



Nataša S. Ćuragić¹

Preschool Teacher Training College, Novi Sad

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Aspects of Changing and Improving Music Education of Future Preschool Teachers

Extended summary

There are a lot of research-based evidence proving the far-reaching significance of music for intellectual, emotional and social development of children, and showing that there are many opportunities for using music resources for various types of support and stimulation. The majority of the pre-service preschool teachers are not well-acquainted with these opportunities or with the importance of the level of their own personal, cultural and educational development and its influence on selecting proper methods of transferring musical content to preschool children. As the vast majority of the preschool education students do not have any previous musical experience, their perception of their own knowledge of music is quite low. For this reason, they generally tend to refrain from using activities involving music in their work with children.

This paper presents the results of the qualitative research aimed at exploring some aspects of possible changes and additions to the syllabus of music subjects at the Preschool Teacher Training College in Novi Sad in order to improve the applicability of the knowledge that students acquire in the course of their studies. The research also investigated the effectiveness of the attempts to expand students' cultural horizons by selecting carefully the content of the music subjects. In addition, it seems important to inquire what is the students' perception of the introduced syllabus changes and if they perceive the role and the impact of their teacher as important and stimulating for their musical progress. Action research was conducted on a sample of 50 students and in three parts during one academic year. Every subsequent part of the research was based on the results of the previous one. The research was survey-based, with open and combined types of questionnaires developed for the purposes of this particular research.

¹ n.djuragic@gmail.com

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According to the results of this research, students perceived the changes and additions to the syllabus of the music subjects – implemented mainly in the activities such as singing, piano accompaniment for children's songs, and listening to music – important for their future practice, as well as for their own personal development. This was particularly evident relative to the activities aimed at widening their own cultural and professional horizons by listening to music.

The majority of the students claimed that their level of professional skills and practically applied knowledge had been significantly improved and that this could have great implications on their instrumental and vocal achievements, particularly on their personal musical aspirations – mostly towards classical music – and their preparation for musical activities in kindergartens.

As far as the impact and role of the music teacher is concerned, the vast majority of the students stated that the teacher plays a very stimulating, important and meaningful role in the affirmation of their own musical competences, development of their deeper understanding of music, and the whole cultural-pedagogical aspect of their future work as preschool teachers.

The research results indicate that the introduced and well-received changes of the syllabus of the music subjects at the Preschool Teacher Training College in Novi Sad have been formally accepted and form the basis for the work of music teachers and their future endeavours on developing new methods for acquiring and applying practical music knowledge in the training of the pre-service preschool teachers.

Keywords: music education of preschool teachers, qualitative research, listening to music, the role of music teachers.

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