

# GETTING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE MUSICAL STRING ENSEMBLE INNOVATION (MSEI) TOWARD A MEANINGFUL LEARNING IN MUSIC AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## Abstract

*This study aimed to describe the impact of the MSEI program on students' musical performance as well as the perspectives of the immediate completers and the different stakeholders of the school. A mixed-method research design was employed. Forty-five students participated in the study. These students were selected through an audition. Before undergoing series of training, they underwent a pre- evaluation to determine their capabilities. Four pedagogical strategies in teaching music were utilized. Results of the post-evaluation reveal that there was an evident increase in the perceived musical skills of the students. In addition to this, the students described how their participation in the program positively affected their studies. It is suggested that a thorough evaluation of the program be conducted to determine the long-term effect of the program on the students.*

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**Key words:** musical skill, series of training, perspective, audition, pedagogical strategies, capabilities, participation in the program, teaching music, positive effect in the studies, and long term effect in their studies.

## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of music education varies around the world. Based on "The Music Trust", there is a significant difference as to how western countries teach music to their students. Sweden, Norway, and Finland were noted to have taught music more effectively than United States, Australia, Canada, and England. An explanation for this could be the lack of teaching of music in classrooms such as in Australia where it was observed that about 63% of classrooms do not teach music. In England, though about a million children have access to musical instruments, there is still an issue of underfunding. The same problem can be observed in the US. On the other hand, in Canada, the major observable problem was the lack of

qualified teachers to handle the subject. It can be noted that those who currently teach it do not have any musical background or do not have any experience teaching it at all. Generally, the study found that when students obtain their undergraduate degrees all over the world, they received only 17 hours of music education, a quite saddening finding that should be noted by curriculum developers and implementers.

In the Philippines, music education plays a crucial part in the curriculum. Based on the Curriculum Guide for Music released by the Department of Education in 2016, music education in the country is valued for it seeks to provide an avenue for learners to express themselves artistically, promote cultural literacy, and most importantly develop nationalism. To achieve this, schools are encouraged to enhance students' "keen sensitivity to environmental and musical sounds".

As stated in Borromeo (n.d.), Philippine music education is currently unthreatened for most schools observe R. A. 4723 a.k.a Music Law. There is a wide array of available materials, qualified teachers, and student assessments. Also, effective practices are observed well. Borromeo further added that with the help of varied government and non-government agencies, music education in the country is expected to be more global and inclusive regardless of trends in music and teaching.

However, this assumption is not enough to support that music is indeed used optimally in schools. Oftentimes, music education is limited to the teaching of music alone whereas the use of it as a strategy in teaching is limited. It can also be noted that fewer Filipinos pursue a career in music.

It has been a common notion that music is vital to every social gathering. In the Philippines, on almost every special occasion, people rent *videokes* (*video-karaoke*) for their family members to bond through singing. In schools, music is a performance everyone seeks to witness. In the country, indigenous groups and even ordinary groups of people gather to sing whether to foster bonds, inculcate a sense of nationalism or reminisce memories. This is how important music is for it seeks to uplift, inspire, unite, and build a group of people.

Baker (2007) mentioned that people are most often attracted to music due to the construction of the song itself such that every song has its special tune, lyrics, or point of view. In most instances, people regard songs as a reflection of who they are or what they feel at the moment. With this, the notion that music is universal and can apply to almost everyone (De Klein, 2016; Whiteman, 2015) can be accepted. Sacks (2007) stated that music is essential to humans as it is important in their life and communication.

Music has varied uses to people. Music is a means to express oneself. It could help a person visualize himself as somebody or simply tell people that this is his personality based on the music he listens to or plays. This is because music communicates the innermost feelings and thoughts of a person. Music is also a great reminder of successes as well as failures a person experiences. Lastly, it inspires and forever promotes, nourishes, and sustains hope in the heart and soul of every woman and man (Dukes, 2014).

Music can also be used for healing and balancing a person's mind and body. Welch, et al. (2020) pointed out that there were studies that can prove that music benefits the mental and physical well-being of a person. Music can be a source of happiness, energy, and introspection (Greenberg, 2016).

In the teaching and learning aspect, music is a substantial tool to support cognitive development (Jaschke, et al., 2018). Music stops behavioral issues among children. It makes recalling effective, promotes autonomy and creativity.

Music is as well vital for human communication. Sacks (n.d.) and Hanlon (n.d.) pointed out that it is an effective means of emotional communication between people. A common example of this is when a man makes use of music to win the heart of the woman he loves. In the Philippines, they call this practice as *harana* or serenade where a man usually sings a *kundiman* or a love song with the accompaniment of a guitar and some men who act as background singers.

Lastly, music affects a nation. Briones (2018) expressed that regardless of differences in religion or political belief, people seem to unite when it comes to music. This is evident in the song "Bayan Ko" which was particularly famous during the time of the EDSA People Power I. The song was a means of unification for Filipino people to fight the 15 years of Marcos' regime. This is the reason why the Department of Education continues to promote music as an important aspect of the K-12 curriculum.

Despite the benefits of music to people, the current state of music teaching and learning as far as education is concerned is a bit bleaker and just about surviving. Varied challenges are faced by music teachers in different countries.

Foremost among the woes is financial sufficiency and adequacy. There are not enough funds to support curriculum requirements such as the availability of facilities and instruments needed to promote music education. This is seen in most countries around the globe, the Philippines included (Hayes,2015).

Second is the belief that music cannot be a source of living. Most of the students who have the inclination to learn music and enhance their skills are hesitant to try because they are not motivated by their parents, guardians, or

immediate community. This is because some parents prioritize educating their children to careers they could get a job and earn well. A lot of parents believe that music is only for the faint-hearted, the lazy, the indigenous, and those left behind by civilization. Music will not make one healthy and so it must be sacrificed for more academic subjects which can help one land a professional job which pays a lot.

The third challenge is the cultural implication. It cannot be denied that at present music in many eastern countries are affected and quickly replaced due to the propagation of western cultures. This is due to feelings of inferiority and an effect of propaganda techniques. Felipa Padilla De Leon, an Australian national artist, once noted that a lot of youths in her country do not value their music because they were not given the chance to cultivate it. This is because of the presence of western pop and commercial music which are often advertised on radio, television, and movies.

Another challenge that music education faces is the political implication of music teaching. Though music and politics are not quite related, history has proven that what happens to an era is reflected in the music they choose or create. An example of this is Korean Music- a type of music that originated during the time that Koreans focused on developing their culture for it is slowly affected by other forms of music. The Korean government, to avoid the diminishing interest of their people in their music, localized the promotion of their music, and hindered foreign music to reach their country. The Korean Wave is indeed making a name in the world now as more people around the globe patronize it. In the case of the Philippines, a lot of songs were written during the Spanish, Japanese, Marcos, and even present times that reflect the political landscape. Bamboo's song *Tatsulok* is an evidence of this. In his song, Bamboo explained the different social classes in the Philippine society primarily pointing out the corrupt politicians governing the country. In the case of political implication, a knowledgeable teacher not just in music but also in history is needed as he/she could provide a wider perspective of why things happen and why people created certain forms of music during those times.

The last challenge is the availability of qualified teachers. The absence of licensed and competent music teachers poses a problem to the education itself as teaching music is not simply teaching the concepts, it takes passion and certain skill to be able to inculcate in students the importance of music to appreciate one's culture and unite a nation. Currently, a lot of music teachers around the world are not licensed to teach music but have accepted the job for certain reasons such as unavailability of specialized subjects and lack of available jobs that will give security of tenure. Most of these teachers only have rote learning a. k. a. "oido" or no learning at all in music. If cases such as this persist in music education, fewer students will most likely get interested in learning music or even pursue a career in it.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education tries to maintain its standard in music education in secondary schools by implementing effective music pedagogy and programs.

Pedagogy is the method and practice of teaching especially an academic subject (Coughlin, 2013). Music pedagogy is defined as the use of vocal or instrumental sounds or both combined to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion. Garnet (2013) referred to it as the study of the methods and principles of music instruction.

Jorgensen (2008) said that teaching music can be quite difficult especially when the teacher lacks the passion to teach it. He encouraged teachers to be delightful in teaching it for this greatly affects how students perceive the subject.

According to SunStar Philippines (2017), the art of teaching music is when there are passion and a lot of effort and dedication to encourage students to love the subject. Another is when one takes the initiative of improving his or her craft by gaining more knowledge about the subject (Whitmire, 2018).

Choosing the appropriate music pedagogy deals with two important aspects: principles and methodology. The first is principles. These will serve as the guide in planning, formulating, and writing methods. The methods should be varied because their effectiveness is largely based on the environment and the musical inclination, emotional maturity, cultural upbringing, and indigenous foreign influences of the learner. A teacher must only use methods which suit the needs and interest of the learner. To understand this, the teacher must have a solid background of all learning theories and child development principles.

Next is methodology. An important part of the method is motivation. One of the most effective ways is auditory. The music or song must awaken, agitate, promote, and uplift. Eventually, this will all lead to the maximization of the interest of the learner.

There are a lot of music teachers around the world who became popular due to their unique approach to teaching music.

First was Zoltan Kodaly who was named a great teacher of music for he embraced the culture of developing passion among his students to achieve meaningful learning (Kuiper, n.d.). Kodaly supported the idea that music plays an important role in the intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual development of a child. His teaching methods included sight-reading, mastering basic rhythm and pitches, utilizing folk music, and composing quality songs used to teach children.

There was also Carl Orff and Dorothee Gunthee who were famous for their Orff-Schulwerk method whose style of teaching was to help students discover their abilities through using Western music (Shamrock, n.d.). There are four stages in this method which are imitation, exploration, improvisation, and composition.

Another was Shinichi Suzuki who was known for his Suzuki method. He did not just teach his students to play musical instruments but also helped them see the beauty of life and develop their character. His way of achieving this is to learn music in the same way as one learns the mother tongue (Niles, 2012).

Next was Emily Jacques Dalcroze noted for her Dalcroze method (Estrella, 2018). It is sometimes referred to as “rhythmic gymnastics”. This style is known for the use of “eurythmics” which incorporates rhythm, structure, and musical expression with movement. The goal of this method is to develop cognitive and kinesthetic awareness through sound. This method believes that music should be able to express purposeful movement.

Another famous music teacher was Edwin Gordon known for his Gordon’s Music Learning Theory. His method explored how children learn music through “audiation” which he defined as “hearing and comprehending in one’s mind the sound of music that is not or may have never been physically present”. Gordon believed that everyone is born with musical aptitude (Approaches to Music Education, 2020).

Lastly, Dr. John Feirabend who was famous for his Conversational Solfeggio, a method characterized by the use of musical instruments and at the same time, immersing students in the nature of their own culture (Feirabend, n.d.).

All of these methods were proven to be effective in the teaching of music and are adapted by teachers around the globe. Meanwhile, in this study, one proposed strategy for the teaching of music is the Musical String Ensemble Innovation (MSEI) which is in connection with the Special Program in the Arts of the Department of Education. This strategy is primarily used in Junior High School.

The Special Program in the Arts (SPA) is DepEd’s initiative to provide specialized education to students who have a special interest or gift in the field of arts whether in music, graphic arts, or theatre arts (Leocario and Pawilen, 2015). The program commenced in the year 2000 and continues to be implemented in the K-12 curriculum. Students under these programs take the same subjects as students in the Regular Program and are given additional subjects in the field of arts to enhance their talents. Usually, the availability of both human and material resources is considered by schools whether to offer a special program in the arts or not.

One feature of the Special Program in the Arts is the creation of musical ensembles in schools.

The origin of ensembles dates back to the earliest times of indigenous groups such as Aetas, Dumagat, and Igorots. These groups of musicians often play their music on special occasions such as harvest time, weddings, even when asking for a baby. In Western Africa such as in Nigeria, there are also musical ensembles such as those coming from the Hausa of the North, the Yoruba of the South, and the Ibo of the middle topography.

At present musical ensembles are not only participated by professional musicians. Schools in the Philippines have put up their respective ensembles to cater to the interest of musically inclined students. They already have their rondallas and lyre bands.

Estrella (2019) mentioned that ensembles are categorized based on size. A group composed of two to eight musicians is referred to as a small ensemble whereas large ensembles comprised of a large number of musicians are referred to as orchestra. Examples of such are Film Symphony and Phil Harmonic Orchestra.

People join ensembles for varied reasons such as to develop one's social and emotional well-being, teamwork, organization skills, application of learning in private lessons, watch a conductor, or for experience (Scots College, 2017; Galindo, 2009). They can harness their potential and skills (Leehey, 2011) and at the same time give a sense of fulfillment. Indeed, ensembles can be advantageous to students.

In the field of music education, ensembles play a vital part. Such is the case in this action research conducted about Musical String Ensemble Instruments (MSEI). This strategy in teaching and organizing musically-inclined students particularly in the field of playing stringed musical instruments is implemented in a public secondary school in Pampanga. The goal of the program is in relation to DepEd Memorandum Order No. 192 entitled *2011 National Music Competitions for Young Artists (NAMCYA)* which was organized to holistically develop students by inculcating in them a love for music, a commitment to enhance their potentials and cultivate a sense of nationalism by playing music that reflects their culture. The use of this strategy could help to provide awareness to those who lack perspective in the use of musical ensemble and its possible benefits among its members. Most importantly, the program serves to engage students in the so-called meaningful learning.

Mayer (2002) emphasized that the goal of any teaching-learning process is retention and transfer. By *retention*, he explained that what the student has learned must remain in his/her mind over long periods. This process particularly deals with

concepts, ideas, and understanding. Meanwhile, Mayer stated that *transfer* refers to the ability to put into practice what one has learned (Mayer and Wittrock as cited in Mayer, 2002). These two objectives are necessary to identify if one has *no learning*, practiced *rote learning* only, or engaged in *meaningful learning*.

In coming up with the program used in this study, the concept of meaningful learning was borne into mind. According to Jonassen, Howland, Moore, and Marra, as cited in Jonassen and Strobel (2006), meaningful learning is the process of engaging students to “active, constructive, intentional, cooperative, and working on authentic tasks”. By *active* and *constructive*, they mean that the student has to directly participate in all tasks prepared by the teacher, and out of these tasks, the student thinks creatively and critically on how to understand concepts as well as apply them to actual situations. They also pointed out that learning should be *intentional* meaning for any instruction to be effective, there must be a desire on the part of the learners to learn. As proven by many studies, the lack of willingness on the part of the learner to engage in an experience of learning would just be tantamount to shooting at nothing. Learning must also be *cooperative* meaning as a social animal, all learners must learn to engage in a situation where they need to learn to work with others as they try to learn something new. This is highly important as learners can learn from their peers as well. Their feedback to one another will enable them to accept constructive criticism easily and with this, they value camaraderie even in the area of learning. Lastly, meaningful learning entails the creation and facilitation of *authentic tasks*. Since learning is paralleled to real-life experiences, classroom activities or any activity in school must be created in such a way that whatever knowledge or skill the students will learn they would be able to apply it in real-life situations.

In his study, Shuell (1990) enumerated the three stages of meaningful learning which are the initial, intermediate, and terminal phases. Shuell (1990) explained that it is in the initial stage that the learner acquires knowledge and tries to relate it to previous knowledge. This is processed until the intermediate part where knowledge gained is processed in the mind and serves to be retained there. Lastly, in the terminal phase, the learner transfers to actual situations what he has learned.

In this study, aside from enabling students to learn different musical skills, the concept of meaningful learning in music in relation to the Special Program in the Arts was dealt with.

Primarily, this study aimed to describe the overall impact of the MSEI program on Junior High School students particularly in learning music which would serve as a basis for enhancing pedagogical practices in teaching music. Specifically, this study sought to describe: (1) the MSEI Program (rationale, objectives, activities, evaluation mechanisms) juxtaposed with the Special Program

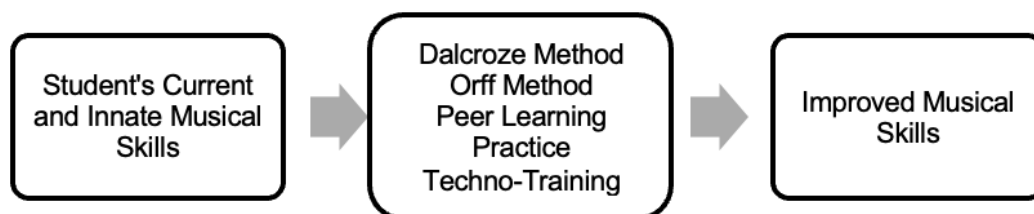


in the Arts (SPA), (2) the results of the performance of the students in the pre and post-assessment, (3) the perspectives of the immediate completers of the program in terms of its impact on their lives and (4) the perspectives of the other stakeholders in terms of the MSEI's impact to the school and the community.

“Learning by doing” is an important aspect of UNESCO’s Education Strategy of 2014. In this research, this principle was considered in the application of the MSEI program where students were engaged in the process of playing musical instruments for them to appreciate their craft as artists and for them to develop a sense of love for their country and their culture. Studies show that students who play musical instruments develop high learning capacity, self-efficacy, and leadership skills which help them in school (Journal of Educational Psychology, 2019; Gouzouasis, 2019). Also, high school students who are engaged in music are significantly better in English, Science, and Math subjects (University of British Columbia, 2019).

To prove the effectiveness of the principle in this study, four pedagogical practices were utilized to develop students’ musical skills: Dalcroze method, Orff method, Peer Learning Practice, and Techno-training.

The paradigm shows how these approaches were utilized.



The study complies with DepEd Order No. 192 s. 2012 which seeks to provide musically-inclined students the opportunity to harness their skills while giving them a possible source of income in the future. With the results of this study, the following benefits are expected to be acquired by the following people:

**Music Teachers.** Insights obtained from this study can provide music teachers a new approach to handling music classes particularly in handling musical ensembles.

**School Administrators.** Music teaching and learning are quite a challenge for the past decades especially that there is a common notion that music could not bring food to the table. By supporting this program, school administrators do not

only promote music education but do as well give financially-challenged but musically – gifted students the opportunity to have an alternative source of income in the future. In this way, parents are awakened that music could be a passion as well as a job in itself. Second, support in this program could be a means for the unification of the immediate community. Since musical ensembles often have days when they perform in front of the community, school members, as well as the immediate local community, can be united. Lastly, this program is a promotion of local culture. This is achieved when local instruments are used to play local songs.

**Future Researchers.** This research can be an excellent source of information about the advantages of creating musical ensembles. Since the research only dealt with teaching musically- inclined but financially-challenged students, any researcher may find it worth exploring especially in the area of igniting the interest in music of non-musically inclined individuals.

Meanwhile, the study is only limited to the current students included in the program.

The following concepts are defined for a better understanding of this study:

**Ensemble.** It pertains to a small or large group of people playing musical instruments (Estrella, 2019) to accompany vocal music. In this study, the same definition was used.

**Meaningful Learning.** It is the process of engaging learners in authentic tasks where they would be able to create their knowledge of a concept by relating it to previous knowledge and afterward applying this knowledge to actual situations (UNESCO' International Bureau of Education, 2021)

**Melodica.** It is a wind instrument with a small keyboard controlling a row of reeds and a mouthpiece at one end (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). In this study, it is one of the instruments used by the students to participate in the program.

**MSEI PROGRAM.** In this study, it refers to the program implemented which sought the development of Junior High School students` music learning abilities. This program is posed as an intervention to cater to students' needs to develop their abilities thus, the effectiveness of it was tested in this study.

**Ukulele.** A member of the guitar family of instruments, it generally employs four nylon strings to produce music although it may have six to eight strings as well (The Vault, n. d.). In this study, the ukulele is one of the musical instruments used by the researcher in the implemented program to boost the musical inclination of students.

## METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method research design particularly a sequential-explanatory design. According to Wipulanusat, Panuwatwanich, Stewart, and Sunkpho (2020), a sequential- explanatory design begins with the quantitative phase followed by the qualitative phases. It can be conducted by surveying for the quantitative phase and then by conducting an interview and thematic analysis in the qualitative phase to support the results in the quantitative phase. This is an effective design since the results of the qualitative phase will provide a better understanding and interpretation of the quantitative results (Creswell as cited in Research Rundowns, n. d.).

In utilizing this research design, the following procedures were observed.

In the quantitative phase, the pre and post evaluation through a survey form were administered to the students before and after the implementation of the program. The pre and post-test evaluation data dealt with the self-perceived readiness and ability of respondents to use the ukulele as part of the musical ensemble. Such data were interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistics. The instrument that was used in this phase was created by the researcher and was validated by a head teacher, school principal, and Education Program Supervisor (EPS). It is comprised of 15 questions that covered the following areas: the musical inclination of the student, current musical ability, pre-existing knowledge on playing songs, and musical understanding. The same instrument was used in the pre and post evaluation of the program.

A test of normality was conducted to show whether the data was normal or non-normal. Based on the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, results show that two data sets are non-normal. The pretest data registered a statistic of 0.915,  $df=45$ , and with a  $p$ -value  $>.05$  and the posttest registered a value of 0.770,  $df=45$ ,  $p$ -value  $>.05$ . The results of the normality test indicate that the data are non-normal. Therefore, a non-parametric test, namely, Wilcoxon signed-rank test, was adopted to compare the difference between the two data sets.

In the qualitative phase, the primary data used are the attestations or the results of the brief interview conducted after the students did a culminating activity after months of training under the program. Such data proved to be useful in describing the impact of the ensemble on the students and the immediate community. Steps undertaken included a verbatim transcription of spoken attestations and subjecting them to thematic analysis. The thematic analysis conducted covered three significant steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the open coding, an idea was a lift from every statement which answers the assigned interview question. In the axial coding, lifted ideas from every statement were categorized whereas in the selective coding, a final theme was

derived out of all the categories created. (See *Appendix III*). The interview guide used in this phase was created by the researcher and again validated by experts which composed of a head teacher, principal, and an EPS.

There were forty-five (45) students who participated in the quantitative phase of the study comprising of 19 males and 26 females. Among the males, four have their musical instruments while the remaining 15 were lent by the school. As with the females, only five have their musical instruments, thereby 21 of them borrowed from the school. These students were official enrollees of the concerned school who were selected through an audition, musical background, enthusiasm, and willingness to participate in the ensemble and the study. To be part of the program, aside from musical inclination and being a student at the subject school, parent consent was required from the students to make sure that their parents or guardians were knowledgeable of the activity they were participating in. The parent consent indicated the willingness of the parents and their clear understanding of the purpose of the program and the responsibilities their children are to commit to.

In addition to stating the purpose and activities included in the study in the consent form, all participants were made aware of the practice of Data Privacy such that they were given an assurance that the information they will share in the study will only be used for the study and no such information shall be spread to other platforms and people.

The data acquired in the quantitative phase were processed in three steps. First, data were organized through descriptive statistics particularly using frequency and percentage to show the number of responses per question in both pre and post-evaluation. After this, data in both surveys were processed through a normality test to identify whether data were distributed equally. Lastly, since the data obtained indicated that they are “potentially symmetrical”, a Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test was conducted using SPSS v. 25 to identify if the program indeed made a difference to the students. According to Yinglin (2020) and Scheff (2026), Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Test is an effective statistical assessment used when assessing the same subjects using the same instrument after being exposed in a certain condition. In this tool, a paired difference test was conducted.

Meanwhile, participants of the qualitative phase comprised of the different stakeholders of the school which included 30 immediate completers of the program, teachers, school administrators, and some people in the immediate community who were able to witness the growth of the students in the program. A random interview was conducted among them immediately after the program and the obtained data were processed through thematic analysis. The responses of the immediate completers and other stakeholders of the school served to answer objective nos. 3 and 4 of this study. A consent form was also signed by the respondents in the qualitative phase.

## FINDINGS

### Description of the MSEI Program (Rationale, Objectives, Activities, Evaluation Mechanisms) Juxtapose with the Special Program for the Arts

Music String Ensemble Innovation (MSEI) Program is an activity organized to put into reality the objectives of the Department of Education stipulated in DepEd Memorandum Order No. 192 as well as in adherence to DepEd's Special Program in the Arts (SPA). It primarily sought to inculcate in the minds and hearts of the students the love for music, enhance their musical skills and God-given talents, constantly make them aware that practicing self-discipline is needed in the improvement of their skills, foster patriotism through the playing/rendering of nationalistic songs and music, keep them closer to the Almighty by playing solemn heavenly tunes and prepare them to become future professional musicians someday. The rationale for the program is that in the development of the students' musical skills, their academic performance will escalate and that they may use the skill as a source of income when they grow up.

To further these objectives, various activities were conducted starting from the audition, the assessment of musical capabilities, building of working committee, conducting of practices, seeking possible sponsors to enable qualified students to participate in the program, conduct pre and post-assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and have the community witness the talents of the students. (See Appendix VI for the complete details of the program.)

It is in organizing these activities that the program was able to meet the objectives of the SPA and DepEd Memorandum Order No. 192 which is to provide an avenue for students to develop their innate talents in arts particularly music. Students who did not have the opportunity to play music due to lack of instruments were given the instruments to utilize so they could enhance their skills. Students who only dreamt of joining a group so they could perform in front of people and showcase their skills were allowed to do so. Lastly, they were allowed to appreciate music as part of schooling and not simply a part of a dream.

### Performance of the Students in the Pre and Post-Assessment

Table 1 indicates the perception of students as regards their musical readiness. Among the items in the pre-evaluation, item no. 1 which is *manifests willingness in learning a musical instrument*, item no. 14 which is *increased musical proficiency in MAPEH subject through the MSEI program*, item no. 15 which is *improves musical understanding and abilities through ukulele playing* and item no. 3 which is *manifests interest in playing musical instrument* have the most number of "yes" in the pre-evaluation. These questions reflect the students' state of readiness for the program.

**Table 1**  
**Pre-evaluation results**

Question	YES	Percentage	Rank	NO	Percentage	Rank
1. Manifests willingness in learning musical instrument	36	80 %	1	9	20 %	14
2. Has innate musical inclination	6	13 %	5	39	86 %	10
3. Manifests interest in playing musical instrument	35	77 %	3	10	22 %	12
4. Performs pop music in strumming string style	0	0 %	10	45	100 %	5
5. Plays simple chord pattern to enhance musical competencies	2	4 %	6	43	95 %	9
6. Manifests competencies in musical instrumentation through the MSEI program	1	2 %	8	44	97 %	7
7. Performs music of the lowlands with regards to parameters using string instruments	0	0 %	11	45	100 %	4
8. Knows the proper tuning and knowledge of musical elements and style in using the ukulele	2	4 %	9	43	95 %	6
9. Plays selected songs/accompany music of Highlands of Luzon	0	0 %	12	45	100 %	3
10. Composes simple primary chords adapting folksongs of Luzon	0	0 %	13	45	100 %	2
11. Performs 'Atin Cu pung Singing' with expression and style	24	53 %	9	21	46 %	6
12. Knows how to read notes, follow rhythm, and uses the string and melodic	1	2 %	12	44	97 %	3

13. Plays and sings the tune of various folk songs of Luzon	1	2 %	13	44	97 %	2
14. Increased musical proficiency in the MAPEH subject through MSEI program	36	80 %	9	9	20 %	6
15. Improved musical understanding and abilities through ukulele playing	36	80 %	10	9	20 %	5

Table 2 shows the post-evaluation results of the program implemented. As gleaned on the table, *manifests willingness in learning musical instrument, manifests interest in playing musical instrument, increased musical proficiency in the MAPEH subject through MSEI program and plays and sings the tune of various folk songs of Luzon* has the most number of responses. The least items which the students think they were not able to fully-develop include *know how to read notes, follow rhythm and uses the string and melodic (16%), compose simple primary chords adapting folksongs of Luzon (38%), and plays selected songs/accompany music of Highlands of Luzon (71%)*.

**Table 2**  
**Post-evaluation results**

Question	YES	Percentage	Rank	NO	Percentage	Rank
1. Manifests willingness in learning musical instrument	45	100 %	2.5	0	0%	13.5
2. Has innate musical inclination	42	93%	9.5	3	7%	6.5
3. Manifests interest in playing musical instrument	45	100%	2.5	0	0%	13.5
4. Performs pop music in strumming string style	44	98%	5	1	2%	11
5. Plays simple chord pattern to enhance musical competencies	43	96%	7	2	4%	9
6. Manifests competencies in musical instrumentation through MSEI program	40	89%	11	5	11%	5
7. Performs music of the lowlands with regards to parameters using string instruments	43	96%	7	2	4%	9
8. Knows the proper tuning and knowledge of musical elements and style in using the ukulele	36	80%	12	9	20%	4

9. Plays selected songs/accompany music of Highlands of Luzon	32	71%	13	13	29%	3
10. Composes simple primary chords adapting folksongs of Luzon	17	38%	14	28	62%	2
11. Performs 'Atin Cu pung Singsing' with expression and style	42	93%	9.5	3	7%	6.5
12. Knows how to read notes, follow rhythm, and uses the string and melodic	7	16%	15	38	84%	1
13. Plays and sings the tune of various folk songs of Luzon	45	100%	2.5	0	0%	13.5
14. Increased musical proficiency in the MAPEH subject through MSEI program	45	100%	2.5	0	0%	13.5
15. Improved musical understanding and abilities through ukulele playing	43	96%	7	2	4%	9

### Test on the Normality of Data Results

Since the data are not normally distributed, a non-parametric test which is the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to analyze the data in the pre and post-evaluation.

**Table 3**  
**Results of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Negative Rank	Positive Rank	Z	p-value
Pretest	4.000	1.08711	0	23	-5.890 <sup>b</sup>	0.000
Posttest	12.644	0.77329				

Based on the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test, ratings improved between the pretest (M=4.00, SD=1.087) and posttest (M= 12.64, SD0.773). The results show zero negative ranks and 45 positive ranks with a mean rank of 23. The test statistic shows a statistically significant difference in ranks between the pretest and the posttest (Z=-5890, p-value=.000). Therefore, there is a statistically significant increase in musical skills among the participant-junior high school students.

The result of the Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-evaluation and the post-



evaluation. It indicates the high effectiveness of the MSEI program in improving the musical skills of the students.

### **Perspectives of the Immediate Completers of the Program in terms of its impact on their lives**

Three (3) themes emerged under the participants' perspectives on the impact of the program in their lives: *useful skill in class performances, fount of inspiration* and *memory aid*.

***Useful Skill in Class Performances.*** Most of the students who completed the program expressed that the skill they acquired in joining the ensemble can be applied to their group activities and class performances.

***A Fount of Inspiration.*** The students expressed that aside from utilizing their skill in playing the ukulele in group activities, they also make use of it as an inspiration in going to school every day.

***Memory Aid.*** As proven by research, utilizing music aid students in learning. One of the students who participated in the study mentioned that his/ her knowledge of playing ukulele aids him/her in memorizing lessons.

### **Perspective of the Stakeholders in terms of the MSEI's Impact on the School and the Community**

Four (4) themes emerged from the perspectives of the school administrators, teachers and some members of the community who witnessed the development of the program and its impact to the school: *a wellspring of honor and happiness for the school and the immediate community, developed an understanding of musical technicalities and were able to apply them, a demonstration of students' commitment to their art, and a magnificent performance.*

***A wellspring of honor and happiness for the school and the immediate community.*** As perceived by the school administrator, teachers and some members of the immediate community, the musical ensemble organized is a source of pride and happiness for the school.

***Developed an understanding of musical technicalities and were able to apply them.*** After having been trained about the different chords and strumming techniques, the students were able to exhibit mastery of musical skills related to playing ukulele.

***A demonstration of students' commitment to their art.*** A participant noted that the students' dedication to improving their craft as well as excitement to

show to the crowd their hard work for several months were well-exhibited during their performance.

**A magnificent performance.** Generally, the performance of the students was lauded for exhibiting excellent performance.

## DISCUSSION

Music is an underrated discipline, especially in the Philippines. Though it is one of the seven arts, not many Filipinos appreciate it as a means of increasing their income as well as improving students' interest in going to school. In this study, the program's impact on the students and the school was explored. Primarily, the goal of the program was to correspond to the requirement of DepEd Memorandum Order No. 192 as well as the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) to address the musical needs of the students. To do this, auditions, performances, and pre and post evaluation were conducted. In addition, to support the students who have talent in music but are not capable to buy their own musical instruments, were provided by the school by asking the kind assistance of some benefactors. These were used by the students during their practices and in their actual performance.

Generally, the program was able to abide by the objectives of the Special Program in the Arts (SPA). The SPA as one of the programs of the Department of Education endeavored not only to engage students in activities that will promote the enhancement of their talents in humanities' subjects such as music, theatre arts, and visual arts. This program is also beneficial as it seeks to transform the creativity and talent of students into useful skills which they could use in their future careers (Lal-lo National High School, Cagayan, n.d.).

In the program conducted, students not only enhanced their talent in playing musical-stringed instruments but also developed other things such as valuing music as a means of self-expression, a guide to studies, and also a way to interact with the community. These are useful skills that they could utilize in the future.

Because of this, MSEI proved to be a meaningful learning experience for the students. Learning to play musical instruments as well as working with a group of people with whom they share the same interests encouraged the participant-learners to actively, constructively, wilfully, and cooperatively work on authentic tasks which are not just useful in school but in their future lives. Music is not just a place for them to express themselves but also to connect with people and prepare them for a better future. As discussed by Vallori (2014), a successful meaningful learning experience adheres to a set of principles that include strengthening imagination and intelligence through creativity and considering learners' needs by innovating the school curricula. In this way, MSEI is the innovation schools need to address the musical needs of their musically-inclined students.

As follows are the results of the quantitative analysis undertaken.

Quantitative data obtained in the pre and post-evaluation yielded positive results as regards students' perceived readiness in terms of attitude as well as skills in music in joining the ensemble. As gleaned on Table No. 1, only items number 1, 3, 14, and 15 obtained high scores. Most of these items focused on the attitude of the students towards learning the ukulele. In Table No. 2, it can be observed that there is a significant increase in the frequency per item, and only items pertaining to technical musical skills such as reading notes and composing songs obtained a low percentage. Orlando and Speelman (2012) noted that music reading skills are vital skills for any musician who wish to learn new musical pieces as well as play along ensembles. They noted that with exposure to ensembles, it could be advantageous for any budding musician to acquire these skills. It could be possible that due to the limited time that the students were exposed to the program, they were not able to grasp this.

Also, as shown in the result of the Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test, the data obtained in the pre and post-evaluation yielded that the program made a significant difference in the students' musical skills and understanding. As explained in the study of Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, and Tarrant (2003), music plays a very important role in the lives of students. With a good attitude towards music, learning becomes easier to facilitate since it is an indispensable tool that aids the fast acquisition of learning. In addition to this, a good musical intervention provides various benefits not only to academic performance and musical appreciation but also in terms of the development of communication, cognitive, social, emotional and motor skills (Suthers and Niland, Sarkamo, et al., Ho et al., Costa-Giomi, Schellenberg, Forgeard et al., Standley, Jentschke and Koelsch, Southgate and Roscigno, Yazejian and Peisner-Feinberg and Strait et al. as cited in Dumont, Syuri na, Feron & van Hooren, 2017). Indeed, as emphasized by Orlando and Speelman (2012), ensemble participation can enhance the musical skills of a person. -

Meanwhile, based on the interview conducted among the participants as regards the effect of learning ukulele in their lives as students, the following themes emerged: *Useful Skill in Class Performances, A Fount of Inspiration, and Memory Aid.*

The goal of DepEd Order No. 192 s. 2012 is to make use of music as a tool for learning and at the same time provide an alternative means of livelihood to students. Analyzing the findings gathered in the interview among the students, it can be seen that their knowledge of ukulele and their participation in the musical ensemble provided corollary benefits to their studies. First, students made *use of this skill in their classroom performances* such as when teachers ask them to make jingles. As Shamrock (n.d.) explained, the utilization of music in teaching helps

students discover their innate abilities (Mason, n. d.; Leehey, 2011). They not only exhibit their talent in playing musical instruments but also develop some skills such as communicating with other people, developing confidence, enhancing the creative side of the brain and becoming resourceful. In this aspect, student-participants of the musical ensemble were able to showcase that their knowledge of the instruments is not just advantageous on actual musical performances but also in the classroom.

The second theme that emerged is *a fount of inspiration*. As many students nowadays get distracted with their gadgets or resort to addiction and other vices, the incorporation of music in the curriculum particularly creating a separate organization that will develop the musical skills of students will lessen the probability of students engaging in these socially unacceptable practices. Due to their participation in the ensemble and because students were able to use their talent in their classes, they became more enthusiastic in attending their classes and practices. As emphasized by Hanlon (n.d.), music connects to the innermost feelings and thoughts which in turn bring inspiration and hope to the heart (Dukes, 2014). With this concept, the encouragement of students to participate in the musical ensemble would prove to be beneficial to their studies and their development in general.

Lastly, music can be a *memory aid* to students. Many experts have proven that music can be a good aid in memorizing (Fulton, 2014). Since some students are born musically-inclined, this innate talent can be useful in remembering difficult lessons or in learning things easily. The reason why music proved to be useful in memorization is that when one listens to music, the left and right sides of the brain are activated (Florida National University, 2021). Stanford University's School of Medicine discovered in 2007 that when a person listens to music, the brain is moved to concentrate. This is because the brain tries to anticipate the music and the lyrics that are coming and with this transition, the brain generates the process called event segmentation. This process allows the brain to divide information and then generate them as a whole in return. This is the reason why music tends to help any learner to memorize and understand things effectively.

In addition to the perceived effect of the MSEI program to the lives of the students, the perception of the school and community proved to be vital as well in the conclusion that MSEI was indeed effectively implemented and had achieved its target objectives.

The school and the community are the first audiences of every musician-dreamer. The appreciation of the community and the support of the immediate others give students moral support as well as the binding reason why should they pursue their passion. In this study, four important points emerged as to how the community perceived the creation of the ensemble based on their preparations as

well as on the performance they exhibited. These include: a *wellspring of honor and happiness for the school and the immediate community, developed an understanding of musical technicalities, and were able to apply them, a demonstration of students' commitment to their art and magnificent performance.*

Hallam and MacDonald as well as Cliff and Hancox as cited in Jones, Smith, Mattes, and Cseh (2019) explained the different effects of music on the community such as it provides psychological benefits to the members of the community. According to them, music enhances the well-being of anyone listening to it and it also boosts one's self-esteem and freedom of expression. Moreover, it diminishes the negative mood of a person.

In this study, it described how the community perceived the creation and performance of the ensemble. Many of them praised the participants for the magnificent performance they showcased particularly how this brought honor to their school. Also, the participants noted how the ensemble was able to develop the technical skills of students relative to playing the ukulele as well as their passion to improve their craft. In a general sense, what the ensemble was able to promote is not just the development of the students' musical skills but the appreciation of the community of the importance of music as a binding force that gathers all the members of the community united in one medium. It also opened the eyes of the members of the community about the gift of music which is bestowed on some people, in this study, the students. With this, discrimination of musicians is discouraged and that its promotion to improve students' commitment to their studies as well as use this in the future is encouraged.

As stated in the study of Wilson and MacDonald (2019), aside from the fact that music helps individuals to develop their psychological, creative, and social development, there are factors in the community that are affected and are affecting them. This includes boosting the self-confidence of the musicians due to the praises of the community, feeling happier, more relaxed, and enthusiastic in engaging in workshops and having the ability to socialize even in unusual situations and the excitement to mingle with other people. Indeed, an effective musical intervention is successful with the support of the community where it is situated.

In general, the study was able to prove the usefulness of ensembles in promoting music education and in giving opportunities for musically-inclined students to develop their skills. As explicitly stated in The Scots College (2016), participation in musical ensemble promote the development of the following: teamwork, social and emotional wellbeing, experiential learning, organizational skills and communicating with a conductor. The study did not only address these skills but also opened the eyes of the wider school community about the importance of music to students.

## **Summary of Conclusions**

This study was able to prove the noticeable impact of creating ensembles in schools. First, it showed how students' attitudes and skills have improved since they were subjected to pieces of training. Second, it proved how encouraging students to join musical ensembles can inspire them in their studies as well as utilize this talent in their school activities and lastly, the school and the community's appreciation of the efforts of the musical ensembles prove to be important as they are the silent spectators of how relevant the program is to the students as well as to what extent did the program become successful if related to the objectives of DepEd Order No. 192 s. 2012 and the Special Program in the Arts. Most importantly, the program proved to be a meaningful learning experience for all the participants as they did not only get a better understanding of musical concepts and enhanced their skills but also opened a door for the learners another means of livelihood which they could use in the future. It was both training and life for them.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

Analyzing the results obtained in this study, the following are suggested:

Since music training was proven to be vital to students' education, schools are encouraged to set up their musical ensembles fitted to the interest of their musically-inclined students. This is to provide opportunities to all students with these talents and interests to practice their penchant for their benefit and for the school and community in general.

Since there are many financially-challenged but musically-gifted students in many schools, school administrators are encouraged to be resourceful in coming up with ways on how they can support the creation of musical ensembles as well as look for qualified musical maestros who may provide the best training to the students.

One of the noticeable features of the musical ensemble involved in this program is the utilization of nationalistic music. As a means to promote national patrimony, musical ensembles to be created in other schools must be encouraged to play local music or those which are cultural in their very nature. This will deepen the students' nationalism and patriotism as well as those who will be listening to their performance.

Lastly, a more intensive evaluation of the program is advised to future implementers of the program particularly as regards the long-term effect of the involvement of the students to musical ensembles. As noted in DepEd Order No. 192 s. 2012, the goal of the program is not just to aid students in their studies but more importantly make use of this talent and training as a source of livelihood in the

future. A tracer study that will show the impact of the possible utilization of this training to the students in the future would be beneficial as to the improvement of the program.

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