

Reflections on Teaching Methods Catering to Students' Psychological Needs in Music Education Practice

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Abstract: Music education has two purposes at the same time: cultivating aesthetic consciousness and fostering all-round development of people. However, the traditional model of teaching is highly structured and generally focuses on students' technical abilities rather than addressing their emotions and psychology; therefore, performance anxiety and a lack of intrinsic motivation have increased. Critically examine teaching methods in music education that address the psychological needs of students according to the frameworks of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), positive psychology and socio-emotional learning. Based on the research, an autonomy-supporting teaching environment that meets students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness can enhance their interest in music and creativity. In addition, this paper explores the psychological reasons for Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) and puts forward cognitive-behavioural and empathy-based interventions to help students learn emotional regulation and a sense of 'flow'. Change from a traditional, teacher-led model to a more flexible, student-centered one to foster all-around development in music education. Finally, this study offers supporting data to guide music teachers in creating inclusive, psychologically supportive teaching plans that promote all-round development of students.

Keywords: Music Education, Self-Determination Theory, Performance Anxiety, Positive Psychology, Flow Experience, Emotional Regulation.

1. Introduction

For a long time, music education has not only aimed to teach students how to be good artists but also to nurture all-around development of individuals. In the past, the way of teaching music was a master-apprentice system that focused on strict technical repetition, precise theoretical knowledge and outstanding public performances. Although the traditional way has produced many talented musicians over the years, it often fails to explore the deep emotions and feelings of the students. Strictly performance-oriented education in the present day may lead to high-pressure environments that cause students to experience significant anxiety about performance, emotional exhaustion and a loss of the inherent joy of music. Therefore, it is necessary to revise music education based on psychological principles urgently.

Educational psychology and music pedagogy have shown that, in order for students to learn well, their basic psychological needs must be met. When the students enter the music classroom, they still have their emotional vulnerabilities, social anxieties and other inner desires on their minds. They want a place to learn that feels safe emotionally, accepts their unique sense of self, and supports them in learning independently. According to the current ideas of education, the main task of a music teacher should no longer be to demand students meet a high standard in music; instead, they should foster all-around development and self-realisation for the students.

Given the high stress that both academics and life are under now, students are more likely to be anxious. With the widespread use of social media and the continuous pressure for online perfection, many young people are highly conscious of their peers' judgments at present. When this generalised societal anxiety is combined with the high-expectations culture of traditional music education, it can

have a very bad effect on people's mental health. Students who are first exposed to a musical instrument out of genuine interest and a desire for self-expression quickly learn that their musical worth will now be judged by strict grades, competitive seating arrangements and high-stakes tests. Continuous quantification reduces the aesthetic value of art and reduces it to a transaction; thus, musical creation becomes merely a way to gain external praise. As a result, educators have observed a worrying increase in students leaving middle and high school music classes, not due to a lack of talent in music, but because the psychological pressure of attending has become too great.

Catering to the students' psychological needs in music education requires an all-round methodological change. Integrate the evidence-based psychological system of self-determination theory and positive psychology into daily teaching design at the same time. By learning why people are motivated or anxious in certain situations, we can learn how to increase our own study motivation and control our emotions.

This paper will systematically investigate and reflect on teaching methods that meet the psychological needs of students in music education practice. Following the above introduction, Section 2 will study the application of Self-Determination Theory in promoting intrinsic motivation through autonomy-supportive teaching. Section 3 explores the psychological reasons for Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) and puts forward practical classroom measures. Section 4 will introduce the ideas of positive psychology and social-emotional learning in the development of 'flow' and emotion regulation. Finally, Section 5 presents the main content of the previous parts and offers a final outlook for the future of psychologically informed music education.

2. Fostering Intrinsic Motivation through Autonomy-Supportive Teaching

At the bottom of psychologically responsive music teaching is the fostering of intrinsic motivation, which can be covered by Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT thinks that for people to be able to learn well and do well in deep learning, the three basic psychological needs must be met: autonomy, competence and relatedness [1]. In the past, autonomy in traditional music education has been heavily restricted; therefore, teachers have often prescribed the learning materials and strictly controlled the speed at which students learn. This high-control environment moves the source of students' motivation from inner enjoyment to external obedience, and music study is thus viewed as a difficult duty rather than a source of joy.

Therefore, the teacher should use an autonomous-supportive teaching mode. Provide some suitable choices in the course of study for the students. For example, letting students help select the music they will perform in the recital, exploring different kinds of music that are not strictly classical, and setting up short-term goals for practice can motivate them more strongly to participate [8]. In addition, a good Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) has also been used to achieve the above results. Research shows that when students are allowed to use digital platforms to create and combine their own music, they have a greater sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, and thus can concentrate and create for longer periods [9].

The second part of SDT is competence, and it can be developed through scaffolding and positive reinforcement, not continuous fault-finding. The teachers' tasks should be moderately challenging; they are not too simple and not too difficult. Provide feedback that offers students concrete and feasible paths for self-improvement to boost their sense of creative self-efficacy. Build a shared living environment for the segregated individual practice rooms and enhance the sense of community among residents. Group improvisation, peer-to-peer teaching, and collaborative ensemble work can all meet students' needs for belonging by creating a safe space for musical experimentation.

Implementation of autonomy-supportive pedagogy also needs a change in how teachers frame language during rehearsals and private lessons at a basic level. Control language often uses imperatives such as "you have to", "you should", and "do it exactly as shown here", and will quickly trigger psychological reactance in the students. It suggests that the teacher is unable to recognise the student's artistic sense. Autonomy-supportive language is by no means devoid of information. Teachers can use expressions such as "How do we know what the character thinks here?" or "What kind of feelings do you want to show in this part?" to lead the students to find the answers themselves. This dialogic mode is to shift the power dynamic of the studio. The teacher is no longer the final authority on music; now they also engage in inquiry alongside students. This joint research serves to meet the students' demand for autonomy and also caters to their need for relatedness by making them feel intellectually respected and emotionally acknowledged by their teacher. When students believe that their individual artistic identity is genuinely respected by their teacher, they will be more willing to study difficult and repetitive technical skills; in fact, they are no longer studying for the sake of learning, but rather to

help express their own original works.

3. Psychological Interventions for Music Performance Anxiety

Although the person has intrinsic motivation, the public setting for the assessment of music will cause some people to experience anxiety about performance. MPA is a prolonged and severe anxiety disorder that reduces a musician's ability to perform in adulthood [3]. Many students do not think that the concert stage is a place for artistic expression; instead, they believe there will be harsh criticism. The physical symptoms of MPA, such as shaking, hyperventilation and memory loss, are caused by severe cognitive distortions about the disastrous results of making a mistake.

Teaching methods that take into account the psychological needs of students should be used to reduce the stigma of MPA proactively and incorporate coping mechanisms into the curriculum. Minimising or ignoring a student's anxiety is pedagogically negligent. Therefore, add some cognitive behavioural (CB) techniques to the usual exercise plan for the children. Group-delivered psychoeducation has been shown to help students learn how to recognise irrational catastrophic thoughts and replace them with rational thinking, thus reducing their own performance anxiety [2].

Teachers can use teaching methods and other forms of body-and-mind regulation for students at school. Anxiety is also a kind of emotion that causes physical symptoms, and thus these symptoms may interfere with the fine motor skills needed to play the piano. A sudden increase in adrenaline and cortisol will lead to muscle stiffness, difficulty breathing, and disruption of the fine kinesthetic memory that has been gradually accumulated by the student over many years of training. Therefore, the teaching method needs to add explicit instruction in physiological grounding. Progressive muscle relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing exercises, and the ideas of the Alexander Technique should all be taught with the same strictness and regularity as scales and arpeggios. Teach students to recognise the initial physical signs of anxiety, such as a tight jaw or shallow breathing, and enable these students to take some physical measures before the anxiety escalates into a full-blown panic attack. Visualisation and mental rehearsal can also be used to help students safely experience the psychological triggers of the concert environment in the security of a practice room. When a student mentally practices not only the ideal performance of the music but also how they will emotionally react to a possible mistake, they build a strong psychological defence mechanism to help them handle the unforeseen circumstances during the actual performance.

The structure of the performance also needs to be psychologically readjusted. Teachers can organise some low-stakes performance opportunities regularly, such as informal studio classes and peer-sharing sessions, to reduce the students' fear of being judged. By changing the teaching emphasis from precise execution of notes to emotional expression, the teacher reduces the psychological pressure of performance for the students. When a student learns that recital can be viewed as sharing good deeds through music, the fear of high-stakes evaluation lessens; thus, the physiological arousal of anxiety can be turned into vigorous and enthusiastic performance energy.

4. Cultivating Flow and Emotional Regulation via Positive Psychology

In addition to reducing anxiety, music education should be used to foster positive psychology and social-emotional learning (SEL) to promote the whole-person development of children. The five components of the PERMA model of positive psychology are positively supportive of the music classroom, namely: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement [7]. Teachers can create joyful learning environments in class by using musical games or free-play vocal expression to help students develop a sense of joy and resilience when facing the difficulties in their technical studies.

One of the main purposes of this positive teaching attitude is to help students achieve a state of 'flow'. Flow is a state of full-immersion in a task that is characterised by the loss of self-consciousness and a distortion of time perception [5]. Flow in the music classroom refers to a state of being deeply engaged, and for young children, this may not be exactly the same as that for older students [4]. To provide a continuous flow of performance, teachers need to have good diagnostic abilities and gradually increase or decrease the difficulty of the pieces based on students' current abilities. When students frequently experience flow, music is no longer studied in school but has become a source of deep pleasure for them.

These good psychological states can also be deliberately promoted to help alleviate the excess perfectionism of high-achieving music students. Perfectionism that is caused by a fear of failure, rather than the will to achieve greatness, will be detrimental to one's art. It results in a kind of freezing effect, and students are too afraid to write down an incorrect note; as a result, all the dynamism and emotional lightness of their music will be lost. Integrate the ideas of positive psychology in teaching and help students separate their self-esteem from their musical ability. Teachers should also be able to celebrate "successful failures", that is to say, times when a student took a brave, expressive risk in a performance and made a technical error. This pedagogical celebration of risk-taking has modified the students' psychological relationship with failure, reducing the sense of profound shame and turning it into a necessary, highly valued part of creative learning. If the class is not organised as an experiment-oriented laboratory, but rather as an investigation space, students may feel fear and inhibition in learning; they will lose their interest in exploring the repertoire and develop a diminished sense of self-esteem as a result.

Empowerment Education and social-emotional learning can also be added to the music curriculum to help students promote their own mental well-being. Musical activities are naturally about active listening and interpreting non-verbal expressions of emotion. Based on the above research, it can be seen that well-organised and empathetic music classes have helped young children learn how to regulate their own emotions more effectively by using cognitive reappraisal [10]. Therefore, a psychologically sensitive music teacher uses the ensemble to teach harmony and interpersonal empathy simultaneously, fostering socially competent and emotionally stable individuals through collaborative music-making activities [6].

5. Conclusion

Music education has shifted from a focus on performance

to a focus on psychology, and thus has become a developmental system. As shown in this paper, the application of teaching methods that address students' psychological needs proactively is not harmful to the quality of music education; rather, it provides a foundation for long-term, continuous musical interest in life. Systematically address the complicated emotional situation of the learners, and thus fundamentally change the structure of the music classroom.

According to the concepts of self-determination theory, teachers should not adopt an authoritarian style of teaching and build an autonomous learning environment to inspire students to achieve independently and create a positive self-concept through mastery experiences. At the same time, the proactive management of music performance anxiety will be done through cognitive-behavioural strategies and low-stakes performance structures to create a space of artistic freedom on the concert stage, not psychological distress. Add positive psychology and social-emotional learning methods to create a sense of "flow" in group musical activities and develop self-regulation skills.

Music education's ultimate goal is no longer the perfect performance of a piece on paper. The true sign of pedagogical success is whether one can foster healthy, strong-minded and passionate individuals. By using teaching methods that are in tune with the psychological needs of students, music teachers help these works continue to be sources of happiness, emotional relief and deep personal meaning for a long time.

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