themselves. From Gordon (2002), cooperate students allow teachers to teach more knowledge as less classroom management is required, hence their music literacy can be raised.

From Asmus (1985), motivation depends on students' believes of what determines success, despite they are successful or failing; teachers' role includes guiding them to understand hard work and effort are the key. Students may still fail even though they had tried their best in class, hence lower their interest over learning. The informal setting of a musical can help students learn in a more comfortable environment (Jaffurs, 2004). The rehearsals eliminate the sense of learning in a classroom, while the performance helped them to gain the feeling of success. They feel like they are as important as teachers because they are part of the production (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). Students can associate the feeling of success with the experience, thinking music is fun to learn, and get a better result in music exam.

-Music Knowledge-

The teachers have said that generally the students who had performed in the musical have improvements in three aspects, pitch, rhythm, and diction. For pitch, this is because practice makes perfect. The intensive rehearsals had provided students a lot of chances to practice singing. They received advices and instructions from teachers during the rehearsals, and as Green has stated (2005), students observe and learn from other performers naturally. The improvement was shown in the singing exam, comparing to the other students who were not involved.

For rhythm, in the performance previous year, there were a few songs that were in style of swing, and rapid use of syncopation and dotted rhythm. The students now are able to count these rhythmic patterns correctly. Learning from peers also show some effects in this area, influencing each other works better in pop music culture; learning this new culture requires self-learning because a lot of pop music genre involve improvisation, if the teacher is controlling then the learning is not complete (Lebler, 2008). Also teachers cannot pay attention to every student at the same time, learning among peers and by themselves fill up the gaps teachers may miss. For diction, students now understand it is important to sing clearly, the audience need to understand what the performers were singing to learn the story. The students brought this concept into regular class as well, this is shown in the singing exam.

In music learning, the training of practical skills is very important, especially for young students. Getting used to music training from a young age can get students engaged to music faster, and they will not give up on music easily (Bresler, 1993). What the students had learnt from the musical, can help their performance in regular music lessons, mostly in the field of performing. They can practice their listening skills in the rehearsals too, because the students have to listen carefully in order to learn the songs.

-Music Literacy-

With more capable students, the teachers can prepare more advanced material. In this study, the teachers' musical knowledge have also improved, they can apply the new knowledge and improve their classroom structure. For example, the teachers can compose new materials for singing practice, or arrange some repertoire that fit the students' ability.

With higher music literacy, students' abilities to learn other skills can also be enhanced. For instance, language skills, teamwork, and creative thinking. In music, a clear diction is very important. Learning the songs is also a training of reading, listening, and speaking. The training of rhythm can also help students in speaking, particularly in learning a foreign language. From Gibbons (2002), to learn a second language in a mainstream classroom, more practice in rhythm is helpful to familiarize how the language sounds, and more sensitive to the sentence structure. Musical is not a solo performance, every performer has to learn how to work with other people. While in the school, the performers came from different levels, they can learn across learning stages, and learn across age groups. Accordingly, students can build up social skills from this experience, especially older students have better language skill. In terms of creative thinking, because acting is one of the important elements in the musical, students need to use their creativity to imagine their characters.

-Concern-

However, these lead to a concern about the students' abilities. The students may be already good at singing and dancing, then the teachers chose them from the auditions. Then weaker students may lose their chances to be trained, and could not improve music skills. This would be unfair and could not cater their learning differences.

Moreover, the extent of improvement also varies by the role. For instance, if a student is the main role then they get most of the training and focus. Hence their extent of improvement would be the greatest. If another student is doing is a minor character, the training and focus would be less and could not help the student. The extent of improvement would be very little. Assuming that they did not learn from their peers or through observation.

Limitation:

The limitation of this study is the lack of multiple perspectives, this limited the result to only focus on the teachers' point of view. Yet areas such as the difference between how teachers teach during rehearsals and classes, how students react between the two occasions, both students and teachers' differences between before and after the production, students' view towards the musical experience, students' view towards musical knowledge, and students' attitude to the music teachers have not been explored.

Conclusion:

This study examined that the production only has little effect on school music education. It has positive effects on the relationship between the students and teachers; the teacher's musical knowledge is also enhanced but has little relation to classroom teaching. The musical is after all an extra-curricular activity, it has different teaching objectives with regular teaching in the classrooms.

Suggestions for this case study would be the involvement of students, it may reduce the teachers' workload. Students can join the art panel as they can draw or design the props and backdrop. The teachers can assign duties to other parties, like TA or other tutors as well. Further research for this study would be conducting a longitudinal study to study across two productions and compare the differences of the teachers and students. Collecting more data from different stakeholders, such as other panels and students, can help seeing the effects from different perspectives, and draw a more comprehensive conclusion.

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Appendix:

-Interview questions-

1. How long have you been teaching in this school?
2. Have you ever joined a musical theatre performance before you work as a teacher?
3. Did you receive any training related to musical theatre?
4. How many times have you taken part in the musical production?
5. What are your duties of organizing the school musical theatre?
6. How does your previous experience help the organizing of the school musical theatre?
7. What are the difference between your expectation and your actual duties?
8. What are the difficulties in the production?
9. How does the workload of producing a musical theatre for your school affect your regular music class teaching?
10. How does the production enrich your musical knowledge according to these aspects?
 - composing
 - singing
 - conducting
 - arranging
11. How does your relationship with students changed after the school musical theatre performance?
 - performance in regular class
 - performance in homework
 - interaction outside of classroom
12. What are the differences of your objectives of teaching between teaching music in regular lessons and in the musical theatre?
13. What are the differences of the teaching strategy between teaching music in regular lessons and in the musical theatre?
14. Did you take reference from the experience of organizing a musical into your teaching strategy of regular lessons?
15. Do you think the experience of participation a musical can help to raise students' motivation of learning more music?
16. Do you think the students have learnt more music knowledge from the experience of musical theatre? If yes, please explain?
 - pitch
 - rhythm
 - diction

-Interview transcripts-

Interview conducted date: 28th February, 2018

Interviewer: A; teacher (1): B

A: First of all thank you for helping me. This project is about how does the experience of organizing a musical at your school would affect your teaching. Today's date is 28th of February. So shall we start?

B: Yes let's start.

A: Let's start with your background, how long have you been teaching in this school?

B: This is my second year at this school.

A: Have you ever joined a musical performance before you work as a teacher?

B: No. But I had joined the English musical once in my secondary two, and after that I had never joined one.

A: So that's all? Not even any training course?

B: No.

A: Or any experience in organizing one musical?

B: No.

A: Completely no. Okay. Then how many times have you taken part in the school musical production?

B: It was my first time when I was still in practice, but I did not have lots of duties. Last year (first year to work here) I started to be very involved. For example I need to compose, conduct rehearsals, organize everything, practice the dance numbers etc.

A: So this is also the school you were practicing when you were still studying in university?

B: Yes it is.

A: So overall this is your third year? Your third experience in it?

B: It will be my third time this year.

A: Oh so the third time is coming. I see you have already talked about your responsibility, would you like to elaborate more?

B: Sure. At the beginning we will have to hold a production meeting, I even wrote the script last year as well. But it was not supposed to be part of the music teacher's responsibility, it was because the principal wanted me to try writing a few scenes. After the script was done, for my school, somebody would finish the lyrics first. Then we will compose and arrange the songs according to the lyrics. Then after that we will teach the students, who are the little actors, to sing. After they know the songs we will start to arrange some movements, do some choreography, and lastly the stage walk. Also before the whole production the teachers have to do some auditions to pick the little actors.

A: So it is a production that involved more than one subject?

B: Yes it is a project that the whole school would be involved, not only music. The

responsibilities of music teachers were mainly conducting rehearsals, also composing and arranging the music.

A: And the script was in Chinese or in English?

B: Chinese / Cantonese.

A: Oh I see. Then did your only experience of musical in your secondary two take any effect on your recent production?

B: Honestly no. It was because it was too far from here now, and my current school was not doing an English musical or going to any competition. As far as I remember my secondary school did musical because of competitions, but I am not sure.

A: Was it a large production?

B: We were performing some famous musicals; unlike now we are doing original musicals.

A: Do you have any particular theme or did your school request any?

B: Yes we have one every year, and the production would be all about that. Last year the theme was “Culture Day”, and it was about the famous book “Journey to the West (西遊記)”. The school liked it a lot so our musical was also performing about the story of it. We named it “New Journey to the West (西遊新傳)”.

A: So it’s a musical about the Monkey King, interesting. How about this year? Have you decided it yet?

B: I think it should be about the 60s to 80s, but it was not yet confirmed. I just heard about it today.

A: Do you think the theme would make you feel difficult when you are organising? Like transforming the traditional Chinese story into a Western musical.

B: Actually yes. Since I am not familiar with the Chinese music instruments. Also the school would want me to make it more in style of Western music, while the musical was in the setting of China, it did not match somehow. However I did not focus a lot on the setting, when I compose I only consider whether the melody matches the lyrics or if I like the style. For example I made it jazz as well, and it still worked.

A: Okay. Then is there any difference between your expectation and your actual duties? Like how you pictured it versus what actually happened.

B: Yes indeed. At first I did not know the students very well, some things that I thought would be easy to handle did not apply to them. They needed more time to learn because unlike in the music lesson which they only needed to sing, in the musical they also needed to dance at the same time. These made everything more difficult for both the students and me. Like they could not reach the high note or the diction was not clear. The standard was higher than that in the music lesson. In order to train them I even used the recess time to coach every song they were weak at.

A: I see, how about the expectations on your career? Do you think you have worked more than you expected in this position?

B: Hmm I think I should have composed it simpler, I made it that way was only because I liked it. But in terms of workload I think it was really heavy, heavier than I used to have. Like you will not and cannot compose in class, so I could only composed after work after I got home. I also had to arrange the music score and make a demo which I recorded by myself for each of the songs. Hence I really spent a lot of time on it.

A: So it means that besides from the problem with the students, you were also facing problems with yourself.

B: Yes, the working hours would be much longer therefore I had less time to rest. Also I may be distracted in my teaching sometimes, yet it was only minor effects. Sure the workload was huge but I am only teaching music at this school, so I think it is also included in my working area.

A: So more or less you think it's your duty.

B: Yes it's like my responsibility apart from teaching.

A: You mentioned that it still affected your teaching, do you think it is significance?

B: Not really because I am not working on it during my teaching hours. I still prepare my lessons in the same way with the same time, just my working hours became longer.

A: Oh which means your teaching was actually remain the same.

B: Yes it was still the same.

A: You were just using the time outside the classroom and the teaching.

B: But do you mean only to myself or to the school or the students?

A: Let's say due to the preparation of the musical your teaching would not be the same?

B: Oh it was not like this. When it was about the time to perform the school would cooperate with us, because the school values the musical a lot. Sometimes the whole afternoon would be used for rehearsal, and we have to practice on Saturdays, so that it will not cause any effects on the activities in the weekdays.

A: So basically it was just adding up things but not changing or reducing things?

B: Yes most of the school work remains the same, since we practice on Saturdays.

A: Let's talk more about the music. Do you think during the process of producing, your musical knowledge was enhanced? For instance composing.

B: Well yes, like I was not very familiar with the chords, but now I would pay more attention to them. The more I compose the more familiar I became with the use of chords.

A: Okay. You also mentioned that you would sing the demo, do you think your singing skills and or your teaching method on singing would be enhanced?

B: I would say practice makes perfect. The experience provided me a lot of chances to sing and I think it's good. Besides I am teaching students singing so it was not significant.

A: Then how about in conducting? Like in a choir.

B: Basically it has no effect because we do not conduct the students in the musical, which is no opportunity to practice.

A: Then how about arranging? You said you had to do it also with the composing.

B: Yes I knew more about arranging. I was a piano major students, knowledge about other music instruments was not my strength hence I was weak to arrange them. So I have to explore more and try to fit the resources that the school has. We have a handchime ensemble so when I was arranging I would consider to involve the handchimes, to make the musical looks and sounds more interesting. Or if the school wants us to play the Chinese drums, then I will have to work with the drums. But when I was still a student I would not arrange like this. Normally we arrange music in orchestral style. But how about piano and handchimes? Or piano with other instruments. These were different from what we learnt from university. Also for composing we have to match the singing range of the students. At first I did not notice this because I am a soprano I can sing high note, but the students could not. What's more is that when they are performing, the high notes would be risky. Therefore the range should be narrower and should be easier for the students to learn to sing.

A: You also said you composed some jazz sound, was it easy for the students to catch the rhythm?

B: It was very difficult. At first I thought it was nice to hear so I composed it that way, but it became a problem during the rehearsals. That they could not catch the rhythm, or they could not understand the style. Which is why I had to use the recess time to practice with them one by one.

A: I understand. So besides from pitch and rhythm, is diction also a problem?

B: Exactly because a musical could not communicate with the audience if they could not hear what the performers were singing. Hence I focus more on diction than usual (music lessons), I would train them more on it. I think this part may help in conducting a choir because diction is also important for a choir but I had never noticed it before. It was because of the musical then I started to pay more attention on it.

A: So the choir was also under your supervision?

B: Yes, I was in charge of the junior choir. My students were not playful children, but through this experience I learnt how to correct their dictions since there were more practices for me.

A: Generally the musical experience helped your teaching skills?

B: Yes a little bit.

A: Okay, now let's talk more about your students. After last year's experience, does your relationship with students change? For example do they pay more attention in class or become more playful because they think you are friends now.

B: There is nothing particular in the classroom, because not every students were involved in the musical performance. And for those who had participated they became a better student because during the rehearsals we were strict and set a high standard, not that they are afraid of us but they would become nicer to us or become more active in the classroom. Sometimes there are students who I did not teach would become friendlier because of the musical. We

meet for a long time throughout the whole process, like a few months for many days. They also knew that the songs were composed by me, so they would start to admire me and respect me.

A: So generally the relationship has positive changes, just not significant in the classroom.

B: Yes it was all positive outside of the classroom. It was not significant in the classroom because not all of them were involved.

A: How about the music homework? Do the involved students have a better result? Or they have a better performance in class like singing?

B: For students who had joined the theatre were stronger students musically, the more familiar we are with them, they are more willing to participate or to demonstrate in class.

A: But the most significant effect is outside of the classroom.

B: Yes it's the relationship with the students becoming better.

A: Next, comparing your regular teaching in classroom and your teaching in the rehearsals when you are organizing the musical, are the learning objectives different? Or is there any major differences?

B: For the musical because the show time was short, so we have to be very effective. Using the least of time to improve them the most. But usually I would focus more on their learning process, not how well they sing. I would want them to learn the theory behind or some techniques in singing. But in the musical I have to train them to be a good singer within the shortest time, I would want them to do it immediately.

A: It's more like you are spoon feeding them when you are doing the musical rehearsals.

B: Exactly.

A: In regular classes they sound happier.

B: Well I think because we don't have much time, how to learn is not the most important thing to focus when I am practicing. I would not explain to them that this technique is like this and that, but I would tell them more in the regular classes. In the musical being fast is more important.

A: So the outcome is the most important for the theatre. I think in some ways the musical does not focus a lot on the musical issues?

B: I would say, in the classroom we have more time to teach them the musical knowledge behind everything, or the details. However, in the musical our goal is to sing the songs, not to explain too much. For example why I compose this song in this way, or why the song is in this mood. We still mention them but not as deep as in the regular music lessons. Also the students are very smart they can learn the song fast without a lot of instructions.

A: Okay for music class you focus more on the musical knowledge, but for musical you focus more on the outcome.

B: Yes.

A: Would you be stricter during the rehearsals? Or you are always strict when you are teaching?

B: I am more relaxed in the musical rehearsal, because I only have to pay attention to a small group of students, I usually practice scene by scene. In the classroom I have to face about 30 students hence I have to be more serious about everything. I don't want them to feel pressure and be miserable in it, I want the students to enjoy the musical. But of course when they could not do what I asked, they are not respectful, or they do not work well with us then I would scold them. But I do not ask them to behave like in the classroom, there is less classroom management.

A: The styles of two sides are different, when you are teaching in the classroom do you take reference from the experience of organizing the musical?

B: Well sometimes. For example recently I am teaching the P.5 students about operas and musicals, I will mention the students' experience to compare with what they know.

A: But not all of them have this experience?

B: Yes, therefore I do not talk much about it in class. I would invite the students from the musical to share something that they knew from the experience. For example I was telling them about how big is an opera house, I would compare it with the Yuen Long Theatre (元朗劇院), so that they can imagine that.

A: So you are mainly using this to initiate their learning motivation.

B: Yes but not using it as a technique, just mentioning to the students. Since there were only a few students from each class had joined the musical, or I could not cater the learner diversity.

A: Do you think the learning motivation of those students who had joined the musical is enhanced from it?

B: Yes I think so. I am not sure about if it is because we had a closer relationship or they had more chances to sing, now they would pay more attention and not as shy as before. Sometimes when I need students to demonstrate, the students from the musical would be more active to participate, and more willing to help. Even it is not about singing, like playing the recorder.

A: They are more interested in music now?

B: Yes those students are more willing to try now.

A: Besides from their motivation, how about their musical knowledge?

B: For their singing skills there are surely some improvements. Like practicing on a piano, the more you sing the better you can sing. Their diction has improved, but sometimes I wonder whether it's because they were already good singer then I chose them from the audition.

A: So you think it helps but the level is different within different students.

B: Yes, it also depends on their role. If they are the main character they sure will have more chances to sing and improve. But some sing less hence the effect would not be huge, I still think there are some though.

A: Mainly it is the pitch and the diction right?

B: Yes.

A: How about the jazz rhythm?

B: Yes, those students can perform syncopation better because they are used to it now. But for those who did not sing it may not be very accurate when performing the syncopation rhythm, or the dotted rhythm as well.

A: Will the difference between whether they had joined the musical or not be very big? Particular in these three areas.

B: They would be more active, and more or less the students who had sung more would be better somehow. But it was not very obvious.

A: More or less the same?

B: Hmm... Maybe better than the others a little bit. They sang louder in the singing exam.

A: Well they should be.

B: And they usually had a better result.

A: Do you examine them one by one?

B: Yes, both in singing and recorder playing exam. But in terms of theories I think there is truly no difference, only in the singing they improved.

A: So generally which do you think, to yourself, has more effect on you? Positive or negative.

B: If we are not accounting the workload then improving the relationship with students is a happy thing to happen, because we experience this process together and it is happy for someone to sing the songs that you composed. Also I wanted them to know more about music, like jazz is only my personal preference that they do not have to learn them in the primary school. But through this experience I can make them to know more, in terms of music genre and musical knowledge. I feel happy to have a better relationship with them. However the rehearsals would reduce my personal time after work. Generally it has more positive effects.

A: So you are saying even though the workload is bigger, but the improved relationship balanced it.

B: Yes I feel it worth it. It was not really huge, and it's because of my position at school should involve it, you know I do not need to collect and correct the homework.

A: So how about to the students from your perspective? Is it obvious?

B: I think it is also positive, because they now have more opportunities to perform. Primary students do not have many chances like this. We would book the city hall, and this experience is valuable. I think they can learn something from it. Like their dancing and their sense of rhythm etc.

A: So you think they can learn a lot?

B: They can learn something but not much. It depends on the school. My school does not require them to learn it very detailed, but it surely is a good thing.

A: Hence you would think that the experience of organizing a musical is a good thing for you, a teacher?

B: Yes at least now I know how to organize one. Now I know more about stage walk, what time before the performance should I book the venue, ticketing, and how to train the students to have a good stage effect. Since in the classroom or the choir or the handchime ensemble I would not think a lot of stage effect. In the musical I have to think of the lighting and sound effect, there are a lot of things to consider. Before these experiences I had no idea, and I know nothing about backstage since I usually was the performer. Now I know more about the whole production, and starting to be familiar with it.

A: Great. I think that's all I want to ask, anything you want to add?

B: To conclude I think it is a good experience for a teacher.

A: Thank you for doing this interview with me.

Interview conducted date: 17th March, 2018

Interviewer: A; teacher (2): C

A: First of all thank you for helping me in this project, which is about the effect on a teacher's teaching from organizing a musical at your school. Today's date is 17th March. Shall we start?

C: Yes, what do you want to know?

A: First of all, please tell me your background. Like how long have you been teaching in this school?

C: This is my fifth year, I am also the music panel of the school.

A: I see, so the musical would be produced every academic year right?

C: Yes, each year we have a theme and last year was about culture. Maybe you have heard from another teacher, it was the Journey to the West.

A: Yes I knew about it. But before you have joined this school, or even became a teacher, have you ever joined any musical?

C: Well when I was still in the university, I joined the musical for one year. I was one of the singers also dancers.

A: So you only had performed once, but have you received any training on how to produce one? Like a course or did you learn how from your experience?

C: Since it was only one year as a performer, and was quite some time ago, I could not recall any memory from it. Speaking of training, I have never received any of it.

A: So the experience from this school was new for you?

C: Yes it was my first time to organize a musical when I firstly joined this school.

A: Okay, so I assume this year is your fifth time?

C: Yes. But music teachers are not the only teachers who are involved in the production. It was actually a cross-subject project. The whole school would participate in it, but most importantly we are in charge of the rehearsals and writing the music.

A: I see, as you had mentioned, you are the music panel. Do you work more on the administration work? Such as having meetings with the school board and with the other teachers who are involved. While comparing to the practical work like writing the music and conducting rehearsals.

C: Yes, you are right. Most of the time, the other teacher would write the melodies and train the students. Of course I was also there during the rehearsals, but for more time I was working with other teachers at the meetings. I have to report to the school board about the schedule of production, the overview of the musical, also what we need in the musical. For example, the props, also people from different teams. If we are using the handchimes or the orchestra, then we have to plan about the logistics. The budget, cooperation with other teachers like the language teachers, and schedule planning. You know we also have

rehearsals on Saturdays.

A: Yes I have heard about that. So is there anything from your previous experience that helps you now?

C: Not really. Even though I performed one, it did not tell me what's behind the curtains. Like the sounding panel, or lighting and such. I only know what should be on the stage. For instance, if we are doing an original one, we have to do our own story-writing, composing, lyric-writing, and choreography. Then the background and other props. It was like checking a list rather than doing a real production.

A: Okay, so it seems the experience did not help. And is what you expected in the production the same as what you actually did?

C: Do you mean like the duties?

A: Yes.

C: Oh they are so different, because as I told you, I did a lot of administration work. When I was in university, we never had to think about these. Now it was like meetings after meetings, and there are many people working together. Teachers, parents, and the students. Also because it is the students who are performing, we have to teach the students before, and practice with them. They are not very musically trained since they are still small, then it causes more time and effort. That's why we also had rehearsals on Saturdays.

A: I see. So there are difficulties while organizing a musical, especially an original one?

C: Exactly, the production is not in the syllabus or part of the lesson, so it's more like an extra project. However, this is how the school planned, and this is a very interesting project for both the teachers and students. The musical is very special as it is original. Besides I have learnt a lot from it, now I am very familiar with what to do in order to produce a full scale musical.

A: I see you agree on this is only part of your responsibility. But it still affects your regular music teaching?

C: I would say, the meetings and all preparation work were not done in the teaching time. We find time that all teachers would be free so regular work will not be disturbed. I think it was just more working hours besides from normal class preparation, all of the lessons was basically the same as planned.

A: So only the working hours were extended but generally it's the same.

C: Yes. The school values the musical a lot since it is a project performed by the whole school. So the school will help to find time for us to rehearse and so.

A: Which is why you have rehearsals on Saturdays.

C: Yes then the activities on weekdays can remain the same.

A: So there was no overlapping or changes?

C: Yes.

A: Then let's move to music. From all of your experience in organizing a musical, is there any

of your music knowledge was enhanced? For instance, composing.

C: Not really, since these two years I focused on the administration and handed the composing to the other teacher. I did not have many experience with composing before as well. However I would say my arranging skill is somehow improved. We don't have a full orchestra here, so we need to find a way out. We need to arrange our music to fit what resources we have while making it sounds good. But since I am not the one doing it now I don't have chances to practice that.

A: How about singing? You also conducted rehearsals right?

C: I think it's because of "practice makes perfect". The rehearsals give us (students and teachers) more time to practice, hence I think my singing skill is improved.

A: How about the pedagogy?

C: Oh in the rehearsals we focus on the result more. As long as they can sing it correctly, we do not explain the theories behind like in regular lessons. Still we gave them some advices to help them sing.

A: Okay. How about conducting?

C: Since it is a stage performance, the teachers do not conduct on stage. So the production does not provide a chance for me to practice my conducting skill. Moreover I do not lead the choir and handchime ensemble these years, then I would say it is not significant.

A: I see. Then maybe let's move to the relationship with students. After years of many productions, is there any changes in regular lessons?

C: Actually not many students joined the musical, only a few from each class every year. Those students would be a bit more active in class. They are more used to performing in front of people then more willing to help us demonstrate things. But the lessons are pretty much the same.

A: Is this a huge difference compare to those students who did not participate?

C: Not really. Maybe it's because when we are doing audition, we already chose those who were more capable to sing and dance. From the first place they were not very shy children, but in the class they will listen more.

A: So can I assume that the difference in performance in like homework is not big as well?

C: Yes, the students who can sing well continue to sing well, and those who were not remain the same. Well they sang a lot in the rehearsals hence they can practice more and maybe improved. If we are talking about the relationship with students, then the most significant change would be the one outside the classrooms.

A: Like the students who were not in your class?

C: Yes those I did not teach but were in the musical seems to become more friendly because they meet you more and would think that we are friends now. Sometimes they greet me in the playground or whenever they see me. I think after the performance they would respect the teachers more. For example, they know you wrote those songs, and we spent a lot of

time together before the performance. These pull us closer, and it makes me happy.

A: I see. Moving to teaching objectives, is there any difference?

C: Of course there is a lot of them. In the musical rehearsals, we do not explain a lot on the theories or history of the music and techniques. We need the least time to make the best performance, hence most of the time we give orders. But in regular lessons, I would tell them more about what we are learning, the background, and so. I focus more on the learning process rather than only results. There are more students and more time in the regular class, hence I would like to give them more information and knowledge.

A: So in the rehearsals of the musical you tend to focus more on the result, and more on the knowledge when in the lessons.

C: Yes. But just adding a little note is that since I am doing more administrative work, more rehearsals were conducted by the other teacher.

A: Okay got it. Then how about the teaching strategy? Since you've got different learning objectives.

C: Well yes based on that. I would not explain a lot when I am in the musical rehearsals. Relatively I gave more orders-like instruction and quite demanding I think, because we really don't have much time to spare.

A: I understand. Are you a strict teacher? Whether it's in the class or not.

C: I am afraid I have to say yes, but I also want the students to enjoy music while being disciplined. It's all about respecting each other. If they are nice in the class or in the rehearsals, I would not scold them or be very harsh.

A: So are the students scared of you?

C: I hope not! But they are all very nice children, students from the musical will always greet me and they know I care about them so I am strict. Our relationship is rather good from my perspective.

A: I see. So do you take reference from your experience of conducting the rehearsals into your regular teaching?

C: You mean like teaching what is musical?

A: Anything in your teaching.

C: Well when I taught about opera or musical I would talk about it a little, but not bringing it into a full topic. Not every students joined the musical, hence I don't want the others to feel being left out. They knew the school has a musical performance every academic year, and that's it. It would be unfair if not everyone of them can understand things I say about the musical.

A: And you also mentioned asking some of them to demonstrate?

C: Oh yes, I would ask the students from the musical to help because we are closer in some way, and they are willing to do.

A: Is it only singing or everything ?

C: Oh not only singing, sometimes I asked them to show us how to play the recorder correctly as well. They did it pretty well.

A: So do you think the experience helped raising their learning motivation?

C: Well for the students who participated, yes. They are more interested in music and not shy to perform in front of people. But I think that's all since they are not only learning about musicals right?

A: Yes, I got it. How about their musical knowledge? Do you think they learn more from it? For example their pitch when singing?

C: It's all about practice, so generally they are better. But they were already good singers before the musical. However not every students sing a lot in the performance, so not everyone had improved a lot.

A: I see, so it also depends on who get the most singing parts.

C: Yes.

A: How about the rhythm? Like I know there are some syncopation in the songs last year.

C: Well yes and it was quite clear. Because the other teacher would practice with them individually, but in primary school not many songs would involve the syncopation rhythm. Anyway it's always good that they can learn something new.

A: Yes of course. So last but not least, how about their diction?

C: They are smart students so from the rehearsals they understand that only if they sing it clear the audience can hear the lyrics. Again it only helps when the students was taking a major role. Generally they all improved, mainly the pitch and diction.

A: I see. So generally what do you think about this experience? Does it have more positive or negative effect on you?

C: I would say positive. Yes the workload has increased but that's what the school has planned. The relationship with students has improved, I enjoyed it, and the students also enjoyed. Now we are very familiar with what to do and it's not very difficult to do. So I would say it is very positive.

A: So you think everything balanced out, and the result is good?

C: Yes, I think it worth it. I learnt a lot from it too.

A: How about to the students from your perspective? Is it obvious too?

C: I think it's also positive. Now they have more chances to perform, which is rare for them.

A: Do you think they learn a lot too?

C: Sure they can learn something but I would not say it is very obvious. We are not training them to join a competition, so it was just generally good.

A: To conclude producing a musical is a good experience for a school teacher?

C: Yes because teachers can learn a lot from it. The students are also having fun. But the most important thing for me is that how the school plan it. If the school is planning it like ours, only for entertaining then there would be less stress. But if it is for a competition, then the

teachers may need to cope with more stress from the school and the parents. The students would feel it too. After all it should be about the students not just about the awards right? What's more is that how far the school allow teachers to do the musical. If the school allows the teachers to create freely and support them, then of course it is the best. However some schools may also restrict the teachers a lot, or only offer limited resources, then the teachers would be taking hard work. It's more or less the administration work, like bargaining with the school board.

A: I see, that's all I would like to know. Is there anything you would like to add?

C: I think that's all too.

A: Thank you for doing this interview with me.