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Music Proficiency Level of Elementary Teachers and Its Relationship to Learners' Music Proficiency Level

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Abstract

This study assessed the music proficiency level of elementary teachers and examined its relationship to the music proficiency of Grade 6 learners in selected public schools in Flora District, Apayao. The study used a descriptive, comparative, and correlational research design. the study gathered data from five Grade 6 teachers and 121 learners through a 50-item music proficiency test based on Grade 5 curriculum standards. Teachers' profiles, including age, educational attainment, years of experience, and music-related training were also collected.

Findings revealed that most teachers demonstrated low to moderate proficiency, with no formal training in music. Learners, meanwhile, scored poorly, particularly in complex elements such as melody and harmony. ANOVA confirmed a significant difference between teacher and learner proficiency levels. However, no strong correlation was found between teacher demographic profiles and learner performance. Qualitative responses highlighted key challenges including lack of training, limited instructional time, and difficulty teaching advanced musical concepts. A Comprehensive Music Capacity-Building Program (CMC-BP) was proposed to address these gaps.

Keywords: *music proficiency, teacher training, spiral progression, music education, learner performance, curriculum gaps, public elementary schools*

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INTRODUCTION

Music instruction is a fundamental component of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum in the Philippines. It follows a spiral progression, requiring learners to build on prior knowledge of the eight core elements of music: rhythm, melody, form, timbre, dynamics, tempo, texture, and harmony as they advance through grade levels. Despite this framework, observations reveal that many learners enter secondary school without mastery of essential musical concepts.

Teachers play a vital role in facilitating musical understanding, yet in many public elementary schools, generalist teachers with limited music training are tasked with delivering a specialized subject. This gap in teacher proficiency may result in poor learner outcomes, especially in advanced concepts like harmony and melody. As emphasized by Zakaria et al. (2021), teacher expertise significantly influences student performance.

This study assessed the music proficiency level of Grade 6 teachers in selected public elementary schools in Flora District, Apayao, and examined its relationship to their learners' music proficiency. Teacher profiles, including age, years of teaching, educational attainment, and music-related training—were analyzed in relation to their own proficiency and that of their students. The study also identified challenges in teaching music and proposed a capacity-building intervention.

The results aim to inform teacher training programs and curriculum planning in music education, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes and instructional practices in elementary schools.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Generally, this study aimed to determine the music proficiency level of elementary teachers and examine its relationship to the music proficiency of Grade 6 learners in selected public elementary schools in Flora District, Schools Division of Apayao. Specifically, it sought to:

1. assess the music proficiency level of teachers based on the eight elements of music;
2. evaluate learners' proficiency levels in the same elements;
3. determine the relationship between teachers' profile and their own proficiency levels;
4. determine the relationship between teachers' profile and their learners' proficiency levels;
5. examine the relationship between learners' profiles and their proficiency levels;
6. identify the challenges teachers encounter in teaching music; and
7. propose appropriate interventions based on the findings.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-comparative-correlational research design with a qualitative component to assess the music proficiency levels of elementary teachers and their relationship to learner performance. Conducted in three public elementary schools in the Flora District, Apayao—referred to as School A, School B, and School C—the study focused on institutions that serve as primary feeder schools to a local secondary school where low music proficiency has been noted among new students. The respondents included five Grade 6 teachers and 121 Grade 6 learners, with all teachers participating and learner samples determined through Slovin's formula at a 95% confidence level.

Two research instruments were used for data collection: a Teacher Profile Questionnaire that gathered information on teachers' age, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and involvement in music-related seminars or training; and a 50-item Music Proficiency Assessment based on the Grade 5 curriculum, designed to evaluate both teacher and learner proficiency across eight musical elements. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize profiles and test scores, ANOVA to examine differences in proficiency levels, and Pearson correlation analysis to explore relationships between teacher profiles and music proficiency. Additionally, qualitative data from open-ended teacher responses were subjected to thematic analysis to identify challenges encountered in teaching music.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Teachers

Five Grade 6 music teachers from three public elementary schools participated in the study. Their profiles include age, years of teaching, highest educational attainment, and seminar attendance related to music. As shown in Table 1, most teachers held master's degrees, yet none had attended formal music-related training. Teaching experience ranged from 3 to 18 years.

These findings reveal that while teachers possess relatively strong educational backgrounds, the lack of music-specific training may hinder effective instruction, especially in advanced musical concepts.

Table 1. Teacher Profile

School	Age	Years Teaching	Highest Educational Attainment	Seminars Attended in Music
School A	41	10	Master's Degree	No
School B	27	3	Master's Degree	No
School C (Section 1)	51	18	Bachelor's Degree	No
School C (Section 2)	42	5	Master's Degree	No
School C (Section 3)	37	10	Bachelor's Degree	No

Profile of Learners

The study included 121 Grade 6 learners across five sections from three schools. The learner profile includes mean age, sex distribution, and final academic grade in music from Grade 5. Table 2 presents a summary of this data.

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Learners had a balanced gender distribution and typical age range for Grade 6. Final grades in music ranged from 82% to 90%, though these academic grades did not always reflect actual proficiency, as shown in later test results.

Table 2. Learner Profile

Section	Mean Age	Male	Female	Final Grade in Music (%)
School A	11.8	16	12	84
School B	11.7	12	14	85
School C (Section 1)	11.6	12	11	82
School C (Section 2)	11.8	12	13	82
School C (Section 3)	11.5	11	11	90

Teacher and Learner Population

The distribution of teacher and learner respondents from each participating school is summarized in Table 3. Each Grade 6 teacher was paired with their corresponding learner group for the music proficiency assessment.

A total of five teachers and 121 learners participated in the study. Each teacher handled one specific class section, ensuring that the proficiency assessment was contextually linked to their own group of learners.

Table 3. Teachers and Learners Population

School	Number of Teachers	Number of Learners
School A	1	27
School B	1	25
School C (Section 1)	1	23
School C (Section 2)	1	25
School C (Section 3)	1	21

Teacher Proficiency Levels

Teachers were assessed using a 50-item multiple-choice test based on the Grade 5 music curriculum. Their raw scores were converted into percentages and categorized according to a predefined scale. As shown in Table 4, teachers' scores ranged from 24 to 30 out of 50.

Proficiency Level Scale:

- ≤ 25 (≤ 50%) – Poor Proficiency
- 26–30 (51–60%) – Low to Moderate Proficiency
- 31–37 (61–75%) – Moderate Proficiency
- 38–45 (76–90%) – High Proficiency
- 46–50 (91–100%) – Very High Proficiency

Three teachers demonstrated low to moderate proficiency, while two scored in the poor category. These results suggest gaps in content mastery, particularly in advanced music elements such as harmony and melody.

Table 4. Teachers' Scores and Proficiency Levels

School	Score (out of 50)	Percentage	Proficiency Level
School A	29	58%	Low to Moderate Proficiency
School B	30	60%	Low to Moderate Proficiency
School C (Section 1)	24	48%	Poor Proficiency
School C (Section 2)	28	56%	Low to Moderate Proficiency
School C (Section 3)	24	48%	Poor Proficiency

Learner Proficiency Levels

Learners were assessed using the same 50-item music proficiency test administered to their teachers. Mean scores per section were calculated and categorized using the same proficiency scale.

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Proficiency Level Scale:

- ≤ 25 (≤ 50%) – Poor Proficiency
- 26–30 (51–60%) – Low to Moderate Proficiency
- 31–37 (61–75%) – Moderate Proficiency
- 38–45 (76–90%) – High Proficiency
- 46–50 (91–100%) – Excellent Proficiency

As shown in Table 5, all learner groups fell under the **Poor Proficiency** category. Despite variations in classroom performance and academic grades, all sections showed low proficiency levels in the objective assessment, indicating a need for instructional improvement and content reinforcement in music.

Table 5. Learners' Scores and Proficiency Levels (Summary)

School	Number of Learners	Mean Score (out of 50)	Mean Percentage	Standard Deviation	Proficiency Level
School A	27	18.96	37.92%	6.78	Poor Proficiency
School B	25	20.16	40.32%	5.92	Poor Proficiency
School C (Section 1)	23	14.35	28.70%	4.63	Poor Proficiency
School C (Section 2)	25	18.12	36.24%	6.41	Poor Proficiency
School C (Section 3)	21	18.57	37.14%	6.23	Poor Proficiency

Learner Performance by Musical Element

An item analysis was conducted to determine learner performance across each of the eight elements of music. Table 6 shows the percentage of correct responses per musical element per section.

Learners consistently performed best in Rhythm and Timbre, with scores above 50% in most sections. The weakest areas were Harmony, Texture, and Melody,all higher-order concepts in music. These findings suggest foundational elements are more effectively learned, while advanced musical concepts require improved instructional support.

Table 6. Learner Performance by Musical Element (Percentage of Correct Responses)

Musical Element	Items Covered	School A	School B	School C S1	School C S2	School C S3
Rhythm	1–6	70.37%	70.67%	54.35%	68.80%	63.81%
Melody	7–29	36.89%	40.18%	33.80%	38.47%	37.35%
Form	30–33	42.59%	48.00%	39.13%	35.00%	40.47%
Timbre	34–38	55.56%	60.80%	48.00%	60.00%	56.19%
Tempo	39–46	38.43%	44.75%	30.75%	38.63%	35.56%
Texture	47–48	33.33%	28.00%	34.78%	24.00%	28.57%
Harmony	49–50	18.52%	20.00%	13.04%	20.00%	16.67%

Teacher Performance by Musical Element

To further analyze instructional capacity, teacher scores were also examined by musical element. Table 7 shows the percentage of correct responses for each element, based on grouped item numbers.

Teachers outperformed learners across all elements, particularly in **Rhythm**, **Timbre**, and **Form**. However, their scores in **Melody**, **Harmony**, and **Texture** remained below 60%, indicating areas that require further mastery. This aligns with their reported instructional challenges and reinforces the need for targeted professional development in higher-order musical concepts.

Table 7. Teacher Performance by Musical Element (Percentage of Correct Responses)

Musical Element	Items Covered	School A	School B	School C S1	School C S2	School C S3
Rhythm	1–6	83.33%	88.33%	73.33%	85.00%	80.00%

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Melody	7–29	52.17%	55.65%	47.83%	56.52%	50.43%
Form	30–33	62.50%	68.75%	56.25%	68.75%	60.42%
Timbre	34–38	66.67%	73.33%	60.00%	73.33%	66.67%
Tempo	39–46	60.42%	64.58%	54.17%	64.58%	58.33%
Texture	47–48	50.00%	60.00%	40.00%	60.00%	50.00%
Harmony	49–50	35.00%	40.00%	30.00%	40.00%	35.00%

Comparison of Proficiency Levels Between Teachers and Learners

To determine whether a significant difference exists between the music proficiency levels of teachers and learners, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Table 8 presents the F-values and p-values per school section.

The results show statistically significant differences in proficiency levels between teachers and learners across all schools ($p < 0.05$). Teachers consistently scored higher, as expected. However, the overall low performance of both groups, especially in complex elements like **Harmony** and **Melody**, points to the need for improved content delivery, more instructional time, and structured training opportunities.

Table 8. Comparison of Proficiency Levels Between Teachers and Learners

School	F-Value	P-Value	Remarks
School A	14.3	0.001	Significant Difference
School B	10.3	0.003	Significant Difference
School C (Section 1)	8.72	0.006	Significant Difference
School C (Section 2)	9.58	0.004	Significant Difference
School C (Section 3)	11.5	0.002	Significant Difference

Relationship Between Teacher Profile and Learner Proficiency

This part of the study explores whether teacher characteristics—such as age, teaching experience, and educational attainment—are associated with their learners' music proficiency scores. Descriptive statistics were used due to the small sample size.

Teachers with master's degrees tended to have learners with slightly higher scores, but the relationship was not statistically significant. Interestingly, the teacher with the least experience (School B) had the highest-performing class. While years of service and age alone did not predict learner proficiency, trends suggest that teacher training and subject-specific preparation—rather than tenure—may be more critical in influencing learner outcomes.

Teacher	Age	Years Teaching	Highest Degree	Learner Mean Score (%)
School A	41	10	Master's	37.9
School B	27	3	Master's	40.3
School C (Section 1)	51	18	Bachelor's	28.7
School C (Section 2)	42	5	Master's	36.2
School C (Section 3)	37	10	Bachelor's	37.1

5 Relationship Between Learners' Profile and Their Proficiency Level

This section examines whether learners' demographic profile—specifically age and sex—has any relationship to their performance in music proficiency. Two data sets were analyzed: (1) their final academic grade in Music and (2) their test scores from the 50-item music proficiency assessment.

Table 10. Learners' Profile

Section	Mean Age	Male	Female	Mean Grade in Music (%)
School A	12	16	11	83
School B	11	12	14	85
School C (Section 1)	11	12	11	82
School C (Section 2)	11.5	12	13	82
School C (Section 3)	11.5	11	11	90

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Despite slight variations in age and gender distribution, no consistent patterns emerged between learner profile and performance. For example, School B had the youngest learners and also the highest average Music grade (85%), yet School C Section 3, with the same mean age, had the highest final grade (90%) but only an average test score.

All learner groups scored below 50%, classifying them under "Poor Proficiency." The data further suggest that final grades in Music may not reliably reflect actual musical understanding as tested by standardized assessments. This reinforces the importance of using objective tools to measure music proficiency across curricular elements.

Table 11. Learner Music Proficiency Scores

Section	No. of Learners	Mean Test Score (out of 50)	Mean Test Percentage	Proficiency Level
School A	27	18.96	37.92%	Poor Proficiency
School B	25	20.16	40.32%	Poor Proficiency
School C (Section 1)	23	14.35	28.70%	Poor Proficiency
School C (Section 2)	25	18.12	36.24%	Poor Proficiency
School C (Section 3)	21	18.57	37.14%	Poor Proficiency

6. Challenges Encountered by Elementary Teachers in Teaching Music

Based on open-ended responses in the teacher questionnaire and follow-up discussions, four major interrelated themes emerged regarding the difficulties teachers face in delivering music instruction effectively.

a. Lack of Music-Specific Background and Training

All five Grade 6 teachers reported minimal to no formal training in music. Most admitted relying solely on **self-study**, online videos, or pre-made lesson plans to prepare for their classes. One teacher stated:

"I have very little background in music and have never attended any seminar or training related to it. I just search online or ask colleagues when I don't understand a lesson."

This lack of training directly correlates with their proficiency assessment scores, particularly in advanced concepts like harmony and texture.

b. Limited Proficiency Relative to Curriculum Demands

Teachers shared difficulty in delivering higher-level competencies, especially those introduced in upper grades through the spiral progression model. Their own assessment results mirrored their self-reported limitations, confirming instructional gaps. One teacher noted:

"How can I teach harmony and triads when I myself never learned them formally?"

c. Time Constraints vs. Breadth of Curriculum

Music is scheduled for only **one hour per week**, yet teachers are expected to cover multiple learning competencies. Many said that the limited time forces them to either rush through topics or omit complex lessons entirely. A common sentiment was:

"There isn't enough time to teach, let alone let students practice and perform."

This concern also helps explain the poor learner scores across schools, particularly in melody, harmony, and texture.

d. Escalating Curriculum Complexity Without Support

Teachers voiced frustration with the increasing difficulty of competencies from Grades 1 to 6, especially under the **spiral progression** approach of the K–12 curriculum. As competencies become more complex each year, no accompanying **systematic training** is provided for generalist teachers. One teacher emphasized:

"The curriculum moves forward, but our training doesn't. We're expected to know more each year, but we are not equipped."

8. Proposed Music-Related Training Program or Intervention

Based on the study's findings, which revealed that teachers generally demonstrated low to moderate proficiency in music, particularly in advanced elements such as melody, harmony, and texture, and reported a lack of formal music training, a structured and contextualized training program is proposed to improve their competence and instructional delivery.

The recommended intervention is the Comprehensive Music Capacity-Building Program (CMC-BP)—a school-based, a training course designed specifically for generalist elementary teachers with limited formal background in music.

Objectives of the Program:

Generally, the CMC-BP aims to develop the music proficiency of teachers, it specifically aims to:

- equip teachers with essential knowledge and practical strategies for teaching the eight elements of music.
- boost teacher confidence in delivering music lessons aligned with the curriculum.
- address instructional gaps in teaching higher-order musical concepts such as harmony and form.

Proposed Training Structure of the CMC-BP:

The Proposed Training Structure of the CMC-BP consists of 3 different phases to comprehensively address teachers' professional development gap:

Phase 1: Basic Music Literacy (2 days)

This phase focuses on building foundational musical knowledge and practical skills to ensure that teachers are confident in understanding and applying basic music concepts.

- Overview of the 8 elements of music: rhythm, melody, form, timbre, dynamics, tempo, texture, and harmony

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- Reading musical notation (notes, rests, pitch names, time signatures)
- **Hands-on practice using body percussion and solfeggio (Curwen hand signs)**
- Composition of simple rhythmic and melodic patterns

Phase 2: Pedagogical Strategies for Generalist Teachers (2 days)

This phase bridges theory and practice by equipping teachers with pedagogical tools and teaching strategies for music instruction, particularly in low-resource settings.

- Demonstration and practice of low-cost music activities (e.g., rhythm games, vocal warm-ups)
- Strategies for teaching advanced elements (melody, harmony, texture) without relying on formal instruments
- Cross-curricular integration of music with other learning areas such as Filipino, Araling panlipunan even in mathematics.
- Peer teaching with observation and feedback

Phase 3: Instructional Planning and Assessment (1 day)

The final phase emphasizes practical application through lesson planning, assessment development, and the creation of sustainable classroom resources.

- Crafting daily lesson logs and instructional guides
- Designing performance-based assessments and rubrics
- Creating visual aids and kinesthetic materials
- Assembling a "mini-music corner" using recycled and accessible materials

The **CMC-BP** directly addresses the lack of training and content mastery identified in this study.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the proficiency level of elementary teachers in music and its relationship to the music proficiency of their learners in selected public elementary schools within the Flora District. The key findings reveal a consistent pattern: both teachers and learners demonstrated low proficiency in music, with significant gaps observed in advanced musical elements such as melody, harmony, and texture.

Despite teachers performing better than learners, their average scores fell within the *low to moderate* proficiency range. Notably, none of the participating teachers had attended music-specific training, and all reported minimal background in music education. This lack of training corresponds with the challenges they encountered in classroom delivery, particularly when teaching complex or higher-order musical concepts.

Learners, in turn, consistently scored in the *poor proficiency* category. Their strongest performance was in rhythm, while the weakest was in harmony. The absence of a significant relationship between learner demographics (age and sex) and proficiency suggests that the quality of instruction, rather than learner profile, is a more influential factor in music achievement.

The study also found that the K to 6 spiral progression model increases the demand for teacher expertise, yet teachers often lack the necessary support and professional development to meet these escalating expectations. Time constraints and limited instructional materials further compound the challenge.

In response to these findings, the study proposes the **Comprehensive Music Capacity-Building Program (CMC-BP)** a structured, school-based training initiative aimed at equipping generalist teachers with the content knowledge and pedagogical strategies needed to teach music effectively.

Declaration of No Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that there is no conflict of interest and this article is his original work.

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