

Research article

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Students' Motivation for Success while Teaching Music in Small Groups

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Abstract: Introduction. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the description of the phenomenology of small groups, which is understood as a description of the main phenomena that arise in the field of relationships and are characteristic of small groups, the psychological characteristics of the success motivation development, as well as a comparative analysis of the results of a survey on the motivation development among Russian and Chinese students.

Methods. The survey was conducted using a methodology designed to assess the motivation for success among students in small groups. The adapted questionnaire consists of questions from A. V. Sidorenkov's methodology for socio-psychological research of small groups and of questions from foreign authors' questionnaires devoted to the research of social loafing in a small group. The respondents were Chinese and Russian students, which made it possible to carry out a comparative analysis. The aim of the study was to obtain two arrays of experimental data on the studied indicators, on the basis of which an analysis of the differences between them was carried out. Statistical analysis of the data included the calculation of average values of indicators, as well as statistical significance of the differences assessment is identified.

Results. A comprehensive experimental and diagnostic study was carried out on the motivational process development of students when working in small groups in the process of teaching music. The results of the study revealed socio-psychological contradictions, but it was also proved that all three groups of respondents have positive relationships within the group and equally need social support. The second part of the empirical research assessed the level of social loafing in group participation in music classes and showed a relatively low level of social loafing in small groups among Chinese students, and a higher one among Russian students. **Discussion.** As a result of the research, a comparative analysis of the psychological diagnosis of students' motivation development for success while working in small groups in the process of teaching music at the Shenzhen College of International Education (China), Rostov State Conservatory named after. S. V. Rachmaninov and Taganrog College of Music (Russia).

Keywords: motivation for success, learning strategy, motivation assessment, small groups, educational environment, social loafing, teacher-facilitator, work efficiency, music learning, success achievement

Highlights:

- ▶ When working in small groups, many students experience psychological discomfort, prefer autonomy, i.e. study individually.
- ▶ The introduction of new strategies for teaching in small groups in the musical educational environment of traditional learning may be resisted by students, teaching staff and administrative staff due to the phenomenon of the so-called social loafing, when each member of a small group makes less effort working in a group than in the mode of individual learning.
- ▶ The motivation to achieve success is one of the key aspects not only in the learning process, but also in the process of student's self-identification as a musician.

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Introduction

In modern psychology, motivation is seen as a complex multi-level regulator of human life (behavior, cognitive activity, creativity), which includes needs, motives, interests, ideals, aspirations, attitudes, emotions, norms, values, etc. "The hierarchical structure of the motivational sphere determines the orientation of a student's personality, which has a different character depending on which motives have become dominant in their content and structure" (Zimnyaya, 2010, p. 52).

Research conducted within the framework of educational activities confirms the importance and significance of supporting the motivational behavior of students. The positive aspects include an increase in intrinsic motivation for the activities performed (Gordeeva & Shepeleva, 2011; Moiseeva & Sannikova, 2018; Makarova et al., 2019a; Makarova & Denisov, 2021), a better understanding of the material being studied (Ulyanova & Svinareva, 2015; Konovalova, 2013), greater thinking flexibility (Byzova & Perikova, 2015), more active information processing (Zainiev & Karomatov, 2017; Makarova et al., 2019b), creativity (Ilyin, 2012; Borovinskaya, 2016), a high assessment of one's own competence (Kulikova et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017), positive emotions (Khanevskaya, 2016), higher academic achievement (Glazkova & Glazkov, 2021), as well as an increase in overall involvement in the learning process (Andreassen & Makarova, 2018), where "involvement" means a certain motivational construct that includes various behavioral patterns (persistence in the face of obstacles, diligence and intensity, immersion in what is happening, reflection of what is happening), usually associated with increased emotionality and positive emotional states (passion, enthusiasm, pleasure), as well as with cognitive abilities (initiation of the thinking and learning process, attention to detail, lack of detachment). Engagement can be viewed as an important resource for achieving success, as well as a psychological characteristic of the degree to which the student and the educational environment fit (Skinner et al., 2009; Pavlova & Krasnoryadtseva, 2021).

In our research context, it is worth pointing out that satisfaction of the student's need for autonomy plays a crucial role in the development of intrinsic motivation for creative activity, while intrinsic motivation itself is one of the key aspects in the process of identifying oneself as a musician (Hallam, 2006). Unfortunately, most young musicians beginning the learning process need various reinforcements from outside (Howe & Sloboda, 1991), as activities based on personal interest in a musical instrument or in the process of learning music are rare. Therefore, the teacher must plan and design the educational process in such a way that the activity, initiated and regulated initially due to external stimuli, gradually acquires independent significance and arouses interest. In general, autonomy support is a specific set of methods used in class planning or delivery by which educators first identify and then gradually develop students' intrinsic motivational resources in such a way that students eventually come to perceive themselves as the initiators of their own actions and regulators of their own behavior (Reeve & Jang, 2006).

The importance of autonomy is emphasized in the self-determination theory of Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (Ryan & Deci, 2017), according to which agency and choice are more significant motivating factors than control through threats and manipulation. Autonomy also depends to a large extent on the dynamics of relations in the group, on the involvement of trainees both in the organization of the learning process and within study group relationships. The more involved, the more autonomous they feel. Sharing responsibilities and encouraging peer learning in groups promotes engagement, which in turn leads to increased intrinsic motivation of students to succeed. This psychological approach to understanding academic motivation is logically related to the psychology of small groups.

Small group psychology is one of the oldest and most developed areas of social psychology. The increased interest in it has a simple explanation: it is the basic cell of society, the immediate sphere of the formation, development and self-identification of the individual, the psychological means of communication between the individual and society, their mutual influence. The problem of a small group has long been a leading one for Russian psychologists (Andreeva, 2016; Gaidar, 2013; Zhuravlev, 2005; Zhuravlev & Nestik, 2012; Krichevsky & Dubovskaya, 2009; Petrovsky, 1977; Sarychev, 2008; Sidorenkov & Sidorenkova, 2011a; Tretyakova, 2020; Umansky, 2001; etc.), but even now it does not lose its relevance despite the large number of studies in this area (Pronenko & Bunyaeva, 2018).

The need to belong is a strong psychological motivation. In different societies and even eras, people have consistently sought inclusion rather than exclusion, membership rather than isolation, acceptance rather than rejection. As R. Baumeister and M. Leary concluded, people have a need to belong: "the ubiquitous desire to form and maintain at least a minimum number of long-term, positive and effective interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497).

"Small groups can be different in size, in the nature and structure of the relations that exist between their members, in individual composition, in the characteristics of values, norms and rules of relationships shared by the participants, in interpersonal relations, in the goals and content of the activity. The quantitative criterion of a group in the language of science is called the size, and the individual criterion is called the composition" (Nemov, 2003, p. 529).

Defining the concept of small groups, some authors propose to consider the upper and lower limits of a small group size, which, in their opinion, can resolve the contradictions that arise between representatives of different theoretical approaches to this problem.

In majority of researches, the number of small group members ranges between 2 and 7 with a modal number of 2 (mentioned in 71 % of studies). This count is consistent with the widely held notion that the smallest group is a group of two, the so-called "dyad". However, in the "dyad" it is almost impossible to single out the type of communication that is represented by joint activity, it is the appearance of the third subject that brings this type of relationship out of interpersonal interaction, forming a group.

For a long time, in determining the upper limits of the group size, Russian authors relied on the "magic number" (7 ± 2), discovered by J. Miller in research on working memory. Over time, the data were not confirmed empirically, and the attention of psychologists switched to the sociometric studies of J. Moreno indicating the group size from 20 to 30 people, based on social studies of school classes.

In the future, considering the small group primarily as a real one, mediated by social relations and activities, the upper limits will be taken as the number of members of the small group that satisfies this range and is necessary for the implementation of joint educational activities (Andreeva, 2016).

Thus, from the view point of Russian scholars, "a small group in its composition is a small social unit whose members are united by common activities and are in direct, stable contact with each other, which is the basis for the emergence of both emotional relations in the group and special values and norms of group behavior" (Sidorenkov & Sidorenkova, 2011b, p. 33).

In foreign researches, a small group for learning is defined as a group of students with three main characteristics: active participation, specific task and reflection (Agnihotri & Ngorosha, 2018). Effective learning requires that the small group has a specific task at which the group activity is directed. This task must be clearly understood and accepted by all small group members. Although individual members of a group may not be equally involved in achieving the goal, successful learning in small groups requires all members' active involvement and participation. The need for reflection as part of effective learning was highlighted in a long-term study (Rossokhin, 2010). Small groups allow students to reflect on their own experiences as well as the experiences of others, thus contributing to a deep understanding of the learning material during the learning process. A skilled facilitator can guide this reflection so that it leads to the desired learning outcomes.

In a small group, students can be encouraged to talk, reflect on the problems and share opinions much more easily than in a large group. Communication with the teacher and with each other is a fundamental factor in any small group learning, a critical first step is the willingness of students to communicate. It makes sense to identify the goals of a small group and explain the value of communication in terms of personal and intellectual development of students (Kolb, 1984).

The phenomenology of small groups is understood as the representation and description of the main phenomena that arise in the sphere of human relationships and are characteristic of small groups. Special attention is paid to trust as "the selective attitude of one subject to another, based on an assessment of certain qualities of another, a willingness to interact with them in a certain way, and on a sense of personal security (well-being) during interaction" (Sidorenkov & Sidorenkova, 2011a, p. 95).

The socio-psychological basis of all relations that develop in a group is the values and norms adopted in it. The term "values" means what is valued by the members of this group,

what is most significant and important for them, including the general and individual goals that the members of the group strive for. The values are followed by the behavior norms, relationships that are developed and operated in a given social group, general rules that guide members of the group in their actions and relationships with each other.

As a result of the research, problems associated with learning and teaching in small groups were identified:

1. The introduction of new approaches to teaching in small groups in the educational environment of traditional learning may meet students, teaching staff and administrative staff resistance.

2. Small groups usually require additional investment in key resources, including additional staff and specially equipped classrooms.

3. Most small group activities are best performed with the help of qualified facilitators (who are often in short supply) rather than through traditional teaching methods use.

4. Many students feel psychological discomfort when working in small groups, they prefer to study individually or in large groups (in the class).

Music education, like other areas of education, needs to rethink the way information is communicated and to promote changes in students' development that meet the new society demands for future professionals' education. Among the factors contributing to this cultural change are the epistemological beliefs and concepts held by various actors in music education – students, teachers, and/or scholars conducting research in this field. Teaching music in small groups requires a complete understanding of each participant in the educational process, respect for student's personality. Each student is an autonomous person pursuing their own goals, but they are also members of the group – this circumstance limits, directs and supports their activities in the educational process. Individual students do not always achieve their goals by working autonomously, but when group members learn to work together as a cohesive team; their learning becomes effective, aimed at achieving success. Many human activities are more successful in groups, people also turn to group members when they need to make an important decision, and this choice is justified as long as groups avoid problems such as group polarization and group thinking.

Just as each student affects all people in the group, so does the group change each of its members. Joining a group satisfies the student's need for belonging, support, gaining information and understanding through social comparison, defining a sense of self and social identity in achieving goals that might escape attention if students work alone. Groups are also of practical importance, since most tasks in the world are fulfilled by groups rather than individuals.

Methods

At the first stage of research students' motivation for success while working in small groups in the process of learning music, data were collected on a selection of Chinese students of the Shenzhen College of International Education, Shenzhen (China), and Russian students of the Rostov State Conservatory named after S. V. Rachmaninov, Rostov-on-Don, and the Taganrog College of Music, Taganrog.

The age of the subjects varied from 16 to 18 years ($n = 96$). The average age of the subjects was 17.2 ± 1.3 years, and the median age was 17 years. The criterion for dividing the subjects

into two groups was the place of residence: the 1st group – in China ($n_1 = 50$ people), and the 2nd group – in Russia ($n_2 = 46$).

Realization of the research purpose implies the need to obtain two main arrays of empirical data. Based on the division of the subjects into two groups, an analysis of the differences between them in terms of the studied indicators was carried out. Mathematical processing of the obtained empirical data included the determination of the average values for the researched indicators, as well as the procedure for assessing the statistical significance of the differences identified.

To diagnose students' motivation for success while working in small groups in the process of learning music, questionnaires were developed for students and teachers in Russian and English, taking into account the mentality of Chinese students, for whom English is a second language.

The first part of the student questionnaire consists of twelve statements based on the adaptation of A. V. Sidorenkov's methodology for the socio-psychological study of small groups (Sidorenkov et al., 2012). Agreement with the statements is assessed on a five-point Likert scale.

The second part of the questionnaire includes ten statements and is based on foreign studies on the perception of social loafing in a small group (Zhu et al., 2019). Agreement with statements is also assessed on a five-point Likert scale, which allows you to indicate the degree to which each item corresponds to the subjective experience of the survey participant.

The third, final part of the questionnaire is devoted to assessing the motivation for success of students while working in small groups in the process of learning music and consists of thirty two statements, each of which must be answered "yes" or "no": T. Ehlers' questionnaire was taken as the basis for determining motivation to success (Ehlers, n.d.).

The second stage of the research was an expert assessment of the small group as a whole and students' motivation in the process of teaching music by these groups' teacher-facilitators. At this stage, the processing of the results was performed with a breakdown into small groups, which shows the subjective vision of students for motivation for success development during the process of learning music and teacher's objective assessment of the psychological climate in the group as a whole.

The questionnaire consists of 15 statements and is intended for a general expert assessment of the learning effectiveness in each small group. Agreement with the statements is assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, which allows indicating the degree of correspondence for each item to the objective, also on teacher's expertise.

Results

Both selections coincide in terms of the main demographic indicators (gender, age, level of education, professional orientation, and marital status) and are close in size.

The first part of the empirical research is devoted to the identification of socio-psychological contradictions (interpersonal, individual-group, motivational-activity, activity-organizational, status and intergroup contradictions) in small groups when learning music. On average, the results of groups in China ($G1W = 1.75$; $G1X = 2.164$; $G1Z = 2.097$; $G2X = 1.843$; $G2Y = 1.964$) show a low level of socio-psychological contradictions in small groups; in Rostov-on-Don these indicators are somewhat higher ($RD1W = 2.229$; $RD2X = 2.292$; $RD3Y = 2.250$; $RD4Z = 2.208$),

and in Taganrog, respectively (T1W = 2.104; T1X = 2.396; T2Y = 2.133; T2Z = 2.154). In general, students in a small group socio-psychological contradictions' research in the process of learning music showed that the groups have much in common in terms of personal interests and ideas, they experience positive relationships with each other, but they need the attention and support of the group and the teacher-facilitator. Students in small groups in China and Russia are satisfied with the purpose and content of the activities performed and the setting of tasks, but they want to receive more attention and social support from the teacher and compete with other groups.

The second part of the empirical research assesses social loafing in a group. On average, the results of groups in China (G1W = 1.936; G1X = 2.613; G1Z = 1.833; G2X = 2.556; G2Y = 2.295) show a relatively low level of social loafing in small groups, in Rostov-on-Don these indicators are slightly higher (RD1W = 2.859; RD2X = 3.180; RD3Y = 2.843; RD4Z = 2.625), and in Taganrog, respectively (T1W = 2.813; T1X = 3.125; T2Y = 2.625; T2Z = 2.625). Social loafing, despite its clearly negative character, makes a positive contribution to non-learning aspects of group functioning. Collaboration, content acquisition, and choice provide small group educators with an excellent foundation to manage and improve teaching and learning. As follows from the above three strategies⁶ not only the teacher, but also small group members can make an important contribution to fight against social loafing and social facilitation.

Evaluation of social loafing in a small group can be made using the "transparency" of individual efforts and results in the overall group effectiveness. The perception of the result will be negative if the "transparency" of the work in the group is low; students are less motivated to make an effort when they believe that their individual efforts are indistinguishable from the efforts of others and are not visible to the teacher; they will be socially lazy, knowing that there will be no reward or punishment.

The third, final part of the questionnaire is devoted to assessing the motivation for success of students when working in small groups and is presented in more detail in Table 1 and Figures 1–3.

Table 1

Evaluation of students' motivation for success when working in small groups in the process of teaching music (T. Ehlers questionnaire)

Group name	Small group size	Min.	Max.	Median	Average	Standard deviation	Dispersion
China							
G1W	12	5	20	16	16.83	5.306	28.15
G1X	10	12	21	18	17.2	2.600	9.511
G1Z	6	13	21	18.5	18	3.000	12.000
G2X	8	9	22	16.5	15.38	3.531	19.411
G2Y	12	9	21	20	17.86	4.073	16.593

Group name	Small group size	Min.	Max.	Median	Average	Standard deviation	Dispersion
Rostov-on-Don, Russia							
RD1W	8	8	25	18.5	17.5	5.154	26.571
RD2X	4	13	18	15.5	15.5	2.081	4.333
RD3Y	4	15	21	17	17.2	2.872	8.25
RD4Z	3	16	18	17	17	1	1
Taganrog, Russia							
T1W	4	12	22	17	17	4.163	17.333
T1X	4	13	19	15	15.5	2.516	6.333
T2Y	5	7	19	12	13.4	5.029	25.3
T2Z	15	10	20	16	16.46	3.583	12.838

Figure 1

The indicators' severity of motivation for success of Shenzhen College of International Education (Shenzhen, China) students when working in small groups in the process of music learning

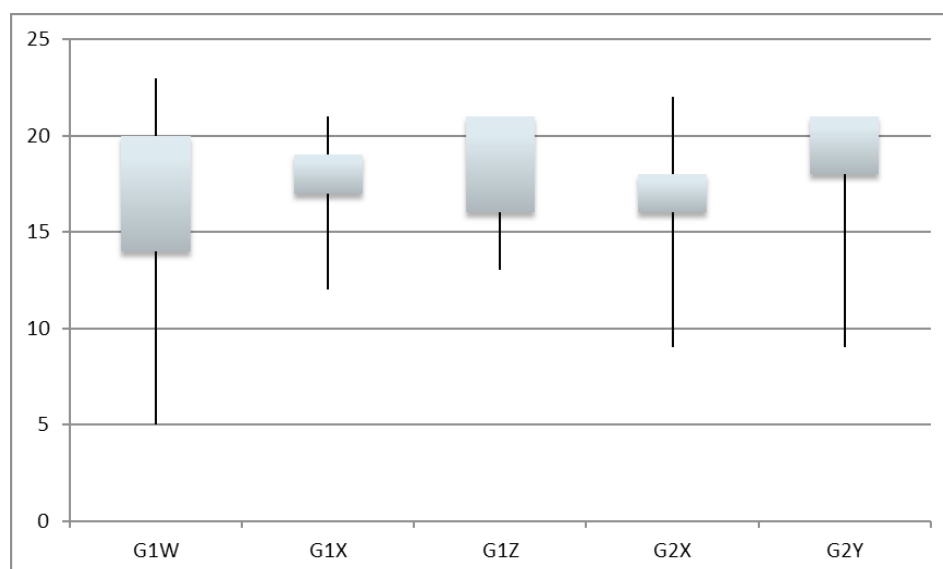


Figure 2

The indicators' severity of motivation for success of Rostov State Conservatory named after S. V. Rachmaninov (Rostov-on-Don, Russia) students when working in small groups in the process of music learning

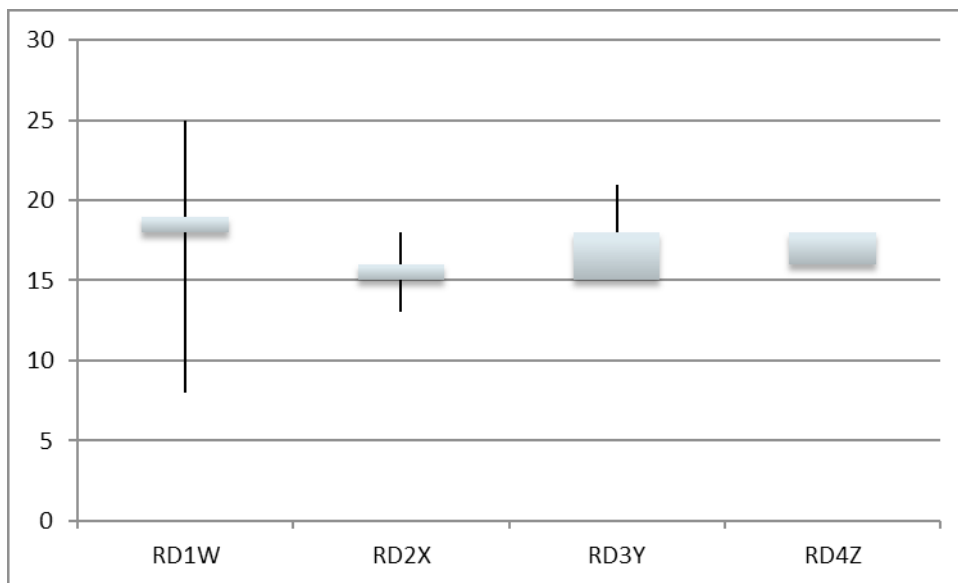
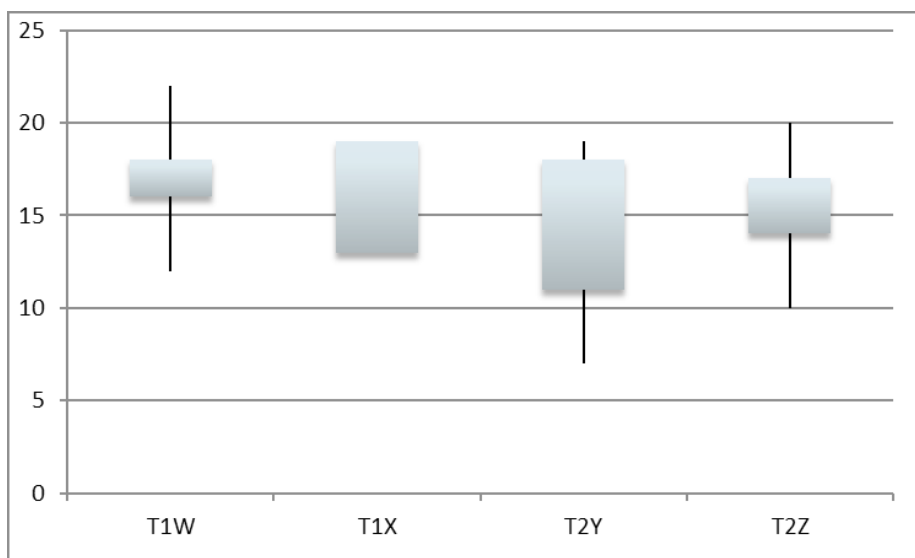


Figure 3

The indicators' severity of motivation for success of Taganrog Music College (Taganrog, Russia) students when working in small groups in the process of music learning



The observations of the expert teacher in each group confirm the research results.

Discussion

Research in the psychology and education sciences has shown that small group learning (compared to competitive and individual learning) improves academic performance, relationships with other students in the group and teachers, and contributes to the psychological well-being of each group member. The following is a summary of these benefits based on a meta-analysis of small group learning (Davidson et al., 2014).

Academic benefits: Compared to competitive and individual learning, students are better at problem solving and better understanding of the material when working in small groups. Regardless of the subject, students learn more and retain learning material longer when learning in small groups than when presented with content in other teaching methods. Attendance, performance and perseverance are improved.

Social benefits: Students develop social and leadership skills, such as learning how to communicate with other people who dominate the group and making sure all members contribute their efforts. Students who process information and work together on a problem in groups are also more likely to keep learning and are more likely to integrate into diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, class, creative, and gender groups successfully.

Psychological benefits: teaching in small groups helps to draw attention to those students who usually do not like to answer in front of the whole class. It also contributes to increased self-esteem, compared to competitive or individual training.

The effectiveness of small group learning and teaching is evidenced by its long history, and it remains a key method of teaching and learning in modern educational environment.

The benefits of learning and teaching in small groups can be classified according to the following criteria:

- Learning in small groups corresponds with modern educational theory because education is best when studying is an active rather than a passive process.
- Group participation allows students to test and refine their understanding of concepts, test hypotheses, evaluate ideas, and consider possible outcomes (Crosby, 1996).
- For individual members of small groups there is more likely to identify what they do not know, clarify what they do not understand and correct during education process (Exley & Dennick, 2004). This great opportunity arises because it is often difficult for a student working in isolation to comprehend what he or she does not understand.
- Members of small groups have better control over their learning activities, have more opportunities to self-manage their individual learning, and are also inclined to develop the skills of introspection and self-discipline necessary for lifelong learning (Glaser, 1991).
- Studying in small groups gives students the opportunity to work collegially and acquire the social skills necessary for their future profession. These skills include prioritizing selected tasks, teamwork, time management, establishing and maintaining professional interpersonal relationships, communicating effectively, developing leadership skills, monitoring group dynamics, and building self-confidence through the need to express and defending ideas (Reynolds, 1994).
- Working in small groups promotes self-motivation through active participation and greater satisfaction with learning, as well as the application of many principles of independent learning.

- Learning in small groups promotes deeper, more thoughtful, rather than superficial learning. Deep learning leads to long-term changes, more developed cognitive abilities and a deeper understanding of the subject of study; superficial learning tends to be limited and short-lived.

Conclusions

The research results of the psychological characteristics' study and the motivational behavior of students when working in small groups in the process of teaching music are presented. Based on the results of the empirical study, it can be concluded that in China, working in small groups is better organized, students are highly motivated, actively participate in the learning process; the level of social laziness is low, but they need attention and social support from the teacher, other students and their parents.

In Russia, studying in small groups is not so well organized, therefore, socio-psychological contradictions and social laziness are higher, and the motivation to achieve success is lower. The organization of training in small groups allows you to structure the work on mastering the educational content, correcting errors and discussing the results. The use of group learning strategies has been proven to promote a lifelong learning experience that is effective in developing social interaction skills and can be recommended to improve student learning, memorization and retention of learning materials by students, as well as to increase academic performance and improve attitudes towards teamwork.

The use of structural modeling methods has shown that the development of conscious self-regulation makes a significant contribution to the enthusiasm for work and prevents the appearance of specialists' professional deformations. At the same time, regulatory flexibility and reliability are of great importance. These personal-regulatory resources not only directly affect professional well-being, but are also mediators of the influence of cognitive-regulatory resources on it, such as goal planning, modeling of significant conditions, action programming, and results' evaluation.

Education in small groups demonstrates broad prospects for a resource approach to the consideration of conscious self-regulation to study the problems of human well-being in various environments, including the inevitably increasing anthropogenic pressure on the environment, which exacerbates the need to develop subjectivity and awareness of human being in order to maintain its activity and realize the need in activity, communication and self-realization in life in general.

The materials obtained as a result of our empirical research can be used to build and refine a program for studying various subjects in small groups, to develop a learning strategy, to develop the motivational sphere for students and the development of social interaction skills.

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E. L. Makarova organized the empirical research, analyzed and interpreted the obtained empirical data, designed and edited the manuscript of the article.

B. V. Denisov collected the empirical data of the research, analyzed and interpreted the obtained empirical data, contributed to the manuscript of the article, worked with resources.

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Conflict of Interest Information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.