

Musical Activities Performed During Music and Movement Classes at the Primary School in Romania

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Abstract

Keywords:

musical education; primary school; musical activities; teaching aids; teachers.

Quality music education can only be achieved when the activities proposed by teachers during music and movement classes are designed for the development of musical skills in children. For this purpose to be achieved, teachers must have musical skills that allow them to perform various musical activities.

Through this study we explore the opinion of teachers teaching music and movement at primary school about the musical activities they perform. This research is based on a design based on a quantitative analysis: A questionnaire attended by 1,151 teachers from the primary school in Romania. These data were taken from 28.05 to 26.06.2021.

The main results point out that singing on a voice, musical listening and teaching are the reference activities to the primary cycle. Teachers also use YouTube, various platforms and teaching tools made by other colleagues for their own musical activities. It is obvious that the institutions that can propose training activities for teachers have never organized, in proportion of 59, 3% musical training activities.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

musikalische Bildung; Grundschule; musikalische Aktivitäten; Lehrmittel; Lehrer.

Eine qualitativ hochwertige Musikpädagogik kann nur erreicht werden, wenn die von den Lehrern im Musik- und Bewegungsunterricht vorgeschlagenen Aktivitäten auf die Entwicklung musikalischer Fähigkeiten bei Kindern ausgerichtet sind. Zu diesem Zweck müssen Lehrer über musikalische Fähigkeiten verfügen, die es ihnen ermöglichen, verschiedene musikalische Aktivitäten durchzuführen.

Durch diese Studie erforschen wir die Meinung von Lehrern, die Musik und Bewegung in der Grundschule unterrichten, über die musikalischen Aktivitäten, die sie durchführen. Diese Untersuchung basiert auf einem Design, das auf quantitativer Analyse basiert: Ein Fragebogen, der von 151 Lehrern der Grundschule in Rumänien besucht wurde. Diese Daten stammen vom 28.05. bis 26.06.2021.

Die Hauptergebnisse zeigen, dass das Singen auf einer Stimme, das musikalische Hören und der Unterricht die Referenzaktivitäten zum Primärzyklus sind. Lehrer nutzen auch YouTube, verschiedene Plattformen und Lehrmittel anderer Kollegen für eigene musikalische Aktivitäten. Es ist offensichtlich, dass die Institutionen, die Ausbildungsaktivitäten für Lehrer vorschlagen können, nie im Verhältnis von 59, 3% musikalische Ausbildungsaktivitäten organisiert haben.

Der Beitrag dieser Studie zielt darauf ab, die wichtigsten musikalischen Aktivitäten von Lehrern der Grundschule in Rumänien und ihren Bedarf an Schulungen für diese Aktivitäten zur Entwicklung musikalischer Fähigkeiten für Kinder hervorzuheben.

1. Introduction

The importance of means and modalities of any kind in education substantially influences the process of discovery and knowledge, being a support of the thinking process, greatly expanding the possibilities of investigation when the teacher uses them during the classes. Whether they are modern or classical teaching aids, the purpose for which they are used in the lesson is a contributing factor to school success.

In music education classes, the ways and means of expression for this art are diverse and can be treated interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. In primary school classes, according to the age of children, music

education is an essential and beneficial factor in the harmonious development of the body, from a cognitive point of view, of intellectual, psychological and social capacities. Music also covers a very wide spectrum, as it addresses both auditory, visual, kinesthetic and motor levels.

The vast majority of children study in schools of general culture where the educator or teacher has a special role in discovering children who have a talent for the art of sound. Of course, it is preferable that at this age, regardless of the parents' options, children study an instrument, and if they do not have this

opportunity, at school, in the classes dedicated to music education, the teacher / teacher has the opportunity to develop the children's skills and talents in different ways that we will describe. I mention that the ways of achieving musical education are very vast, but we will briefly address some of these ways that have been used in the past and are still current, and others have become current due to the progress of technology and new psycho-pedagogical approaches.

From my own experience as a teacher, I consider that the most important and appreciated ways of approaching musical education at the primary school are the following: singing, learning an instrument, musical listening, rhythmogram and musicogram, teaching games, music, body percussion, eurythmia and music software used extensively lately due to the SARS-CoV-19 pandemic.

2. Theoretical foundation

We highlight some of the most important aspects of musical education at school age. Singing is one of the oldest forms of music through which man expresses himself when he feels the need. As physical benefits, singing develops respiratory function and increases blood oxygenation, and this effect can often reduce stress and improve health. Regular musical activities can improve the functionality of the lungs by increasing the volume of air and the development of the whole body (Moss H, Lynch J, O'Donoghue J., 2018). Neurologically, singing behavior goes through different areas of the brain, including development and interaction between parts of the brain that are specialized in some aspects of music.

Most recently, a major longitudinal study provides evidence of the basis for the impact of music by examining the effects of musical training on the developmental trajectory of children's brain structure, starting at the age of six (Habibi et al, 2017). Also, singing in groups ,in the classroom, develops areas involved in interaction, coordination , empathy and positive social impact (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Hallam, 2011; Rickard and Colab., 2013; Ritchie and Williamon, 2011; Welch .Limonides, Saunders, Papageorgi and Sarazin, 2014; Williams and Col., 2015), according to the latest research. When children sing in a group or in a choir, either within the classroom, school, or community, a sense of inclusion develops, which brings social benefits. Group singing gives the group an identity in a positive way, beneficial both on the physical and mental level. On the psychological level, singing is related to the

intrapersonal and interpersonal communication (when it comes to an ensemble), develops individual identities and stimulates self-esteem by giving the student a state of well-being, confidence in his own powers.

Together with the song, the musical audition helps to decode the humanistic messages of music, qualities of a representative repertoire from the great history of universal and local music . Through listening, children can feel the effects of the great music transmitted through states such as joy, satisfaction, happiness, peace, high vibrations with which they resonate. For a good audition, the teacher must select songs from the musical creation appropriate to the age of the children so these can understand it, be in connection with the theme proposed for the lesson and have a major effect in what he wants to present. Thus, we can witness the imprinting in the child's soul of the educational and aesthetic values for a thorough progress of educators (Sabina Vidulin, Valnea Žauhar & Marlena Plavšić,2022). In the realization of this moment, the musical audition consists of three stages: preparing the students for the musical moment, the actual audition, the re-audition, as the case may be. Each stage must follow certain essential steps for the audible message to be received and understood by the student.

The next musical activity is the study of an instrument. Learning at blockfleets is very easy and produces benefits for both parties involved in the educational act. There is also a manual for the use of this tool (Gerasim, Mariana, 2014). Studying an instrument, as research has already said for many years, improves memory, increases the ability to concentrate, and through exercise, perseverance and willpower are trained. Studying an instrument relieves the individual from stress and is a remedy for children with dyslexia and autism. In some schools in Romania there are also small whistle assemblies with children from the primary school, where teachers understood that art becomes a support in the interdisciplinary development of the other disciplines they teach.

Body percussion is an important activity in music classes, it is the art by which we strike the body to produce different types of sounds for certain purposes: educational, therapeutic, anthropological and social.

The musicogram is a new strategy to listen to a musical audition (Homone, 2014). The musicogram is a method by which students actively listen to music, and the auditory element, in this concept, is complemented by images or certain symbols. Through

this concept, children develop their creativity, abstract, intuitive thinking, used in other disciplines, and as a mode of exposure, the musicogram is a new way of relating, reporting and communication for the development of emotional intelligence, artistic sense, imagination and a creative spirit.

Eurythmia is an art that aims to combine the art of speech, music and theater through the expression of movement. The use of these elements, exercises, techniques for combining and developing education through music will bring many benefits to children: balance in movement, coordination of the body with the elements of singing, maintenance of a very good balance between body expression and the specific of the musical piece. Simplicity develops through movement. The ability to focus attention becomes very good, and the expressiveness of the word will be rendered differently by children who practice this method. An important book where this concept is presented at length is also the *Therapeutic Eurythmy for children*, by Anne-Maidlein Vogel, published in 2007.

Playing music is an essential method in music lessons. Due to their beneficial effect, the games have gone beyond the pedagogical sphere and are used with interest by psychologists, therapists and educators. In music, games can be based on songs, instrumental pieces, certain exercises, and musical listening. Also, there are melodic, rhythmic games with movement for acquiring elements of expression, harmonics, polyphonic for vocal technique, etc. As a benefit, musical play reduces shyness, forms the team spirit, homogenizes the group and dynamizes activities (Vasile, 2004).

In the digital age, technological development serves the pedagogy that we need to apply to the classroom. Ruben Puentedura has developed the SAMR model, through which teachers can use technology in the teaching-learning-assessment process in the classroom, and students are more comfortable and beneficial to the new approach. Ruben Puentedura introduced Bloom's taxonomy around the circle for using digital applications and organized them according to cognitive domains. (Ruben, R., Puentedura, 2010). Solfy is a musical program for children, through which solfegiation can be practiced for the teacher to train the ear and develop his ability and skills to play in the classroom. It is also available in Romanian and is free of charge. For more

information and login, please go to: https://www.4solfy.com/solfy_home/ (Koren, 2019).

3. Research methodology

3.1. Design of research

This paper proposes a research that presents the results of the data through a quantitative investigative design as well. Quantitative research, based on the use of the online questionnaire of the investigational sample, is objective, allowing the collection of empirical, measurable, conclusive data that establish a link between cause and effect of two variables through the use of mathematical and statistical calculations. The research aims to answer the following questions:

- What if the teachers think they have the skills to teach music?
- What are the most common musical activities performed in music classes?
- Where do you get your teaching materials for teaching music?
- How often the County School Inspectorate organizes activities to improve teachers for teaching music?

3.2. Participants.

In the following table are presented data on the population addressed and certain relevant information about respondents:

Table 1. Demographic data about the participants

Environment	Results
Urban	65,2%
Rural	34,8%
Age	
< 25 years	3,4 %
Between 25-35 years	12,4%
Between 36-45 years	36,1%
Between 46-5 years	35,7%
Over 55 ears	12,4%
The seniority in the field	
1 year	2,3%
Between 1-5 years	6,4%
Between 5-10 years	6,3%
Between 10-15 years	7,6%
Between 15-20 years	11,3%

Between 20-25 years	22, 5%
Over 25 years	43, 5%
The didactic degree	
Debutant	5,0 %
Full Registration	10, 4%
Didactical qualification level II	11, 6%
Didactical qualification level I	73, 0%
The last level of study	
High school education	6,5 %
The pedagogy of primary and preschool education (PIPP)	32, 4 %
License/ other domain	19, 8 %
Master	35, 8 %
Graduate	4, 6%
PhD	0, 9%

We specify that the respondents of the proposed study are female teachers (95.50%), which indicates that attractiveness for this profession must be improved among men.

3.3. Tools used in data collection

In the research carried out on the online questionnaire, 1.151 teachers from the primary school in Romania answered. The items of the questionnaire are taken from a research that validated the psychometric properties of the investigative tools used (International Journal of Music Education, 2015), and the socio-demographic questions were introduced by me so that I could capture more specifically what I was looking to investigate.

The study, by Chinese authors Zuodong Sun (teachers`College, Tonghua) and Bo Wah Leung (the Hong Kong Institute of Education), was published in 2014 in the International Journal of Music Education, with the title "A survey of Rural primary school music education in Northeastern China". The study measures the latest techniques of teaching music education in primary schools in the Tonghua region of China. The questionnaire we administered is made up of the following sections: introduction, demographic data (gender, school environment, age etc.) status, degree, level of studies completed), aspects of teaching music-specific subjects in the primary cycle taken from Appendix 1: *Questionnaire survey on the current State of school music education for teachers.*

3.4. The research procedure

The research procedure was online questioning. The questionnaire was conducted in Drive, on the West University of Timisoara platform, from the student address (daniel.milencovici94@e-uvt.ro), applying a virtual form through Google forms, as a free, easy to manage and fast means of data collection, regardless of the applied area in Romania. The online questionnaire was applied between 28.05 and 26.06.2021, and the dissemination of the questionnaire was made through posts on social platforms, on groups of interest of teachers in the country, through emails sent to the inspectors for the primary school in the country or preliminary telephone approaches. The necessary information about the proposed person, the issue addressed and the consent form for the respondents were attached in section I. The research data was analyzed with the help of the JASP program (version 0.14.1), being a quantitative analysis.

4. Research results

Before submitting the analysis data, it is important to know data related to the training of respondents in the music field. The largest share is the respondents who have a musical training in the pedagogical high school (58, 6%), students who are only graduates of PIPP (18%), where the methodology and didactics of music teaching are studied for a semester, that is one year at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Ovidius University, and at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the University of Oradea (a more special case, having vocal training and conducted as an option). 12% do not have musical training or do not think they have, and 8, 3% have trained at private music schools, respectively 2.2% are graduates of faculty and 0.9% have completed a music high school.

We start by asking the number one question: **Do you think you have musical skills?** These skills are made up of the development of musical hearing, rhythmic and melodic sense, and the ability to sing.

Table 2. The analysis about the musical abilities of the participants

1. Do you think you have musical skills (musical hearing, rhythmical sense, melodic, ability to sing)?	Frequency	Percent
I have good musical skills	435	41.707
I have moderate musical skills	440	42.186

1. Do you think you have musical skills (musical hearing, rhythmical sense, melodic, ability to sing)?

	Frequency	Percent
I have modest musical skills	152	14.573
I have no musical skills	16	1.534
Missing	0	0.000
Total	1043	100.000

We can see from the table shown that only 42, 1% of the respondent teachers have very good musical skills, and 41, 7% have moderate musical skills. On a simple calculation, we can conclude that 83, 8% of respondents have musical skills that can be useful for conducting music classes at primary school. In order to analyze the statistical information referring to the teaching degree that the teachers have in relation to musical skills, we will use the contingency table.

Hypothesis 1: There are significant differences in the competence and self-taught skills to teach music at primary school, depending on the teaching degree.

Table 3. The musical abilities level of the participants as these are perceived

1. Do you think you have musical skills ?	Teaching degree:				Total
	Debutant	Definitely	Grade I	Grade II	
I have good musical skills	14	35	371	48	468
I have moderate musical skills	19	44	374	54	491
I have modest musical skills	17	37	88	29	171
I have no musical skills	8	4	7	2	21
Total	58	120	840	133	1151

	Value	dfp
X ²	109.752	9 < .001
N	1151	

The present hypothesis is confirmed, because the meaning threshold is < .001, which indicates that in this case, depending on the teaching degree, the teachers appreciate that they have musical skills. We can see from the table that very good and moderate musical skills are in a large proportion in teachers with the first degree

Next question: **What are the most common musical activities performed in music classes?**

With this question we want to highlight what are the most often performed activities during the music classes at the primary school. To this question, the survey respondents were able to choose several options from the ones listed below:

Table 4. Developed musical activities

Nr	Musical activities	Percent	Numer of respondents
1.	We sing individually and in the same voice	89, 8%	1034
2.	Musical auditions	89 %	1024
3.	Musical games	79, 5%	915
4.	Dance in combination with musical exercises	68%	783
5.	Intonation exercises for hearing development	64, 2%	739
6.	Integrated activities	60, 2%	693
7.	Interdisciplinary activities	48, 8%	562
8.	We use digital music applications	48%	553
9.	Musical improvisations	41, 4%	476
10.	Solfegy and musical dictation	28, 5%	328
11.	Eurythmy	18, 4%	212

12.	I was playing a musical instrument	11, 9%	37
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Looking at the above percentages, we can see that the top three activities that the respondent teachers use in the classroom are: individual and single-voice singing, 89, 8%, musical audits 89% and musical games 79, 5%. These activities are among the most important in the literature, but for the training of teachers and their training are the most accessible for classroom achievement. Usually, primary school teachers prepare school-to-class celebrations where they put students to sing either individually or collectively with a single voice. In this sense, there are many songs from cartoons or children's age that are found on YouTube and are on one voice, precisely to be accessible for use in class. Music listening is important and must be active. It is easy to use in music classes, but it must have a precise purpose when it is used. Musical games are loved by children and can be engaging, with the aim of developing creativity and musical skills.

At the opposite end, the rarest activities used in class are the solfege and musical dictation (28, 5%), eurythmia (18, 4) and playing musical instrument (11, 9%). These activities require a high degree of musical knowledge from the teacher, a greater preparation for them to be carried out. Although these activities should not be separated as individual lessons, they can be integrated into the other activities. They have a high share in the development of children's musical skills: musical hearing, rhythmic, melodic feeling, high concentration.

Another activity that should not be missed during music classes or during extracurricular activity from the primary cycle is the choir. The choir includes almost all the activities listed in the table.

Regarding the choral activity, the respondents responded as follows:

How often do you chorus with your students?

Table 5. How often do you have choir classes with your students

Answer	Systematically	Sometimes	So and so	At certain events	Never
Percent	17, 1%	19, 3%	18, 7%	35, 3%	9, 6%

It can be seen that the highest percentage is in teachers who chorus only at certain events (35, 3%), followed by those who do occasionally (19.3%). Unfortunately, at this activity, we have low percentages, which requires special research to see the reasons why teachers do not choir.

In order to carry out the activities in the classroom, the teacher must use certain teaching means to successfully use certain activities. That is why our study continues with a question about: **Where do you get your teaching materials for teaching music?**

Table 6. The use of the didactic materials used by the participants during the classes

	Teaching materials	Percent	Numer of respondents
1.	From YouTube	85, 8%	988
2.	Other platforms/sites/pages/articles	48, 6%	559
3.	From colleagues	27, 7%	319
4.	Various sites with resources (County School Inspectorates)	27, 3%	314
5.	I do it personally	24, 8%	286
6.	Edu Music platform	22, 8%	262
7.	Cantus Mundi Romania page	20, 5%	236
8.	From various blogs	15, 2%	175

As the table shows, we can see that 85, 8% of respondents use YouTube as the main teaching tool in their musical activities, other teachers use platforms and websites, and other teachers use teaching materials already made by their peers, in a ratio of 27, 7%. Only 24, 8% make their own teaching means for the musical activities they propose. We also draw attention from this result that training programs should be developed to help teachers to make their own teaching materials, which can have a greater impact on children in the classroom. Of course, YouTube is a great help along with many other educational software that can be used, but for other teaching materials, we believe that a personal footprint is needed.

The last question for this research: **How often does the County School Inspectorate/ teaching staff house organize teacher training activities for music**

teaching? In the table below we find the answer to this question.

Table 7. The organization of formations in the musical field by the County School Inspectorate/The Teachers' Training Centre

Answer	Once a semester	Once a year	Several times a year	Never
Percent	7%	24, 3%	9. 4%	59, 3%

One can see a sad reality related to the training in Romania in the musical field for teachers who teach disciplines in this area. The teachers said that 59, 3% of the institutions responsible for training have never organized training for the Music discipline. Only 9, 4% of respondents say they have participated in training several times a year. Of course, this study was conducted at the country level, only in some areas of Romania there were trainings, and those are few.

We hope that through this study we can attract the attention of the decision-makers who can propose training activities for teachers who teach music. A quality education in music can bring many benefits as we have seen in the theoretical foundation. Teachers need training on the musical activities they propose during classes.

5. Discussions

The research results related to the four questions I have followed in this research are a foundation for me to be able to pronounce myself in future research directions in the field in which I am specialized.

An idea that can give a different face to musical activities, would be that teachers who teach at the primary school to participate with the children in the lesson concerts organized by cultural institutions, to participate in the children's shows of the National Opera, to organize shows with their own children in which to involve their parents and to organize a choir of the class, because through the National Cantus Mundi Program in Romania, they can have a real support for the personal progress of their own children in the classroom.

The second essential idea is that teachers who do not have the necessary musical skills for music classes, ask for the help of music teachers in the schools where they teach, and at school level seek professional training solutions for students to benefit from valuable musical activities. Even if the County School Inspectorates and the Teaching Houses do not propose

training programs for various reasons, I encourage teachers to send proposals to them and I am convinced that solutions can be found if there is a desire from teachers to progress. Also, a simple e-mail sent to Cantus Mundi Romania can be for the benefit of teachers, and the music experts within this program will respond positively to the need of those who ask for help.

I want this study to be a continuation of other specialized studies, which can present data through which our representatives in the bodies of power at national level, accept changes and recommendations for the good of children and not just look at the economic side through which these solutions can be supported.

The results of this study should be interpreted taking into account the limitations of the research approach. Even though the study population was 1,150 primary school teachers, I believe that for a comprehensive analysis it is also necessary to ask students from third-fourth year and music education teachers to observe certain aspects of how a collaboration between music teachers and primary school teachers could be proposed. As future research directions we propose the following: a training program for the development of musical skills according to the 21st century skills, a choral festival dedicated to the primary cycle, and a more detailed analysis through a more detailed international scientific article on the research issues exposed to other countries in Europe.

6. Conclusions

I believe that it is time for us to get involved in changing something in the context of the classes we teach, through proposals from the school unit where we operate, at the county level and even at the national level through educational policies. Musical activities organized during primary school classes or during extracurricular activities can be extended by participating in lesson concerts, by performances dedicated to children and provided by cultural institutions. Also, the introduction of musical educational tools in the activities is essential for the digital natives who are children of this century.

I propose that the music and movement class have the same status as the other disciplines, and this aspect belongs to us, the teachers, who must have the musical skills necessary for teaching a vocational discipline,

and if for various reasons these skills are missing, let each of us look for solutions to enrich these abilities.

As we form children today, this is what the next society will look like, and if we want to have a quality education system, the change must start from now, from the children in the primary school, for which to be an example.

So, in light of the above, each of us can reflect on how music classes should take place and what they need to do for these classes to have an impact on the development of the child.

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