

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GRADES 9-12 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN MUSIC CLASS ACCORDING TO GENDER, YEARS OF ENROLLMENT, AND MUSIC INSTRUMENT PLAYED AT THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF BANGKOK, GREEN VALLEY CAMPUS

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**Abstract:** The aims of this study were to identify Grades 9-12 students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness of teachers in music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, and to determine whether there was a significant difference among these students' perceptions according to their gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played. This study focused on 81 Grades 9-12 students who enrolled music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, during the academic year 2016-2017. The students answered a questionnaire after learning to play and perform an instrument for at least a nine-month period. The research findings revealed that there was no significant difference among students' perceptions according to all three demographic categories, gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played, and suggested that Grades 9-12 students, regardless of their demographic differences, perceived teaching effectiveness of music class as very effective. Based on the findings, recommendations for students, teachers, administrators and future researchers were provided.

**Keywords:** Teaching Effectiveness, Students' Perceptions, American School of Bangkok, High School Music Class.

## Introduction

Many researchers and educators have investigated the topic of *teaching effectiveness* in their unique professional fields, most of them agreeing that there are three important factors regarded to be beneficial in increasing students' learning achievement: effective use of instructional strategies (IS), students-teacher relationship (STR), and students' learning assessment (SLA) (e.g., Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Sutcliff, 2011; Waldrip, Fisher, & Dorman, 2008). These three dimensions of teaching effectiveness are also taking an important part in the high school music class of the American School of Bangkok (ASB), Green Valley (GV) campus. Therefore, teaching effectiveness in the current study is defined as the degree to which teaching actions fulfill their desired

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instructional goals and objectives regarding the following categories: instructional strategies, student-teacher relationship, and students' learning assessment. According to Chua and Kho (2014), who surveyed over 800 students in a teacher education program in Malaysia, students' evaluation of lecturers' teaching effectiveness serves to benefit every participating member of the education community, and could be a way to develop the learning environment. Therefore, the current study focused on identifying students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in high school music class of ASB, GV campus. According to the learning environment of high school music class at ASB, GV campus (The American School of Bangkok, 2016) and previous researchers (e.g., Abeles, 2009; Green, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Krenz, 2006; Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, 2015; Wessels & Moore, 2012), gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played, were three factors that may influence students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in the high school music classroom. Therefore, the researcher used these three demographic indicators to divide students in groups for comparing their perceptions of teaching effectiveness.

In high school music class at ASB, GV campus, the researcher found that students, although receiving the same music lessons, performed differently in terms of learning outcomes. Therefore, in order to develop a better learning environment, the researcher designed this study, in order to identify students' perceptions on three dimensions of teaching effectiveness: IS, STR, and SLA. Comparisons were made to find out whether students' perceptions of these three dimensions of teaching effectiveness were significantly different according to students' gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played.

### **Objectives**

The following were the research objectives developed for this study.

1. To identify the perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class held by Grades 9-12 students at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus.
2. To determine if there is a significant difference in Grades 9-12 students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, according to their gender.
3. To determine if there is a significant difference in Grades 9-12 students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, according to their years of enrollment.
4. To determine if there is a significant difference in Grades 9-12 students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, according to their music instrument played.

### **Hypotheses**

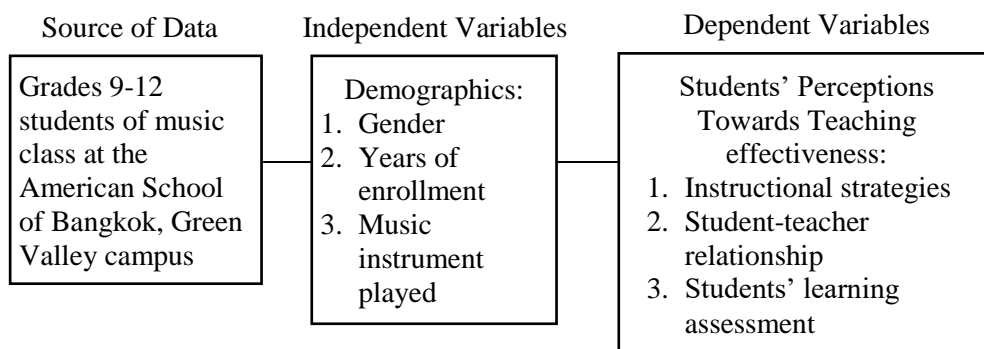
The following were the research hypotheses developed for this study.

1. There is a significant difference of Grades 9-12 students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, according to their gender at the level of .05.

2. There is a significant difference of Grades 9-12 students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, according to their years of enrollment at the level of .05.
3. There is a significant difference of Grades 9-12 students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class at the American School of Bangkok, Green Valley campus, according to their music instrument played at the level of .05.

### Conceptual Framework

The objective of the current study was to identify and determine whether there is any significant difference of Grades 9-12 students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness (IS, STR, and SLA) in high school music class at ASB, GV campus. After learning to play a musical instrument for at least nine months, the Students' Perceptions of Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaire (SPTEQ) was distributed among students to identify their perceptions on teaching effectiveness in high school music class at ASB, GV campus, in the second semester of academic year 2016-2017. Inferential statistics were used to examine if there were significant differences in students' perceptions according to their gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The Present Study**

### Literature Review

#### *Teaching Effectiveness*

In the current study, teaching effectiveness is defined as the degree to which teaching actions fulfill their desired instructional goals and objectives regarding the following sub-scales: instructional strategies (IS); student-teacher relationship (STR); and students' learning assessment (SLA).

#### *Instructional Strategies*

According to the Business Dictionary (2017), an instructional strategy refers to the process or manner by which an instruction module, instruction phase, or an entire course is delivered. Regarding to music education, music teachers implement

instructional strategies in their specific manner. According to Duke and Simmons (2006), effective music teachers make fine discriminations about student performances, describe performance technique in terms of the effect that physical motion creates in the sound produced, give out clear, frequent and directed negative feedback towards specific aspects of students' performance, especially on musical effects created to improve students' auditory discriminations and performance, give out possible feedback to appreciating students' critical accomplishment, and play examples from students' repertoire exquisitely to demonstrate important points.

#### *Student-Teacher Relationship*

According to Brand (2009), student-teacher relationship is the ability of a teacher to connect to students using values such as music teaching skills, musicianship, tolerance, and responsiveness. This connection bridging teachers and students can help enhance students learning. Klem and Connell (2004) suggested that students are more engaging in school when they perceive teachers as ones creating a caring, fair, and high expecting learning environment. This connection was also fostered in high school music class of ASB, GV campus through caring actions initiated by the music teachers.

#### *Students' Learning Assessment*

As indicated by Duke and Simmons (2006), effective music teachers base their assessment on the following characteristics: assign proper repertoire to students according to their capabilities, have a clear auditory image of the piece that guides their judgments about the music, demand a consistent standard of sound quality from their students, select lesson targets that are technically or musically important, position lesson targets at a level of difficulty that can be reached by students in a short term, and remember students' work in past lessons and frequently draw comparisons between past and presence to give positive and negative feedbacks. Based on Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (2000), learning assessment can provide feedback to help students improve their learning and can inform teachers to improve their teaching.

#### *Theory of Perceptual Learning*

The psychologist Eleanor J. Gibson developed a theory of perceptual learning, which considers perception as a process of extracting meaningful information from the environment to guide actions adaptively (Gibson, 1969, as cited in Adolph & Kretch, 2015). According to Gibson, perceiving is an active process that requires active participation of the perceiver in gathering perceptual information (Gibson, 1988, as cited in Adolph & Kretch, 2015). In music, gathering perceptual information relates to instrument learning in every aspect. Additionally, perception and action operate as a continuous cycle. Perceptual information gathered by the perceiver serves as guidance for actions, and the consequences of the actions generates new perceptual information. Referred to the process of playing an instrument, one will improve his instrument playing by firstly, perceiving visual patterns and audio sounds, and adjust his playing to produce expected sounds.

### *Students' Demographics of the Current Study*

Among the factors that may influence students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness, three demographic factors emphasized in the literature were chosen to be the independent variables of the current study: gender; years of enrollment; and music instrument played.

#### *Gender*

Based on previous researchers, students perceive music education differently according to their gender in school learning environments. Abeles (2009), in her study of examining gender associations across three decades (1970s, 1990s, and 2000s) in U.S.A, indicated that male and female students' preferences on choosing instruments to play were aligning with the gender stereotyping concept of the society, namely the idea of masculinity and femininity (Green, 1997). Male students mostly prefer to play instrument such as drum, saxophone, trumpet, and trombone, while instruments such as flute, violin, and clarinet were chosen mostly by female students. However, the image of masculinity and femininity is changing through times (Gauntlett, 2002).

#### *Years of Enrollment*

Forming positive bonds with students will take time and commitment from teachers, so a classroom culture that teachers and students can trust each other could be built (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, 2015).

#### *Music Instrument Played*

It requires specific skill sets to play different musical instruments (Krenz, 2006; Wessels & Moore, 2012), The skill of playing a drum set is different from the skill of playing a guitar. To be able to do different instruments demand a specific set of muscle movements, thus an effective music teacher must possess the skill to play those instruments, the knowledge of the related music theory, and the ability of implementing suitable instructional strategies, and modifying the lesson plans according to the needs of students. Identifying students' perceptions according to music instrument played allowed music teachers to find whether their teaching of different instruments is effective or not.

#### *The American School of Bangkok*

Founded in 1983, ASB has now two campuses in around Bangkok: the GV campus and the Sukhumvit campus. Both campuses offer a K-12 curriculum. In the academic year 2016-2017, ASB Green Valley campus has 432 students, while the Sukhumvit campus has 385 students. The approximate rate of Thai students enrolled in ASB is about 40 percent, which means more than half of ASB students were born and raised as foreigners, from 15 different countries over the world.

#### *High School Music Class in ASB, GV Campus*

The elective high school Choir and Band class is the main focus of this research study. It is run by two music teachers, teaching different instruments in a music teaching room and a band rehearsal room. There are three periods of band class in a week, one short period with forty minutes of class time, and another two long periods with eighty

minutes of class time. In the academic year 2016-2017, there were four band classes opened with a total of 81 students enrolled among Grades 9-12 students. According to the curriculum of ASB, GV campus, in the academic year 2016-2017 (The American School of Bangkok, 2016), high school music class focuses on improving students' ability on performing a musical instrument in a band setting, with English-oriented popular songs and understanding music theory. Instruments such as guitar and electric bass from the string family, piano, and drum set from the percussion family, and voice are being taught in this class. In high school music class of ASB, GV campus, music skill is not the only thing being fostered, caring actions happen in daily teaching practices. Through the action of coaching, sharing, and listening to students' ideas, music teachers approach to individual student and develop a trustful student-teacher relationship. Based on this student-teacher relationship built in the classroom, students could be more open-minded to the lessons taught in the classroom of high school music class at ASB, GV campus.

#### *Students' Perceptions of Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaire (SPTEQ)*

The students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness questionnaire (SPTEQ) is a survey questionnaire comprised with three demographic questions identifying students' gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played, and 26 items under three subscales of teaching effectiveness (IS, STR, & SLA). Items of SPTEQ were adopted from two previous studies: Sutcliff (2011) and Waldrip et al. (2008). The SPTEQ was developed to identify Grades 9-12 students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness in three dimensions of teaching effectiveness (IS, STR and SLA), according to their gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played, in the high school music class of ASB, GV campus, in the academic year 2016-2017.

#### **Methodology/Procedure**

The purpose of this research study was to determine whether there was a significant difference in Grades 9-12 students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in music class at ASB, GV campus, according to three demographic parameters: gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher developed a comparative research design, using quantitative approach, to firstly identify Grades 9-12 music students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness, and secondly, to determine whether there is any significant difference in such perceptions based on gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played. The survey questionnaire SPTEQ was delivered to collect data from 81 high school music students from ASB, GV campus in April 2017, during the second semester of academic year 2016-2017, and the data collection process was done in two weeks of April 2017. Based on the collected data, inferential statistics were used to find out whether there was a significant difference in students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness according to the aforementioned demographics.

#### *Research Instrument*

The SPTEQ was used to collect data from sample students to identify their perceptions of teaching effectiveness in high school music class at ASB, GV campus.

The SPTEQ was comprised with three demographic items and 26 items covering three subscales in evaluating teaching effectiveness as shown below:

1. instructional strategies (IS);
2. student-teacher relationship (STR); and
3. students' learning assessment (SLA).

The first section of SPTEQ was comprised with three demographic items to acquire students' information of gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of 26 items of teaching effectiveness, with eight items under the IS subscale, nine items under STR subscale, and nine items under the SLA subscale. All 17 items of the first two subscales were adopted from the study of Sutcliff (2011), which conducted to identify secondary students' perceptions of teacher quality in eight public schools in Southern Georgia, U.S.A. The questionnaire in the study used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *unsure*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

The third subscale of SPTEQ consisted of nine items, adopted from the study by Waldrip et al. (2008). Australian educators Waldrip et al. made an instrument to identify middle schooler's perceptions towards assessment tasks. They developed the Students' Perceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ), with 30 items on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *almost never*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often*, 4 = *almost always*).

## Findings

There are 4 findings:

1. Regarding to Research Objective 1, the following findings were obtained.
  - Students, on average, agreed that teaching practice of high school music class under the category of instructional strategies as effective.
  - Students, on average, agreed that teaching practice of high school music class under the category of student-teacher relationship as very effective.
  - Students, on average, agreed that teaching practice of high school music class under the category of students' learning assessment as very effective.

According to the students' demographic information, the following findings were also obtained.

  - Students, for both male and females, agreed that teaching practice of high school music class of ASB, GV campus, under the three dimensions of teaching effectiveness, IS, STR, and SLA, with an overall look, was very effective.
  - Students, who enrolled high school music class for one year, two years, and more than two years, agreed that teaching practice of high school music class of ASB, GV campus, under the three dimensions of teaching effectiveness, IS, STR, and SLA, with an overall look, was very effective.
  - Students, who learned to play a string instrument or a percussion instrument, agreed that teaching practice of high school music class of ASB, GV campus, under the three dimensions of teaching effectiveness, IS, STR, and SLA, with an overall look, was very effective.
2. Regarding to Research Objective 2, it was found that, through the comparison of the two-tailed independent samples *t*-test, there was no significant difference in

Grades 9-12 students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness in music class at ASB, GV campus, according to their gender.

3. Regarding to Research Objective 3, it was found that, through the comparison of the one-way ANOVA test, there was no significant difference in Grades 9-12 students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness in music class at ASB, GV campus, according to their years of enrollment.
4. Regarding to Research Objective 4, it was found that, through the comparison of the two-tailed independent samples t-test, there was no significant difference in Grades 9-12 students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness in music class at ASB, GV campus, according to their music instrument played.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the current study showed that Grades 9-12 students, on average, regardless of their demographic differences, perceived their music class teachers at ASB, GV campus, as effective on the three dimensions of teaching effectiveness, IS, STR, and SLA. Based on that, this section discusses the relation between the findings of the current study and previous ones.

### *Gender*

The SPTEQ findings and the result of the inferential statistics showed that there was no significant difference between students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness according to gender, and both male and female students agreed that music teachers are teaching effectively in the high school music class at ASB, GV campus. This result aligns with the study of Sutcliff (2011), which was conducted to examine secondary students' perception of teacher quality, and has found that there was no significant difference between male and female students in the dimension of instructional strategies and student-teacher relationship. On the other hand, the result of the current study seemed to contradict what Green (1997), and Abeles (2009) have found, that according to gender stereotype, in other words, masculinity and femininity, perceived the practice of learning music differently by joining different music activities and choosing different instruments to play.

However, the image of masculinity and femininity is changing through times (Gauntlett, 2002). Comparing to the society in the past, the representations of gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are more complex and less stereotyped. Hence, the media is a rapid changing tool that shape and represent the gender images (Scott, 2008). The changing of these factors in the present society could possibly influence students' perceptions towards music activities to a level that, according to the current study, revealed no significant difference of male and female students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness of high school music class at ASB, GV.

### *Years of Enrollment*

Indicated by both SPTEQ findings and the inferential statistics, there was no significant difference among students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness regardless of their years of enrollment, and all three groups of students agreed that music teachers were teaching very effectively under the STR subscale. On the other hand, according to the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation (2015), who stated that



it takes time and commitment to build a classroom culture that teachers and students can trust each other. This statement seemed to contradict the findings of the current study; however, the period of building a trustful relationship may vary from one condition to another. This finding suggested that the period to foster a trustful student-teacher relationship in the learning environment of music class at ASB, GV campus, can be less than nine months.

#### *Music Instrument Played*

It is widely accepted that there are different skill sets and techniques to play different instruments (Krenz, 2006; Wessels & Moore, 2012). According to the teaching experience of the researcher as a music teacher, the skill sets and techniques are different in learning string and percussion instruments. Therefore, in order to teach multiple instruments, teachers have to apply various instructional strategies to deliver knowledge appropriately to students. Indicated by both results of the SPTEQ finding and the inferential statistics, Grades 9-12 students of music class of ASB, GV campus, agreed that teachers were teaching effectively in the classroom on these three dimensions of teaching effectiveness, no matter which instrument they were teaching. In other words, the way teachers deliver knowledge, techniques, and skills of playing and performing a string instrument or percussion instrument, interact with students, and conduct learning assessments were perceived by students as effective, regardless of which instrument they were teaching during the academic year 2016-2017.

Therefore, the non-significant difference of students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness of high school music class of ASB, GV campus, according to music instrument played did not contradict with the fact that there are differences in learning various instruments, but indicated that teachers have to be capable to meet students' needs through teaching. According to the teaching experience of the researcher, as long as a teacher is able to fulfill those needs, students can perceive the teaching practice as effective, regardless the differences of playing and learning different instruments.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the current study, there are some recommendations made for students, teachers, administrators, and for future researchers.

#### *Recommendations for Students*

This research study revealed that teaching practice of high school music class at ASB, GV campus, was effective regardless of students' demographic differences. In other words, teachers were able to modify their teaching to meet the needs of students, no matter if they are male or female, enrolling for the first time or not, or choose to play string or percussion instrument. Therefore, students in order to have the best learning outcome from high school music class of ASB, GV campus, should consider how to reflect and react to the lesson taught, so the effective teaching can transform to one's own skill and techniques of playing an instrument.

### *Recommendations for Teachers*

Although teaching practice of high school music class at ASB, GV campus was perceived by students' as effective in general, there were still students who resulted in low learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers need to consider the possible cause of why their perceived effective teaching was not transformed to students' better learning outcomes. Initiatives should be taken to help students, especially those who were not learning well, to better their capability of absorbing the delivered knowledge, and transforming the knowledge to their own skills.

### *Recommendations for Administrators*

The research of the current study revealed that teachers were teaching effectively in the classroom of high school music class at ASB, GV campus, administrators could do support outside of classroom such as, helping and encouraging students that were struggling in class to better their classroom learning strategies, or giving council to students prior selecting the course, so students can get to choose the suitable course to learn.

### *Recommendations for Future Researchers*

The current study focused on students' perceptions on three teaching effectiveness dimensions (instructional strategies, student-teacher relationship, and students' learning assessment), according to gender, years of enrollment, and music instrument played. In order to find out the possible cause of students' difference in learning outcome of high school music class at ASB, GV campus, and develop the curriculum so students can receive better education, there are few directions that future researchers can follow to investigate such as

- other dimensions of teaching effectiveness (e.g., organization of class work, holding high expectation towards students, and enthusiasm towards teaching career);
- other demographic information of students (e.g., interest level towards music learning, and family support condition); and
- perception of different stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents).

On the other hand, based on the SPTEQ findings of students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness and the result of one-way ANOVA test, the researcher suggested that the period to build up a student-teacher relationship in high school music class of ASB, GV campus, which can enhance students' learning (Brand, 2009; Pianta et al., 2012), can be less than an academic year, in the current study, less than nine months. Therefore, in order to find out the period of building a trustful student-teacher relationship, future researcher may consider examining and collecting data of students' perceptions in a shorter period of time.

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