

# Enhancing Music Literacy through a Marching Band Training Workshop

Salvador Berja<sup>1</sup>, Emily Berja<sup>2</sup>

Bicol State College of Applied Sciences and Technology, PHILIPPINES  
ssberja@astean.biscast.edu.ph<sup>1</sup>; ejberja@astean.biscast.edu.ph<sup>2</sup>

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**Abstract** - *Music is an integral part of the educational system of the Philippines and has the objective of developing the significant and unique value brought by music to one's life. Just as harmony is created in the assonance of notes, so the practice of music in a group produces solidarity, unity of hearts and friendship. However, music literacy has not been given an emphasis in terms of music education. The study is conducted to enhance the music literacy of the students through a marching band training workshop. The participants of the above-mentioned training workshop were the selected musically inclined students of Naga City School of Arts and Trades. There were 25 students who participated in the workshop handling varied instruments. The training incorporated the different basic concepts in music: time signature, rhythm, note reading and playing of musical instruments starting from whole note up to sixteenth note. Based on the evaluation results of the student's musical performance the training workshop is effective. The result of the study also implied that the training built the students confidence in playing instruments and as observed produce a harmonized sound.*

**Keywords:** *Music, Music Literacy, Band Training, Workshop, Musical instruments*

## INTRODUCTION

In today's society, it would have been a difficult time to operate without the development of literacy skills. Music, on the other hand, is seen as an activity for pleasure, in which students have fun and take a break. However, music has a great deal of value and can teach students many of the skills needed for well-rounded development.

Music is powerful [1]. It can bring people together; it can be a medium of understanding and instrument of peace. Maybe this is the reason why music is part of the educational system. Educators believed in the magic of

music and its significance to one's life. No matter what language we speak, what color we are, what religion we belong, what and to whom we believed in, music proves we are one.

Literacy refers to knowledge of social value that has many facets, including knowledge of everyday issues and the ability to make decisions on technological, natural-environmental or societal issues [2]. The current definition of literacy suggests that there are non-cognitive components in connection with any given content area, so literacy refers to psychological constructs that involve both empirical information and components of capacity that are formed culturally within a given social context. The definition of James Paul Gee [3] links literacy directly with communication, which emphasizes that literacy is not just about words on paper but also about verbal exchanges. In Gee's definition, it is important to see literacy as a social act. This aligns with Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, which notes that social contact is important for improving children's comprehension [4] (Culatta 2012). Music naturally creates a social environment, where students are working together to produce a common result. They become comfortable interacting with peers in new ways and learning from one another by listening.

Music literacy refers to the ability to read and write musical notation and to read notation at sight without the aid of an instrument [5]. As observed most individual know what a music is however not all understand music. Thus music literacy is being thought in education platform. Unfortunately most people use popular music in the modern music syllabus that contributes to musical illiteracy amongst music students. Because of the informal methods and circumstances in which popular music is often learned, traditional music notation can sometimes be relegated to secondary importance and can be considered irrelevant by some as a result [6]. It is in the same way Gudmundsdottir [7] stated that,

*The apparent difficulties a large number of music students are faced with in the endeavour of mastering adequate music-reading skills has prompted many*

*music educators to abandon music-reading instruction or at least minimise the emphasis on music literacy.*

It is apparent that many music instructors agree that teaching musical literacy is part of music education, however few instructors actually devote significant time to teaching it [8]. High level of speed information and processing occurs in music reading [7]. In the same way, Burton (2015) explained that learning music is paralleled to the way an individual learns a language[9].

In Kodaly's approach in music education, maximizing the musical experience of students in classroom is the most powerful means of shaping musical taste and attitude [10]. For example, the aversion of students to solfège as an activity in the classroom led to the development of a nonsolfège system to improve music literacy skills [11]. These and other pedagogical ideas will corroborate empirical findings on the ability to shape the attitudes towards music among students. In the same way, Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory [12] gives light to the study that not all students learn music at the same pace and some may have wanted to learn music and some may not.

Many countries value music education and some have funded programs, trainings and workshop of its kind. In Ireland, Music Literacy trainings and workshops were available in different platforms[13] However, in Australia, 63% of schools do not offered any music instruction. Likewise, in Australia, Britain and the United States music curriculum is less common; it differs from district to district and, sometimes, from school to school. In Canada, 38 % of respondents to the latest survey indicated that music is either taught by teachers with no music experience or not taught at all. Similarly, music programs in the United States, especially in public schools, are frequently underfunded or completely abandoned under budgetary pressure. Although infrastructure continues to be an concern for music education in England, a network of 123 music hubs was set up by the government around the country in 2012 to provide more than 1 million children with access to musical instruments [14].

In the Philippines, Music literacy is incorporated in the educational system. Where students are thought on how to read notes, understand rhythm, play instruments in different notes and other basic music concepts. Thus it can be seen in the yearly Bicolandia Festival of Inang Peñafrancia, where group of students or a so-called marching band brought a lively songs spread in the streets.

With this in mind, music literacy of the selected students in Naga City School of Arts and Trades were assesed and a Summer Band Training and workshop is developed and conducted to enhance the skills and abilities of the students/participants in expanding the knowledge in music especially in playing musical instruments.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study is conducted to enhance the music literacy of the Naga City School of Arts and Trades Marching band. Specifically the study evaluated the band performance in terms of their music literacy along: time signature, rhythm, simple note reading, playing instrument in different notes and playing simple songs. The study also determined the effectiveness of the band training workshop implemented.

#### **METHODS**

##### **Research Design**

A descriptive evaluative method of research was utilized in the study. Data gathering was done through surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), document review, direct observations and interviews with the participants as well as with the school band administrator were conducted.

##### **Research Site**

The study is conducted in Naga City School of Arts and Trades, Philippines by providing a band training workshop. Music literacy of the band was assessed before and after conducting the training workshop.

##### **Participants**

The participants of the study are the 25 students of the Naga City School Arts and Trades, Philippines that are identified to be musically-inclined students. The respondents were the students who attended the Summer Band Music Literacy Training-Workshop conducted in April-May 2017.

##### **Instrumentation**

Five students that are not included in the summer-training workshop participated in the validation of the questionnaire. The trial respondents' responses were analysed and its measure of reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha. In this study, the internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the scales used were all above the level of 0.7, which is acceptable for the analysis. The validated

questionnaire was then used to gather information and data. The questionnaire is composed of four parts. It includes the profile of the respondents, assessment of the student's music literacy and open-ended questions about the effect of the program on the respondents. Rubric as shown in Table 1, were also used to determine the progress of the participant's performance before and after the training-workshop.

All targeted respondents were informed about the purpose and importance of the study and that honest answers would serve well for the study.

**Table 1.** Rubric for the Participant's Performance

CATEGORY	3 pts	2 pts	1 pt
<b>Time Signature</b>	Identify the time signature correctly	Had one or two minor errors	Did not identify the right time signature or have many errors
<b>Rhythm</b>	played the correct rhythm	Had one or two minor errors in rhythm	Did not play correct rhythm.
<b>Note Reading</b>	Read the notes correctly	Had one or two errors	Did not read them correctly/has many errors
<b>Playing instrument in different notes</b>	Notes are consistently accurate.	A wrong note was played, but the student corrected it.	One or more incorrect notes were played and/or student did NOT correct it.
<b>Playing simple songs</b>	Played the songs correctly	Had minor errors	Did not play the songs correctly or has many errors

It is assessed along the Signature, Rhythm, Simple Note Reading and playing instrument in different notes and playing simple songs using a performance rating sheet.

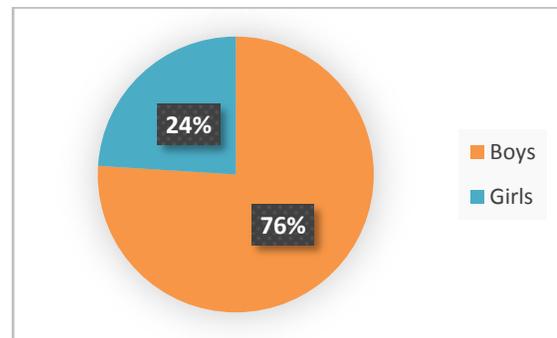
**Table 2.** Score Interpretation of the Student's Evaluation Results

Score	Interpretation	Description
1-3	Needs Improvement	Consistently failed to perform the role expectations in this area.
4-6	Fair	Met some expectations in this role but sometimes falls short.
7-9	Satisfactory	Met majority of the expectations in this role.
10-12	Very Satisfactory	Met most and exceed some of the expectations in this role.
13 - 15	Excellent	Consistently exceeded the expectations in this role.

Presented in Table 1 is the rubric for the assessment of the student's performance along the five categories. Evaluation of the band members' performance after the training is conducted to determine the effectiveness of the implemented program. In Table 2, interpretation of the student's scores in the performance evaluation is presented.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The training was catered to 25 students, combination of girls and boys of Naga City School of arts and trades who after the training had acquired the intended skills to be adopted and be part of the NCSAT Band and ready to serve the school and the community as well.



*Figure 1. Gender Profile of Band Members*

The Figure 1 shows that 19 out of 25 students or 76% are boys and the remaining 6 or 24% are girls. It implies that boys are more interested in joining marching band and playing band instruments than girls, as has been observed in the existing bands in the city, there are more male members than female members.

**Table 3. Training Workshop Plan**

Session	Training Activity	Hour	Learning Objectives
1	Orientation/Opening Program	4	Discuss the band training workshop preliminary information.
2	Lecture on time signature and rhythm	4	Band members should know and learn how to identify and exhibit the time signature and rhythm.
3	Rhythm lessons and simple note reading through clapping	8	Band members should exhibit the right rhythm in clapping and read simple notes

**Table 3 (cont.) Training Workshop Plan**

Session	Training Activity	Hour	Learning Objectives
4	Lessons on Whole note and half notes (actual playing) different instruments	8	Band members should play instruments on whole note and half notes
5	Lessons on quarter notes and eighth (actual playing) different instruments	8	Band members should play instruments on quarter notes and eight notes
6	Lessons on sixteenth notes (actual playing) different instruments	8	Band members should play instruments on sixteenth notes
7	National anthem and simple songs	8	Band members should play the Philippine national anthem and other simple songs
8	Performance Evaluation	1	Band members are evaluated though their performance

16% get a score of between 13-15 points which indicates that they have excellently performed and consistently exceeded the expectations of the teacher’s despite of having no background of proper music training. Sixteen out of 25 students or 64% get a score of 10 – 12 points which is described as performed very satisfactorily and met most and exceed some of the expectations, and 5 out of 25 or 20% get a score of 7-9 points, who are described as they have performed satisfactorily met majority of the expectations in this role. This result means that most of the students acquired the skills in playing musical instrument however some students still need further training and practice to perfect the skill.

Shown in Figure 2 is the comparison of the pre-evaluation and post-evaluation results of the performance of the students. Based on the results, students play instruments and simple songs without errors however some students make some errors in identifying the right time signature, rhythm and reading simple notes. Furthermore, based from the pre-evaluation result students are already competent in playing musical instruments and they already know how to play simple songs.

From these results it is clear that, students that are musically-inclined with proper guidance will enhance their skills and talents. In the same way, these results demonstrated the theory of Gardner [12] in Multiple Intelligences where students are unique in every way and providing them an avenue for learning to enhance their skills and talents.

The training workshop plan served as guide both to the trainer and trainees on what to achieve on the specific time frame. The training workshop is through the delivery of skills training in the area of music literacy specifically in playing musical instruments. Students were taught of the basic skills in reading notes and in playing the different band instruments suited to them.

The training consisted of lecture, demonstration and one on one tutorial on actual playing following the training modules.

**Table 4.** Summary of the Students’ Scores of the Post Evaluation

Score	Description	Number of Students	Percentage
13 – 15	Excellent	4	16 %
10 – 12	Very Satisfactory	16	64 %
7 – 9	Satisfactory	5	20 %
4 – 6	Fair	0	0
1 – 3	Needs Improvement	0	0

Table 3 revealed the summary of the student’s score of the post evaluation performance which were rated excellent, very satisfactory, satisfactory, fair and needs improvement. The results revealed that 4 out of 5 or

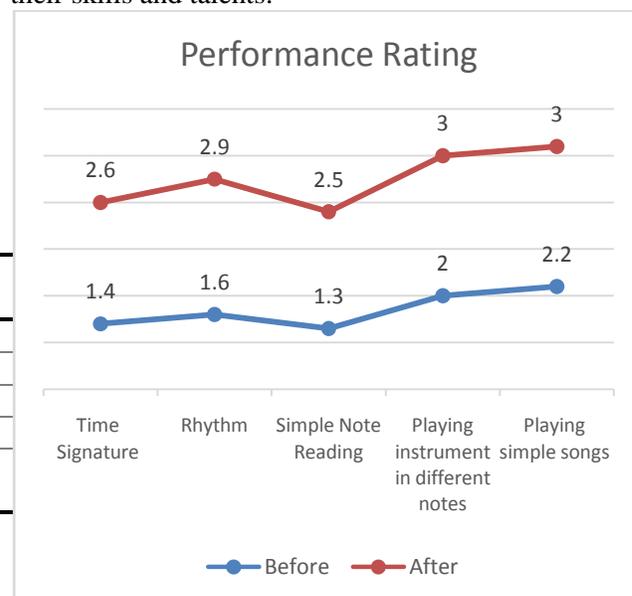


Figure 2. Comparison of the Performance Rating Before and After the training workshop

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Music literacy is broader than just reading and writing, it also involves listening, speaking it social skills that are important to communication. In the classroom environment, teachers seek to enhance the auditory and visual decoding processes of students. There are also other aspects of rhyme and vocabulary learning in both literacy and music, and students may have an enriching experience in these areas within a musical setting. Since literacy is a social skill, this dimension of music is also important to student literacy. Music has a meaning of its own and is not only a resource for literacy education, but it can be used to greatly enhance these literacy learning experiences for all students.

In this study, music literacy is enhanced by the band training workshop conducted. It is also observed that listening is the key in learning music [5]. Results of the evaluation indicated that the training was effective as observed in the improvement of the students in playing musical instruments. The results furthermore give an overview of the effect of musical training –workshop in the students’ performance.

It is best recommended to continuously monitor and conduct intensive training for these young and future musicians and lovers of arts and culture. Being a music enthusiast is an avenue and a great help and healthy habit for these young generation and future hope of our community.

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