



**FACULTY OF MUSIC**  
**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA MALAYSIA**

**INTEREST TO LEARN MUSIC AMONG NON-MUSIC STUDENTS IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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**Abstract**

*Interest to learn music in school, especially at the secondary level poses many issues in Malaysia. The fact that not many secondary schools offer the subject offers less opportunity for secondary students to choose to learn music. However, for the schools which offer music, one may assume that students would take the opportunity to select to take music. The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of secondary students towards music learning and factors that influence non-music students' interest to learn music in secondary school. A total of 175 participants participated, consisting of 106 female students and 69 are male students. A questionnaire was used to gather data from the subjects. With the adaptation of the expectancy-value model of motivational theory by Eccles & Wigfield (1988), seven-point Likert scale with different motivational construct of the expectancy value theory such as importance, usefulness, enjoyment and difficulty in implementing the interest to learn music subjects in school, could be measured. Findings show that there are various factors that influence non-music students' interest to learn music. These factors are themselves, music activities, teacher, parent, and peers. It is found that most non-music students would be interested to learn music at school if they were given the chance to study it. Most of non-music students perceive that music learning in school is very enjoyable and very important to them especially in playing a music instrument. Overall, it shows that most non-music students in school show high interest towards studying and playing a music instrument.*

**BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

According to Pintrich & Schunk (1996), motivation to learn is one important element which propels a person into action to achieve some objective. Motivation usually "arises due to inducement factors which may be internal and/or external" (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, p.96).

There are some factors which motivate students to be interested to learn something. According to Asmus (1987), in music, generally there are five major common factors that attract student's interest to learn, namely "music involvement, music background, music classroom environment, musical ability and musical talent" (p. 259). Musical ability and talent in music is usually found among students that had been exposed to music education at a young age. In addition, effective teaching techniques and lesson delivery also can increase motivation to learn music among students (Ames, 1988, 1992; Teachout, 2001). Classroom environment, a factor that teachers can manipulate, has also been found to be a significant influence on student motivation for participation in school music programs (Asmus, 1987).

Beliefs about their own ability are also seen as a factor that encourages students' motivation to learn music (Asmus, 1887). According to Eccles (1983, p. 34), "children or adults who are confident with their musical ability should be more motivated to study music". Students who have high self beliefs about their own ability, have more confidence and tend to put in more effort to do well in given tasks (Ames, 1990; Bandura

1994). Albert Bandura (2004) believes students who have high self-efficacy will be able to learn and do well at activities in class. According to Schunk (2004), self-efficacy influences students' choice of activities, which means, students with low self-efficacy for learning might avoid some learning tasks, especially those that are challenging to them. In short, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to persist and put in more effort at a learning task than students with low self efficacy.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In contrast to other countries, the music subject is offered in limited number of public secondary schools in our country. Generally, the schools that offer this subject and implement it actively are mostly located and focused in urban areas or when they have a trained music teacher posted in their school. One possible reason for small schools not offering this subject is because of a lack of facilities for supporting the music teaching and learning needs. Besides, important rooms like Science and Computer Labs take more precedence compared to the music room. Furthermore, budget needs for music are also very high. The lack of funds to fulfill the music needs resulted in many schools opting out of offering the music subject or any music program at school especially in rural schools. This therefore results in students not being given opportunities to learn music formally at the secondary school level.

Random survey to investigate lower secondary non-music student's opinion and perceptions toward the music subject showed an encouraging interest to learn music. According to Rodzi (2009), a music teacher at SMK Dato Hamzah Klang, some factors that influence students not to learn music at school is because of the Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) results that they obtained which did not fulfill the requirement to join the music class. In addition, some parents also do not allow their children to study music at school because of the worry that it might affect their performance in core subjects.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that music is considered as unworthy to be learned. The inclusion of musical activities and the music curriculum in private schools shows the otherwise. Unfortunately, not all students can afford to learn music in private music schools because of the fairly high fees and expensive instruments. It is also not affordable for some middle and lower class family. Unfortunately, random survey by the researcher in urban area shows that only a small percentage of students come from wealthy families and can afford to study music at the private sector.

This study is conducted to investigate the factors that influence non-music students' interest to learn music. Since secondary students studying in schools offering the music program have the option or choice to learn it, it would be interesting to know how many of them are actually interested to learn music at school and what are the factors which have influenced their interest. Generally, these factors may comprise of individual (intrinsic) and situational (extrinsic) forces which plays a role in the decision to learn something (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002). Individual interest in learning is seeking new information concerning something the student already knows about and love (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002). Many students say that they are interested to learn music because they like music. A broader range of factors such as family background, school and classroom environment, music program, parental encouragement, peers, teachers

and society are some important factors which have an effect on a person's interest to learn music.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research is to clarify non-music student's perception about learning music in school and to investigate why they did not choose to take the music subject in school.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How do non-music students perceive the teaching and learning of music in school?
2. How interested are non-music students in secondary school to learn a musical instrument?
3. What are the factors that influenced non-music student's interest in learning music in school?

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Findings from this study will provide knowledge about non-music students' perceptions on music learning in secondary school and their interest to learn music. The findings may also help music educators and the policy makers at the Ministry of Education to understand secondary students' attitudes towards the school music program.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are various factors that influence student's interest to learn music. Other than the nature of the music value itself, which charms children and adults, it is also a challenging branch of knowledge. However, the music subject's existence has been an issue since it was introduced in schools in Malaysia since the 1980s. This is mainly caused by society's typical mindset that music is only suitable as entertainment and therefore, not fit or significant enough to be taught as an academic subject, together with other core subjects in school. Besides that, music is assumed as entertainment alone, and not beneficial for human intelligence (Johami Abdullah, 1993, p. 28.)

However, for students who have the chance to learn music at school, their personal interest in music is influenced by some factors that motivated them to learn it, in spite of the subject's position in school. There are several factors that influence student perception and interest towards the formal learning of music at school. The following section discusses some of these factors.

### **Music Education in Malaysia**

The music education subject has been implemented as a compulsory subject in primary school since the year 1983. Today, apart from the primary school this subject is also taught in secondary school. The curriculum elements in the primary music educations

intend to give opportunities to the students to experience and appreciate music and at the same time, giving the basic understanding of basic musical concepts (KBSR, 1998, p. 1). On the other hand, the primary music education aims to expose and provide musical experiences to music so that students will appreciate the music, make music and develop their musical potential (KBSM, 2004, p. 5). Since its implementation, music education has gone through many changes especially in the syllabus. The curriculum consists of traditional music such as Cak Lempong, Gamelan, Kompang and many more.

### **Factors which influence student interest to learn music at school**

Literature and research conducted overseas in the past ten years have generated many interesting findings regarding music education. Some factors can be identified as the most common reasons for students' interest in learning music. These factors are discussed below.

#### ***School factor***

The environment of music teaching and learning in school plays a major part in attracting students' interest. According to Campbell (2002), school is the one place where students get music experience, different from the one they learn from outside. Standard content of a music curriculum may consist of music appreciation, music listening, singing and music making activities. Ghazali (2006) stated that designing a curriculum that could fulfill every aspect of children's diverse and musical backgrounds maybe a difficult task. Campbell also proposed that the teaching and learning of music in class be made more fun and must be related to the students' own experience with music itself. This will help students to be more interested in music and they can relate to it more easily. Acorn (2002) stated that the orchestral and brass band activity are also vital in raising students' interest. Having a band in school, will help students who never got any chance to learn it outside and to experience playing it (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998).

#### ***Teacher factor***

The issue of having enough trained music teachers in our schools seems to be a prevalent problem until today. At present a lot of teachers who teach music in the primary schools are often those not properly trained in music. Many of them were directed to teach the music subject by the school management in the light of their experience and inclination towards music (Johami Abdullah, 1993). Teachers need to be equipped with sufficient musical knowledge so they could teach well. Every teacher must be strong in music theory and should be able to play musical instruments.

According to Colwell (1995), "trained teacher approaches compared to those untrained teacher in music can be very different with regards to the approach, presentation, method and accuracy in giving music knowledge to students while concurrently using the necessary classroom management skills to facilitate maximum learning" (p. 7). Colwell stated that the effective approach or presentation style of music teachers will arouse more interest in the students to learn music. On the other hand, Marshall (1998) felt that the key for success with all students is appropriate teacher praise. Marshall stated that the teacher's role is to promote music achievement, effort, and encourage perseverance to help develop habits for success that would make them lifelong learners.