

Enhancing Musical Performance Competence through Body Percussion-Based Instruction for Grade 5 Students

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ABSTRACT: In competency-based primary education, musical performance competence plays a vital role in developing students' expressive ability, confidence, and engagement. However, music instruction in many primary schools still provides limited opportunities for embodied rhythmic practice and performance. Body percussion, which uses the human body as a musical instrument, offers an experiential and accessible approach to addressing this limitation. This study examines the effectiveness of body percussion-based instruction in enhancing musical performance competence among Grade 5 students. The research was conducted through practice-based implementation in regular music lessons, integrating body percussion activities such as clapping, stamping, and coordinated body movements into singing, listening, and performance tasks. Data were collected through classroom observation and reflective feedback from students and teachers. The findings reveal noticeable improvements in students' rhythmic accuracy, bodily coordination, expressive movement, performance confidence, engagement, and collaborative skills. Teachers also reported that body percussion is a feasible, inclusive, and low-resource instructional approach suitable for primary classrooms. Interpreted through experiential learning theory, the results highlight body percussion as an effective pedagogical strategy aligned with learner-centered music education in primary schools.

KEYWORDS- Body percussion; Musical performance competence; Experiential learning; Primary music education; Grade 5 students.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Vietnam's competency-based General Education Curriculum, music education at the primary level is expected to contribute not only to artistic knowledge but also to learners' broader competencies such as creativity, communication, collaboration, and self-confidence. For Grade 5 students in particular, musical learning increasingly requires opportunities to *express* and *perform*—through singing, movement, and simple instrumental practices—so that musical understanding is embodied and communicated rather than memorized. However, classroom music instruction in many primary schools still tends to prioritize basic singing and simple theory, while students' opportunities to develop rhythmic stability, coordinated performance, and expressive presentation remain limited. As a result, students may participate passively and struggle to sustain interest, especially when they encounter abstract rhythmic concepts or lack access to instruments.

In the Vietnamese context, body percussion is still not widely implemented in primary music classrooms, partly due to limited teaching materials and insufficient guidance for systematic integration into lesson design. Although some recent local studies and initiatives have introduced body percussion, existing work is often descriptive or applied in isolated activities rather than being designed, implemented, and evaluated as a coherent instructional approach—especially for Grade 5, a stage where students possess stronger physical coordination and an increasing need for self-expression in front of peers. This indicates a practical gap: schools need feasible, low-cost strategies that can be implemented in typical classroom conditions while effectively developing students' musical performance competence.

Responding to this gap, the present study focuses on **enhancing Grade 5 students' musical performance competence through body percussion-based instruction**. Building on lesson content in Grade 5 music, the study designs and implements body percussion activities that support rhythmic awareness, group coordination, expressive performance, and learners' confidence. The instructional approach is explored through practice-based implementation and school-based investigation, including classroom observation and outcome-oriented evaluation. Notably, initial school-based evidence suggests that a large proportion of students can master core body percussion actions and report higher confidence and readiness to perform when body percussion is integrated into music learning.

Accordingly, this paper aims to (1) clarify the educational potential of body percussion for developing musical performance competence in Grade 5, (2) propose and describe a teachable body percussion-based instructional approach aligned with primary

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music content, and (3) discuss pedagogical implications for music teachers and primary schools seeking effective, inclusive, and resource-light strategies for competency development in music education.

II. CONTENT

A. Implementation of Body Percussion-Based Instruction in Grade 5 Music Classes

Body percussion-based instruction was implemented with Grade 5 students through a series of structured music lessons integrated into the regular music curriculum. The instructional design focused on using the body as a primary musical instrument, including clapping, stamping, thigh tapping, chest tapping, finger snapping, and coordinated body movements. These actions were organized progressively, beginning with simple rhythmic patterns and gradually advancing to more complex combinations involving multiple body parts and group coordination.

Each lesson followed a clear sequence consisting of warm-up activities, rhythmic practice, integration with songs or musical excerpts, and short performance tasks. Students practiced individually, in small groups, and as a whole class, allowing for differentiated engagement and peer interaction. The implementation emphasized repetition, imitation, and creative variation, enabling students to internalize rhythmic patterns through physical movement. This approach created an active and engaging learning environment in which students participated continuously rather than passively observing musical content.

B. Development of Musical Performance Competence through Body Percussion

1. Improvement in Rhythmic Accuracy and Coordination

One of the most evident outcomes observed during the implementation was the improvement in students' rhythmic accuracy and bodily coordination. Compared to initial lessons, students gradually demonstrated a stronger sense of steady beat and were able to maintain rhythmic patterns more consistently while performing body percussion sequences. The coordination between hands, feet, and body movements became more synchronized, particularly during group performances that required collective timing.

Students who initially struggled with rhythmic stability showed noticeable progress after repeated practice. The physical engagement inherent in body percussion helped students perceive rhythm as a bodily experience rather than an abstract musical concept. As a result, students were better able to follow tempo changes, reproduce rhythmic patterns, and align their movements with musical cues.

2. Expressive Movement and Musical Interpretation

In addition to technical rhythmic improvement, students displayed enhanced expressive movement and musical interpretation. As they became more familiar with body percussion patterns, students began to perform movements more fluidly and confidently, incorporating facial expressions, posture, and dynamic variations. The use of the body as a medium for sound production encouraged students to connect musical elements with emotional expression.

During performance activities, students demonstrated an increased ability to interpret musical character through movement, such as adjusting the strength, speed, and intensity of body percussion to reflect changes in musical mood. Some students creatively modified movements or added expressive gestures while maintaining rhythmic accuracy, indicating the emergence of individual musical expression within structured tasks.

3. Development of Confidence and Performance Skills

Another significant result was the improvement in students' confidence and performance-related skills. Through frequent opportunities to perform body percussion individually and in groups, students became more comfortable presenting musical activities in front of peers. Students who were previously hesitant to participate showed greater willingness to volunteer, lead rhythmic patterns, or perform short sequences independently.

Group-based body percussion activities also helped reduce performance anxiety, as students shared responsibility and supported one another during practice and presentation. Over time, students demonstrated clearer stage presence, stronger eye contact, and more assured body posture during performances. These changes suggest that body percussion contributed not only to musical skill development but also to students' self-confidence and readiness to perform.

C. Student Engagement and Collaborative Skills

High levels of student engagement were consistently observed throughout the body percussion lessons. The physical and interactive nature of the activities generated enthusiasm and sustained attention, even among students who previously showed limited interest in music lessons. Students actively participated in practice sessions, responded promptly to instructions, and showed enjoyment during rhythmic games and performance tasks.

Collaborative skills were also enhanced through group-based body percussion exercises. Students learned to listen to one another, adjust timing, and coordinate movements to achieve unified performances. In small-group tasks, students negotiated roles, corrected mistakes collectively, and encouraged peers, demonstrating improved cooperation and social interaction. These behaviors indicate that body percussion activities supported not only musical development but also essential social and collaborative competencies.

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D. Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Body Percussion-Based Instruction

Feedback collected from classroom observation and informal reflections revealed positive perceptions of body percussion-based instruction from both students and teachers. Students described the activities as enjoyable, dynamic, and easy to understand, emphasizing that using their bodies to create music made learning more engaging and less intimidating than traditional rhythm exercises.

Teachers noted that body percussion was a feasible and effective approach within typical classroom conditions, as it required no additional instruments and could be adapted to different lesson objectives. They observed that students were more attentive, motivated, and expressive during body percussion lessons compared to conventional music instruction. Teachers also highlighted the method's potential for supporting inclusive learning, as students with varying musical abilities could participate successfully.

E. Discussion

The results of this study provide strong evidence that body percussion-based instruction can effectively enhance musical performance competence among Grade 5 students. These findings can be meaningfully interpreted through the lens of **experiential learning theory**, which emphasizes learning through direct experience, active participation, reflection, and meaning-making (Kolb, 1984).

First, the observed improvement in students' rhythmic perception and coordination supports the core assumption of experiential learning that knowledge is constructed through concrete experience. In body percussion activities, rhythm was not introduced as an abstract concept but was experienced physically through clapping, stamping, and coordinated body movements. This bodily engagement allowed students to internalize rhythmic patterns more naturally, which explains the high proportion of students (over 90%) who were able to master basic body percussion techniques. Similar to Kolb's *concrete experience* stage, students learned rhythm by doing, feeling, and adjusting their movements in real time rather than through verbal explanation alone.

Second, the development of expressive movement and musical interpretation reflects the *reflective observation* and *active experimentation* stages of experiential learning. As students engaged repeatedly with body percussion tasks, they began to reflect on how different movements, intensities, and tempos could convey musical character and emotion. The emergence of creative responses—such as proposing alternative movements or combining body sounds—indicates that students were not merely imitating models but actively experimenting with musical expression. This aligns with experiential learning theory, which views creativity and personal meaning as outcomes of reflective engagement with experience.

The increase in students' confidence and performance readiness further highlights the affective dimension of experiential learning. Frequent opportunities to perform body percussion in a supportive group environment reduced performance anxiety and encouraged participation, especially among previously shy students. According to experiential learning perspectives, emotional engagement and psychological safety are essential conditions for meaningful learning. Body percussion created a low-risk performance context in which students could succeed regardless of prior musical training, thereby fostering confidence and intrinsic motivation.

Moreover, the high level of engagement and collaboration observed during body percussion activities underscores the social nature of experiential learning. Learning occurred not only through individual experience but also through interaction with peers—listening, synchronizing movements, and adjusting to group dynamics. These collaborative experiences contributed to students' musical performance competence while simultaneously supporting social skills such as cooperation, communication, and shared responsibility. This finding resonates with social-constructivist extensions of experiential learning, which emphasize learning as a socially mediated process.

From a pedagogical perspective, teachers' observations regarding feasibility and effectiveness further strengthen the practical implications of this study. Body percussion requires minimal resources and can be implemented flexibly across different music lesson contents, making it particularly suitable for primary schools with limited access to musical instruments. Its alignment with learner-centered and experience-based principles of the General Education Curriculum 2018 suggests that body percussion is not only an instructional technique but also a pedagogical approach consistent with contemporary educational reforms in Vietnam.

Overall, the findings confirm that body percussion functions as an experiential learning approach that integrates physical action, emotional engagement, reflection, and social interaction. By transforming students from passive recipients of musical knowledge into active musical participants, body percussion contributes meaningfully to the development of musical performance competence. This discussion highlights the value of embodied and experiential approaches in primary music education and supports the broader argument that effective music learning must be grounded in lived experience rather than abstract instruction alone.

III. CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that body percussion-based instruction is an effective experiential learning approach for enhancing musical performance competence among Grade 5 students. By engaging students in rhythmic movement, bodily coordination, and expressive performance, body percussion transforms music learning from a passive, abstract process into an active and embodied experience. The findings indicate clear improvements in students' rhythmic perception, expressive movement, performance confidence, engagement, and collaborative skills.

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Viewed through the lens of experiential learning theory, body percussion enables students to construct musical understanding through direct experience, reflection, and creative experimentation. The use of the body as an accessible musical instrument allows all students, regardless of prior musical training, to participate meaningfully in music learning. This inclusive and low-resource approach not only supports technical aspects of musical performance but also fosters emotional involvement and intrinsic motivation.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results suggest that body percussion aligns well with the learner-centered orientation of Vietnam's General Education Curriculum 2018. Its flexibility and feasibility make it a practical option for primary music teachers seeking to enhance students' musical performance competence within typical classroom conditions. Moreover, the integration of body percussion contributes to broader educational goals by promoting confidence, cooperation, and expressive communication. Although this study is limited to a specific school context and relies primarily on qualitative evidence, the findings provide valuable insights into the potential of embodied and experiential approaches in primary music education. Future research may expand this work through larger-scale studies or mixed-method designs to further examine the long-term impact of body percussion on musical and socio-emotional development. Nevertheless, this study affirms that body percussion is a meaningful and effective pedagogical strategy for developing musical performance competence in primary school students.

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