

Research Article

EXPLORING THE FLOW EXPERIENCE AMONG MUSIC STUDENTS AND MUSIC TEACHERS

* Németh-Czirok Ildikó

Gyulai Erkel Ferenc Művészeti Iskola, Gyula, Hungary, University of Pécs Phd student.

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ABSTRACT

The flow's elements were formulated by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (1975). People who have experienced flow have reported that there is nothing but the activity that engages them. The feeling of flow occurs during an activity that requires preparation, has clear goals, and provides immediate feedback. It engages full attention of the person, it takes control of the mind and the person is immersed in the action while doing it. The sense of time is transformed and finally, these elements create an auto telic experience. This study's goal is to explore the flow among music teachers and music students from 11 different music schools and to provide insight into a research that is still ongoing. It is hypothesized, that the time spent teaching a teaching influences the flow experience. Also, the music students' learning in music secondary schools flow values are lower than the students' flow values learning music in primary schools.

Keywords: flow experience, auto telic, music student, music teacher, music education.

INTRODUCTION

Flow experience is a state of consciousness (awareness) where people become totally immersed (nothing else exists just the activity itself) in an activity, and enjoy it intensively (very much). Flow experience can be a state they fit in and live in and a method that they create to be in flow. They are involved in the activity, they do it because they love doing it. They do it by intrinsic motivation, not external motivation. Nothing else matters, just the activity itself. It is named by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (1975,1990), who was a Hungarian-American psychologist. His father was a carrier diplomat. His father's hobby was sculpture, he was making several statues for hours and hours. In the beginning, Csíkszentmihályi (1975) started to test, observe chess players, athletes, musicians, workers during the activity. He was curious about the reason, why these people play chess, practice, run for hours and hours every day even if they are tired. He was also curious what's the secret of loving our job. He said: „ ... *the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.*” (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990.) He made several interviews, using ESM[1] with successful people and asked them: what they feel during the activity. These people said:

„It was like floating.”, „ I was carried out by the flow”, It's exhilarating to come closer and closer to self-discipline. You make your body go and everything hurts; then you look back in awe at the self, at what you've done, it just blows your mind. It leads to ecstasy, to self-fulfillment. If you win these battles enough, that battle against yourself, at least for a moment, it becomes easier to win the battles in the world.” (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990).

If we are in flow we feel in control of our actions, we are masters of our own fate (destiny). On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration (cheerfulness, fun), a deep sense of

enjoyment that is long cherished (planned) and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like.

Researches (Torres, 2017; O'Neill,1999; Bakker,2005; Lusca, 2014; Bernard,2009, Smolej & Awsey, 2007; Macdonald, Byrne & Carlton, 2006) showed that the flow experience due to its autotelic nature increases the performances' quality. Gabriella Torres (2017) investigated the extent to which music teachers are able to experience flow, whether they are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, and if they are intrinsically motivated, it increases their effectiveness in teaching or not. She found that music teachers experience higher flow than other teachers, are more motivated, and that intrinsic motivation and flow are directly proportional. All the eight elements of flow are realized at high levels. Susan Neill (1999) looked at three types (excellent, good, general ability) of 12-16-year-old students in two types of schools (music students learning music in music-specific schools - music students learning music in non-genre-specific schools). She examined whether ability - performance is directly proportional to. She concluded: if the practicing music is intrinsically motivated, yes. Sabahat Burak (2014) investigated the relationship between music practice and flow. Those, who practiced for less than one hour per day experienced less flow and more antiflow than those who practiced at least three hours or more per day. He found that the reason for less practice was abdication.

Barbara S. Fritz and Andrea Avsec (2007) investigated the relationship between flow and well-being among musicians. They concluded that the fulfillment of certain elements of flow has a positive effect on the experience of well-being, increasing its attainment and experience. Lusca (2014) was interested in the degree of flow experienced by music students during an examination concert. She found that participants experience flow state, and that performances' levels correlate directly and proportionally with the degree of flow state.

*Corresponding Author: Németh-Czirok Ildikó,

Gyulai Erkel Ferenc Művészeti Iskola, Gyula, Hungary, University of Pécs Phd student. email: czirok.ildi89@gmail.com

[1] ESM= Experience Sampling Method. The examined person wears an electronic pager or beepers, and a booklet. This programmed transmitter gave signs about eight times a day and the persons had to write down what they were doing and feel at this time.

ELEMENTS OF THE FLOW EXPERIENCE

Fig. 1. The elements of flow

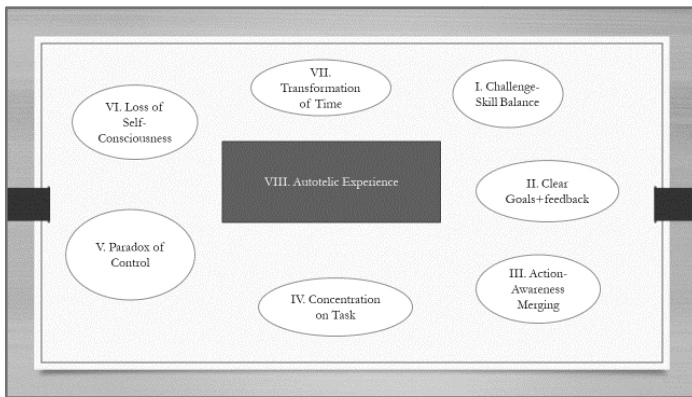


Fig. 1. The elements of flow (own editing)

The first element is challenge skill balance. Flow can be experienced when the required skills are in balance with the person's skills. If the person's skill is higher than what is required, boredom and when the person's skill is lower, anxiety may occur. (See fig. 2) The second element is clear goals and feedback. We have to know what we want to do and need feedback on whether we have succeeded in our goal or not. If one chooses a trivial goal, success in it does not provide enjoyment. In some creative activities, where goals are not clearly set in advance, a person must develop a strong personal sense of what he/she intends to do. Certain activities require a very long time to accomplish, yet the components of goals and feedback are still extremely important to them. Almost any kind of feedback can be enjoyable, provided it is logically related to a goal in which one has invested psychic energy. The third element is action awareness merging. It means concentration while doing something. Only the activity itself exists: the person's attention is totally absorbed by the activity itself. The fourth element is concentration on the task. This occurs if the person understands everything that should be done and leaves no room for irrelevant information in the mind. As Csikszentmihályi said: „ Only the clearly structured demands of the activity impose order and exclude the interference of disorder in consciousness" (Csikszentmihályi 1990). The fifth element is the paradox of control. In flow, the sense of worry is lacking, the person does not worry about anything, he/she is intensively involved in the activity, and he/she can control what he/she is doing. He/she dominates the situation. The sixth element is the loss of self-consciousness. It happens when the activity is so engrossing that there is not enough attention left over to allow the person to think about the past, the future, or anything else. All intentions are invested in the activity, and the person and the activity become one. In flow, there is no room for self-scrutiny. The seventh element is the transformation of time. In flow, you don't feel time passing. In flow, time passes faster, hours passing like minutes. The eighth element is autotelic experience. This element is the key element of the flow experience. Autotelic derives from two greek words: auto means self, and telic means goal. The most important thing is that the activity is done by intrinsic motivation and not an external motivator (future benefit, duty, habit). The activity itself is the reward. After the activity, the person will be happier, more satisfied, and look forward to doing it again and again.

Fig.2: challenge – skill balance

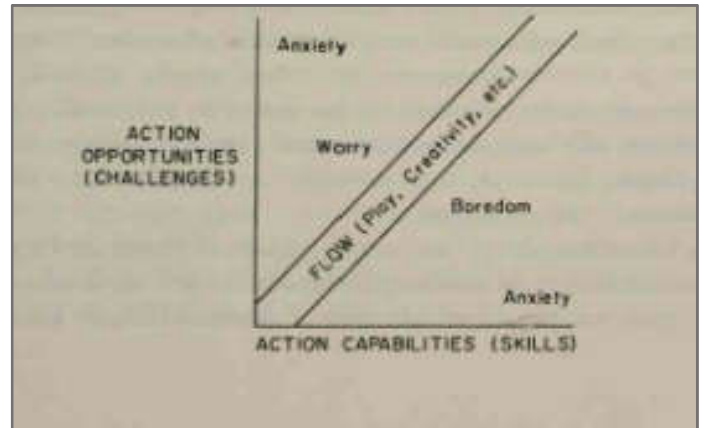


Fig.2 Csikszentmihályi, 1975

FLOW AND MUSIC

Fig.3 The elements of flow and their meanings while playing music

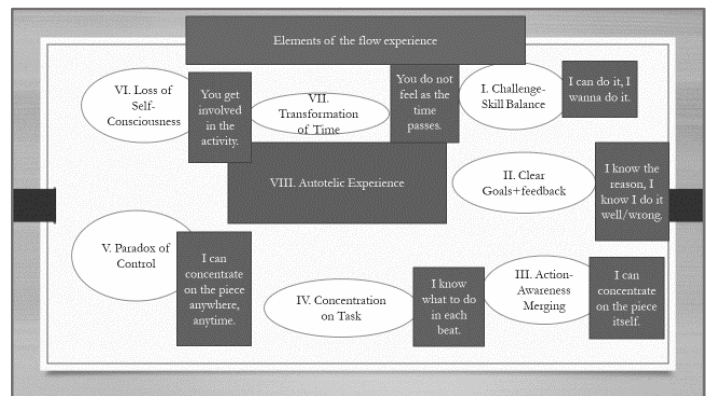


Fig.3 The elements of flow and their meanings while playing music (own editing)

Csikszentmihályi (1990) demonstrated that people who listen to music at a concert hall get into a flow state at a higher rate than people who listen to music at home. Susan O'Neill's research (1999) examined flow during practicing. Andreas Burzik (2003) and Eve Newsome (2013) developed their own flow method. A comparison of my findings and the literature (Csikszentmihályi 1997, Bakker 2003, Burzik 2003, Newsome 2013, O'Neill 1999, Bakker,2005; Smolej & Awsey, 2007; Macdonald, Byrne & Carlton, 2006) the interpretation of the flow elements is the next. (See fig.2). In flow nothing else exists just the playing/teaching of music. To achieve this experience, the musician must know that he/she is talented, what piece to play, concentrate well, know what to do with each beat, play well anytime, anywhere, and get involved in music playing. The music teacher must know what piece of music to teach and why, must give feedback to their students, concentrate well, know the piece of music at his/her best, lock out the outside world, and put his/her own personality into the lessons. If these elements are implemented, the desired flow experience is achieved.

THE RESEARCH

The research is an exploratory research. The research is cross-sectional research — more schools take part, but one school takes part only once. The sampling procedure was developed by the maximum strategy principle. Only those students participated in this

research who aspire to be professional musicians, as well as only those teachers who are dedicated to music education. (Sántha, 2006).

Participants and the method

In the school year 2020/21, 52 music schools were approached to take part in this research, of which 11 participated. 53 music school students and 67 music teachers took part in this research. They received the questionnaire by e-mail. The four scales questionnaire have been developed by A. Jackson and Herbert Marsh Flow State Scale (1996) and have been adapted to music learning/teaching by me. The results have been summarized by using SPSS 26.

Hypoteses and results

The following hypotheses have been examined:

Hypotesis 1: The flow values of students learning in music schools are higher than those of students learning music at music secondary schools. According to the results of the questionnaire (See fig. 3, table 1), the hypothesis cannot be proved. The students at the music secondary school had a higher flow rate in terms of the following flow elements: challenge-skill balance, clear goal and feedback, and autotelic happiness, but lower in terms of action-awareness and concentration control. In terms of the following flow elements: loss of self-consciousness, transformation of time, their rates are equal. So, in summary, this hypothesis cannot be proven.

Fig. 4: Flow values of music secondary/primary school students

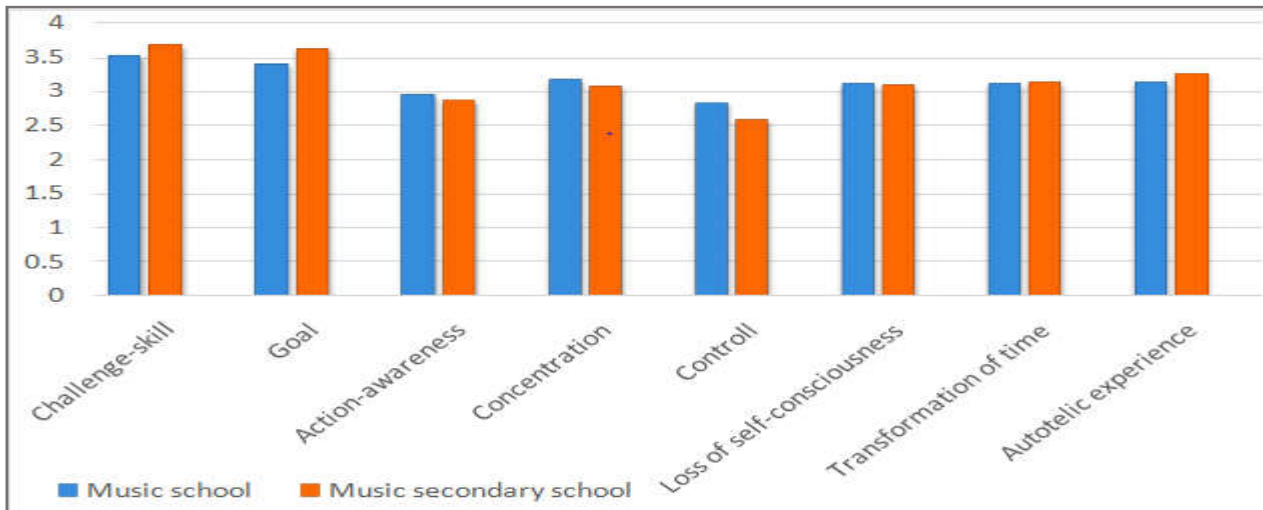


Fig. 4: Flow values of music secondary/primary school students (own editing)

Table 1. Flow values of music secondary/primary school students

Flow element	School type	Flow value	Std. Deviation	Noun
Challenge-Skill balance	Music school	3,52	0,510	23
	Music secondary school	3,66	0,479	30
Goal-Feedback	Music school	3,39	0,480	23
	Music secondary school	3,62	0,431	30
Action-awareness	Music school	2,94	0,488	23
	Music secondary school	2,85	0,687	30
Concentration	Music school	3,17	0,331	23
	Music secondary school	3,06	0,535	30
Controll	Music school	2,83	0,596	23
	Music secondary school	2,57	0,572	30
Loss of self-consciousness	Music school	3,10	0,690	23
	Music secondary school	3,08	0,695	30
Transformation of time	Music school	3,10	0,583	23
	Music secondary school	3,13	0,578	30
Autotelic experience	Music school	3,13	0,520	23
	Music secondary school	3,25	0,794	30

Table 1. Flow values of music secondary/primary school students (own editing)

Hipotesis 2: The flow values of music teachers who teach fewer hours are higher than the flow values of music teachers who teach several hours.

As can be seen (fig 4, table 2), the flow values of teachers teaching 4–16 hours per week are higher than those of teachers teaching 17–40 hours per week. The biggest difference is found in the transformation of time. This hypothesis can be proven.

Fig. 5: Flow values – teaching

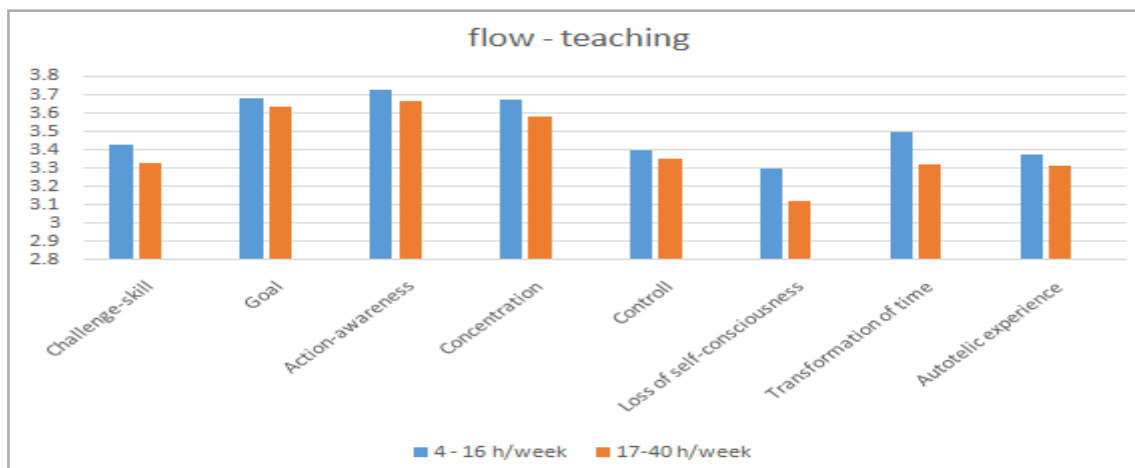


Fig. 5: Flow values – teaching (own editing)

Table 2: Flow values – teaching

Flow elements	Teachers' hours/week	Flow values	Std. Deviation	Noun
Challenge-Skill balance	17-40	3,33	0,471	37
	4-16	3,43	0,421	30
Goal-Feedback	17-40	3,63	0,345	37
	4-16	3,68	0,245	30
Action-awareness	17-40	3,66	0,304	37
	4-16	3,72	0,328	30
Concentration	17-40	3,58	0,329	37
	4-16	3,67	0,315	30
Controll	17-40	3,35	0,388	37
	4-16	3,40	0,412	30
Loss of self-consciousness	17-40	3,12	0,532	37
	4-16	3,30	0,624	30
Transformation of time	17-40	3,32	0,461	37
	4-16	3,50	0,485	30
Autotelic experience	17-40	3,31	0,371	37
	4-16	3,37	0,387	30

CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen both music students and music teachers experience flow during their music activity. In the case of students the highest value is 3,66, the lowest is 2,57 (see table 1). In case of teachers the highest flow value is 3,72 the lowest is 3,12 (see table 2). As few people filled in the questionnaire further researches are required, but to tell the truth, it is probable, that a lot of music teacher and music student love their job.

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