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SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' ATTITUDE TOWARD MUSIC
EDUCATION IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract

The article discusses the approach of school principals towards the improvement issues of music education. The article analyses how school principals evaluate certain aspects related to music education in school. 160 principals from Lithuania and 7 from the USA participated in the research which revealed the conditions, provided to improve the learners' musical skills in extra-curricular activities. Musicianship in vocal ensembles is highlighted, as well as playing music in instrumental ensemble. The research ascertained if the schools devote sufficient amount of funds to equip music classrooms with teaching (learning) means and if school administration encourages and financially supports initiatives of music teachers in organizing school's musical life, and conditions created in the school ensure the responsibility of music teachers for the quality of music education. Music teaching (learning) in school is organized purposefully, with the aim to meet not only the learners' experience and skills, but also their dispositions. The financial base of the general education schools is similar: the insignificant abundance of instrument choice, but however, it is impossible to say that there are no instruments at all. The greater choice of instruments and their quality enables students to achieve better results and strengthens their motivation in the field of musicianship. Therefore, it is necessary for the school principals to support the idea of enriching the inventory of instruments, rather than devoting most of the funds for the implementation of technological innovations.

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1. Introduction

These days, school principals are facing many new challenges, which they have yet to link to specific purposes of education system and school. As the principal solves complex and sometimes confusing issues, he or she needs a broad range of knowledge to assist in looking at the running of the school from a holistic angle – separate parts of school management’s system cannot be summed up, they must conjointly define the whole system. In such situation, it becomes a challenge for school principals to use their existing competencies. Good working principals must be innovative and open to innovations and changes (Cohen, 2015). The leaders have to initiate the practical changes in the education without getting any support from principals, and even the education initiatives based on the very best wishes are doomed to failure. The positive approach of the school principals towards the music education is also very important, since appropriate microclimate in the school and teacher collaboration create a good medium for the expression of the arts in schools.

The role of art education in revealing the young people’s skills in the 21st century is widely recognized across Europe. The research (Hallam, Creech, & McQueen., 2018; Waldron, Mantie, Partti, & Tobias, 2018; Rauduvaitė & Lasauskienė, 2015) conducted on the potential of art education to enhance the creativity of young people showed the need for the continuous improvement of its quality. Music - an integral part of art education. According to the researchers, Lithuania has successfully developed and operated a unique music education system (Rinkevičius & Rinkevičienė, 2006; Abramauskiene Krasauskiene, Šečkuvienė, & Vitkauskas, 2006; Vitkauskas, Abramauskiene, Barisas, Kirliauskiene, & Tarnauskaite-Palubinskiene, 2012). Abundant and significant research and experiments are carried out in Lithuanian general education schools in the field of music education (Balčytis, 2005; Girdzijauskienė, 2004).

Music education in general education schools is a part of coherent Lithuanian system of music education. Therefore, for this system to be maintained and foster it is important to actualize the ideas which today are referred to in European music education field. Most significant of them - the need to change the educational process, based on the individual interests of the pupils, cooperation between the participants of the teaching process, actually implemented initiatives of music teachers, etc. (Gabnytė, 2015). The changing and growing needs of modern society encourage changes and raise new demands for music teachers. Therefore, it is often enquired, which competences should the contemporary music teacher acquire in order to meet the challenges of a changing environment and the demands of the public. By identifying them, it would become possible to improve the process of musical education, study programs, and perfect the liaison between theoretical knowledge transmission and development of practical skills. According to recent researches (Koca, 2017; Lasauskiene & Yang, 2017), the concept of professionalism is constantly changing: the change of professional competence is determined by the learning and the content of learning, unceasing improvement of technology, educational processes, etc. Gapšytė and Bankauskienė (2016) also state that the problem of music teachers’ competency in general education schools is ripe and it is extremely important to start looking for ways to improve the situation. In Lithuania, the strategic aim of education in the state’s education strategy for 2013-2022 years (2014) is to increase the professionalism of teachers. The objective is to strive for professional, constantly improving and effectively working educational communities. While analysing the written scientific literature it becomes clear that there is already done a

lot in the music education field, nevertheless, possibilities of music education activities are very often unexpended in general education schools and to disclose the problematic musical aspects there is not enough continuous research. For this purpose the research in general education schools was conducted, which partly helped summarize the features of ongoing music education in schools and figure out how the changes in music education process are understood, modelled and take place.

2. Problem Statement

While analysing the written scientific literature it becomes clear that a lot has already been done in the music education field; nevertheless, possibilities of music education activities are very often unexpended in general education schools and to disclose the problematic musical aspects there is not enough continuous research. For this purpose, this research in general education schools was conducted, which partly helped summarize the features of ongoing music education in schools and figure out how the changes in music education process are understood, modelled and taking place.

3. Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

- What is the school principals' attitude to conditions created in general education schools for the improvement of musical skills, to provision of teaching (learning) tools in music classrooms, to the motivation of teachers to organize musical events?
- Does the school create conditions for ensuring music teachers' responsibility for the quality of music education?
- Are the learners properly prepared for further music education?
- What is the attitude of heads of the general schools towards the professional competences of music teachers?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify the principals' of general education schools attitude towards the certain aspects of music education in Lithuania.

5. Research Methods

The research which was conducted in 2016 - 2017 sampled 160 principals from Lithuania and 7 from the USA. Data was collected using a self-reported questionnaire (according to The State Education Strategy 2013-2022 (2014)). The questionnaire was based on four diagnostic blocks. The questions of the first block were aimed at establishing the importance of the created conditions of general education schools for the improvement of musical skills, provision of teaching (learning) tools in music classrooms, and the motivation of teachers to organize musical events. The second block was designed to establish the conditions for ensuring music teachers' responsibility for the quality of music education. The third block

was used to determine the preparation of the learners for further music education while the aim of the fourth block was to assess the professional competences of music teachers.

This questionnaire was given to the participants in workshops: the 2016 Music Teachers Workshop "Gospel Music Training" and the 2017 National Music and Art Teachers' Workshop "Innovative Integrated Arts Education". The data were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software package.

6. Findings

It can be stated that the financial base of the general education schools is similar: the insignificant abundance of instrument choice, however, it is impossible to say that there are no instruments at all. Of course, the greater choice of instruments and their quality enables students to achieve better results and strengthens their motivation in the field of musicianship, therefore, it is necessary for the school principals to support the idea of enriching the inventory of instruments, rather than devoting most of the funds for the implementation of technological innovations.

6.1. The results of the research

The principals shared their opinions on the subject of organizing the music teaching and learning in the school, so that it would meet learners' experience, skills and dispositions (see Table 01). Research data reveals that even about two thirds of respondents (65.3%) are sure that music teaching (learning) in the school is organized deliberately, with an aim that it would meet not only the learners' experience and skills, but also their dispositions. When a learner, his/her needs, interests, experience are in the centre of the process, particular aims dominate: creative expression, free learning environment. However, almost one third (29.9%) of principals think that in their school, music teaching (learning) is only partially organized in a way that it would meet learners' experience, skills and dispositions, thus, it should be improved. Various events, arts projects which take place in the schools open untapped opportunities for children, but also bring new challenges, which require more diverse skills, wider cultural horizons.

Table 01. The Principals' Attitude to the Created Conditions for Improvement of the Musical Skills in Choir and Ensembles (%)

Statements	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Did not answer
Music Teaching (Learning) in the School is Organized in a Way that It Would Meet Learners' Experience, Skills and Dispositions	65.3	29.9	1.8	3.0
The Created Conditions for Improvement of the Musical Skills in Choir	52.7	19.2	21.0	7.1
The Created Conditions for Improvement of the Musical Skills in Vocal Ensemble	72.5	20.4	4.2	2.9
	Grand Piano	Guitar	Violin	
The Created Conditions for Improvement of the Musical Skills in Instrumental Ensemble	37.1	21.0	31.1	10.8

To understand the features of music education ongoing in today's general education schools, we examined whether the school provides with good conditions to improve musical skills in extra-curricular activity – choir (see Table 01). More than a half of principals (52.7%) state the schools do create conducive conditions for the development of musical skills during choir after lessons. Almost one fifth (19.2%) of the respondents think that there are while there are certain conditions for the improvement of musical skills during choir, these are not enough, while more than one fifth (21.0%) of the sample do not agree with the statement that the school provides good conditions to improve musical skills for choir singing. According to Abramauskienė and Kirliauskienė (2016), choral singing encompasses the techniques of vocal musicianship, cognition of the means of artistic expression, develops the possibilities for musicianship and musical self-expression. Being a part of the choir is also a great opportunity to spend the free time and satisfy one's personal needs. This is especially well revealed through today's trend of the emergence of musical projects on television. Social factors are also highlighted during choir singing, which promote the aspects of communication, cooperation and help.

The study has also disclosed the data concerning the conditions needed to improve the musical skills in extra-curricular activity – vocal ensemble. Statistically significant differences were observed between the city and provision of good conditions for the development of musical skills in vocal ensemble. While comparing the responses of principals (applying the χ^2 criterion) were revealed the statistically significant differences. It turned out that in Kaunas schools good conditions to improve musical skills through vocal ensemble are created: $\chi^2=95.54$, $df=3$, $p=0.001$. It can be assumed that learners from smaller towns have worse conditions for attending the vocal ensembles. While analysing the research results presented in Table 01, we can see that learners do not have enough opportunities to improve musical skills in extra-curricular activity – instrumental ensemble. Almost one third (31.1%) of the respondents have stated that there is an opportunity to play violin, about one fifth (21.0%) of them – that there are opportunities to play guitar and more than one third (37.1%) of principals think that it is possible to develop musical skills in school while playing grand piano after classes. Nevertheless, we should not forget that the schools do not have enough grand pianos, thus, there is just a chance that a child could play an instrument, if there would not be more people also willing to do so. Statistically significant differences between the city and provision of good conditions for the development of musical skills in instrumental ensembles were not found. It can be stated that the financial base of the general education schools is similar: the insignificant abundance of instrument choice, however, it is impossible to say that there are no instruments at all. Of course, the greater choice of instruments and their quality enables students to achieve better results and strengthens their motivation in the field of musicianship, therefore, it is necessary for the school principals to support the idea of enriching the inventory of instruments, rather than devoting most of the funds for the implementation of technological innovations.

In summary, the results suggest that after-school activity - singing in the choir, is a very important factor in developing personality, but the conditions for it in the schools are not sufficient. It is likely that not all general education schools have choirs. Of course, there are other non-formal education institutions, but not all parents have enough financial resources to devote to that, thus, the school should invest more in the conditions in which students can actively improve their own innate talents.

During the research it was intended to determine whether in the opinion of principals the school devotes enough funds to provide the music class with teaching (learning) tools (see Table 02) and the same table presents the research data concerning the issue of school administration's provided promotion and financial support for music teacher's initiative in organizing musical life in the school. More than a half (57.5%) of respondents think that administration sufficiently promotes and financially supports the initiative of music teachers in organizing school's musical life, while more than one third (37.7%) of them have stated that administration supports and promotes music teacher's initiative financially only partially.

Table 02. The Principals' Attitude to Some Aspects of Music Education (%)

Statements	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Did not answer
The School Devotes Enough Funds to Provide the Music Class with Teaching (Learning) Tools	42.5	45.5	9.6	2.4
School Administration's Provided Promotion and Financial Support for Music Teacher's Initiative in Organizing Musical Life in the School	57.5	37.7	2.4	2.4
Do the Conditions Created in Schools Ensure Music Teachers' Responsibility for the Quality of Music Education	67.7	28.1	1.2	3.0
School Properly Prepares the Learners for Further Music Education (Art Studies)	27.5	52.7	16.2	3.6

A statistically reliable difference was established ($\chi^2=61.06$, $df=3$, $p=0.01$) between the city and the school's administration, which promotes and financially supports the music teacher's initiative in organizing the school's musical life. Another important aim of the study was to reveal whether the conditions created in schools ensure music teachers' responsibility for the quality of music education (see Table 02). More than two thirds (67.7%) of principals have answered that they agree with the statement that conditions present in the school ensure music teachers' responsibility for the quality of music education, while less than one third of respondents (28.1%) agree with it only partially. Statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=117.65$, $df=3$, $p=0.000$) shows that the city of Kaunas has a clear position in relation to the subject of music and responsibly evaluates the conditions that ensure music teachers' responsibility for the quality of music education. In the following stage of research the attempt was to find out whether the school properly prepares the learners for further music education (art studies). The results support the statement that the school is not capable enough to prepare learners for further music education (art studies). Less than one third (27.5%) of principals think that their school has a favourable environment to prepare for further music studies, however, more than a half (52.7%) only partially believe so and less than one fifth (16.2%) of principals don't think that their school is capable of preparing learners for further music education (art studies).

The purpose in the next step is to determine whether the professional competences of music teachers are assessed. The research provides the data that confirms the competence of content of the subject's planning and improving. It can be seen from the data (in Table 03) that music teachers are able to prepare a curriculum while following the documents regulating education. More than three quarters of principals (75.4%) state that music teachers, who work in their schools, while compiling the curriculum rely on

documents; however, almost one quarter (23.4%) of respondents only partially agree that music teachers rely on education regulating documents when preparing a curriculum. Thus, while analysing the competence of content of the subject planning and improving, it is important to disclose the teachers' ability to formulate the teaching (learning) aims and objectives of the music subject.

Table 03. Music teachers' Competence in Planning and Improving the Subject Content: the Principals' Attitude (%)

Statements	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Did not answer
Preparation of a Curriculum Based on Documents Regulating Education	75.4	23.4	0.6	0.6
Formulation of Teaching (Learning) Aims and Objectives of the Music Subject	79.0	19.2	0	1.8
Planning of the Process of Education, in Advance Integrating Other Subjects into the Curriculum	53.3	41.9	3.0	1.8
Ability to Choose the Teaching (Learning) Methods Appropriate for Reaching the Teaching (Learning) Aims and Prepare the Teaching (Learning) Materials which would be Interesting and Attractive to Learners	61.7	34.1	1.8	2.4

Research results (Table 3) show that most (79.0%) of principals believe that music teachers are able to formulate the subject's teaching (learning) aims and objectives. Also, almost one fifth of them (19.2%) have mentioned the doubt music teachers' *in planning and improving the subject content*, when formulating the teaching (learning) aims and objectives of the music subject. For the competence mentioned above, the ability to plan the process of education in advance, adding the integration of other subjects into the curriculum is also very important. Furthermore, also consists of the ability to choose the teaching (learning) methods appropriate for reaching the teaching (learning) aims, as well as of the ability to prepare the teaching (learning) materials which would be interesting and attractive to learners. More than three fifths (61.7%) of respondents think that music teachers prepare interesting and attractive to learners teaching (learning) materials, though more than one third (34.1%) are sure that teachers do not always put effort in doing so.

Table 04 shows *the competence of managing the teaching (learning) process*.

Table 04. The Competence of Managing the Teaching (Learning) Process: the Principals' Attitude (%)

Statements	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Did not answer
Purposeful Use of Modern Education Technologies	61.7	34.7	1.2	2.4
The Ability to Provide Learners with the Content of Education and Necessary Information in an Accessible and Comprehensible Way	73.7	22.2	0	4.1
The Ability to Apply Strategies that would Develop Learners' Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving Skills and Creativity	46.1	45.5	5.4	3.0
The Ability to Participate in Creating and Implementing the Integrated Curricula for Learners with Special Needs	40.1	49.7	7.2	3.0

One of the most important constituent parts of above mentioned competence is a purposeful use of modern education technologies. It can be seen in the Table 05 that more than three fifths (61.7%) of respondents have agreed that music teachers apply modern technologies in education expediently. While analysing *the competence of managing the teaching (learning) process* the ability to provide learners with the content of education and necessary information in an accessible and comprehensible way, should be distinguished as well. Almost three quarters (73.7%) of the participants have answered that in their schools, music teachers are able to make the content of education and needed information understandable and accessible for learners. Summing up the competence of managing the teaching (learning) process, it can be stated that purposeful use of modern education technologies, ability to convey the content of education and necessary information in an accessible and comprehensible way for students, according to the heads of the schools, are significant factors in encouraging learners' motivation in the process of education. However, one third of music teachers should improve these qualities. The research has also helped to reveal that for almost half of the music teachers it is necessary to put more effort into applying various strategies developing critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills of learners, as well as participate in creating and implementing the integrated curricula for learners with special needs more actively.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of scientific literature has revealed that music education is inseparable part of art education; therefore, it is important while developing each learner's cultural awareness and basics of musical competence, developing emotional and creative personality, which is willing and is able to participate in musical life. Thus, for this system to be maintained and foster it is important to actualize the ideas, which today are referred to in European music education field. Most significant of them - the need to change the educational process, based on the individual interests of the pupils, cooperation between the participants of the teaching process, actually implemented initiatives of music teachers.

The research has disclosed the conditions, which are provided for the improvement of learners' musical skills in extra-curriculum activities. The musicianship in vocal ensemble is highlighted (however, children living in smaller towns have worse conditions for attending vocal ensembles), also, the possibilities to play music in instrumental ensemble (but they are limited). After-school employment – singing in choir, is a very important factor in the development of personality; however, the conditions in the schools are not sufficient. It is likely that not all general education schools have choirs.

During the research, it was found that schools devote enough funds to provide the music classes with teaching (learning) tools, school's administration promotes and financially supports the music teacher's initiatives in organizing the school's musical life, and conditions created in the school ensure the responsibility of music teachers for the quality of music education. Music teaching (learning) in school is organized purposefully, with the aim to meet not only the learners' experience and skills, but also their dispositions.

The financial base of general education schools is similar, with insignificant abundance of instrument choice. The school is not capable enough to prepare learners for further music education (art studies).

The gathered data makes it possible to state that according to the opinion of the heads of general education schools, it is important to develop the two following competences of music teachers: the competence of content of the subject planning and improving and the competence of managing the teaching (learning) process. The competence of content of the subject planning and improving, according to the principals, helps music teachers to prepare the curricula, while relying on documents regulating education, formulate the teaching (learning) aims and objectives of the music subject, and choose the methods appropriate for reaching the teaching (learning) aims. However, about one third of the participants think that sometimes music teachers could prepare the materials, which would be more interesting and attractive to learners, while about two fifths agree that while planning the process of education, teachers could devote more time to integrate other subjects into the content of education in advance. The competence of managing the teaching (learning) process helps music teachers to expediently apply modern education technologies and conveying the content of education and necessary information to learners in accessible and comprehensible ways. However, according to the heads of the schools, one third of music teachers should improve these aspects of the competence. The research results have also helped to disclose that about half of the music teachers use various education strategies developing learners' critical thinking, problem-solving skills and creativity not sufficiently and they should participate in creation and implementation of curricula for learners with special needs more actively. It is likely that the conducted assessment of music teachers' competences will elicit preparation of more effective music education programs.

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