SEVERAL ASPECTS OF MUSIC SCHOOL TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AND THEIR ROLE IN FACILITATING SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPETENCES OF PUPILS: ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

Ilze Vilde  
*Music Academy of Latvia named after Jāzeps Vītols*

Zenta Anspoka  
*Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy*

Abstract
A teacher’s ability to change and to be part of the society is the key trait of his or her professionalism and thus competitiveness. One of the most significant personality traits of a teacher is creativity, and one of the most important professional competences is the socio-cultural competence, which is characterized by an ability to use particular knowledge of the social and cultural environment, cultural values and their impact upon interpersonal communication, in order to cope with the challenges of the social environment without losing own identity.

The aim of the article is to analyze aspects of music teacher professionalism, which not just allow implementing musical contents, but also help pupils to acquire the socio-cultural competence.

Materials and methods. Analysis of cultural studies theories, personality development theories and use of empirical methods – expert interviews, pedagogical observation methods in order to explore several aspects of music school teacher professionalism in the context of the described issue.

The article analyzes competences of music school teachers in the work with pupils to promote the development of pupils’ musicality and to give a chance to understand the significance of learning music in a personal context. Based on the comprehension about music being a field of art education that may facilitate the development of personal culture of each pupil, extensive and versatile knowledge of teachers is emphasized, along with the ability to use integrated learning for the realization of goals in music studies. The article analyzes empirical data and their link to music teacher professionalism in working with ethnically, linguistically, musically and in other aspects clearly heterogeneous groups. The obtained data allows to draw conclusions about several aspects that should receive more thorough attention not only within music teacher study programmes, but also in teachers’ further education. It illuminates the questions that should be addressed within the local community of the educational establishment and within the whole of society, in order for music to not just be a study subject, but also a tool for facilitating the development of each pupil’s personality.

KEYWORDS: Socio-Cultural Competences, Music School Teacher Professionalism, Music culture, Music acquisition, Common experience

Introduction
We live at a time when events change so rapidly that we cannot wait a single moment for the surrounding world to adapt to the needs of a single individual. Ever since childhood each person must learn to gradually integrate into the society and to be able to see one’s own place in it. Each individual must understand what he or she can do to satisfy personal needs, as well as the needs of the peers, must gain experience in making the surrounding environment more harmonious, thus acquiring an inner balance. A person is judged not by his or her academic or artistic achievements, but by how he or she develops as a personality, and to what extent this person is able to understand particular situations within a multicultural environment by preserving own identity.

For a teacher to be competitive, a significant trait of his or her professionalism is to change and to adapt to the society. Creativity is one of the most important traits of a teacher’s personality today, and one of the most significant professional competences is the socio-cultural competence. This competence is characterized by the ability to use particular knowledge about the social and cultural environment, cultural values and their impact upon the interaction between people, an ability to use this knowledge, in order to, without losing own identity, cope with all the challenges of the social environment.

A music teacher’s professionalism is not only linked to knowledge and skills in the field of music, but also to knowledge about the development of personality, an ability to not only teach others, but also to continuously engage in the learning process. It is important to be aware that the aim of music teaching at school is not to push the pupil to musical achievements of particular standard, but rather to create circumstances, in which a pupil can understand music through an emotional experience and is motivated to make music in the most diverse ways, to cooperate with others in this process and to gain pleasure from it.
The aim of the article is to analyze various aspects of music teacher professionalism, which do not just allow to realize the musical contents, but also help each pupil to acquire the socio-cultural competence.

Materials and methods. Analysis of cultural theories, personality development theories, in order to determine several aspects of music teacher professionalism in the context of the described problem.

Results and discussion

The globalization tendencies in today’s world raise the question of the significance of traditional cultures of various ethnic groups on an international scale, the necessity for acquiring cultural values and the way of acquiring these values in the 21st century educational process. Of importance within music pedagogy is the question of a qualitative understanding traditional cultural heritage of various ethnic groups and providing each pupil the feeling of cultural identity and a sense of belonging to the state.

Nowadays the influence of Western culture (popular culture) is changing the attitude towards values, beliefs and traditions. Reorientation of values takes place; therefore one of the basic tasks of contemporary education is to facilitate a pupil’s interest in own ethnic culture.

Ethnic identity and cultural traditions that represent this identity is not a ready and permanent given to each nation - these are chosen, developed and confirmed through communication and always transmitted anew. They exist and compete with other social identities and their symbols (Bula, 2000).

The cultural identity of an ethnos and a nation’s experience is also accumulated in music, and music preserves and passes on the genetic memory of an ethnos. A teacher’s professionalism determines whether a cultural dialogue will be facilitated, characterized by communication, an ability to work together and to live side by side with other members of society (Roth, 1996).

The socio-cultural competence broadens the opportunities for communication and self-determination of personality, which encourage the pupils’ integration into society and into a multicultural environment (Tilija, 2005). It is important for the knowledge and skills acquired at school to be based on an understanding of cultural heritage and to reveal a link with the globalization processes, thus providing an opportunity to be competent in the informative multicultural world.

Within the professional activity of a music pedagogue the socio-cultural competence is linked to an understanding of music culture, competence in the symbols characterizing different eras, music styles and intonations, as music can be diverse in terms of both its contents, style as well as its performance. Music may contain ethnic intonations, codes and subtexts; music may be globally oriented and available to large masses as, for instance, popular music. Diverse musical styles may unite or divide listeners into various groups, both according to their age, taste, ethnicity and lifestyle (Hargreaves, 2001). In order to orientate oneself in the diverse world of music, knowledge and skills are needed not just in the professional field. It is equally important for the pedagogue to have a clear position of views, which would allow to critically assess and to express an attitude towards the development tendencies and transformations of music culture.

In music acquisition the socio-cultural competence of pupils is facilitated by introducing them to the diverse music culture, personalities and ways of music making. The artistic contents of music reflect the cultural values of separate individuals, groups or society – norms, traditions, symbols, morality and belief systems, as well as lifestyle.

Experience is required in order to facilitate the possibility of cultural dialogue, which includes musical culture – knowledge and skills in the field of music, cooperation skills in the communication context. It means that within music acquisition interactive forms of action are required, which do not only facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also encourage the development of interaction and cooperation skills.

As a result of productive cooperation, cognitive development of pupils is stimulated, as the interaction process facilitates information exchange between the teacher and pupils, enriches their experience and encourages acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Productive cooperation also means making music together and engaging in all kinds of creative activities during music lessons that have to do with the socio-cultural competence in its various aspects: discovering music through creative activities and the teacher’s experience, as well as support provided in acquiring new experiences (Rundfola, Taggart, 2005).

Development of pupils’ socio-cultural competences is facilitated by the democratic style of pedagogical management, which is based on the principles of a humane approach, giving pupils an opportunity to freely choose own examples, encouraging to look for personal significance in the learning
process. A democratic pedagogical style of work is based on the principles of the humanistic approach in the first place and targeted at overcoming alienation within the learning process and at developing cooperation and positive mutual relationships. Music acquisition is promoted by the teacher’s attitude, which is expressed as an interest in everything new, which would catch the pupils’ attention and interest.

Music culture may also become a way of creative self-expression for the pupils, which is revealed during the music process and creativity. It is therefore important for the teacher’s pedagogical activity to be expressed as an activator of pupils’ creativity and learning processes.

The following aspects are proposed for the stimulation of the socio-cultural competences of pupils (see Image 1), which refer to professionalism of music teachers and the specifics of their work.

In order to facilitate the socio-cultural competence of pupils, the music pedagogue must possess extensive knowledge in a variety of fields that broadens the scope. The necessity of this professional quality is determined by the integrated approach in music lessons, which derives from the specificity of music contents. Getting to know music culture begins with the acquisition of traditional culture of own nation, followed by foreign music and professional music development throughout centuries and eras. In order to introduce the pupil to music and its contents, one must be competent in music history, theory, symbols of the era and public events. Therefore the teacher must be able to explain the musical image of the composition and regularities of music development, must analyze compositions, determine the meaning of musical means of expression in the reflection of the composition’s image and find pedagogical means for passing this knowledge on to the pupils.

Image 1. Facilitating Socio-Cultural Competences of Pupils in Music Acquisition

Regarding the socio-cultural competence, the music teacher’s skill to create a link between subjects is no less important. This way the teacher encourages pupils to within music culture acquisition make use of their knowledge and skills in geography, history, social sciences, visual arts, languages, literature, psychology, philosophy, culture history and folklore. The above-mentioned fields form part of music study contents, the acquisition of music language and stylistics, the composers’ message about human life, developments in nature, God and soul. Therefore the worldview of the music teacher plays an important role within the pedagogical process, which unites mentally ethic, psychological and other traits of personality.
With respect to the development of pupils’ musicality, as well as the socio-cultural competence, an important aspect is the music teacher’s skill to make use of diverse learning methods and methodological means. The socio-cultural competence is facilitated by making use of interactive forms and methods of action – dialogue, discussions, group work, joint performances and projects, as a result of which pupils acquire social skills.

The ability to teach and to engage pupils in an active learning process is important to teachers of all subjects, yet the specifics of music acquisition lies in the fact that musical skills that are linked to music perception, understanding and music making develop and improve as a result of regular and continuous action. Therefore various and regular exercises are needed, which may seem boring and do not generate interest to the pupils. In order to avoid this, it is important for the teacher to make use of diverse methodological means, which may sometimes be game elements, gradually developing into sustainable skills and abilities, as well as musical skills.

In the work of a music pedagogue it is important to remember that everyone perceives and understands music in a peculiar way, and that is determined by musicality, experience and attitudes of pupils. Therefore the teacher must organize the study work in a manner that provides each pupil with an opportunity to implement own musicality potential, obtain new knowledge and skills, by linking it to real-life actions, facilitating the understanding of the meaning of learning in the context of personal significance (see Image 2).

！ Image 2. Choice of the Music Teacher’s Pedagogical Means

The development level of pedagogue’s musicality is of large importance in the professional activity of a music teacher. It is linked not only to an ability to technically perform a composition, but also to the skill to listen to and to analyze the presentations of pupils, which requires a well-developed music hearing. The skill to preserve in memory and to reproduce the heard fragments of compositions is important, just like the ability to memorize and reproduce separate musical means of expression, a composition in general, and the skill to assess the interpretation of a composition, as well as the technical and artistic quality of a composition. Without these traits of musicality – perception of the height of musical sounds and intonation, the sense of tonality and of rhythm, a well-developed harmonic hearing etc., a music teacher cannot develop the musical skills of pupils on a good or an excellent level. These are also important in the context of the socio-cultural competence, as only if the music teacher can qualitatively perform a musical composition, will the pupil be better able to hear and perceive its contents and to emotionally experience it.
One of the most important aspects of music teacher professionalism is the ability to make music. It is important both in the work of a music teacher during music lessons and during interest education lessons. It is observed that in practice the teacher’s narration about music or listening to music records does not always create an emotional atmosphere and does not provide an understanding of the world of music to an extent that a qualitative demonstration on one of the musical instruments or a vocal performance of a song would provide. Thus a teacher’s music making skills promote the pupils’ interest in creative work and it is the first step in the direction of cooperation in the field of music: starting with the learning of new songs, which may develop into a joint performance at a school concert.

Joint music making and listening to music arouses emotions and activates the musical hearing, as well as facilitates musical thinking through the already obtained knowledge and skills. If music and the music making process becomes a meaningful part of the life of a pupil, the support of adults and co-participation in this process would help develop his or her musicality and creative expressions. Creative activity in music may provide the pupil with an opportunity to engage in the cultural life at school and the public life.

Professionalism of a music teacher and results of pedagogical activities are reflected in the proceedings of concert performances, which engage pupils both as participants and as listeners. This aspect has to do with traditions that have developed since the times of teachers’ seminars (led by J.Cimze and L.Bētiņš), which started in the 19th century and continue to this day. Therefore the work of a music teacher does not end with giving a lesson in the classroom and is pursued through interest education – by conducting choirs, music groups and various hobby groups. The engagement of pupils in interest education reflects the teacher’s ability to generate interest, to develop and to encourage children and youth for musical activities. If music and the music making process becomes viewed as a value in the lives of pupils, that counts as an achievement of pedagogical work. Of course, not every pupil will become an active participant of a choir or a music group, but what matters is that the pupils, who do have interest and the wish to be active, have the chance to creatively express themselves in the field of music.

The professionalism of a music pedagogue develops from his or her ability and wish to improve and develop, by advancing the skills and abilities needed for music making, by acquiring diverse knowledge on the specifics of a particular study subject.

Conclusions

- The development of the socio-cultural competence is possible by understanding the self, own place in society and in relationships with peers. There are multiple possibilities in the professional activities of a music pedagogue to facilitate the development of the pupils’ socio-cultural competence. It may begin during the music lessons by listening, learning about music history and theory and then continue through joint creative activities within music culture events.
- The best way for a pupil to get to know music culture and its diverse world is through practical music making, which stimulates the music perception processes and encourages an understanding of music in the context of various cultures. Joint creative activities help develop communication skills between classmates and the teacher.
- Acquisition of music theory, history and music language facilitates the pupils’ understanding of the music culture of various nations and societies, including the values, norms and expressions of subcultures, whereas knowledge creates a tolerant attitude towards the different. By encouraging the cognitive processes of pupils, there develops a skill to critically evaluate information and to find an own music style that is examined and felt by the pupils themselves.
- The ability to make music – to sing, to play musical instruments provides pupils a chance to see into the cultural events of music life. Oftentimes these skills help children and the youth to feel like being part of the community – to find common language with other people, to gain new friends, to realize their creative desires and to find appreciation from the adults.
- A joint music making process and engaging in the events of cultural life develops the pupils’ sense of belonging, which comes into being through mutual interaction, common experience and an awareness and understanding of cultural values.
Kopsavilkums

Lai skolotājs būtu konkurētspējīgs, šotā būtiska viņa profesionālātās iežime ir spēja mainīties un iekļauties sabiedrībā. Viena no svarīgākajām skolotāja personības īpašībām ir radošums, bet viena no būtiskākajām profesionālājām kompetencēm sociokultūras kompetence, ko raksturo spēja izmantot konkrētas zināšanas par sociālo un kultūras vidi, kultūras vērtībām un to ietekmi uz cilvēku savstarpējo saskarsmi, prasmes šīs zināšanas izmantot, lai, nezaudējot savu identitāti, tiktu galā ar visiem sociālās vides izai cainājumiem.

Raksta mērķis ir analizēt dažus tieši mūzikas skolotāja profesionālātās aspektus, kas ļauj īstenot ne tikai mūzikas saturu, bet palīdz skolēnam apguvēt ārā sociokultūras kompetencē.
Materiāli un metodes. Kulturoloģijas teoriju, personība attīstības teoriju analizē un empirisko metožu – eksperti interviju, pedagogiskā novērojuma metodes izmantošana, lai noskaidrotu dažus mūzikas skolotāja profesionālātās aspektus minētās problēmas kontekstā.

Rakstā tiek analizēta mūzikas skolotāja prasmes darbā ar skolēniem, lai veicinātu viņu muzikālātās attīstību un dotu iespēju izprast mūzikas mācīšanās jēgu personīskām nozīmēm kontekstā. Balstoties uz izpratni par to, ka mūzika ir mākslas izglītības joma un var veicināt katra skolēna personīskās kultūras veidošanos, uzsvērta skolotāja daudzpusīgu zināšanu nozīme, viņa prasme izmantot integrētu pieeju mūzikas mācību mērķa īstenošanā. Rakstā analizēti empiriskajā pētījumā iegūtie dati un to saistītā ar mūzikas skolotāja profesionālātās, strādājot etniski, lingvāli, muzikāli un no citiem viedokļiem izteiktī heterogenās klasēs vai grupās. Iegūtie dati ļauj spriest par vairākiem aspektiem, kam jāpievērš lielāka vērība ne tikai mūzikas skolotāju studiju programmās, bet arī viņu tālākizglītības programmās, kādi jautājumi jārisina arī vietējā kopienā, kurā atrodas izglītības iestāde un sabiedrībā kopumā, lai mūzika būtu ne tikai mācību priekšmets, bet arī līdzeklis katra skolēna personības attīstības veicināšanai.

References

DAŽI MŪZIKAS SKOLOTĀJU PROFESIONALITĀTES ASPEKTI SKOLĒNA SOCIOKULTŪRAS KOMPETENCES VEICINĀŠANAI: PROBLĒMAS UN RISINĀJUMI

Ilze Vilde, Zenta Antspoka