

POS-110

Factors Influencing the Formation of Learning Motivation of Doctoral Students in Music Education at a Research University in the U.S.

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Abstract

The pursuit of a doctoral degree in music education is a major life commitment. Through looking into the influential factors of the formation of learning motivation of doctoral students, we can identify dynamic factors of the developmental trends in music education, as well as the contributing factors of music education to students' motivation development. This study aims to explore factors that influence the formation of learning motivation of doctoral students in music education at a research university in the US. Nine doctoral students (four international students and five US-born students) were selected for the study. Qualitative data were collected through interviews and participant observation. Nvivo was used to code the transcripts of audio recordings, from free nodes and tree nodes. The coverage rate and the correlation between coded word frequencies based on audio recordings were analyzed so as to line up the rank order of influential factors. Then a relationship model of influencing factors of doctoral learning motivations, based on time, space and content, was constructed. Results indicated that 1. Doctoral students have a strong sense of self-identity and value the knowledge, skills, and opportunities that a doctorate carries. 2. In terms of intrinsic motivation, doctoral students think that they have a natural and inseparable relationship with music education. In terms of instrumental motivation, both international students and US-born students tended to aspire for a career as a university professor. 3. Childhood experience has a great influence on their persistence in their studies. Some people have a strong motivation for making up their once lost learning opportunities in past. 4. They all hope to help more people through music education. Taken together, the conclusion is that instrumental motivation, achievement motivation, and self-actualization are vital influencing factors for doctoral students' learning motivation. Implications for teachers include 1. Teachers should pay attention to pluralism, have a multicultural perspective, engage all kinds of motivation of different students. 2. The pursuit of creativity is an effective way to guide students to increase their intrinsic and external motivation. 3. Because of the long-term influence of childhood on their adult, teachers sow the seeds of interest in students' hearts in order to reignite their motivation throughout their musical development. 4. Teachers should design activities that facilitate students to help each other, cooperate, share, and complete the activity goals successfully.

Keywords: learning motivation, doctoral students, music education, influencing factors, relationship model