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Musical competencies of teachers of preschool and school-age children

Kompetencje muzyczne nauczycieli dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym i szkolnym

Słowa kluczowe: kompetencje muzyczne, nauczyciele wychowania przedszkolnego i edukacji wczesnoszkolnej, samoocena, edukacja muzyczna.

Streszczenie: W ogólnościowym dyskursie naukowym przygotowanie muzyczne nauczycieli do pracy z dziećmi w wieku przedszkolnym i szkolnym stanowi istotny problem badawczy. Większość badań potwierdza, że wielu nauczycieli ma ograniczoną wiedzę i niewystarczające umiejętności zawodowe, aby organizować efektywną edukację muzyczną. W literaturze przedmiotu podkreślane jest znaczenie takich elementów przygotowania muzycznego jak wiedza, umiejętności, trening, zdolności, postawy i motywacja. W artykule przedstawiono model kompetencji muzycznych nauczycieli wychowania przedszkolnego i edukacji wczesnoszkolnej, oparty na podziale kompetencji nauczycielskich (merytorycznych, metodycznych i wychowawczych). Autorki koncentrują się m.in. na samoocenie kompetencji muzycznych nauczycieli i podkreślają również potrzebę ciągłego rozwoju kompetencji muzycznych nauczycieli.

Key words: musical competences, kindergarten and primary school teachers, self-assessment, musical education.

Abstract: The musical preparation of teachers to work with preschool and school-age children is an essential issue in the global academic discourse. Most studies confirm that many teachers and caregivers of young children have limited knowledge and poor professional skills to organize effective music education. In the world, there is a lack of good musical education for students and in-service training for teachers to meet the expectations of modern curricula. It pays attention to different elements of musical preparation, such as knowledge, skills, training, abilities, attitudes, and motivation. This paper presents the model of musical competencies of preschool and school teachers, based on the division of teaching competencies (substantive, methodical, and pedagogical). The authors focus on the musical education and self-esteem of the preschool and school teachers. The article also highlights the need for continuous development of teachers' musical competence. The supportive strategies to develop the musical competencies and skills of future teachers are crucial.

Introduction

The musical preparation of teachers to work with preschool and school-age children is a significant problem in the global academic discourse (Andang'o & Mugo, 2007; Bautista et al., 2022; Begic et al., 2017; Benic et al., 2017; Đurđanović, et al., 2017; Elaldı et al., 2020; Russel-Bowie, 2009; Sarrazin, 2016; Sušić, 2018; Weiner, 2010; Welch et al., 2014; 2021; Wilk, 2004; Wilk, 2018). The common denominator of the unsatisfactory situation of universal musical education of children is, among other things, the low social rank given to this subject and the gap between the declared importance of music in the comprehensive and harmonious development of the child and the student and the practical and real possibilities of competent application of music in the educational process by teachers (Bautista et al., 2021; 2022; Đurđanović, et al., 2017; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2020). The repercussions of this problem are serious as children in this period manifest a high sensitivity to the possibility of stimulating their musical development (Sušić, 2018; Welch 2021). The scientific literature confirms that music broadly supports human psychological, social, and emotional development (Apaydin, 2023; Kirby et al., 2022). The paradox of music education, however, is that many teachers and caregivers of young children have somewhat limited knowledge and poor professional skills to organise effective music education (Đurđanović, et al., 2017; Elaldı et al., 2020; Welch, 2021) and apply best teaching practices (Sušić, 2018). In most countries, there is a lack of good musical education for students and in-service training for teachers to meet the expectations of modern curricula (Bautista et al., 2021; 2022; Susić, 2018). For this reason, the question of whether music classes with preschool and younger school-age children should be taught by a music teacher or a teacher of all subjects is still open to debate (Nicolás et al., 2023). Specialists see a way out of the impasse by having teachers participate in additional in-service training in music (Bautista et al., 2021; Đurđanović, et al., 2017) or through self-education (Sarrazin, 2016).

Researchers around the world approach the area of musical preparation for teaching preschool and early school-aged children in a variety of ways. They pay attention to different elements of musical preparation, such as knowledge, skills, training, abilities, attitudes, and motivation. In the pedagogical literature, 'the set including knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes, and values necessary for the effective implementation of the tasks imposed' (Benic et al., 2017; Đurđanović, et al., 2017) is associated with competencies. It is an interdisciplinary concept and is therefore also applied to the musical field and results in various particularisations and models of musical competencies. The literature shows that musical competencies can be identified, among other things, with the acquisition of knowledge of musical principles (Koelsch et al., 2003), with the recognition of changes in musical examples in terms of rhythm and melody (Wallentin et al., 2010; Swaminathan et al., 2018), with the person's endowment and its conditions (Weiner, 2010), with musical knowledge and skills, i.e. singing, movement, playing instruments, listening

to music, making music (Begic et al., 2017; Benic et al., 2017), organising various musical activities (Đurđanović, et al., 2017); e.g., with content and methodical preparation in the area of working with children (Begic et al., 2017; Çeliktaş et al., 2021; Jiyenbaevich, 2022; Sarrazin, 2016; Sušić, 2018; Weiner, 2010; Wilk 2004; Wilk, 2018). And while many studies pay attention to single elements of competence, i.e. knowledge or skills, they can be viewed more complementarily and in detail as an integrated, complementary possession of a specific body of knowledge about music, developed interests, special abilities, mastery of reproductive, creative, perceptual skills (Wilk 2004). Musical competencies can also be understood as an individual's endowment, encompassing singing skills (vocal competence) and musical perceptual skills, belonging to audition processes (Weiner, 2010). It is worth noting that current research is devoted to the musical competencies of children (Hernández-Bravo et al., 2016; Weiner, 2010), students, i.e. future teachers (Benic et al., 2017; Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2020; Wilk 200;), teachers working in kindergartens and primary schools (Kataryńczuk-Mania, 2010; Sušić 2018; Szczyrba-Poroszewska 2020; Weiner, 2010; Wilk 2018), specialists, i.e. musicians, music teachers, music therapists (Bautista et al., 2017; Çeliktaş et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2013; Jiyenbaevich, 2022; Kataryńczuk-Mania, 2010), and non-specialists, defined as people without formal musical training (Hansen et al., 2013; Russell-Bowie 2009; Welch, 2021). Developing musical competencies is an extremely long-term process (Sloboda, 1985), as is pedagogical training (Jiyenbaevich, 2022).

The Model of Musical Competencies of Preschool and School-Age Teachers

An analysis of the literature (Begic et al., 2017; Benic et al., 2017; Çeliktaş 2021; Đurđanović, et al., 2017; Jiyenbaevich, 2022; Koelsch et al., 2003; Sarrazin, 2016; Sušić, 2018; Swaminathan et al., 2018; Wallentin et al., 2010; Wilk, 2004; Weiner, 2010; Wilk, 2018) confirms that musical competencies are most often combined with musical skills (oscillating around several musical activities) and methodical skills (e.g. knowledge of various methods), knowledge (e.g. of notation, understanding of musical principles), predispositions (musical abilities, interests etc.) and environmental influences (family support and encouragement). Therefore, it is worth considering musical competencies not only in terms of the performance aspect but also more broadly in the context of cultural competence and the reception aspect. It is important to emphasise that acquiring musical competencies is a highly complex, complicated, and lengthy process. Therefore, not only is it the result of education but also the sum of individual predispositions and activities, as well as social and media influences. The teacher, therefore, cannot be content with the musical competencies acquired during university education but must continually enrich and expand them in their own cognitive and professional activities. In developing the own musical competencies model (Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2020), the classic and common in Polish general pedagogy division of teaching competencies into substantive, methodical, and pedagogical (Strykowski et al., 2003; Taraszkiewicz, 2001) was adopted. Each of the above-

mentioned scopes constitutes a general division, which has been made more specific and adapted to the specificity of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to general music education. Therefore, substantive musical competencies can be either restorative or perceptual-receptive (Weiner, 2010; Wilk, 2004). Methodical-pedagogical competencies have been categorised into organising music teaching-learning (Terhart, 1998) and pedagogical competencies (Taraszkiewicz, 2001).

The substantive musical competencies of future kindergarten and primary school teachers (the first three years of primary general education) provide information on the elementary preparation of students for participation in musical culture, primarily in the role of an informed and active listener and, in a basic extent, as a performer (Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2020; Weiner, 2010). Knowledge and skills concerning: 1. knowledge of works and composers of music (Polish and foreign), 2. selected elements of music, 3. recognition of the characteristics of Polish dances, 4. speaking about the music listened to, 5. orientation in contemporary cultural events have been identified as particularly important within perceptive-receptive competencies. Reproductive musical competencies allow for reading music and performing it. During music lessons (at various levels of general education), preschool and early education students should master the elementary knowledge that enables them to read and perform simple pieces of music from sheet music with the help of an instrument (flute, keyboard, melodic percussion instruments), voice, movement. In terms of musical performative competence, five issues were identified: knowledge of the arrangement of notes on the flute and keyboard, performance of known pieces (ability to sing and perform pieces chosen by the respondents on the flute and keyboard), and performance of an unknown piece, knowledge of musical notation, knowledge of the principles of music (Sarrazin, 2016; Wilk, 2018).

Methodical and pedagogical competencies are essential for future didactic work in kindergarten and primary school. They facilitate the creation of conditions for children's musical development in a way consistent with the methodical, psychological, and legal foundations of music education for preschool and early primary school children (Đurđanović & Stošić 2017; Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2020). On the one hand, the basic knowledge and skills concerning the organisation of the music education teaching and learning process become important, while on the other hand, the pedagogical factor is inseparable from the properly understood educational process. These are the competencies for organising the music teaching and learning process in kindergarten and the first years of primary school and the pedagogical competencies. The competencies for organising the music teaching and learning process in kindergarten and school are essential for creating the conditions for an attractive and effective interaction of the preschool and early primary school child with music, and thus for the child's introduction to active participation in musical culture. For such an interaction to be possible and effective, not only knowledge of music education methods and the core curriculum but also

the teacher's sensitivity to the pupil and their individual potential is important. As regards the competencies in the area of organising music teaching and learning in kindergarten and early childhood pedagogy, ten determinants can be identified (Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2020): knowledge of musical games for preschool and early school children, knowledge of the criteria for the selection of musical pieces (for singing and listening), knowledge of the musical repertoire (at different levels of education), knowledge of the methodical basis for teaching singing, knowledge of the methodical basis for teaching flute playing, knowledge and understanding of the provisions contained in the current core curriculum (rhythm, listening, singing, dancing, creating), knowledge of the music teaching process (including knowledge of the objectives of music education, musical activities, teacher's tasks, music and methodical textbooks, melodic patterns, methods of ear training), knowledge of selected music education systems (C. Orff, J. Dalcroze, Z. Kodály), sequence of introduction of musical material, knowledge of Orff instrumentation (knowledge of names of methodical and non-methodical instruments, ability to give examples of use) (Nite et al., 2015; Sarrazin, 2016; Susić, 2018).

Musical pedagogical competencies help to direct the music education process towards the comprehensive development of the child's potential. They are an expression of the awareness that music education in general education is not an end in itself but serves the individual in various ways, including helping them to become a better person. Therefore, to educate people, it is important to realise that music has pedagogical potential and, moreover, serves various functions. It is also important to properly diagnose the student, particularly their needs and abilities, as well as to prepare them for participation in culture through interaction with various cultural institutions (Kisiel, 2018; Taraszkiewicz, 2001). The competencies understood and classified in this way are also part of the catalogue of knowledge and teaching skills described by researchers from other countries (Begic et al., 2017; Benic et al., 2017; Çeliktaş et al., 2021; Đurđanović, et al., 2017; Jiyenbaevich, 2022; Koelsch et al., 2003; Sarrazin, 2016; Swaminathan et al., 2018; Sušić, 2018; Wallentin et al., 2010; Weiner, 2010; Wilk, 2018). It is worth emphasising that experience, knowledge, and skills are components of competencies and are recognised internationally as essential skills in the 21st century.

Musical education of preschool teachers

It seems that success in musical competence requires extremely favourable conditions provided not only by institutions, i.e. kindergarten, school, high school, and university but also by the family home (Gordon, 2016). The Polish results show that the most of the future preschool teachers came from families that largely did not provide rich musical experiences either in terms of performing music or attending music concerts. Most female preschool and early childhood pedagogy students as adults negatively assessed the functioning of music in the family home (Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2021). The previous research suggests that higher levels

of musical competence are obtained by those who start music training by age seven (Swaminathan et al., 2021). The results of the Polish study confirms a lack of continuity in the acquisition of musical competence in the majority of the preschool and early childhood pedagogy students in our study and are related to the current state education system, in which a marginalisation of the importance of music is perceived (Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2021). The Turkish study revealed that both preschool and kindergarten teachers had minimal skills or training in teaching music to preschool children (Elaldi et al., 2020). Russell-Bowie (2009), in his study, arrived at similar conclusions – the teachers surveyed had very little or no musical experience, and music in schools is given low priority, little funding, poor subject knowledge and inadequate preparation time. Bautista et al. (2022) also highlight the limited extracurricular, preschool and school-based music education offered to music teachers in many countries. Even behavioural and neuroimaging studies have proven that music is processed differently depending on the level of musical knowledge (Wallentin et al., 2010).

Inadequate preparation of teaching staff translates into poor outcomes for children's music teaching in schools. Therefore, supportive strategies to develop future teachers' musical competencies and skills are critically important.

Self-assessment of musical competence by teachers

The results of a Polish study (Authors, in review) confirmed that future preschool and school-age children teachers overestimated their self-assessment of their musical competence. These results are in line with studies from other nationalities, i.e. chorvatian. The tendency to overrate one's musical competencies (e.g. musical ability) is characteristic of preschool and early school teachers (Weiner, 2010; Wilk, 2018).

According to the Polish study (Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2020), after completing the training cycle, most students had a very good command of the elementary skills of performing well-known pieces vocally and playing the melodic and accompanying instruments. Also, Turkish studies show that even music teachers have problems playing accompaniment and using instruments properly in the teaching process (Çeliktaş et al., 2021), and students and teachers play instruments rarely or not at all (Elaldi et al., 2020). Research by Hallam and colleagues (2009) showed that primary school teacher candidates who play one or more instruments feel more confident in teaching music. Moreover, professional experience increases perceptions of professional competence (Çeliktaş et al., 2021).

The Polish study (Authors, in review) and previous studies show that teachers and students are, to some extent, aware of their substantive and methodical deficits, which they often link to a lack of trust (confidence) in their musicality (Welch & Henley, 2014).

It should be noted that the development of self-assessment skills takes place throughout the entire educational stage. The individual is most sensitive to feedback on their performance during childhood. It is worth emphasising that effective music education performance depends on many learning contexts, including self-esteem, professional skills, self-efficacy, beliefs about the process of teaching and learning music, training experiences, as well as social and interpersonal competence (Concina, 2023). It increases with seniority and experience (Yücesan, 2023).

Need for continuous development of teachers' musical competence

The results of a Turkish study indicate that, among teachers of preschool and school-age children, there is a high awareness of the need for further professional development (Çelikleş et al., 2021). Music teachers and early childhood and preschool education teachers should have opportunities to participate in programmes, training, in-service courses (Bautista et al., 2017), or professional seminars (Đurđanović, et al., 2017) through which they improve their skills while enhancing their strategies for teaching music to children (Nite et al., 2015). Croatian researchers came to similar conclusions (Begic et al., 2017). Teaching methods teachers emphasised the need for more practical training, primarily in playing instruments and singing. Moreover, they believe that more classes should be devoted to music courses, i.e. they propose reorganising the content of classes by increasing the number of practical and reducing the number of theoretical classes. A study by Đurđanović and Stošić (2017) also confirms that preschool teachers were interested in in-service training in music and that additional professional training resulted in their having greater satisfaction in implementing musical activities.

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