The Role of Training in Children's Art School in Fostering Psychological Wellbeing

Olga Zotova[1,*] and Lyudmila Tarasova[1]

[1]*Department of Social Psychology, Liberal Arts University (LAU) – University for Humanities, Surikova St 24a, Yekaterinburg, Russia*

Abstract: The study addresses psychological features underlying healthy functioning of the individual and his/her successful management of stressful and tense situations. To study the role of training in children's art school (CAS) in the formation of the given psychological features the authors conducted a comparative analysis of persons with full-time course of education in CAS and persons without such experience. The sample consisting of 257 participants was divided into three groups of comparison. The measures used in the study included the Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing (adapted by T. D. Shevelkova and T. P. Fesenko), Maddi's Hardiness Survey (modified by E. N. Osin and E. I. Rasskazova), and a questionnaire. The data were processed with the help of Kruskal–Wallis test, Mann–Whitney U test, and SPSS 20.0.

The results have shown that the respondents with full-time training in CAS have higher indicators of psychological wellbeing and resilience. They are more aware of their value, integrity and meaningfulness of being, and have a more pronounced resource for coping with difficult, stressful situations. All these characteristics reflect the realm of experiences and states inherent in a healthy individual who is successful in his or her realization.

The findings have revealed that even an incomplete course of studying in CAS creates the conditions for shaping personality wellbeing and resilience – features necessary for the person to combat stress and tension and function efficiently.

Keywords: Children's art school, Psychological wellbeing, Resilience, Coping with stress, Creativity, Art.

INTRODUCTION

Creativity in education has been a popular area of research since the end of the 1990s [1]. Today it is still of interest not only to scholars and educators but also to policy-makers and economists worldwide [2]. Creativity is often treated as a major force in the development of human culture [3], it contributes to the creation of an optimally functioning society through technical, cultural, and political progress. In the economy, the role of creativity is seen as a crucial one in achieving higher employment [4], economic progress, and stronger competition [5]. In addition to its positive social and historical impact at the macro level, creativity also benefits people at the micro level [6], boosting their psychological wellbeing. Creativity is usually conceptualized as a capacity or strength of character – a stable positive human trait occurring in varying degrees [7].

Creativity and art facilitate the solution of socially-sensitive problems, the adaptation of individuals in a rapidly changing world and their success in an uncertain future [8]. It is for this reason that creativity and art cannot be "ignored or suppressed by schooling" [9]. It is for this reason that there exists a call for the introduction of creativity in education as a "basic life skill" [10] which must be cultivated to prepare future generations [8] so that they can not only "survive" but also "thrive in the twenty-first century" [11]. The development of children's creative potential during the years of education is the beginning of the formation of "human capital", on which, according to Adam Smith, "the wealth of nations" depends [12].

Researchers emphasize numerous benefits that art and creativity can provide for people's wellbeing [13–14]. M. Csikszentmihalyi [15] noted that while individual creativity does not always lead to fame and fortune, it can do what is even more important from an individual perspective: make everyday experiences more vivid, more enjoyable, and more rewarding. When we live creatively, boredom is banished, and every moment brings about an opportunity for new discoveries.

In recent years, psychological literature has increasingly presented reasoned evidence of the benefits of engaging creative activities in everyday life [16]. Researchers from the University of Otago examined the impact of creativity on the youth emotional wellbeing. They assessed the answers of 658 young people who took notes of how much time a

*Address correspondence to this author at the Department of Social Psychology, Liberal Arts University (LAU) – University for Humanities, Surikova St 24a, Yekaterinburg, Russia; Tel: +79-122-686-805;
E-mail: oiambusheva@mail.ru

E-ISSN: 2313-1047/22

day they spent on creative endeavours and recorded positive and negative changes they felt. Thirteen days later, the scholars revealed a "rising spiral of wellbeing" in those persons who had taken up creative pastimes every day. The researchers proved the effect of creative pursuits on happiness in social relations and attitudes to learning [17]. Thus, creativity can present a "positive intervention" defined as a "technique directed to the development of positive feelings, behavior, and cognition" [18, p. 468].

In 2019, a large study, supported by BBC Arts, was launched in the U.K. It involved nearly 50.000 people and aimed to explore how creative activities can help people manage their moods and boost their wellbeing. The results of the survey announced during the festival Get Creative indicated three ways to exploit creativity as a mechanism for coping with negative emotions:

1. a tool of distraction – using creativity to avoid stress;

2. a tool of contemplation – using creativity to give space to rethink life problems and make plans for the future;

3. a tool of self-development allowing a person to settle problems through self-improvement.

The study made it clear that gaining hands-on experience with something new and creative is important regardless of skill level, as participation itself is important. The results also showed that people benefit emotionally even from a single session of creativity. Creative activities are especially useful for emotional regulation, especially in stressful situations [19].

Several studies revealed positive correlations between musical activity and subjective and psychological aspects of wellbeing [20-21]. The researchers concluded that active musical interaction is beneficial to both the psychological and subjective wellbeing of the individual [22-23]. This may be due to a higher level of involvement, opportunities for self-expression, and clarity of identity inherent in active music creation. Musical activity enhances the positive effect [20, 24], offering in-depth engagement [25], communication with other people [26-27], bringing meaning and purpose in people's life [28], and personal achievements [29-30]. Therefore, musical activity can contribute to all aspects of wellbeing.

Arguably, education is becoming a way to attain self-improvement and self-realization. The knowledge gained through learning not only provides access to resources (income) and opportunities (career positions), but also cultivates the skills, strategies and knowledge needed to overcome difficulties and obstacles in life. One of the reasons why the system of education is seen as a hindrance to development and liberating people's creative potential resides in the fact that learning focuses on "knowledge acquisition" [5]. However, the knowledge as a result of education in modern world is not sufficient. This is due to the fact that it is difficult to forecast what knowledge one will need in the future, which inevitably requires raising the level of education and rethinking of the creative potential of children and adolescents.

In response to the existing challenges, there has been a shift in educational policy around the world, and efforts are being made to bring creativity and knowledge together. Creativity is in the focus of the curriculum and pedagogy and the official agenda for school improvement. Art schools are treated as places to encourage creativity because they can do so more effectively and develop it not only in the elite, but also in the mass of students. A. Craft [10] argued that for "national prosperity and wellbeing" creativity in primary and secondary education is more important than in higher school since the first two levels are thought to be a crucial stage of the development of children's creativity – they shape them for future life.

For a happier and healthier childhood as well as adulthood, we need art embodied in children's lives. Art builds their confidence, sense of identity, communication skills and resilience. Various creative activities increase different elements of health and wellbeing. Dance improves participants' physical health and self-esteem, especially in girls [31]. Theatrical and group music making enhances social skills and wellbeing of the youth [32]. Learning to play a musical instrument helps children better cope with stress [33]. S. Hallam [34] notes that music plays a special role in reducing stress and anxiety. The process of artistic creation develops youth's sense of individuality, self-efficacy, and increases the psychological resilience of children and teenagers [32].

The study aims to examine the role of children's art schools in the formation of psychological features underlying healthy functioning of the individual and his/her successful management of stressful and tense situations.

Objectives:

1. To study the specific parameters of psychological wellbeing as the basis of healthy personality functioning in individuals having in their experience a full course of education in children's art schools, and individuals without such experience.

2. To conduct a comparative analysis of the aspects of resilience as a factor of successful coping with stress in individuals having in their experience a full course of education in children's art schools, and individuals without such experience.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The measures exploited in the study included the Ryff Scales of Psychological WellBeing (adapted by T. D. Shevelkova and T. P. Fesenko), Maddi's Hardiness Survey (modified by E. N. Osin and E. I. Rasskazova). A questionnaire was used to collect data on sociodemographic characteristics, the experience of studying in CAS, hobbies and their types, etc.

Data processing and analysis were performed using methods of mathematical statistics (Kruskal–Wallis test, Mann–Whitney U test), and SPSS 20.0.

The sample comprised 257 respondents. They were then divided into three groups according to experience of studying in CAS – a full-time course, an incomplete full-time course, and subjects with no experience. The authors conducted a comparative analysis of the parameters of psychological wellbeing and personality resilience in these groups of participants: 1) respondents with a full-time course of training in CAS (N = 155); 2) respondents who didn't manage to complete the course (N = 34); 3) respondents without experience of studying in CAS (N = 68).

The distribution of the respondents by age, gender, and education in these groups is shown in Table **1**.

The distribution of sample characteristics in the groups (homogeneity against each other) allows for their comparing.

In addition, the distribution of subjective assessment of their financial situation by respondents is worth noting (Figure **1**). Uniformity of assessments allows us to conclude on a commensurate level of social wellbeing and wellness of theses groups' respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained results revealed differences in the pronouncement of psychological wellbeing parameters in the three comparable groups of respondents (Figure **2**).

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Parameters	Groups of Comparison		
	Respondents with a full-time course in CAS %	Respondents with an incomplete full-time course in CAS, %	Respondents with no experience of studying in CAS, %
Age			
18–26 year	28	47	58
27–35 years	28	19	17
36–45 years	23	22	10
Over the age of 46 years	21	12	15
Gender			
Male	18	10	21
Female	72	90	79
Education			
Higher	65	44	22
Incomplete higher	12	12	32
Secondary vocational	15	8	8
Initial vocational	–	–	6
Secondary	8	36	32

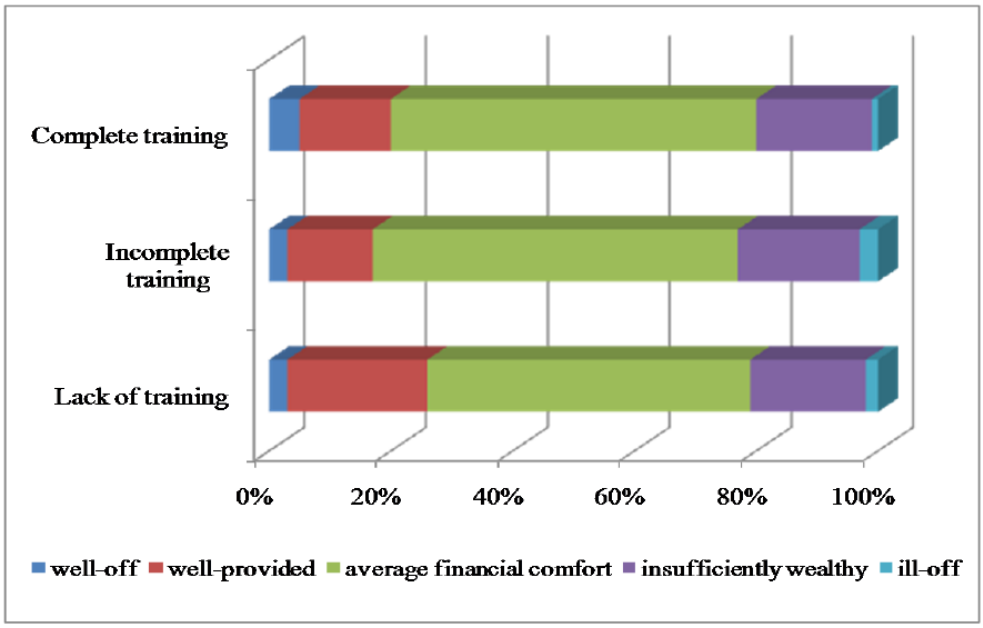

Figure 1: The distribution of subjective assessment of their financial situation by respondents.

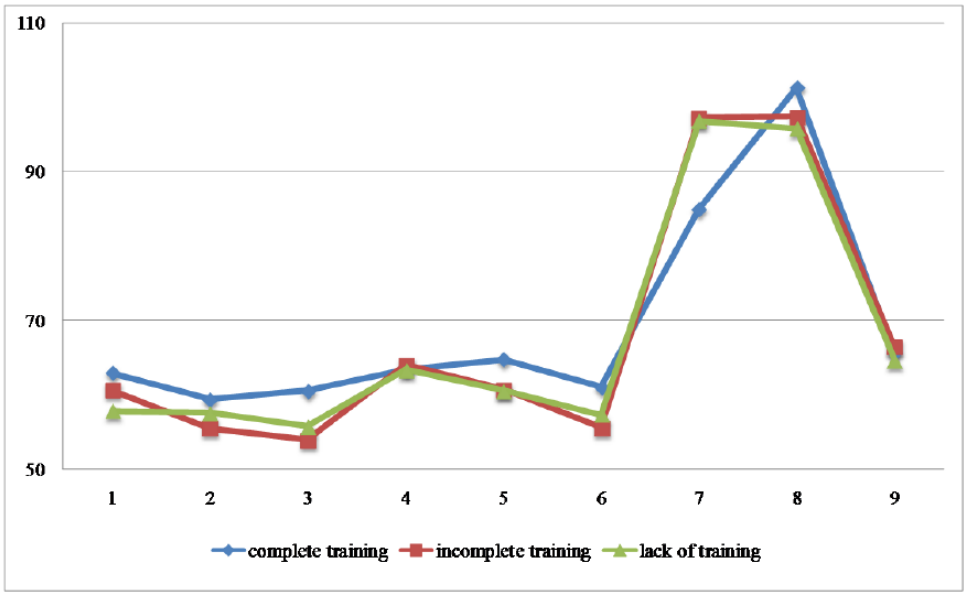

Figure 2: The pronouncement of psychological wellbeing parameters in the three comparable groups of respondents.
Note: 1 – Positive relationships; 2 – Autonomy; 3 – Environment management; 4 – Personal growth; 5 – Life goals; 6 – Self-acceptance; 7 – Affect balance; 8 – Meaningfulness of life; 9 – Man as an open system.

Statistical analysis of the results of diagnostics of psychological wellbeing parameters confirmed the presence of significant differences between the indicators (Table **2**).

No significant differences were found for the parameters – “Personal Growth” and “Man as an open system”.

We should note that in spite of the fact that the indicators of all three groups are in the zone of mean (normal) values, the indicators of the subjects with a complete course of studies in CAS are higher than those in the rest two groups for all measured parameters with the exception of “Affect Balance” (the scale for this parameter is inverse).

To clarify the differences between groups statistical analysis was carried out. The results indicate that respondents with complete and incomplete courses in CAS compared to respondents who lack this training:

Table 2: The results of verifying differences (Kruskal–Wallis test) in the pronouncement of psychological wellbeing parameters in the three comparable groups of respondents: 1) complete course in CAS; 2) Incomplete course in CAS, и 3) lack of course in CAS (n = 257)

	Positive relationships	Autonomy	Environment management	Personal growth	Life goals	Self-acceptance	Affect balance	Meaningfulness of life	Man as an open system	Psychological wellbeing
Chi Square	10.558	6.681	25.943	2.156	8.524	9.388	20.379	8.745	2.539	11.284
Asymptotic significance	**0.005**	**0.035**	**0.000**	0.340	**0.014**	**0.009**	**0.000**	**0.013**	0.281	**0.004**

1. are more open in communication, able to establish relations based on trust, empathize and care of others (U = 3829.500; p = 0.001);

2. better control external environment, their activities; are capable of creating conditions and circumstances suitable for satisfying their needs and achieving their goals (U = 3555.500; p = 0.000);

3. are more aware of their life direction, their goals are more definite (U = 4073.500; p = 0.007);

4. have a more positive attitude to themselves, accept themselves as they are (U = 4233.500; p = 0.019);

5. have more confidence, believe in their abilities (U = 3570.500; p = 0.000);

6. are more aware of the meaningfulness of their life, their past and their present (U = 4080.000; p = 0.007).

Thus, respondents with a complete course in CAS also exhibit higher integral indicators of psychological wellbeing (Figure **3**). These differences are statistically valid: subjects with a complete course in CAS/subjects with an incomplete course in CAS (U = 1881.000; p = 0.009); subjects with a complete course in CAS/subjects with a lack of training in CAS (U = 4082.000; p = 0.007).

These results show that individuals who have completed a full course of study in children's art school are characterized, to a greater extent, by a sense of integrity and meaningfulness of their being, and these characteristics reflect the area of experiences and states peculiar to a healthy personality.

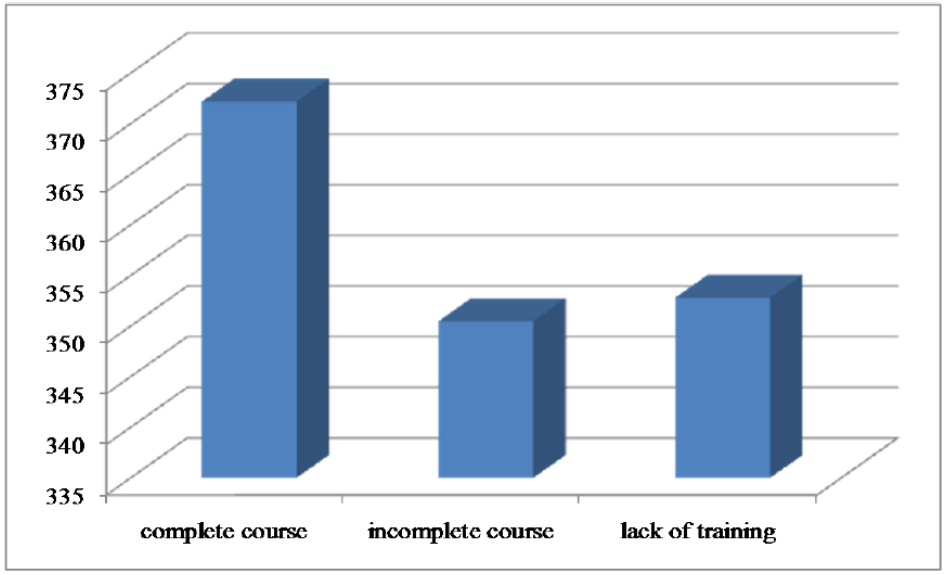

Figure 3: The pronouncement of integral psychological wellbeing in the comparable groups of respondents.

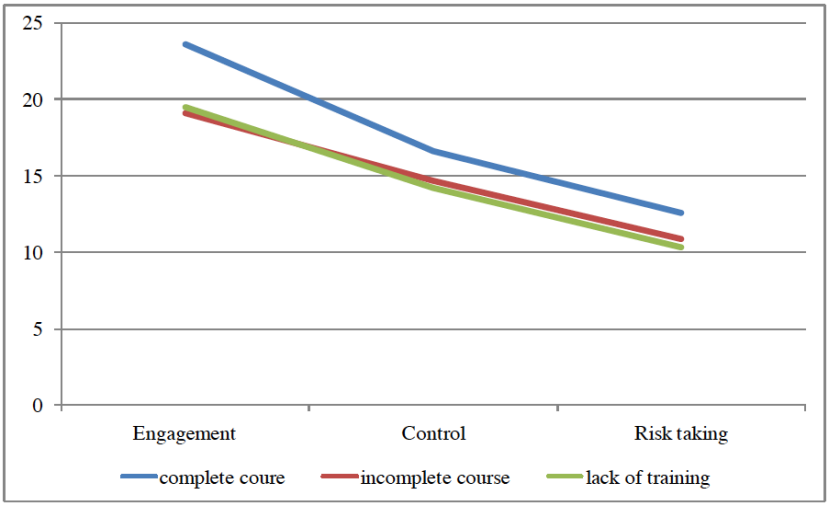

Figure 4: The pronouncement of resilience parameters of respondents of the three comparison groups.

The findings also demonstrate that there are fewer differences between groups of respondents with complete and incomplete course of training in CAS than between the group of respondents who have graduated from CAS and those who have never studied there. This allows us to conclude that even an incomplete course of training in CAS creates conditions for shaping personality psychological wellbeing.

Similar to psychological wellbeing parameters, resilience estimates in three comparable groups lie in the zone of mean (normal) values. However, being relatively independent from each other, all three parameters are differently pronounced in the results of respondents of the three comparison groups (Figure **4**).

Statistical test of the validity of the identified differences showed that respondents with boh complete and incoplete courses in CAS compared to respodents lacking this training are:

1. more involved in what is going on around them, oriented to the search of something interesting, which makes their activities more rewarding (U = 3560.500; p = 0.000);
2. more confident that they can have an impact on what is happening around them and their life through their efforts (U = 3880.500; p = 0.002);
3. more likely to accept risk as a component of gaining new experiences (U = 3428.500; p = 0.000).

On a whole, the pronouncement of resilience in the groups in question has the same tendency – despite their location in the zone of mean values, the results of the three groups have differences (Figure **5**).

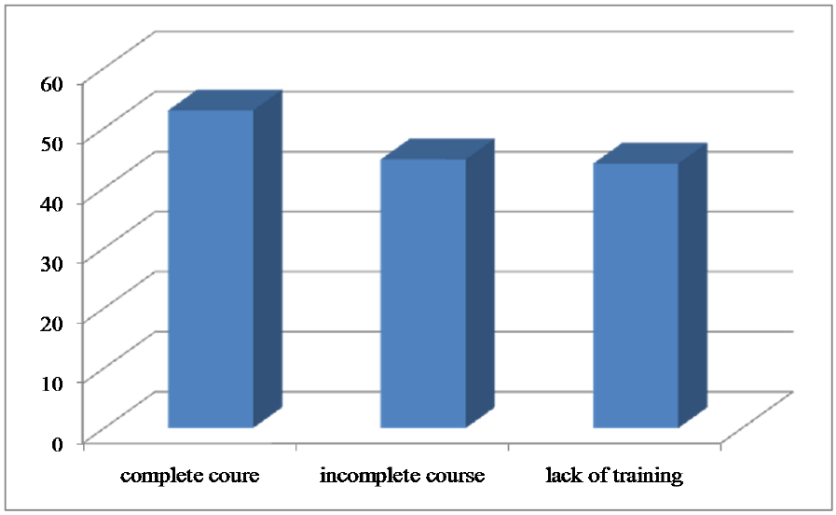

Figure 5: The pronouncement of integral resilience of respondents of the three comparison groups.

Respondents with complete and incomplete training in CAS exhibit higher indicators. These differences are also statistically significant: subjects with complete and incomplete training in CAS (U = 1720.000; p = 0.002); subjects with subjects with a complete course in CAS/subjects with a lack of training in CAS (U = 3452.500; p = 0.000).

Turning to the comparison of the results of the three comparison groups, we can note a trend found when analyzing the results of the psychological wellbeing assessment: there are fewer differences between the groups of respondents who have completed their studies at CAS and those who have not completed them, than between the groups of those who have completed the course in CAS and those who have not studied at CAS.

This allows us to conclude that even an incomplete course of studying in CAS creates the conditions for shaping personal resilience.

The characteristic under examination in its expressed state contributes to success of the person in overcoming difficult, stressful situations. It is necessary to note the thesis that the authors – developers of theoretical bases of studying resilience put forward: the formation of resilience and its parameters occurs in childhood and adolescence, though theoretically its development is possible in later age.

These findings confirm the results obtained by self-reporting – the respondents with full-time training in CAS have higher indicators of psychological wellbeing and resilience. They are more aware of their value, integrity and meaningfulness of being, and have a more pronounced resource for coping with difficult, stressful situations. All these characteristics reflect the realm of experiences and states inherent in a healthy individual who is successful in his or her realization.

CONCLUSION

The results show that compared to respondents who have not attended the course in CAS, subjects with complete and incomplete courses of training in CAS are more open in communication, able to establish trusting relations, empathize and care of others; can better control external environment, their activities; are capable of creating conditions and circumstances suitable for satisfying their needs and achieving their goals; are more aware of their life direction, their goals are more definite; have a more positive attitude to themselves, accept themselves as they are; have more confidence and believe in their abilities; are more aware of the meaningfulness of their life, their past and their present.

Thus, the representatives of the group of respondents – CAS graduates are characterized by higher integral indicators of psychological wellbeing.

Besides, respondents with complete and incomplete training in CAS in comparison with respondents who have never studied there more involved in what is going on around them, oriented to the search of something interesting, which makes their activities more rewarding; are more confident that they can have an impact on what is happening around them, their life through their efforts; and are more likely to accept risk as a component of gaining new experience.

It is worth noting that conditions for shaping psychological wellbeing and personal resilience are created not only in the process of completing a full course of study, but also in the course of uncompleted training in CAS. In the parameters of psychological wellbeing and personal resilience, the groups of respondents with complete and incomplete courses of training in CAS show fewer differences between each other than the differences between groups of those who have experience of studying in CAS and those who lack this experience.

REFERENCES

[1] Jeffrey B. The redress of creative teaching and learning through specialist programmes and strategic partnerships. Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research. Dublin, Ireland. 7-10 September 2005. University of the West of England 2005.

[2] Turner-Bisset R. Performativity by stealth: A critique of recent initiatives on creativity. Education 3-13 2007; 35(2): 193-203. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004270701318007

[3] Gabora L. The origin and evolution of culture and creativity. JoM-EMIT 1997; 1(1): http://cogprints.org/794/1/oecc.html

[4] Burnard P. Reflecting on the creativity agenda in education. Cambridge Journal of Education 2006; 36(3): 313-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640600865801

[5] Davies D, Jindal-Snape D, Collier C, Digby R, Hay P, Howe A. Creative learning environments in education - A systematic literature review. Think Skills Creativity 2013; 8: 80-91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2012.07.004

[6] Simonton DK. Creativity In: Snyder CR, Lopez SJ, Eds. Handbook of positive psychology. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002; pp. 189-201.

[7] Cropley AJ. Creativity: A bandle of paradoxes. GTI 1997; 12: 8-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332276.1997.11672859

[8] Parkhurst H. Confusion, lack of consensus, and the definition of creativity as a construct. J Creat Behav 1999; 33(1): 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2162-6057.1999.tb01035.x

[9] Poole M. Creativity across the curriculum. London, UK: George Allen and Unwin, 1980.

[10] Craft A. Creative development in the early years: Some implications of policy for practice. The Curriculum Journal 1999; 10(1): 135-50. https://doi.org/10.1080/0958517990100110

[11] Craft A. Fostering Creativity with Wisdom. Cambridge Journal of Education 2006; 36(3): 337-50. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640600865835

[12] Walberg H. Creativity and talent as learning In: Sternberg R, Ed. The nature of creativity: Contemporary psychological perspectives. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988; pp. 340-61.

[13] Cropley AJ. Creativity and mental health in everyday life. Creat Res J 1990; 3(3): 167-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419009534351

[14] Richards R. Everyday creativity: Process and way of life - Four key issues In: Kaufman JC, Sternberg RJ, Eds. The Cambridge handbook of creativity. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010; pp. 189-215. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511763205.013

[15] Csikszentmihalyi M. Creativity, flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1996.

[16] Richards R. Ed. Everyday Creativity and New Views of Human Nature: Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Perspectives. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1037/11595-000

[17] Conner TS, DeYoung CG, Silvia PJ. Everyday creative activity as a path to flourishing. J Posit Psychol 2018; 13(2): 181-89. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1257049

[18] Sin NL, Lyubomirsky S. Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: A practice-friendly meta-analysis. J Clin Psychol 2009; 65(5): 467-87. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20593

[19] Fancourt D, Garnett C, Spiro N, West R, Müllensiefen D. How do artistic creative activities regulate our emotions? Validation of the Emotion Regulation Strategies for Artistic Creative Activities Scale (ERS-ACA). PLoS ONE 2019; 14(2): e0211362. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211362

[20] Van Goethem A, Sloboda J. The functions of music for affect regulation. Music Sci 2011; 15: 208-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864911401174

[21] Croom A. Music practice and participation for psychological wellbeing: a review of how music influences positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Music Sci 2015; 19(1): 44-64. https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864914561709

[22] Hallam S, Creech A, Varvarigou M, McQueen H, Gaunt H. Perceived benefits of active engagement with making music in community settings. Int J Community Music 2012; 5(2): 155-74. https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcm.5.2.155_1

[23] Crech A, Hallam S, Varvarigou M, McQueen H, Gaunt H. Active music-making: a route to enhanced subjective well-being among older people. Perspect Public Health 2013; 133(1), 36-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913912466950

[24] DeMarco J, Alexander JL, Nehrenz G, Gallagher L. The benefit of music for the reduction of stress and anxiety in patients undergoing elective cosmetic surgery. Music Med 2012; 4(1): 44-48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1943862111424416

[25] Peifer C. Psychophysiological correlates of flow-experience In: Engeser S, Ed. Advances in flow research. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, 2012; pp. 139-164. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2359-1_8

[26] Rabinowitch TC, Cross I, Burnard P. Long-term musical group interaction has a positive influence on empathy in children. Psychol Music 2013; 41(4): 484-98. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735612440609

[27] Ballantyne J, Ballantyne R, Packer J. Designing and managing music festival experiences to enhance attendees' psychological and social benefits. Music Sci 2014; 18(1): 65-83. https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864913511845

[28] Hays T, Minichiello V. The meaning of music in the lives of older people: A qualitative study. Psychol Music 2005; 33(4): 437-51. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735605056160

[29] Hiscock N, O'Callaghan C, Goodwin M, Wheeler G. Music, intelligence, and the neurocognitive effects of childhood cancer treatment. Music Med 2013; 5(2): 93-98. https://doi.org/10.1177/1943862113479973

[30] Klaphajone J, Thaikruea L, Boontrakulpoontawee M, Vivatwongwana P, Kanongnuch S, Tantong A. Assessment of music therapy for rehabilitation among physically disabled people in Chiang Mai province: a pilot study. Music Med 2013; 5(1): 23-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1943862112470462

[31] Connolly MK, Quinn E, Redding E. Dance 4 your life: exploring the health and well-being implications of a contemporary dance intervention for female adolescents. Research in Dance Education 2011; 12(1): 53-66. https://doi.org/10.1080/14647893.2011.561306

[32] Schellenberg EG, Corrigall KA, Dys SP, Malti T. Group Music Training and Children's Prosocial Skills. PLOS ONE 2015; 10(10): e0141449. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0141449

[33] Roden I, Zepf FD, Kreutz G, Grube D, Bongard S. Effects of music and natural science training on aggressive behavior. Learning and Instruction 2016; 45: 85-92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.07.002

[34] Hallam S. The Power of Music. London, UK: Music Education Council, 2015.

Received on 05-10-2022 Accepted on 21-10-2022 Published on 02-11-2022

DOI: https://doi.org/10.12974/2313-1047.2022.09.8