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*Research Article*

# Children's Music Education from the Perspective of Positive Psychology

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## Abstract

Positive psychology plays a very important role in children's music education. The growth of children is first the growth of mental body rather than the growth of discipline ability. Positive psychology holds that children's music education should actively provide the environment for children to experience the joy of success, turn failure into a positive factor, recognize the value of performance, and avoid boring and long-term music learning. Children's music teaching should focus on encouragement, pay attention to children's happy experience, strengthen cooperation, advocate "learning in playing and doing, pay attention to comprehensive ability, and give play to children's independence.

## Keywords

Positive Psychology • Children • Music education • Encouragement • Cooperation • Independence

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In China, along with the popularization of higher education and the influence of the expansion of music major, a large number of students majoring in music go out of the campus every year, and only a small proportion of them can enter professional music performing arts groups. In addition to changing their profession, most of them work in educational (training) institutions to teach children's music. However, their studies in college rarely involve children's positive psychology. How can they guarantee the quality of children's music teaching? Therefore, this study aims at not only reminding children music teachers to enhance the quality of children's positive psychology, but also calling for higher music education to conduct comprehensive reform towards the real world and the future needs.

### **Positive Psychology and Growth of Children**

Positive psychology is a psychology school which focuses on people's positive quality and positive power, and devotes itself to the prosperity of individual and society. A lot of experiments show that positive psychology contributes to the improvement of cognitive ability and executive ability, but negative psychology is opposite. Positive psychology is conducive to physical and mental health and longevity, but negative psychology is opposite (life may be 10 years shorter (Peterson, 2010)). Positive psychology is helpful to the formation of "new social behavior" while negative psychology is opposite (Kubzansky, Martin & Buka, 2009). Therefore, it is of great value for social construction to make people form a positive character and positive behavior model starting from the positive psychology.

Psychological formation is at the stage of children (0-3 years old is the stage of psychological formation, 3-6 years old is the stage of personality and social idea formation, and psychological structure is basically formed at the age of 8 (Guo, 2008)). In this stage, training for psychology will yield twice, otherwise, it will get half the result with twice the effort. Therefore, in childhood, the growth of physique, personality and emotional quotient is the focus. The learning of knowledge and skills must depend on the growth of physique, personality and emotional quotient. As children get older, it becomes more and more important to increase knowledge, professional skills, and problem analysis ability (rationality) (Ren, 2012). Once children learn to be positive, they will treat everything they experience in an optimistic way, which is known as "Optimistic Explanatory Style" in positive psychology. Explanatory style refers to the habitual expression of an individual's attribution to what happens in life. "Psychological research shows that children generally have a relatively fixed explanatory style (a type of personality) before the age of 8". (Ren, 2012).

### **Positive Psychology and Teaching Method of Children's Music**

#### **Focusing on encouragement**

Encourage shall pay attention to the following four points:

**Encouragement differs from praise:** Encouragement aims at the process of behavior while praise is about talent or outcome. The music teaching should encourage more. For example, "You must work very hard because your music performance is very attractive" instead of praising "You are really smart" or "Your music is really good".

**Encouragement should be specific:** The stereotyped praise will make children slack off. Thus, music teachers should have a sensitive heart to react to every bit of effort of children. For example, "Your up-glide processing is very beautiful today and "Your rhythmic performance is so good today that I can't help dancing with your music".

**Encouragement should be timely:** Teachers should give feedback on children's music learning timely. South Korea's test on 262 students shows that there is a significant negative correlation between delayed response and "flow" (also known as intoxication), suggesting that timely feedback has a positive effect on children.

**Teachers and parents should participate in children's music activities:** Teachers should not just "teach", but "demonstrate" and participate in children's music activities, such as four-handed play or part play in piano teaching with children. Parents sing and dance with their children or let their children dance to their own singing. In this way, children will feel that their music activities are very valuable.

### **Happiness is more important than music**

The childhood is a period when children's physical and functional development is extremely rapid, and also an important stage for the formation of sense of security and optimism. It is not important to master technology at this stage, but to improve children's emotional quotient through music, to develop a good character, emotional management and the ability to communicate with people. This requires us to fully understand and respect children's artistic imagination, performance and creation, and must not take adult professional standards to judge children's performance or pursue skill training.

### **Strengthening cooperation**

Multi-educational value of music cooperation shall be reflected in children's teaching.

First, teamwork spirit. Only after everyone experiences cooperation can they have good music performance. Everyone shall do a good job in the team music work.

Second, a sense of belonging. Create a happy learning atmosphere so that children have the opportunity and willingness to share music insights with other members of the team, thus creating a sense of belonging.

Third, friendship. Friends have more social interaction, and higher intimacy and reciprocity. The frequency of conflict resolution is higher, showing more pro-social tendency (Smith, Coy & Blaze, 2006).

Fourth, tolerance. Guide children to think from the perspective of others, such as the coordination of part.

Fifth, modesty. Let your grades talk and don't think you're better than everyone else. This is easy to develop in the orchestra.

Sixth, prudence. Inspire children to make careful music choices and not to make inappropriate personal risks, otherwise it will affect the collective music presentation.

Seventh, self-regulation. Guide children to adjust their feelings and behaviors in collective activities, observe discipline, and control their desires and emotions. People form self-discipline in the interaction with others instead of getting along with themselves.

Eighth, Appreciation. Guide children to discover the beauty of collective music, and appreciate the outstanding and emotional performance of their friends.

Ninth, hope. Guide children to expect good things to happen (to finish the work) while they and their partners are in the process of creating good things and working hard.

Tenth, social wisdom. Guide children to perceive the feelings and intentions of themselves and others, to know how to perform properly in different situations; to learn to express and develop their positive emotions in front of people, to build good relationships, and treat themselves and others well.

### **Learning in playing and doing**

Playing is the nature of children and the most important way of learning for children. Children, unlike adults, learn on the basis of direct experience, in games and in everyday life. Teachers should stimulate their motivation for knowledge and improve the ability of words and deeds cooperation through "playing" so that they can freely and happily learn and explore in the process of "playing".

In children's music activities, teachers should cherish the unique value of game and life, create a rich educational environment, arrange rationally, support and meet the needs of children to obtain experience through direct perception, practical operation and personal music experience. Superior education and intensive training in the form of "pulling up seedlings to help them grow" is strictly prohibited. In short, let children learn in playing and doing. For children, "what they learn" is not so important and the important thing is to develop a good body, good character and good habit through music (Piaget, 2003).

### **Carrying out music teaching in an integrated way**

Children's perception has a complex nature. The smaller children receive information in the overall mode (Meng, 2003). Therefore, children's music teaching should pay attention to the mutual infiltration and integration between fields and goals so as to promote the overall coordinated development of children's body and mind rather than one-sidedly pursue the development of a certain aspect or several aspects.

**"Three movement"** The first is "movement of shape". Dalcroze's music teaching method holds that when listening to music, the movements of each part of the body should be used to express the ups and downs, speed,

strength, length and continuity of the music, and the movements should have a sense of music. Song and dance performance needs "movement of shape. There is no music without movement of shape. Children also use movement to communicate with their peers or teachers.

The second is movement of heart. In music activities, children should feel and express the emotion and character of music, such as pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy of music, hot and cold, soft and hard, sour, sweet, bitter and spicy of music. Children's emotion also plays a role in their interactions with their peers or teachers.

The third is movement of brain. Children have their own minds which should be used in music activities. In the childhood, children should be encouraged to do simple music creation and performance and inspired to exert their thinking ability to complete music activities. Teachers should not just send out simple instructions in music activities but inspire children and organize teaching in interaction.

**"Six aspects"** (1) Listen. Children grasp music first through the overall way of sensibility instead of starting with music score.

(2) Dance. When listening to music, children can move freely (including Dalcroze's "walking exercises" and "tacit exercises"). When performing music, children can add simple dance. Encourage children to feel and express music with physical movements.

(3) Look. Use objects, pictures, and videos to deepen and expand children's feeling and understanding of music composition.

(4) Read. Perform simple music score reading exercises appropriate to children's level to establish interval relationships in their mind.

(5) Perform. The performance includes various forms, such as music performance of songs, dances and music and action performance (scene reproduction) of musical works. The performance also includes multiple levels, such as singing with the music humming, not with the music memory humming, singing, singing and dancing. Teachers and parents need to create performance opportunities for their children, such as singing in front of guests.

(6) Say. Teachers and children exchange views on music and children need to express within the group after music performance in group. At the end of the class, they also need to say about analysis and evaluation.

**"Seven links"** (1) Appreciation. Most music classes should start with appreciation.

(2) Activities. Everyone feels the music and performs it freely.

(3) Performance. Perform the music in a more focused, complete, and contagious way. Give full play to children's independent views and artistic creation and don't seek unity.

(4) Command. "Don't let any student lose the opportunity to command" (Qin & Du, 2013). Command makes children more active, initiative to quickly improve the overall quality. As long as they can show music, their professional command skills are not strictly required.

(5) Creation. Guide children to conduct simple creation, such as replacing lyrics, changing rhythm, adding dancing accompaniment and so on. They can improvise or have a plan to create. In short, they should not be limited by any form.

(6) Consultation. Children can be divided into several groups and each group completes the project through internal consultation.

(7) Evaluation. Student's performance should be recorded in time, which can be showed to them through audio or video. Organizes and guide them to carry on analysis and evaluation.

### **Giving full play to children's self-regulation of learning**

The experiment shows that autonomic behavior plays an important role in the development of children, which is beneficial to the improvement of children's cognitive ability and creativity. (Ren, 2012) Innovative thinking, imagination and creativity are more essential to the development of children than music technology. Famous American "High Scope" takes "initiative" as an important goal.

First of all, we should fully respect and protect children's curiosity and learning interests, help children gradually develop good learning qualities, such as being positive and focused, being not afraid of difficulties, daring to explore and try, willing to imagine and create. Children are interested in what is happening and are happy to discover and explore, which is an important quality that can't be stopped simply for "being unrelated to music courses".

Secondly, teachers should treat children with an appreciative attitude, accept their individual differences, and not compare them with their peers. Teachers should take positive attitude and behavior to care about children, observe children, understand children, respect children, follow children's growth laws and age characteristics, create loose and appropriate conditions and environment for their growth, and teach them according to aptitude. We should also respect the novel and effective way in which children experience music, rather than the "only right" way to copy music.

Finally, music teaching should be beneficial to the development of children's self-judgment and self-regulation. Music teaching should create conditions for children to practice and describe their music ideas, behaviors and works to form their own musical abilities and internalized pro-social behaviors. Teachers should "learn to be silent" so that children can organize their own music activities which teachers and parents are "passive" to participate in.

## **Conclusion**

At present, the level of musical performance talents trained by schools and departments of music is worrying and disjointed from the needs of society. The music education major must change the original music performance teaching mode. It shall no longer be able to do music exclusively, but attach importance to

educational theory, establish new educational view, and help students obtain accomplishment from educational psychology, child psychology, music education curriculum theory and music teaching methods.

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