

The Effects of Composition Assignments and Teacher Presentation on Student Motivation in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This paper reports parts of the results of a study on secondary students' motivational changes on musical composition after completing a compositional task. A total of 606 students from four secondary schools in Hong Kong responded to a set of pre- and post-activity questionnaires before and after completing a compositional task. A t-test was used to compare the mean score changes in motivation. In addition, a multiple-case study approach was undertaken to observe the class teaching of the schools, consisting of non-participant observations and reviewing video recordings. The nature of each of the different compositional tasks undertaken in various schools was reviewed, and each one's relationship with the resultant motivational changes was examined. Results suggest that the teacher presentation, the nature of the composition tasks, and the level of structure may affect motivational changes. Using computers in a compositional task and students' academic background are irrelevant to the students' motivation changes.

Background

Research on music creativity and its applications regarding teaching music in Hong Kong schools has been limited. An unbalanced situation existed in the junior secondary levels, in which composition was ignored by many music teachers while the focus had been on the history of music (Ng & Morris, 1998). A survey in Hong Kong revealed that on average only five and nine

percent of teaching time has been allocated to various methods of creative music making (including composing and improvising) in junior and senior secondary music teaching respectively (Leung, 2000). As identified by music teachers, the low motivation of students regarding composition was one factor. Many music teachers remained unsure about how to motivate their students to compose.

Motivation Theories

Motivation was regarded as a crucial factor affecting the effectiveness of learning and academic achievement. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have been identified and discussed extensively. Some writers argued that intrinsic motivation played a crucial role in the creative process, while extrinsic motivation (such as rewards) might be detrimental to creativity (Amabile, 1996; Hennessy & Amabile, 1988). Based on her Componential Model of Creativity, Amabile (1996) proposed three components of creativity, namely, task motivation, domain-relevant skills, and domain-relevant processes, in which task motivation was regarded as both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation during participation in the creative task.

From another perspective, the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) identified two areas that were believed to contribute to student motivation: (a) the expectancy of task-specific beliefs and ability beliefs, and (b) the achievement values of individuals toward specific domains. According to

Eccles and others (1983), expectancy was understood as individuals' beliefs about how good they would perform on a task in the near future. When individuals possessed a high expectancy in a specific domain, they tended to achieve a better performance in this domain. Achievement values referred to four individuals' values in relation to a specific domain: (a) the attainment value, (b) the intrinsic value, (c) the utility value, and (d) the cost (Eccles et al., 1983). The attainment value was defined as the importance of doing well in a specific domain according to a subjective judgment by the individual. The intrinsic value referred to the enjoyment of undertaking the specific task. The utility value was regarded as how individuals could benefit in their future from participating and learning in the specific domain. Finally, the cost referred to the perceived loss that individuals would bear if they were engaged in learning within the domain.

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1995, 1997; Pajares, 1996) was another important theory that was defined as "personal judgments of one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated goals" (as cited in Zimmerman, 2000, p. 83). A personal judgment on the individual's ability in a certain domain was believed to be determinative in achieving outstanding performance in that domain. When individuals believed in their abilities, they tended to work harder, persist longer, and possess fewer negative motivational reactions when they encountered difficulties (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who possessed higher self-efficacy tended to undertake difficult and challenging tasks more readily (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Students who possessed higher self-efficacy were shown to be better in monitoring their working time, more persistent, and better in

solving conceptual problems (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991).

In all of these theories, motivation comprised of six different attributions to human desires for success in specific disciplines or work. These attributions included belief of achievement in a discipline in the near future (expectancy), desire of achieving to a certain level in a discipline (attainment value), desire to participate in an interested activity (intrinsic value), consideration of benefits that can be brought through the pursuance of the identified work (utility value), consideration of the cost that one has to pay for (cost), and self-perception on abilities in pursuing a discipline (self-efficacy). These theories provided a rather comprehensive understanding on human motivation.

Motivation in Music Composition

In recent decades, motivation in the literature on musical creativity has started to receive attention in the field of research. In Webster's *Model of Creative Thinking in Music* (Webster, 1990, 2003), motivation was regarded as one of the "enabling conditions" for creative thinking in music. In another study, Wolfe and Linden (1991) employed Webster's model and found that highly motivated children performed better in divergent-thinking tasks in music than children exhibiting low levels of motivation. Upitis (1992) argued that using a computer-assisted teaching approach could be advantageous on an individual basis in terms of initiating interest, that is, intrinsic motivation, in composition. Employing Amabile's motivation theory, Bangs (1992) found that students with intrinsic motivation for composition demonstrated more creative musical compositions than those with extrinsic motivation. However, there is still limited research on student composition using the aforementioned motivation theories.

Compositional Tasks

As the nature of compositional tasks may influence students' motivation, it is necessary to review the relevant literature on the nature of compositional tasks. Some studies have employed the computer as a tool for composition (e.g., Folkestad, 1996; Airy & Parr, 2001; Nilsson & Folkestad, 2005), while others have involved students in composing for acoustic instruments and voices (e.g., Hogg, 1994; Burland & Davidson, 2001; Kennedy, 2002). Some researchers have involved students composing in small groups and individually (e.g., Swanwick & Tillman, 1986), while others have involved the entire class composing songs (e.g., Wiggins, 1994).

The structural level of compositional tasks is an important dimension of such tasks. As reported by Lodewyk and Winne (2005), students could achieve higher self-efficacy for learning and performance when well-structured tasks were encountered, while moderate achievers reported significantly more difficulty in the ill-structured tasks. In the study by van Ernst (1993), however, a group of experienced students preferred to freely choose from among different structural levels: (a) structured – students had no choice but to follow the procedures of the set task, (b) suggested – a series of choices were suggested to students, which they could opt not to follow, and (c) open-ended – free choices by students. Similarly, in her study, Burnard (1995) developed three levels of structure of compositional tasks to provide a series of different levels of constraints and freedom for a group of senior secondary students who had gone through different levels of instrumental training. The “Prescription Task” involved “a high degree of control operating on, and governing, decision making. It involved specific and detailed demands and directions that required the application and demonstration

of certain musical conventions” (p. 36). The “Choice Task” allowed students to choose from a series of compositional options, such as selecting between writing a set of variations to the given tune, a piece in rondo form, or a piece for instrumental chamber ensemble. The “Freedom Task” was of the highest level of freedom with only one requirement – composing for the voiced medium. Results from this study indicated that those tasks with a high degree of control provided students who needed more guidelines with a secure creative platform, while the more musically competent students preferred the open-ended tasks, which allowed for a sense of individuality and encouraged motivation.

The motivation of Hong Kong students in musical composition has not been studied in any form. More specifically, there was a lack of research on factors that affect students' motivation when composing. In reporting part of a research project, this article aimed to fill this gap by exploring secondary students' motivational changes toward musical composition in four secondary schools with different teachers and compositional tasks. The results of this study may provide more information on strategies for designing compositional tasks that may help motivate students to compose music.

Method

This study employed a multiple-case study approach to investigate secondary students' possible motivational changes after participating in compositional activities. Four secondary schools were involved, with a total of 606 secondary students (aged 12–18 years). Four music teachers from the schools were invited to design and implement their own compositional tasks in their schools. Students of all four schools completed the composition projects in two to three months. The researcher employed a

non-participant observational method (Cohen & Manion, 1994) in the study. I made two visits to each of the teachers to observe their teaching with video recordings, and then made observational notes to document the nature and the teaching process of each of the compositional tasks for analysis. In addition, the teachers also provided their teaching plans for my reference and analysis.

A questionnaire survey was implemented to examine the impact of the compositional tasks on students' motivation. Before delivering the compositional tasks, the teachers described and explained their compositional tasks to their students. Afterwards they asked their students to respond to a pre-activity questionnaire with the researcher, who explained the questionnaires to the students to ensure all students understood the questions. After completing each compositional task, students were asked to complete a post-activity questionnaire.

Participants

The project involved four music teachers and 606 students from intact classes of four different secondary schools. Before each class observation, the researcher interviewed the teachers in order to understand the background and the characteristics of their students. All of the music teachers admitted that they had no practical experience in designing and implementing compositional activities. They had, however, participated in workshops on musical creativity organized by the Education and Manpower Bureau of Hong Kong. The teachers designed their compositional tasks according to the guidelines learned from the workshop and the contexts of their schools, including the physical environment, equipment, and their students' musical interests and competence.

All of the students could be regarded as inexperienced learners in composition. The teachers pointed out that this was their first time undertaking compositional activities in a formal way, which required students to compose a piece of music within a set period of time and to perform their work in the class and to receive feedback from teachers and peers. In addition, students' academic background of the four schools varied. As indicated by their teachers, students from School C possessed relatively high academic backgrounds among the four schools, while the students from School D had relatively poor academic background and behavioral problems while undertaking the compositional tasks. In comparison, the students from Schools A and B were average in terms of academic background.

Questionnaire Design

Pre- and post-activity questionnaire surveys were implemented to measure any change in motivation toward creative music-making after the teaching of the projects. The main part of the questionnaire comprised 15 questions which were modeled on items developed for a motivational study by McPherson and others (2008) to compare students' motivation to study music as compared to other school subjects in eight different countries. Personal data including school, age, and gender were sought at the beginning of the questionnaire. The questions were categorized into six motivational measures according to the Self-Efficacy Theory and the Expectancy-Value Theory. These measures were: (a) Self-Efficacy, (b) Intrinsic Value, (c) Attainment Value, (d) Utility Value, (e) Cost, and (f) Expectancy (see Appendix A for the questions). Students were requested to state their level of motivation on a seven-point semantic differential scale, except for the question on

self-efficacy, for which students were asked to exhibit their confidence in composing music on an 11-point scale (i.e., from 0%, 10%, 20%, etc., to 100% confidence). The questionnaires were written in Chinese, which was the mother-tongue of the students, and were piloted beforehand by five students from each school. Minor refinement of the wording was carried out according to the students' feedback. In general, the content of the pre- and post-activity questionnaires was the same, but the wording was slightly different in terms of tenses.

Results

The results of this study can be divided into qualitative and quantitative aspects. For the qualitative aspect, based on the class observation, review of the video recordings and discussion with the teachers after school, important factors affecting the students' motivation in composition included the nature of compositional tasks and the teaching presentation.

The nature of the compositional tasks and the teaching presentation of the four teachers were diverse. Teacher A invited her students in groups to employ percussion instruments and/or self-made instruments to create a piece of music of no less than 30 seconds to express an idea, a story, or a scene. The piece could possess only rhythm (as the students could employ non-pitched percussion instruments only) or add a melody of their choice. Before composition, students were exposed to different percussion instruments and found everyday objects (such as keys and pencils) as instruments for stimulation. The tempo and dynamics of the pieces were suggested for effective musical expression. The task could be regarded as open-ended, as the teacher did not require her students to follow any guidelines nor were any existing musical pieces demonstrated as musical

models. She emphasized that the students could employ any kind of musical style to compose any kind of ensemble. As there was no computer for students' use, the teacher did not suggest the use of a computer to her students.

Teacher A was a friendly and pleasant teacher; she always smiled to her class and provided positive comments and encouragement about students' work. She appeared to be confident in the pacing of her lessons and the project even though the researcher was observing in the classroom. During the group work, she visited every group and provided her feedback in a very pleasant manner. Students appeared to be happy to discuss their work with her. According to Teacher A, the academic achievements of their students were average compared to other schools in Hong Kong.

Teacher B employed a rather procedural approach in her compositional task. At the very beginning, she reviewed a number of local and Western pop songs with analysis of the compositional devices. Afterward, she required the students, in groups, to select a nursery rhyme (in Chinese) and to compose a melody with harmony for the rhyme in order to formulate a song. In this task, her students were required to learn about notation, simple harmony, the issue of matching phrases in the lyrics with the melody, compositional devices including sequence, repetition and contrast of melodic phrases, tempo and expressive marks, and song forms. In addition, the teacher suggested that a good work should possess a suitable range for the singer. In sum, the task could be regarded as "suggestive" because it required the students to learn relevant musical knowledge before composition in a fixed sequence. Hence, the teacher did not employ a computer to assist with the compositional task.

Teacher B was a rather didactic teacher; she did not seem to be smiling in

front of the students throughout the two observed lessons, and she always employed a commanding manner when asking her students to work on their compositions. She appeared to lack confidence in teaching the compositional task, as she neither showed any of her compositions nor provided appropriate feedback to her students' work. Praising students for their compositions was seldom recorded. During the conversation with her, she admitted that she participated in the project only because she did not know how to teach composition and wanted to learn from the experience. She admitted, however, that her students were of average competence, and she felt that it had not been difficult for her to teach the class.

Teacher C employed computers in her compositional task. In her class, each pair of students shared one computer for their compositions. The teacher invited her students to compose a piece of music individually in no less than one minute to "express their emotion." They were encouraged to record their music using traditional or graphical notation, which implied that they were allowed to use traditional or modern musical languages to compose. In addition, they were introduced to notational and sequencer software as tools for their compositions. The basic requirement of the task was to compose a piece in a monophonic (i.e., single melody) or homophonic (i.e., a melody with simple harmony) texture. Nevertheless, students were not exposed to any musical pieces before composition; much of the class time was used to familiarize with the computer software. The compositional task could be regarded as open-ended, because students had the freedom to make their own musical decisions. Among the four cases, the task of Teacher C was the most open-ended.

Teacher C was another pleasant teacher, and there always seemed to be a smile on her face. Her verbal instructions

were very clear, and she required her students to listen carefully before beginning to work. The school principal once observed the class with the researcher, but Teacher C appeared to remain confident. She kept the teaching pace going, and by the end almost every group had completed their compositions.

Teacher D also employed computers in teaching her compositional task, which focused on melody writing by individual students. Four compositional devices of melodies were clearly stated as learning targets: repetition, imitating phrases, sequences, as well as questions and answers. The teacher designed a very close-ended teaching approach in order to monitor the students' progress. She wanted to see every student to make progress in good time and to have completed the task by the end. According to the teacher, since the students were "less motivated," it was necessary to plan everything in detail and to monitor the students so that they could complete their compositions. Observation data showed that there were very sequential partial compositional tasks, such as writing a phrase, and the comparing of phrases to find out if they were imitative. Students followed the tasks in a sequential order. Every task was done on a worksheet, which ensured that every student was on track. When students had successfully and correctly achieved the items of the worksheet a specific mark was awarded. It was perceived that the main aim of the teacher was to teach musical syntax through compositional activities.

Teacher D was another didactic instructor. As she admitted herself, she had to "control" the class by clear instructions with a firm voice because her students were of a relatively weak academic background and had low motivation to learn. She was, however, confident with her instructions and teaching materials. She had extensive

Table 1
A Comparison of Four Cases

| | <i>Teacher A</i> | <i>Teacher B</i> | <i>Teacher C</i> | <i>Teacher D</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Students' Academic Background | Average | Average | High | Low |
| Teacher Presentation | Pleasant and friendly, confident | Didactic, unconfident | Pleasant and friendly, confident | Didactic, confident |
| Compositional task | Composing a piece to express an idea/story/scene | Composing a melody for a rhyme | Composing a piece to express personal feelings | Composing a melody using specific devices |
| Computer-assisted Composition | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| Level of Structure | Open-ended | Suggestive | Open-ended | Structured |

teaching experience, which gave her confidence in her teaching. Table 1 summarizes the main features of the compositional tasks and the characteristics of the teachers and students.

A total of 632 sets of pre- and post-activity questionnaires were collected, of which 606 were completed with valid and comprehensive quantitative data for this part of the analysis. Of the 606 sets of questionnaires, 229 (37.79%) in six classes were from School A, 75 (12.38%) in two classes from School B, 194 (32.01%) in five classes from School C, and 108 (17.82%) in three classes from School D. Among the respondents, 276 (45.54%) were boys, and 330 (54.46%) were girls; 76 (12.54%) were in Secondary 1 (Grade 7), 290 (47.85%) were in Secondary 2 (Grade 8), and 233 (38.49%) were in Secondary 3 (Grade 9).

Using the data, a reliability test on the pre- and post-activity questionnaires was implemented. As a result, Cronbach's Alphas of .95 and .93 were recorded respectively. The reliability of the questionnaires was considered high.

In general, the differences between pre- and post-activity mean scores of the six motivational measures among the four schools were diverse. Students from different schools appeared to possess different levels of motivational changes in different measures. Students from School A achieved an increase of mean scores in self-efficacy, attainment value, and utility value, and a slight decrease in intrinsic value, cost, and expectancy. School B was the only group that appeared to have a rather negative approach to its compositional task. Of the six motivational measures, only the

self-efficacy level recorded an increase after the compositional activity, while all of the other five showed slight decreases. Students from School C showed rather positive motivational change after their compositional task. They increased their self-efficacy, intrinsic value, attainment value, and utility value towards composition while decreasing their cost and expectancy levels. School D was the most positive group and showed an increase in all six motivational measures after its compositional task.

In terms of motivational measures, self-efficacy received the most positive results; students from all four schools seemed to have increased their self-efficacy. In addition, both the attainment value and the utility value were recorded rather positively in that three of the schools showed increases. In contrast, cost and expectancy received the most negative results; only one school showed increases in these two measures, while three schools demonstrated decreases. Table 2 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the motivational measures.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of the Six Motivational Measures in Different Schools

| Motivational Measures | School A (n=229) | | School B (n=75) | | School C (n=194) | | School D (n=108) | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------|------|---------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Self-Efficacy | | | | | | | | |
| Pre-test | 4.67 | 2.14 | 5.30 | 2.27 | 5.11 | 2.49 | 4.32 | 2.80 |
| Post-test | 5.64 | 3.62 | 5.52 | 1.96 | 5.91 | 1.93 | 5.06 | 2.79 |
| Intrinsic Value | | | | | | | | |
| Pre-test | 5.14 | 1.12 | 4.71 | 1.19 | 4.12 | 1.33 | 4.34 | 1.44 |
| Post-test | 5.09 | 1.11 | 4.56 | .99 | 4.30 | 1.08 | 4.54 | 1.49 |
| Attainment Value | | | | | | | | |
| Pre-test | 4.07 | 1.26 | 4.23 | 1.21 | 3.65 | 1.29 | 3.98 | 1.37 |
| Post-test | 4.23 | 1.21 | 4.08 | .86 | 4.27 | 1.09 | 4.30 | 1.44 |
| Utility Value | | | | | | | | |
| Pre-test | 4.29 | 1.16 | 4.44 | 1.10 | 3.81 | 1.30 | 4.08 | 1.38 |
| Post-test | 4.36 | 1.14 | 4.23 | .97 | 4.04 | 1.18 | 4.43 | 1.44 |
| Cost | | | | | | | | |
| Pre-test | 4.60 | 1.04 | 4.49 | .99 | 4.20 | 1.17 | 3.96 | 1.28 |
| Post-test | 4.52 | .91 | 4.31 | .82 | 3.99 | .73 | 4.23 | 1.35 |
| Expectancy | | | | | | | | |
| Pre-test | 4.53 | 1.10 | 4.59 | .96 | 4.36 | 1.26 | 3.98 | 1.37 |
| Post-test | 4.60 | 1.47 | 4.40 | 1.05 | 4.14 | .95 | 4.23 | 1.43 |

Table 3 shows the results of a series of paired *t*-tests that were used to compare the mean scores of the motivational measures between pre- and post-activity. The Bonferroni adjustment is used to avoid Type I error. The significant *p* value is adjusted to .0083 (i.e., .05 / 6 for six comparisons in each school). As shown in the table, there was a significant increase of self-efficacy for students in School A and School C and a significant increase of attainment value for students in School C, while all of the other motivational measures showed no statistically significant changes.

Discussion

This study investigated the motivational changes of secondary students after experiencing musical compositional activities. Based on the statistical findings, it can be seen that only two motivational measures have changed significantly. Teachers A and C have achieved a relatively positive change on their students’ motivation. As observed, the teacher presentation, the nature of the composition

tasks, and the level of structure were shown to be more relevant in motivating students to compose.

Teacher Presentation

From the observations, the teacher presentation comprised two factors: (a) a “didactic” teaching style versus an “open” teaching style, and (b) confident versus unconfident teaching. As observed, two teachers (A and C) tended to employ an open style when teaching composition. The atmosphere in their classrooms was pleasant and positive with little pressure. They allocated more time for students’ group work rather than for procedural learning processes regarding knowledge and skills. They allowed their students to retain a certain degree of freedom while composing. The other two teachers tended to be more didactic in class. They tried to use a rather commanding attitude to urge students to learn. The classrooms’ atmosphere here tended to be rigid in that students had a relatively low level of freedom to experiment. Both teachers tended to employ

Table 3
Paired Sample T-tests between Pre- and Post-activity Motivational Measures

| Motivational Measures | School A (n=229) | | School B (n=75) | | School C (n=194) | | School D (n=108) | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> |
| Self-Efficacy | -3.397* | .001 | .612 | .543 | -2.895* | .004 | -1.803 | .074 |
| Intrinsic Value | .559 | .576 | .887 | .378 | -1.406 | .161 | -.993 | .323 |
| Attainment Value | -1.466 | .144 | .955 | .343 | -4.965* | .000 | -1.607 | .111 |
| Utility Value | -.618 | .537 | 1.360 | .178 | -1.888 | .060 | -1.662 | .099 |
| Cost | .803 | .423 | 1.198 | .235 | 2.176 | .031 | -1.488 | .140 |
| Expectancy | -.661 | .509 | 1.178 | .243 | 1.81 | .072 | -1.328 | .187 |

* *p* < .0083 (adjusted)

a procedural teaching and learning approach to ensure all students were on the right learning track.

The teacher's confidence in teaching composition was crucial. As observed in these cases, teacher B did not appear to be confident enough in her teaching. As a result, her students tended to be more passive and unsure about what they should do in their composition.

Teacher presentation was regarded as an important factor affecting teaching and learning effectiveness. According to a recent study (Leung & Wong, 2005) on good practice of secondary music teaching in Hong Kong, four aspects of good teacher quality have been identified: (a) teachers' personality, (b) pedagogy, (c) music competence, and (d) philosophy of education. According to this study, the characteristics of a good teacher that are favorable to good practice and welcomed by students include caring about students and possessing high energy, a sense of humor, and a sense of reflectivity. Combining the findings of this study and the current project, it is posited that nurturing positive personal quality of music teachers in addition to knowledge of the subject and pedagogical skills is necessary.

The Nature of the Compositional Tasks

The nature of the compositional tasks in this study has been diverse. However, one common characteristic of the tasks designed by Teachers A and C was that they both invited their students to compose music related to concrete objects or reality. For instance, Teacher A encouraged her students to compose a piece for a self-derived story or a scene. Many students enjoyed telling the story and explaining how the music depicted the details of the story. Teacher C required her students to compose music to express their feeling. This was highly related to the students themselves.

One can imagine that students would be highly motivated as they can freely express themselves.

On the contrary, Teachers B and D requested their students to learn to compose a piece that was not directly relevant to the students. For instance, Teacher B prepared a number of rhymes and requested her students to select one and then compose a melody for the rhyme. Teacher D expected her students to learn about repeated phrases, imitative phrases and sequences in order to complete the melody with a given phrase. This seemed to be an exercise rather than a composition task that allowed free wills.

The sense of ownership of composition is argued to be a significant factor affecting motivation (Leung, 2004). Students tend to enjoy more in composing music that is related to their musical preferences. In this study the findings further underpin that students would be more motivated when the composition tasks are related to their personal life and emotion. When students own the task, they would be more motivated to strive for a better result. It may imply that music teachers should relate the task to students' daily life so that students would regard the task as a real composition rather than a school assignment.

Level of Structure

The level of structure refers to the degree of freedom in completing the tasks. It ranges from the "structured task" in which the teacher has designed all teaching procedures and requested the students to follow, to the "open-ended task" in which the teacher allows students to decide how the composition is to be composed.

Teachers A and C employed a rather open-ended structure of compositional task in their teaching while students from these two schools increased their self-efficacy levels. The nature of an open-ended

compositional task may provide freedom for students to explore their compositions. This result supplements the findings of Burnard (1995) that more capable students prefer more open-ended structural tasks. As supported by Berkley (2004), the real facilitation of teaching composition appears to rely on a high level of open content in active composition (utterances shift from general to particular and from objective to personal) and “freewheeling,” which promotes “discovery, creativity, authority, ownership, trial and error learning, and divergent thinking” (p. 257). In contrast, when students are limited by closed content and limited by a procedural teaching package, the teaching as a whole tends to become training and instruction-based rather than involving composition and real creativity. Music teachers who employ highly structured compositional tasks, such as Teacher D, may discourage students’ autonomy, which may also damage students’ motivation.

In this study it seems that using computers in a compositional task and students’ academic background are irrelevant to the students’ motivation in composition. As shown in the results, for example, students of Teachers C and D have not increased their self-efficacy although computers were provided. Similarly,

although the students of Teacher A were of merely average academic background, they have increased their self-efficacy in composition.

In conclusion, teaching composition in music classes can be challenging. It requires the teacher to be confident through the possession of sufficient experience, knowledge, and skills relating to music composition and its pedagogy. As a result, the confident teacher can generate an open-minded atmosphere of learning in which students are encouraged to explore and compose music using divergent thinking, which is helpful for developing real creativity (Leung & McPherson, 2002). This study helps to identify a number of issues in motivating students to compose in the secondary classroom for further research. For instance, what is the relationship between the level of structure of compositional tasks and student variables including academic background and musical competence? What are the significant factors affecting students’ motivation in musical composition? What strategies should teachers employ when dealing with composition in class? These issues deserve more attention in research, especially in those contexts that differ from the West where bigger class sizes and more diverse competencies are found.

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Acknowledgement

This project was sponsored by the Curriculum Development Institute of the Education and Manpower Bureau, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government.

Appendix A
Questions Surveying Students' Motivation toward Composing Music

Self-Efficacy

- ✧ How confident are/were you that you can/could compose an interesting piece of music?
-

Intrinsic Value

- ✧ To what extent do you think the compositional task might be/was interesting?
 - ✧ To what extent do you think the compositional task might be/was enjoyable?
 - ✧ Compared to other musical activities you normally do at school, such as singing and listening, how interesting do you think the chance to compose music will be/was?
 - ✧ Compared to other musical activities you normally do at school, such as singing and listening, how enjoyable do you think the chance to compose music will be/was?
-

Attainment Value

- ✧ To what extent do you think the compositional task might be/was important?
 - ✧ Compared to other musical activities you normally do at school, such as singing and listening, how important do you think the chance to compose music will be/was?
-

Utility Value

- ✧ To what extent do you think the compositional task might be/was useful?
 - ✧ Compared to other musical activities you normally do at school, such as singing and listening, how useful do you think the chance to compose music will be/was?
-

Perceived Cost

- ✧ To what extent do you think the compositional task might be/was challenging?
 - ✧ To what extent do you think the compositional task might be/was easy?
 - ✧ Compared to other musical activities you normally do at school, such as singing and listening, how challenging do you think the chance to compose music will be/was?
 - ✧ Compared to other musical activities you normally do at school, such as singing and listening, how easy do you think the chance to compose music will be/was?
-

Expectancy

- ✧ How good do you think you will be/were at the creative activities?
 - ✧ How hard do you think you will try/tried on the creative activities?
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