

Musical Trajectories and Creative Music Teaching Interventions Affect the Development of Interest in ‘Music’ of German Secondary Schools’ Students

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ABSTRACT

Background

Trajectories of musical development can be very different across adolescence and the causes and mechanisms leading to these differences are often the focus of research in music education (e.g., Müllensiefen et al., 2015). To measure the aspects of musical development, the psychometric constructs ‘musical self-concept’ (Spychiger, 2017) and ‘musical sophistication’ (Müllensiefen et al., 2014) as well as ‘interest in music as a school subject’ (Rakoczy et al., 2008) can be used. However, there is no study, which shows that there are different developmental trajectory groups of the constructs ‘musical self-concept’ and ‘musical sophistication’, which differ from the absolute level as well as them continually changing over time. Moreover, there are also only very few studies, which analyses the effects of specific music lessons—especially of creative music teaching interventions (about 10 double-lessons)—on the development of the target variable of this research study ‘interest in music as a school subject’. To analyse these effects, the specific music lessons or the creative music teaching interventions include a higher amount of creative, i.e. productive and transformative, forms of activities as well as methods (e.g., composing, improvising, arranging, dancing or drawing to music etc.).

Aims

The aims of this repeated-measurement study with four different time-points in the school years 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 were: (1) to identify different typical developmental trajectories (regarding the constructs ‘musical self-concept’ and ‘musical sophistication’) within a sample of secondary school students, and (2) to analyse how ‘musical self-concept’ and ‘musical sophistication’ as well as time-shifted creative music teaching interventions contribute to the development of ‘interest in music as a school subject’.

Method

Data of 167 students (f = 94, m = 73) from two Grammar Schools and two Middle Schools are presented. The data comprised the self-assessed psychometric constructs as well as music-specific and demographic background variables (e.g., age, sex, etc.) at four time points across nearly two school years. The data were analyzed using sequence pattern analyses (Aisenbrey & Fasang, 2010; Gabadinho, 2011) and multilevel linear models.

Results

The sequence pattern analyses identified three developmental trajectories of ‘musical self-concept’ and ‘musical sophistication’, which differ from the absolute level as well as them continually changing over time. From these, two typical trajectories of musical development were identified and associations with the variables *sex* ($\phi = .299$, $p \leq .001$), *musical status* ($\phi = .229$, $p \leq .001$), *type of school* (n. s.), and the overall *self-assessed marks in ‘music’* (n. s.) as well as the *self-closeness to the school subject ‘music’* ($r = .250$, $p \leq .001$), were found. The multilevel analysis shows that the two typical developmental trajectories affect students’ ‘interest in music as a school subject’ over the four time points. Additional, the multilevel analysis shows that the interest in ‘music’ is decreasing ($p \leq .001$), but students in the typical high developmental trajectory demonstrate a significant higher interest in ‘music’ over time ($p \leq .001$)—compared to the students in the typical low developmental trajectory. Moreover, a further analysis shows that creative music teaching interventions ($p \leq .05$) as well as the typical high developmental trajectory of students ($p \leq .001$) affect the development of interest in ‘music’, while ‘interest in music as a school subject’ is generally decreasing over time ($p \leq .001$).

Conclusions

In summary, the identified two typical developmental trajectories as well as the creative music teaching interventions (about 10 double-lessons) contribute the development of ‘interest in music as a school subject’ over time. Hence, this study makes an important contribution to the understanding of the mechanisms of musical development during adolescence, and of the effects of of a creative orientation of music lessons.

Keywords

Music education, musical developmental trajectories, musical sophistication, musical self-concept, creative music teaching interventions

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