

ABSTRACT

Getting in Touch with Emotion: The Impact of a Movement-Based Emotional Self-Regulation Programme for Adolescents in Special Education Transitioning to Post-School Environments

Angela S.L. Leung and Helen Payne

School of Education, University of Hertfordshire

This study aimed to investigate the impact of a movement-based emotional self-regulation (ESR) programme on the adolescents with special educational needs (SEN) during the transition from school to post-school in Hong Kong.

Research questions:

- 1) In what way the intervention cohorts different from the control cohorts after intervention? (Quantitative)
- 2) How do the adolescents go through emotional self-regulation? (Qualitative)
- 3) What are the good practices for implementing the programme? (Qualitative)

Methodology: This study adopted a mixed-methods methodology. A randomised control trial (RCT) study and a focus group study were conducted concurrently. The quantitative and qualitative data were complemented with each other.

Participants included 51 students and five adults (school staff), were recruited from five special schools. Students were randomly allocated into intervention and control cohorts corresponding to the parents' choices.

Data collection was conducted through the RCT and focus group studies. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data at pre, post-intervention and 14 weeks follow-up. T-test analysis was administered. Verbal data collected in the focus groups were analysed by the content thematic analysis. Non-verbal information was triangulated and complemented with verbatim transcriptions.

Findings:

Quantitative results indicated significant improvement of intervention cohorts in all variables at 14 weeks follow-up. Qualitative findings showed the process of emotional self-regulation (the awareness of an emotion triggering event, body awareness, emotional awareness, and emotional regulation strategies) and the good practice (providing students with a happy, new and impressive emotional self-regulation experience). The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by unveiling the emotional regulation process in addition to the statistically insignificant impact of the intervention.

Conclusion and implication: The movement-based ESR programme contributes to improve emotional self-regulation of adolescents with SEN. The practice and experiences in this study contribute to the fields of dance movement therapy and psychotherapy research.

Biography:

Miss Angela S. L. Leung, PhD Candidate, MPhil, MSocSc, BSocSc, BEd, DTAA (DMT Prof), is the PhD student of University of Hertfordshire and a professional member of the Dance-Movement Therapy Association of Australasia. She is a founder and member of the Hong Kong Dance Movement Therapy Association.
e-mail: s.l.leung@herts.ac.uk

Professor Helen Payne, PhD holds a Chair in Psychotherapy at the University of Hertfordshire where she acts as a principal supervisor to a number of doctoral students in dance movement psychotherapy. She is the founder and member of the Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK.