The 5th Intercultural Arts Education Conference: Design Learning

Teacher’s view on the development of values in music education in Estonia

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Abstract

The increasing importance of values education is reflected in national, preschool, basic school and upper secondary school curricula. The purpose of the study was to find out about teachers’ view on music education as a means for developing values. The study relied on qualitative content analysis – a semi-structured group interview. Research results proved that music teachers identify themselves as developers of students’ values and consider music and music education an important source of values education. In the development of values teachers outlined the role of music in supporting students’ socio-cultural identity, values-based selection of repertoire (songs, musical-rhythmic activities, music creation), the effect of music making on emotional education and the development of general human values, social skills and creativity.

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Keywords: values education; music education; music teacher

1. Introduction

Each society is based on a system of values that meet the educational objectives adopted by the state (Gustavsson, 2000). The development of the Estonian society has a deep impact on the shaping of the priorities of values education of the school system. Education does not only mean the transfer of a body of knowledge, but also raising and shaping a person. Therefore, education is deeply involved with values acquisition since it relies on the understanding about the human being, who he is and how he should act,
behave and think. The national curricula for basic and upper secondary schools of Estonia (2010, 2011) provide answers to the questions – what is the aim of education, what values and behavioural norms do we want the people we educate to have?

The Estonian example allows us to state that currently a part of the society hold on to traditions, i.e. values that are authoritatively passed down from generation to generation; others acknowledge the modern socially functioning society; the third party lead a postmodernist life where people only focus on themselves. Occurring simultaneously, these trends affect human values (Sutrop, 2009). Music as a school subject fulfils objectives related to values and values education more widely in the society by supporting interpersonal relations, creating social cohesion and laying the foundation for creating and/or reviving and maintaining the notion of tradition (Ross, 2007).

2. Theoretical background

V. Richardson and C. Fallona emphasise that values education is not merely about learning rules or maintaining discipline, but providing pupils with the practice of making decisions that are based on moral awareness and ethical principles. Therefore, the key role in ensuring pupils’ complete and sustainable development belongs to teachers whose success depends on several factors: the curriculum that determines the goals and trends of action; to what extent teachers try to understand and value a learner, motivate a pupil, attach importance to the coping of every individual learner as well as the whole class; teacher’s feedback to pupils that allows them to understand how they have developed (Richardson & Fallona, 2001).

In the world of research, values are defined differently by different schools. For example, M. Rokeach views values as basic concepts that each person separately and the society as a whole should have. He introduces such terms as internal values (e.g. world peace, strong family, happiness, true friendship, national security, social recognition, etc.) and instrumental values or means that help to achieve the desired final state: honesty, justice, tolerance, responsibility, helpfulness, etc. (Rokeach, 1989).

According to the researchers of value theories S. Schwartz and W. Bilsky, personal values are people’s universal needs that all individuals and societies desire to meet: needs of individuals and biological organisms, needs of social interaction, needs of survival and well-being. At the same time, motivational aims are highlighted: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, benevolence, tradition and security (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Schwartz, 1995).

This article will view the notion of values as follows: “Values are mechanisms that help people make right decisions and express compatibility with the established norms and attitudes in the society. Values guide peoples’ practical activity and the outcomes of human activity can in turn influence or change values” (Muldna, 2011). Values may be ranked according to their relative importance. In the narrower sense, moral, material, economic, political, legal, aesthetic, cultural and historic values are distinguished. Society can direct these values through emphasising certain ideals, principles or making judgements. We can generalise that these are extrinsic values. In the wider sense, the so-called classical basic values are truth, kindness, beauty, trust, hope and love. Interpreting basic values is complicated since these are abstract notions with more personal than collective meaning. These intrinsic values are indispensable. Thus, values are divided into intrinsic and instrumental. We desire intrinsic values for their own sake; instrumental values, however, serve as means for achieving other benefits (Inglehart, 1995; Rokeach, 1989). In the context of this study, music education mainly occurs in the meaning of instrumental values or the means of the acquisition of necessary values.

The development of knowledge, skills, abilities and values in music education relies on pupils’ intrinsic and developable forms of intelligence: emotional, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, spatial, logical, etc. Personal and social values and abilities help pupils to understand themselves, and be sympathetic,
tolerant and open to their fellow-pupils. At the same time, these values aid them in maintaining a balance between freedom and responsibility, diversity and choices. Music education allows the development of socio-cultural skills in pupils through different musical activities: listening to pieces of music and discussing them; joint singing – developing cooperation skills and tolerance; making music alone and in an ensemble – being in different roles and adjusting to them; own creation as a possibility of self-expression, i.e. courage to be who you are – original and unique, etc. (Muldma, 2010b).

3. Research methods

The aim of this empirical study was to ascertain the ways music education influences the development of pupils’ values. The sample of interviewees (n=12) consisted of general education school music teachers. The authors hoped that an analysis of their data would yield reliable results for drawing conclusions according to the aim of the study. Group interviews were used as the method of research. While planning the interviews, it was understood that an interview does not create knowledge a priori (Kvale, 2007; Silvermann, 2006). Therefore the resulting narratives will allow determining the participants’ views on music phenomena, which will create a basis for defining important priorities among the effects of music education that support the development of values.

The interviews were conducted in a confidential atmosphere and the procedure took about 1 to 1.5 hours. Two to three respondents at a time participated in a group interview. In the process of copying the text from the tapes the names of persons and places were removed, which rendered the material anonymous. Each interviewee was attributed a pseudonym used in the examples throughout the analysis.

Based on the aim of the study, the authors worked out a system of categories of values based on the research on values (Rokeach, 1989; Schwartz, 1995; Inglehart, 1995).

Table 1. The areas of music education that influence pupils’ values (Muldma & Kiilu, 2012)

| Social values                  | Ethical values                       | Aesthetic values                  | Personal values                        |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Ability to consider others    | Honesty                              | Sense of beauty                    | General and musical abilities          |
| Ability to hear and listen    | Justice and human dignity            | Musical taste                      | Creative self-expression skills and courage |
| Communication and cooperation skills | Respect for oneself and others           | Emotional musical experience       | Expressing feelings and opinions       |
| Tolerance and empathy         | Responsibility                       | Song text message transmission     | Creative and critical thinking         |
| Socio-cultural identity       | Family, home, homeland               | National cultural traditions       | Expanding of the horizons              |
| Understanding different national cultures | National pride                        | The value of musical literacy      | Positive self-image                    |
The collected data was analysed by means of qualitative content analysis (Laherand, 2008), which focused on comprehensive understanding of the interviews, emergence of the most important keywords and creating categories consisting of multiple codes.

4. Results

The analysis of the background information reveals that all music teachers who participated in the study have a professional higher education and their pedagogical experience ranges between 6 to 30 years. The respondents work at all four stages of general education school, i.e. from grade one to grade 12. In addition, the work of all the teachers also involves extracurricular musical activity (choirs, ensembles, soloists, instrument hobby groups), which expands the opportunities for the influence of music education. The general data allow us to think that the research data rely on the observations of highly educated and considerably experienced teachers and are therefore reliable. The role of music education in shaping pupils’ values will be viewed in the order of priority.

The study revealed that teachers consider the effect of music on social values highest. They highlighted the ability to consider others, which is developed in the work of vocal and instrumental ensembles. In addition, the respondents pointed out improvisation and musical-rhythmic movement, which have a direct effect on the relevant ability. According to the teachers, through musical activities children learn to value and honour the feelings and skills of themselves and others, take into account and respect differences, show tolerance and consideration for others. Getter indicates the importance of this aspect in extracurricular music activity, Considering others is especially important in the ensemble work. The study revealed that teachers consider the effect of music on social values highest. They highlighted the ability to consider others, which is developed in the work of vocal and instrumental ensembles. In addition, the respondents pointed out improvisation and musical-rhythmic movement, which have a direct effect on the relevant ability. According to the teachers, through musical activities children learn to value and honour the feelings and skills of themselves and others, take into account and respect differences, show tolerance and consideration for others. Getter indicates the importance of this aspect in extracurricular music activity, Considering others is especially important in the ensemble work.

It is this joint singing or singing in accord. You shouldn’t be heard, you have to sound in unison with others, take others into account.

The data analysis also confirmed the successful use of the methods of active learning (group work, reports, etc.) in the work of the majority of the teachers. As the reason they give the pupils’ desire to participate in the learning as actively as possible by employing their prior knowledge, suggesting ideas and interacting with their fellow-pupils. Respondents’ opinions also reveal the importance of hearing and listening. The interviewees are convinced that music is the only subject where through listening to music pupils really learn attentive listening. And at the same time, when he/she is able to listen to a piece of music in the music lesson for even three minutes, he/she is able to better listen to the explanations of the teacher of mathematics in the mathematics lesson. (Häli)

In the development of listening skills, besides the habitual listening to music in the lessons teachers also emphasise the importance of experiencing live music in the form of school concerts or various musical performance genres (opera, ballet, musical and other musical productions). They think that through educational outings pupils are able to create connections between different periods of history, collate and compare various means of musical expression and learn to appreciate and assess musical compositions.

For several teachers the development of communication and cooperation skills is the most important activity in music lessons. They view music as a means of communication that teaches children behavioural norms and rules, good communication practices and politeness. According to Laivi, The aim of today’s school is still prevailingly the communication level, the cooperation level, and to be honest, we don’t train professional musicians, we teach people /.../ Let’s take social skills. I give them a lot [of attention], in specific situations. For instance, how I turn to a companion. How I pass him/her by. How I enter the classroom. It means I do quite a lot – I let them talk to each other to allow them to learn. In the age group that I teach the ego is still relatively big.

Teachers regard joint musical activities as the best way of developing cooperation skills, such as joint singing in music lessons, choral and ensemble singing; playing musical instruments, orchestras and
instrumental ensembles. In addition to developing cooperation skills, such activities through their repertoire help to shape socio-cultural identity – by introducing different cultures and teaching to assess their value. The Estonian music education syllabus gives an opportunity for that through introducing the music of different countries (in depth in grades 5 to 8) and teachers see it as an important way of familiarising pupils with the culture and music of different countries and through that helping them understand and appreciate differences. However, the respondents consider it important to maintain a balance between pupils’ own culture and other cultures. Nelli who works in a Russian-medium upper secondary school, justifies, I have to cover both. I can’t only speak about Estonian culture, because they must feel who they are. But of course it’s a multicultural company there. We don’t have any classes with Russian pupils only. We don’t distinguish between Ukrainians and Jews and others.... But in this sense that Russian folk music and Estonian folk music. Then it’s very easy, then again I create links. Well, differences also, of course. This works.

Teachers rated as second important the influence of music on ethical values. The interviewees considered such ethical values as honesty, justice and human dignity very important. This allows us to think that all their pedagogical activity is based on these basic values. They emphasise the importance of honesty in written works, especially correctly referring to the sources used.

This is about written work. Copying homework from others, submitting plagiarised work or cheating during the tests or whatever. And the whole school system actually fights against it. In some schools the methods are very harsh, in others not. (Jaanika)

The data analysis allows us to conclude that in almost all categories of values developing respect for oneself and others is reflected. This is specifically associated with copyright and the correct use of web-based materials, which according to the respondents need more comprehensive discussion and clarification today than before. The teachers see a potential for addressing the above topics as well as the topics of human dignity and personal liberty in dealing with music history.

Take, for example, those romantic composers who only became famous after their death. For a person to deal with the things he really wants to and feels that this is his field. For not to be somebody else because others expect you to. For you see that those composers did exactly what they wanted to do – lived in poverty and even though their works weren’t as well-known as they are today, they did what they wanted to and they did it with real dedication. For this gives them courage to choose their own way. (Getter)

In the category of ethical values, interviewees attached attention to activities that they consider extremely important and relate to family, homeland and national pride. Concerts organised for parents on fathers and mothers’ days, and at Christmas and in spring prove the importance of involving families in the activity of school. The teachers emphasised that today the continuity of Estonianness is to a large extent maintained by music, because when initially the recognition and establishment of the identity took place through the written word, didn’t it, nowadays that people don’t read any more, the only thing left is music, as expressed by Veronika.

The topic of national pride is tightly integrated with Estonian long-standing tradition of song festivals, which the interviewees consider one of the most important goals, motivators and outlets of music education. On the other hand, song festivals are also the most powerful manifestation of Estonianness, which is associated with Estonian people’s aspiration for freedom. Song festivals and songs are something through which we identify ourselves. This we should keep. (Häli)

In addition to the above, also the work of Estonian composers was pointed out because it supports the development of pupils’ identity – composers and athletes are the best-known Estonians in the world (Veronika).
According to the data analysis, the next position belonged to ethical values. In this category, teachers stressed the importance of music in the development of the sense of beauty. In order to achieve this goal, teachers choose diverse audio and video materials demonstrating high quality of performance that would allow pupils to better understand artistic-aesthetical values and help develop their musical taste. Successful development of pupils’ musical taste seems to give teachers feedback about the success in their work. According to Nelli, *It makes me happy when at least one of them goes home and later in the day asks me on the MSN or Facebook, What was the name of that author? What was that piece of music?*

Olga: *Well, the musical taste of a young person develops according to the music he/she most listens to. My feedback from pupils has been that in reality they are really grateful that their horizons have been expanded.*

The majority of the interviewees regard musical experience as an influential starting point in music education – *everything around it can be linked to it. When the (clicks her fingers / musical) experience is there, it’s easy to shape everything on that basis* (Jaanika).

In addition, in the context of musical experience teachers gave examples of musical works that always appeal to pupils: “Spiegel im spiegel” and “Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten” by Arvo Pärt; “Raua needmine” (Cursing of iron) by Veljo Tormis, but also Estonian patriotic songs – “Eesti muld ja Eesti sünd” (Estonian earth and Estonian heart) by Rein Rannap; “Sind surmani” (Yours till death) by Aleksander Kunileid & Alo Mattiisen; etc. The given list is remarkable, because it directly targets the maintaining of national cultural traditions. It has to be admitted once again that in the collected data values related to culture and national traditions are central, which gives another piece of evidence about the impact of music on the continuity of culture, the roots of which reach the preservation of national traditions. According to Heleene, *national traditions are so commonplace; they accompany you throughout a calendar year, because our learning materials are structured like this. So every St Michael’s day we do a relevant programme /.../. National traditions are always with us.*

The research reveals contrasting opinions about musical literacy – pupils’ varying preparation and the resulting doubts about the necessity of teaching it at the upper secondary school level. Teachers justify the overlooking of the development of musical literacy by the lack of time. According to the curriculum, there is only one music lesson a week in grades 5 to 12 and this does not allow sufficient time for dealing with music-specific knowledge. At the same time, the respondents are unanimous in their statements that the development of musical literacy is directly related to practical music making – learning songs and learning to play musical instruments, listening to and discussing music, etc.

*It’s not really possible to say that singing is more valuable than this literacy. There are many children, by the way, who play an instrument better than sing, because then they don’t have to hit notes very accurately with their vocal cords. But when you learn where the C key is on the keyboard – everybody can do that.* (Marika)

In the category of personal values, the majority of the teachers thought that music education mainly facilitates the development of general abilities and stimulates the development of musical skills, which, however, should not be a goal in itself.

*I always tell them that they won’t become musicians. I don’t teach and train musicians. When we speak about general education school then above all we develop those general abilities. (Laivi)*

*General education school is indeed for the development of general abilities and we simply employ musical means to develop general abilities.* (Irma)
In understanding creativity as one of the values, there is a unanimous opinion that the phenomenon of creativity emerges in the creator-audience interaction and is related to creating new ideas, behaviour and outcomes based on the existing knowledge and perceptions. Musical creativity is characterised by the development of musical skills and means of expression on the one hand, and on the other hand, the joint musical creative activity develops communicativeness, sociability, empathy, but also general abilities, such as concentration, response time, attention span, etc. (Ruokonen & Muldma, 2007). In the process of a creative activity an otherwise withdrawn child may reveal his/her true self, as Nelli puts it, ‘You don’t know your children well enough when you give them some creative work to do. And what’s the outcome! It’s extremely interesting that a boy who’s quiet and you never hear whether he knows correctly or he doesn’t. When he’s then creating his vision, he completely opens up, to the others as well! In the development of creative and critical thinking, teachers apply discussions based on reasoning, written work (review, essay), but also oral presentations about composers, music genres and other music topics. As an original and innovative idea, teachers mentioned recording joint singing in the classroom, which was later listened and analysed in terms of the success of musical interpretation, etc. Respondents considered it important in the modern context to be able to distinguish between and analyse the original and the copy of a piece of music / song.

The analysis of personal values showed that the interviewees are geared towards expanding pupils’ horizons and developing their positive self-image. Half of the respondents considered this the most important task for them as teachers. According to Annika, ‘in order a pupil developed a positive self-image, ’T as a value. In reality a child’s self-image also depends on the teacher – how you assess him/her or what’s others’ attitude towards him/her.

In music education, teachers see the best opportunity for offering the experience of success to children. Wow! And it is this success experience that improves your self-esteem, self-image and positive attitude. (Irma)

The interviewees also pointed out as values success experience and being happy. The emergence of these factors was a great surprise to the authors since up to now the orientation of the Estonian society has mainly been towards pragmatic values, for which reason human wellbeing was not a focus of this research.

Wellbeing, to avoid this pressure. Ooh... [imitates discomfort]. In order to attach value to oneself, to feel one’s own value. (Annika)

5. Discussion

The discussion of this research relies on the aim of the study, theoretical sources and the analysis of the collected data. The empirical study confirmed the interdisciplinary nature of music education and its orientation to the overall development of pupils. In the respondents’ views, music is related to areas of human activity and thinking typical of the current period. In the Estonian system of school subjects, music is integrated with all subjects – literature, art, languages, social subjects and natural sciences.

The study also confirmed the opinion of several researchers (M. Sutrop, V. Richardson & C. Fallona) that pupils’ decision making that relies on moral awareness and ethical principles is reinforced and realised through consistent practice. The latter was achieved by means of different activities, such as discussions, written work, etc.

Music education as a whole is built on positive values and value education transferred through them is geared towards getting to know one’s own and others’ values – to reflect about values, allow pupils to practise virtues and receive feedback about them (Cooper, Burman, Ling, Razdevsek-Pucko & Stephenson, 1998; Cantell & Cantell, 2009). The statements of the mentioned researchers are supported
by the outcomes of this study – the following values were significantly highly rated: consideration for each other, accepting differences, understanding different cultures and collegial cooperation. In addition, according to the teachers’ opinion it is possible to teach pupils to notice values through music and reflect about them, consequently, values are objects of perception or treatment. Due to emotional and communicative qualities of music, the teaching of this area enhances the educational and developmental factors of emotions.

The study confirmed the opinion (Muldma, 2010a) that the values developed in music education have an impact on the value children attach to family, home and homeland and are mainly focused on the perception of ethnic and national identity and patriotism. In the Estonian society music has an important role in maintaining and passing down the national culture and music teachers are responsible for its continuity.

6. Conclusion

Estonian school as educational institution faces a difficult challenge – to change from knowledge-centred school to values-centred school. Since knowledge is not free from values, it is important to increase awareness about the issues of values, which means that values should be addressed in all subjects including music education. The values education in a subject lesson contains activities that may be highly interrelated.

The role of the bearer and mediator of values undoubtedly belongs to teachers. Teachers create the learning environment bringing along their values that depend on the real situation. Today the role of music teachers is noticeably more difficult, requiring them to be a source of innovation while also acting as a bearer of traditions, creator of innovative trends, implementer of paradigmatic changes, and shaper of pupils’ values. Music teachers have a great opportunity to address values through the choice of the relevant repertoire, but also through discussing the content of musical works or solving the issues/problems arising in the process of musical activities. The teachers’ role in music education is extremely wide and responsible. It combines into a whole their unique personality traits, musical skills and pedagogical and artistic qualities (Muldma, 2012).

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