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## THE ROLE OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN PREPARING GLOBALLY COMPETENT PUPILS

### Summary

Music has very important function in the lives of most teenagers, but there is a disjunction between music at school and music at home. Adolescent's music preferences are very heterogeneous and they can be explained by various social and individual factors. The author discusses the problem of music education in Croatian grammar schools and speaks in favour of expanding music curriculum with non-western musical idioms, primarily by inclusion of world music and popular music. In that way music education will create globally competent pupils.

*Key words:* music education, world music, popular music

### Introduction

Music plays an important role in the social and personal lives of people, especially of adolescents (Christenson & Peterson, 1998; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). North, Hargreaves and O'Neill (2000) reported British adolescent to listen to music for an average of 2,45 hours per day. Earlier estimates indicate that, from 7th to 12th grade, American adolescents average 10500 hours of elected exposure to popular music (Zillman & Gan, 1997). The times spent listening to music approximate those spent in the classroom from kindergarten through high school. So we can conclude that music is of the central importance in the lives of most young people.

Adolescent's music preferences are very heterogeneous and that heterogeneity can be explained by various social factors (ethnicity, social class, youth cultures) and individual factors (personality, physiological arousal, social identity). The uses and gratification approach (Rosengren, Wenner & Palmgreen, 1985) may serve as the general theoretical framework for explaining associations between personality factors and music preferences. According to the theory, people prefer particular kinds of music because they have particular personality characteristics that the music satisfies (Arnett, 1995; Larson, 1995).

According to the model of optimal stimulation (Eysenck, 1990) people tend to choose the type of music that moves toward their optimal arousal level.

The most popular theory which is focused on the role of personality traits in the determination of musical taste is the theory of Rentfrow and Gosling (2003). The authors first determined the major dimensions of music preferences by means of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and examined the associations of these dimensions with the Big-Five personality factors. There are four music-preference dimensions: *the reflective and complex dimension* (blues, jazz, classical, folk music), *the intense and rebellious dimension* (rock, alternative, heavy metal music), *the upbeat and conventional dimension* (country, sound track, religious, pop music) and *the energetic and rhythmic dimension* (rap/hip-hop, soul/funk, electronic/dance music).

One of the most famous models of musical preferences is based on LeBlanc's interactive theory of musical preferences, according to which the musical preferences are influenced by different factors and they interact at different levels of hierarchical process (LeBlanc, 1981). The model contains eight levels of variables and at the lowest level are the variables of *musical environment* (physical properties of the stimulus, the complexity of the stimulus, the referential meaning of the stimulus, quality of performance) that interact with the *cultural environment* variables (media, peers, family, teachers, incidental conditioning) thus forming the input information to the listener. Will the listener really listen to music or not, depends on three variables at the next level, such as the physiological readiness to listen, attention or affective state. If these requirements are met, musical input information are filtered by means of listener characteristics (auditory sensitivity, musical ability, musical education, personality, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, maturation, memory) and further processed in his brain. Information continues their way to the first level, which consists of four variables (rejection, acceptance, repetition of stimulus, heightened attention) and there are accepted or rejected.

According to the social identity theory we are all members of social groups and the categorization of the self as a member of a particular group excludes certain other individuals. This categorization instigates a sense of self – a social identity – which guides behavior (MacDonald, Hargreaves, Miell, 2002, 137). It is possible that a major appeal of music to adolescents lies in its ability to help them form positive social identities. The same authors make difference between *identities in music (IIM)* which “are defined by social and cultural roles within music and might be categorized in a number of different ways” and *music in identities (MII)* which refers on the way “we use music as a means of, or as a resource for, developing other aspects of our personal identities” (MacDonald, Hargreaves, Miell, 2002, 12, 14-15).

### **Music education for globally competent pupils**

Over the last fifty years two philosophies of music education have dominated in music education. The first one is aesthetically based philosophy of music education, which has experienced a boom during the seventies, with Bennett Reimer as the most important representative. It defines the aesthetic education as “the development of sensitivity to the aesthetic quality of the work” (1972, 29) and believes that music is a collection of aesthetic objects whose meanings and values are within the objects themselves or within the musical works. Consequently, the important role belongs to aesthetic experience in music education.

On the other hand, trying to acknowledge and accept the cultural differences in the United States in the late eighties and early nineties, a new philosophy of music education, praxial philosophy, was developed, and it's most famous representative was David J. Elliott. It is based on the Aristotelian notion of praxis as an action rooted in practice, not in theory (Elliott, 1995). Unlike aesthetic philosophy, Alperson said that consideration of different art forms from praxial perspective has resulted in their understanding “in terms of the various meanings and values that indicates the current practice in certain cultures” (1991, 233). According to praxial philosophy of music education music is not just a collection of works, goods or

facilities, but it is something that people make in the context of a particular time, place and specific traditions of musical creation.

In the statement of The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) it is proposed that “Music can change the way children feel, think and act... Music enables children to define themselves in relation to others, their friends, colleagues, social networks and to the cultures in which they live... The teaching of music deepens and extends everyday experiences, providing new opportunities and forging important links between the home, the school and the outside world” (1999, 162).

Music has very important function in the lives of most teenagers, but there is a disjunction between music at school and music at home. Ross (1995, 1998) provides some evidence that the music is one of the least popular subjects in the secondary school and that the attempts to modernize the music curriculum have failed.

The results of the Mills’ (1997) analysis of the difference between the quality of music education in primary and secondary schools shows that the ratings of music classes for older pupils (11-14 year-olds) were lower than those for younger age groups (5-7 and 7-11 year-olds). One of the possible reasons can be that the content of music lessons is less appropriate and engaging to secondary pupils.

North, Hargreaves and O’Neill (2000) have conducted the study which aims to determine the importance of music to adolescents in England and investigates why they listen to and perform music. A questionnaire asked participants about their degree of involvement with musical activities, to rate the importance of music relative to other activities and to rate the importance of several factors that might determine why they and other people of their age might listen to and perform pop and classical music. The results indicate that music is important to adolescents and that this is because it allows them to portray an ‘image’ to the outside world and satisfy their emotional needs.

Music education in Croatian high schools is conceived on the *diachronic model*, in which the “program generally follows a chronological course of development of the music and its style” (Curriculum, 1999, 77), so for the first grade of high school is planned “development of music from its origins to the Renaissance (until the end of the 16th century)”, for the second grade “Baroque, galant style and Viennese classics (the 17th and 19th centuries)”, in the third grade students learn about the period “from romanticism to impressionism (musical art during 19th century)”, and the fourth with “directions of development of musical art in the 20th century” (Ibid., 77).

The main disadvantage of that concept of teaching is that it is uninteresting for the pupils, and that “... offers music that is contrary to their actual, potential and desirable musical interests, especially at the beginning of learning, which, in turn, can have a negative motivational effect on later classes” (Rojko, 2001, 6). As further disadvantages and concepts Rojko cited excessive content extensiveness at the expense of the music, and the conversion of teaching in a relatively rigid pattern (Ibid., 6-7).

In contrast to this model, in the foreground of the *synchronous model* is the music, not its chronological sequence, and the result is interesting and heterogeneous teaching, as well as avoiding the verbalization of music.

Active listening to music, which involves observing of the musical expressive components of musical works, such as performers, tempo, dynamics, form, etc., and

by introducing music instruction to the *synchronous model*, it is created the conditions for carrying out the achievements music teaching, which Rojko conceived as follows:

- meet, learn the forms of music (in the broadest sense of the term);
- meet, learn, remember certain (as much as possible) the number of musical works;
- meet, learn some basic and important informations from the history of music;
- acquire musical taste (Ibid., 13).

The music education which is conceived in this way would represent a truly valuable contribution to cultivating adolescent's musical taste. Thus established would be “artistic criteria that will enable the critical reception of media-mediated music” (Rojko, 1996, 70-71).

However, the proclamation of the EAS points out that “... different musical traditions and cultural peculiarities of individual European countries and regions contribute significantly to their cultural identity. Resting on these traditions, music education can offer a very wide variety of forms, content and intensity of musical culture. Awakening of own music traditions and knowledge of regional differences among musical cultural traditions, allows the identification of the advantages of such situation, but also of any deficit that might stand in the way of one general requirement for a mature European culture” (according Peschl, Ibid, 6). Analyzing the above text, we can question does the existing conception of music teaching ensures diversity of content and allows the knowledge of regional differences among musical cultural traditions?

The curriculum is designed exclusively of musical idioms that belong to the tradition of Western art music. Since the repertoire of music teaching is directed towards Western art music, the existing concept of music teaching in a certain way creates and promotes an ideology of musical values. Apart from the West, such a model of education is evident in most non-European countries. Although the music is continuously transformed and reinterpreted, maintaining a degree of autonomy, musical education further affirms existing ideologies of musical values.

Sporadic attempts at expansion of the curriculum by introducing valuable examples of non-western and popular music still cannot stop the reproductive effects of a wider social system. However, we must persist in such attempts, and continuously enrich the program with new and unfamiliar musical idioms, which will not only represent examples of specific cultures, stereotypes and labeling that follow this approach, but primarily musical objects and sound events that have an expressive meaning.

According to Shehan “It has been the conjecture of music educators that the more one understands music the greater are the chances that one will like that music. The diversity of musical styles available for study cannot be overlooked but should be used to its best advantage in the understanding of world cultures. It may be that the arts (including music) of a region hold the very key to this understanding” (1986, 162-163).

However, we must bear in mind that art and popular music representing different entities and should not be evaluated in the same manner and on the basis of traits that owns Western art music, because they are in nonwestern music simply

does not exist. But this kind of music has a different value and quality, which can be adequately evaluated only when they recognize and understand.

There are two reasons for the inclusion of popular music in school. The first one is musical reason which refers to introduction of students into the popular musical style and its musical and expressive elements. The second reason is non-musical reason which includes the introduction of students into the socio-historical and cultural context in which popular music is created.

## Conclusion

Teachers slowly adjust to the new sound spectrum, unknown structural standards and the specific terms of individual cultures. As Previšić outlined: "The school is already often behaves as a closed system of teaching whereby the teacher rather inclined to traditional and prescribed content, instead at least to a considerable extent to the alternative and creative programs. This is an old pedagogical dilemma of the teaching profession; namely against the independence and creative courage most teachers still rather inclined to the loyalty and conformity" (1994, 21).

Divergence, diversity and the interests of minorities represent the three key issues relevant to the promotion of pluralism in the context of formal education systems of Western societies. The introduction of popular music, music technology and world music in the curriculum are some of the most significant innovations of modern society. Nevertheless, the dominant musical paradigm remains one of Western art music, so music and cultural voices which are located on the periphery often remain subdued and unrealized.

MENC's National Standards for Arts Education (1994) stated that every student in grades kindergarten through eight should be exposed to music of various styles and genres. In that way we will be able to create globally competent pupils.

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