

## THE ROLE OF CHURCH SCHOOLS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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**SUMMARY.** Our empirical analysis explores a practical question of contemporary music education. We investigate the role of church schools in musical art education by providing a contrast with music education in public schools in Hungary. We establish that the practical approach to teach musical arts through experience is prevalent in both public and church schools. Denominational schools are better equipped with instruments, their music teachers know how to play instruments, and their students sing canons much more frequently. More than 90 percent of church school pupils have attended a live music concert, which can be largely contributed to their institution, the school choir, and their parents. Pupils of public schools frequent concerts, which are usually organised by their school, much less. It can be stated that church schools put a stronger emphasis on musical art education both inside and outside the curriculum. The subject “singing and music” should have a more pronounced place in the curriculum as concert pedagogy does not fulfil its role as experience pedagogy perfectly.

**Keywords:** art education, music education, denominational education, curricular and extracurricular education

### Introduction

Our empirical analysis, which began in 2015, explores a practical question of contemporary music education. In particular, we focus on the methodology of introducing children to music and the extracurricular possibilities offered by live music performances and other cultural events. In recent decades, music education and its effects have been covered by various studies. However, music education and pedagogical practices in

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church schools that were reintroduced after the fall of communism have not been investigated. Our study examines this previously ignored topic, namely the role of church schools in musical art education by providing a comparison with music education in non-denominational schools.

### **The role of the Church in education**

Throughout history, church schools have had an enormous influence on music education. In the Middle Ages, the influence of the Church was significant in all fields of art, which, at the same time, determined the genres and techniques to be used, leaving secular genres in the background. Until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, education in Hungary was organised almost exclusively by denominations (Jakó & Karasszon, 2015). Music education in Latin-language schools in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was centred around church music, which was considered to be the basis of music culture. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic and Lutheran schools taught the well-known church music of their time and had a choir, which performed polyphonic singing and trained pupils in instruments with an orchestra operating at some institutions. The first music schools were established by the Jesuits and were funded by foundations. At these institutions, pupils sang every day, and choir and orchestra accompanied special celebrations. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the places where music culture took place had changed. From the palaces and city residences of the aristocracy, churches and cathedrals, leading music culture gradually moved towards initiatives by the bourgeoisie. The Second World War had an adverse effect on Hungarian music culture, with a significantly decreased number of children enrolled in music education. Due to political reasons, schools and other educational institutions were nationalised in 1948-1949. This system, with small changes, remained until 1990 (Váradi, 2010).

After the fall of communism in 1990, many studies have explored the re-establishment of church schools (Drahos, 1992; Nagy, 2002; Kotschy, 2002; Bacskai, 2008). There are various topics which have been analysed: the socio-economic background, efficiency, and higher education ambitions of those who attend denominational schools (Pusztai, 2004), statistic figures, value added, and identity of denominational schools (Neuwirth, 2005; Imre, 2005; Kopp, 2005), composition and education values of teachers at denominational schools (Bacskai, 2008). In the academic year 2011/2012, many public schools were handed over to churches, which has inspired further research (Morvai, 2014; Pusztai, 2013).

Based on the principles of Zoltán Kodály, many international and Hungarian studies have revealed the positive developmental effects of music education. The beneficial impact of special music education on competencies

and abilities that are also employed in other disciplines has been proven by various analyses (Kokas, 1972; Bácskai, Manchin, Sági & Vitányi 1972, Barkóczi & Pléh 1978; Hodges 2000). The Seashore test of musical ability has been used by Laczó (1978–1979) and Dombiné (1992). The influence of musical ability on academic achievements has been investigated by Knappek (2002) and Janurik (2008). As regards primary school pupils' attitude towards classical music, it has been found that those who have a better opportunity to take part in music education are closer to understanding classical music (Roulston, 2006; Janurik & Pethő 2009; Schmidt 2012). Furthermore, special music education contributes to diminishing differences in cultural capital by providing equal opportunities (Harris, 1996). Our information society offers vast media content, which means that people are exposed to different kinds of music without selection. The rise of the internet and mass communication allows unlimited music consumption, regardless of time and place, in every quality and quantity. Thus, listeners are treated as consumers (Baudrillard, 1998; Stachó, 2008). Many researchers focus on different attitudes towards music, the factors which affect musical taste, and the development of one's musical "menu" (Wheeler, 1985; Dohány, 2012; Hausmann, 2013). The literature (Strenáčíková, 2001; Mende & Neuwöhner, 2006) suggests that frequent encounters with classical music in childhood and adolescence joined by positive emotions are in close connection with the development of classical musical ability. Singing as a family and teaching songs to children at home are not as common, it is rather schools and kindergartens that have a major role in transferring cultural tradition (Váradi, 2015). The quality and quantity of work by teachers at these institutions are important culturally and pedagogically as well as for children's personal development (Szabó, 2015). In a previous study among pupils of primary schools in years 1 to 4, we have explored how the ubiquity of the Internet and modern technical equipment affects the frequency of visits to cultural events (Váradi, 2013).

Independently of political changes, ecclesiastical genres and songs with religious content and lyrics have found their way in education, complementing the curriculum in secular music. The literature contains studies with a special focus on the issue of teaching church music in public education (Drummond, 2014). The differences and similarities in music education between public and church schools have not been investigated, however.

## **Analysis**

Our empirical analysis is based on a survey that we developed. Pupils in eight primary schools in Debrecen, Hungary were surveyed. Four of the schools are public, while the others are run by four different denominations

(N=270). Pupils were asked to complete a questionnaire of 44 items, with both convergent and divergent questions. Pupils aged 8-12 were targeted. Presumably, this age group has had the possibility of receiving music education and getting to know basic musical concepts, instruments, musical notation, and classical music pieces. The analysis also covers the equipment of institutions, infrastructure of teaching, and the comparison of pedagogical programmes.

Our hypotheses are the following:

- *Music education is more pronounced in the music pedagogy practice of church schools than in public schools.*
- *Extracurricular education as a tool of experience pedagogy is more common in the everyday practice of church schools than in public schools.*

In the analysis of the data, we investigate whether recently established church schools can take the same leading role in art education they took throughout history. Furthermore, we explore how common it is in church schools as opposed to public schools to introduce extracurricular education as a form of experience pedagogy.

*The practice of music education in church schools and private schools*

There is a divergence in the number of music lessons per week by school types. Whereas public schools offer one or two music lessons a week, as prescribed by the National Curriculum, church schools have greater discretion. This is partly explained by the practice that church music and psalms are taught in church schools with respect to the liturgy of the denomination. Table 1 displays the differences.

**Table 1**

MUSIC LESSONS PER WEEK		
SCHOOL TYPE	DENOMINATIONAL	PUBLIC
Years 1-4.	3; 3; 2/3; 2/4;	2; 2; 2; 2;
Years 5-9.	1/4; 1/4; 1/4; 1/4;	1; 1; 1; 1;

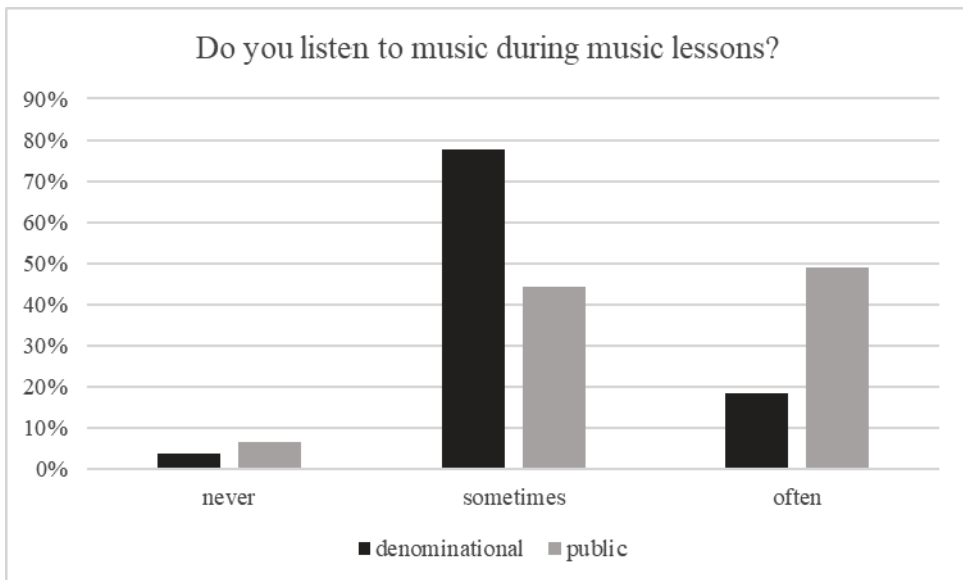
**Table 1: Number of music lessons per week**

Source: own work 2017

We have investigated whether music education is more pronounced in the music pedagogy practice of church schools than in public schools by comparing pupils' responses from denominational and public schools. Out of 12 questions in the survey, 7 have been answered with a significant difference

between school types. There were 270 responses to the question “Do you listen to music during music lessons?” (which contains both live music and music recordings), 135-135 each from denominational and public schools. Three options were given for this question: never, sometimes, and often. Of the pupils of church schools, only 5 (3.7%) reported *never* listening to music during music lessons, while 105 (77.8%) responded *sometimes*, 25 (18.5%) answered *often*. The proportions were the following in public schools: *never* – 9 (6.7%), *sometimes* – 60 (44.4%), *often* 66 (48.9 %) ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Figure 1). The divergence in responses by school type is clear. Almost twice as many reported *never* listening to music during music lessons in public schools than at church-run institutions. Significantly more responded *sometimes* in denominational schools than in public schools. More than twice as many pupils from public schools answered *often* than pupils from denominational schools.

**Figure 1**



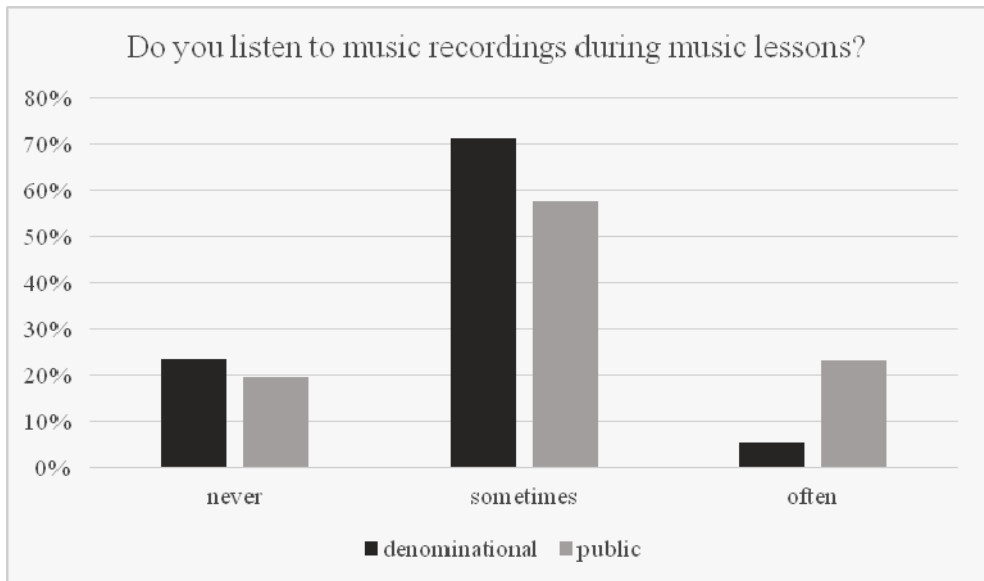
**Figure 1: Frequency of music listening**

Source: own work 2017

There were 266 valid responses to the question “Do you listen to music recordings during music lessons?” 132 of which from church schools, 134 from public schools. Similarly, to the previous question, there were three possible options. Of the respondents from denominational schools, 31 (23.5%) answered *never*, 94 (71.2%) chose *sometimes*, and 7 (5.3%)

responded *often*. Among pupils of public schools, the proportions were the following: 26 (19.4 %) *never*, 77 (57.5 %) *sometimes*, and 31 (23.1 %) *often* ( $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 2). The largest difference is in the responses of *often*: the proportion of such respondents is almost four times as high in public schools as at church-run institutions. This implies that listening to music is a less frequent tool of demonstration and activity during music lessons in church schools than in public schools.

**Figure 2**

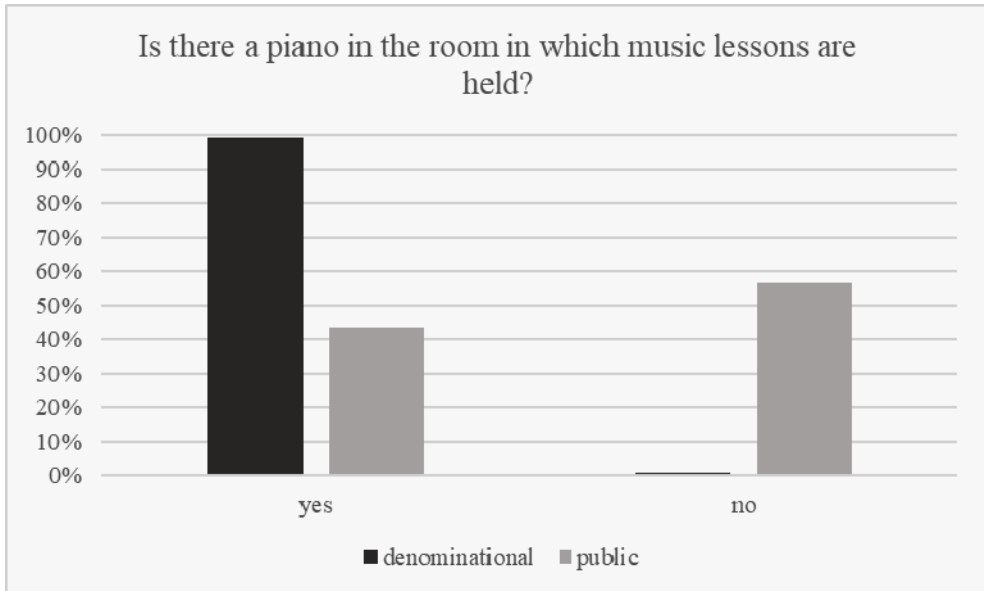


**Figure 2: Listening to music recordings**

Source: own work 2017

With respect to differences in infrastructural background between denominational and public schools, we asked whether there was a piano in the room of music lessons. There were 268 responses, 134-134 each from church schools and public schools. Among pupils of church schools, 133 (99.3%) reported that there was a piano in the room. There was one person (0.7%) who responded the contrary, which is likely the result of superficial reading of the question. In private schools, 58 responded yes (43.4%), while 76 answered no (56.7%) ( $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 3). The data (that is, pupils' memory and attention) suggest that music lessons in church schools are always held in a room with a piano (which allows listening to "live" music), whereas in public schools, only less than half of music lessons are held in a room equipped with a piano.

**Figure 3**



**Figure 3: Piano in the classroom**

Source: own work 2017

This question was also explored from the teachers' point of view: they were asked what instruments they dispose of for teaching. Table 2 shows that the infrastructural background of church schools is better as regards the number and variety of instruments. It seems that both public and denominational schoolteachers dispose of a piano and a recorder.

**Table 2**

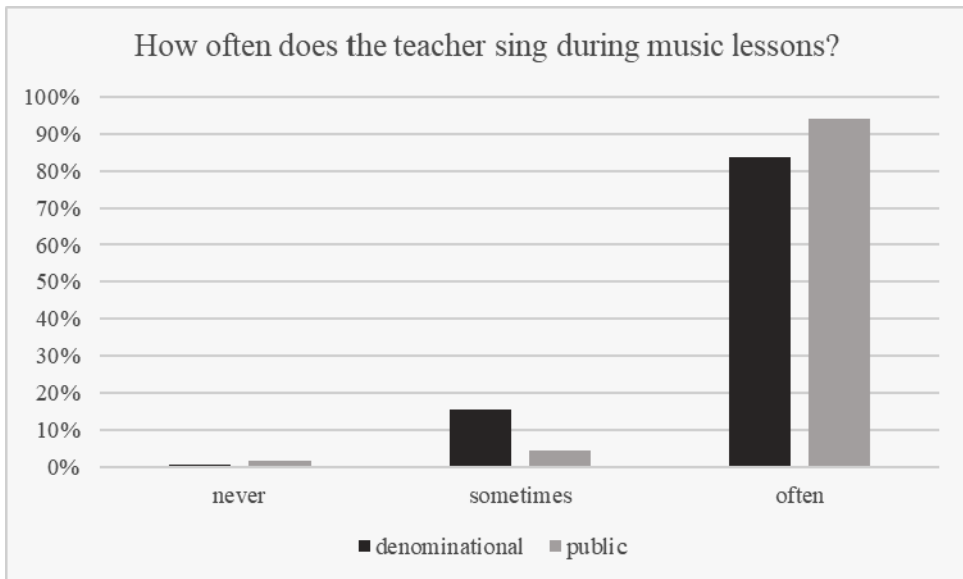
WHAT INSTRUMENTS ARE THERE IN THE CLASSROOM?		
SCHOOL TYPE	DENOMINATIONAL	PUBLIC
INSTRUMENT	piano, percussion instruments, metallophone, recorder, digital piano	piano, recorder, percussion instruments, zither

**Table 2: School infrastructure**

Source: own work 2017

The next question considers how often teachers of “singing and music” (83.7%). In public schools, 2 chose *never* (1.5%), 6 answered *sometimes* (4.5%), and 126 responded that the teacher sings *often* (94%) ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Figure 4). Interestingly and unexpectedly, according to pupils’ accounts, teachers of public schools sing more often during music lessons than teachers at church-run institutions. A possible explanation could be that the latter pay close attention to making the pupils sing more during music lessons.

**Figure 4**

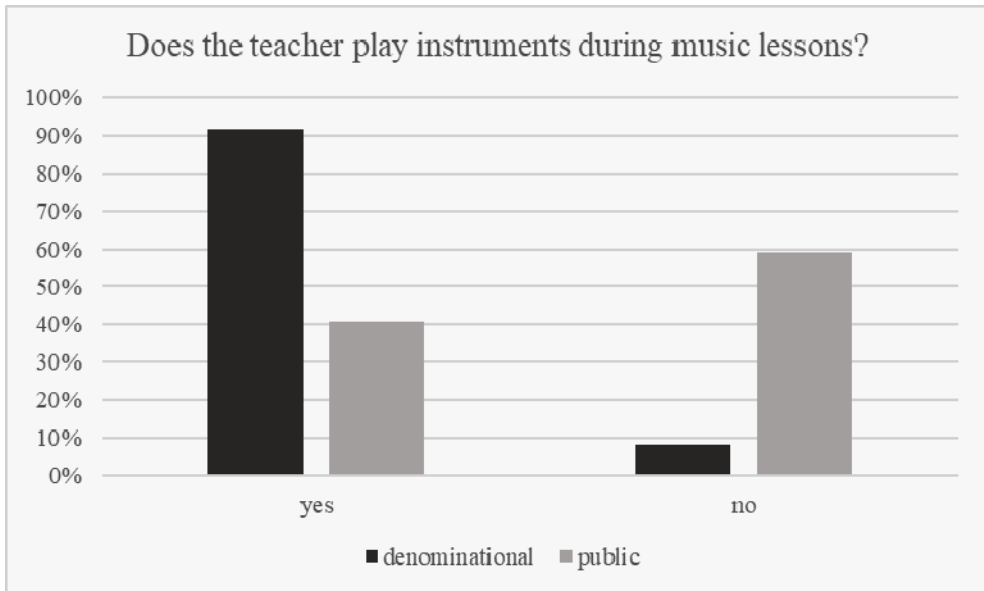


**Figure 4: Frequency of the teacher singing**

Source: own work 2017

Teachers of denominational and public schools seem to have different habits of playing instruments during music lessons. The question exploring this was answered by 266 pupils, 134 of which from church schools and 132 from public schools. In church schools, 123 responded affirmatively (91.8%), while 11 pupils answered no (8.2%). By contrast, 54 public school pupils responded yes (40.9%), with the majority, 78 people (59.1%) on the contrary ( $p = 0.000$ ) (Figure 5). The proportion of affirmative responses in church schools is very large, which may imply that pupils there take part in more musical experience during music lessons, and that teachers are well prepared professionally and methodologically.



**Figure 5****Figure 5: Teachers' playing of instruments**

Source: own work 2017

There is some divergence in the instruments played during music lessons by teachers in denominational and public schools. The open-ended question in the survey on this matter was answered with the following instruments (individually or in different combinations): zither, piano, recorder, percussion instruments (including metallophone, xylophone), whistle, organ. There were 12 pupils from church schools and 81 from public schools who did not respond (those who answered the previous question also responded here with at least one instrument). It follows from the fact that church schools are likelier to be equipped with a piano (Figure 3) that 122 pupils from church schools reported that their teacher played the piano during music lessons, while only 44 people from public schools answered the same.

Nonetheless, the most common instrument in both school types is still the piano. The recorder was mentioned by roughly the same number of pupils (21 and 23, respectively), whereas percussion instruments and the zither appear more in the music lessons of public schools. The whistle (public school) and organ (church school) were mentioned once each.

**Table 3**

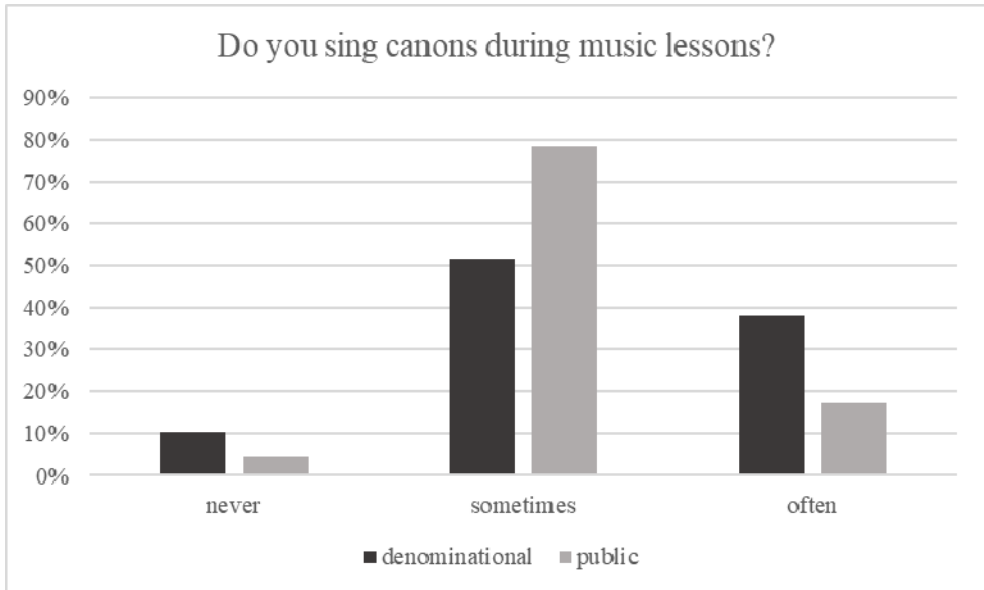
INSTRUMENT	DENOMINATIONAL	PUBLIC
zither	4	22
piano	122	44
recorder	21	23
percussion instruments (including metallophone, xylophone)	5	25
whistle	0	1
organ	1	0
not responded	12	81
all respondents	135	135

**Table 3: What instruments do teachers play?**

Source: own work 2017

A simple form of polyphonic singing is the canon. In total, 268 pupils gave a response to the question whether music lessons featured canons. In church schools, 14 people (10.4%) chose *never*, 69 (51.5%) marked *sometimes*, and 51 (38.1%) responded *often*. By contrast, among public school pupils, 6 (4.5%) answered *never*, 105 (78.3%) responded *sometimes*, and 23 (17.2%) reported *often* ( $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 6). By adding the *sometimes* and *often* responses, it is apparent that canons, which are basic exercises of polyphonic singing and constitute a core element of music education, are employed during music lessons in both school types, although with varying frequency.

**Figure 6**

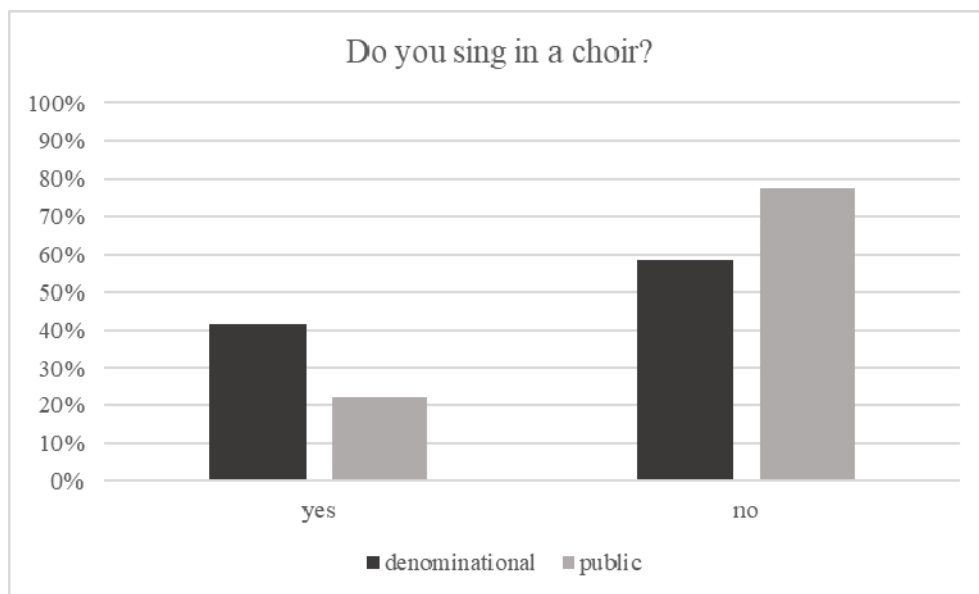


**Figure 6: Singing canons**  
Source: own work 2017

We can conclude that instruments play a greater role in denominational schools than in public ones, probably due to major differences in infrastructural background. Although it is not certain statistically that church schools place a stronger emphasis on the practical method of music education than public schools do, the number of music lessons is significantly higher in the former, which must also be taken into account.

The question “Do you sing in a choir?” was answered by 270 pupils, 135-135 each from denominational and public schools. Of those who go to church schools, 56 (41.5%) sing in a choir and 79 (58.5%) do not. Among respondents from public schools, only 30 (22.2%) reported being choir members, while 105 did not (77.8%) ( $p=0.001$ ) (Figure 7). The proportion of choir members is twice as high in church schools than in public ones. The difference might be explained by the longer history of church schools in maintaining choirs and extracurricular music education.

Figure 7



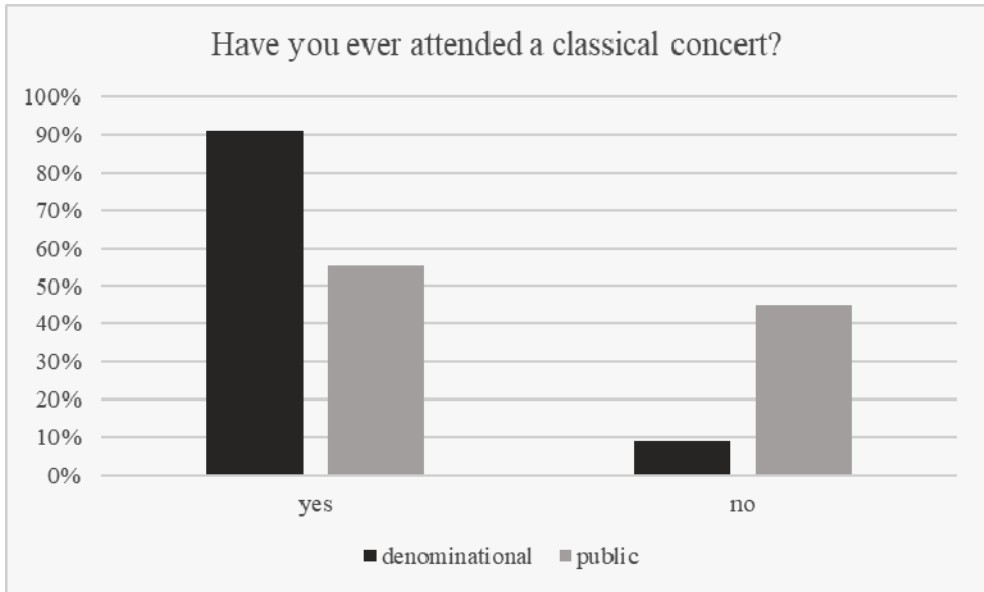
**Figure 7: Singing in a choir**  
Source: own work 2017

### **Extracurricular education as a tool of experience pedagogy in the everyday practice of denominational and public schools**

We have hypothesised that extracurricular education is more common in the everyday practice of church schools than in public schools. We have got significant findings for five questions on this matter.

There were 269 responses to the question “Have you ever attended a classical concert”, 135 from church schools, 134 from public ones. In denominational schools, 123 pupils (91.1%) answered yes and only 12 (8.9%) marked no. The proportions are more even in public schools: 74 pupils (55.2%) have and 60 (44.8%) have not attended a classical concert ( $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 8). It would be worthwhile to investigate this on a larger sample because the latter proportion of affirmative answers (55.2%) is higher than what we think is characteristic of “average” children.

**Figure 8**

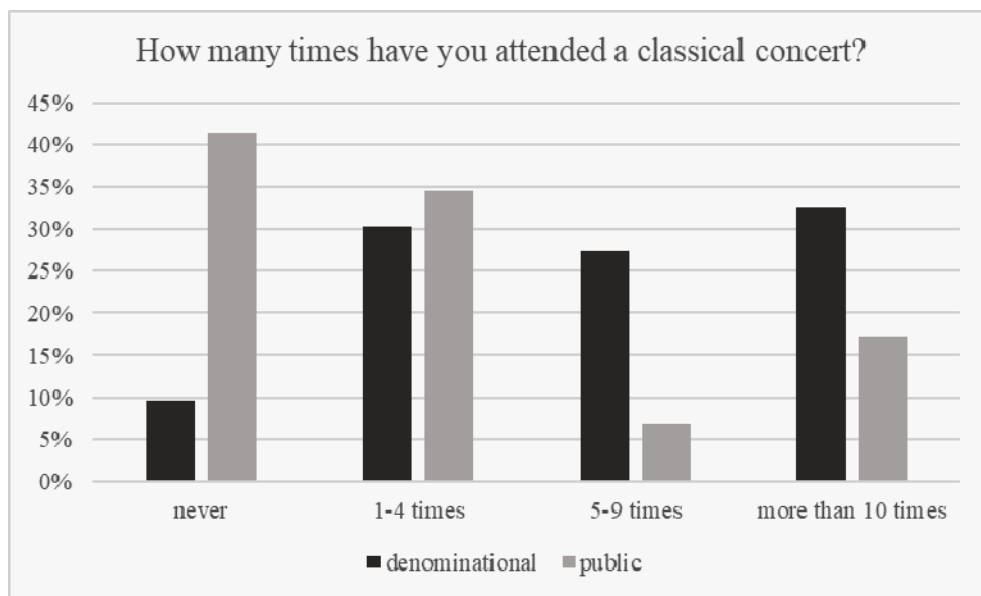


**Figure 8: Concert attendance**

Source: own work 2017

In total; 268 pupils reported on the number of classical concerts they have been to, 135 of them from church schools, 133 from public schools. The two options at the end present a major divergence: only 13 pupils (9.6%) from church schools reported never having been to a classical concert, while there were 55 respondents (41.4%) from public schools who chose the same option, which is the most common in public schools. In church schools, 44 people (32.6%) reported having been to more than 10 classical concerts, which was the most common option among them, while only 23 pupils (17.3%) from public schools said the same ( $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 9). The latter proportion is almost twice as high at church-run institutions than at public ones.

**Figure 9**

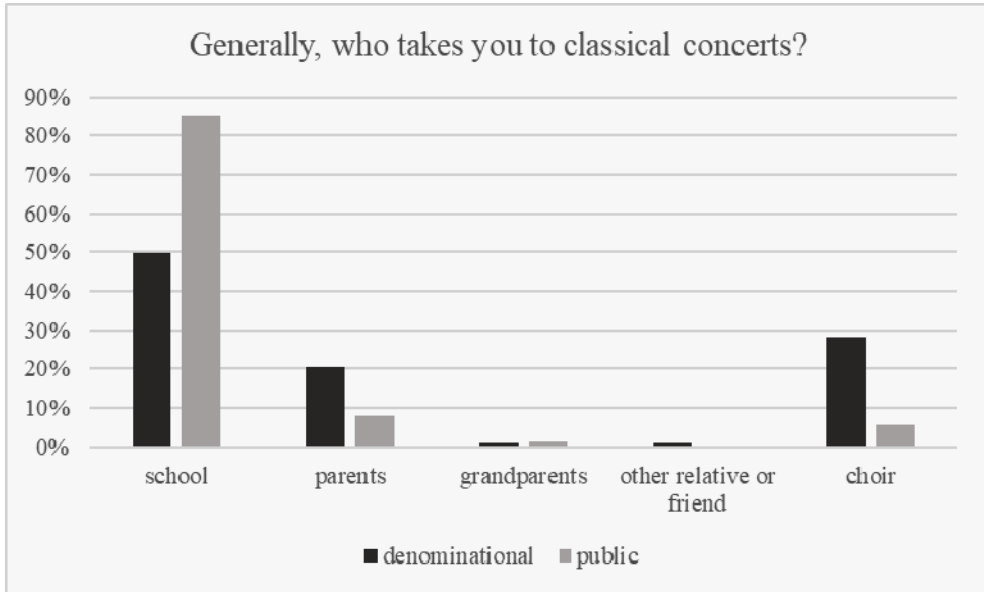


**Figure 9: Frequency of concert attendance**

Source: own work 2017

It is also interesting to explore who accompanies pupils (215) to classical concerts. Respondents were given the following options: school, parents, grandparents, other relative or friend, choir. There were 127 and 88 responses from denominational and public schools, respectively. The previous question has revealed that fewer pupils attend classical concerts from public schools, hence the lower number of responses among them. The most common answer in both groups is concert attendance organised by the school: 63 pupils (49.6%) from church schools and 75 from public schools (85.2%) said this. Very few people reported going to concerts with their grandparents, other relatives or friends (1-1 and 1-0, respectively). In church schools, pupils are often accompanied by their choir, as indicated by 36 of them (28.3%), or their parents, as reported by 26 children (20.5%). The choir and parents as most frequent company were only chosen by 5 (5.7%) and 7 (8%) pupils from public schools, respectively ( $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 10). The figures show that concert attendance among public school pupils can be mostly attributed to the important and beneficial organising activity of schools.

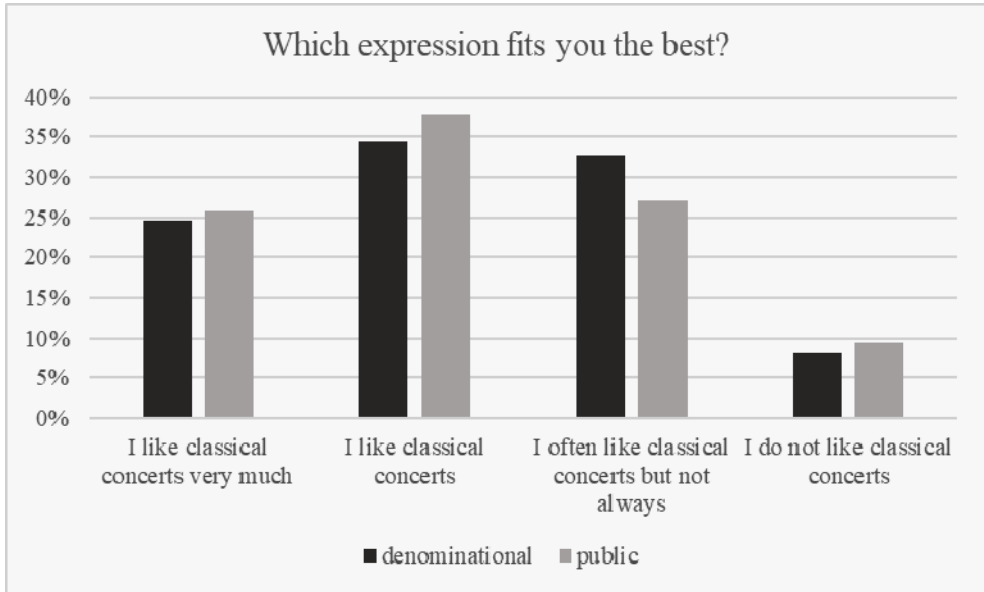
**Figure 10**



**Figure 10: Who takes pupils to classical concerts?**  
Source: own work 2017

We have attempted to assess differences between school types in concert attendance both quantitatively and qualitatively. The qualitative aspect includes a question on children’s attitudes towards classical concerts. There were 196 valid responses to the question, 122 from church schools and 74 from public ones. Among pupils of denominational schools, 30 (24.6%) reported liking classical concerts very much, with 19 children (25.7%) from public schools giving the same answer. As many as 10 children (8.2%) from church schools and 7 from public schools (9.5%) said they did not like classical concerts ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Figure 11). About a quarter of respondents like to attend classical concerts very much in both school types, and the proportion of those who do not like them is also similar across institutions. It seems that these attitudes are independent of schools, and the issue is to be addressed by concert pedagogy.

**Figure 11**

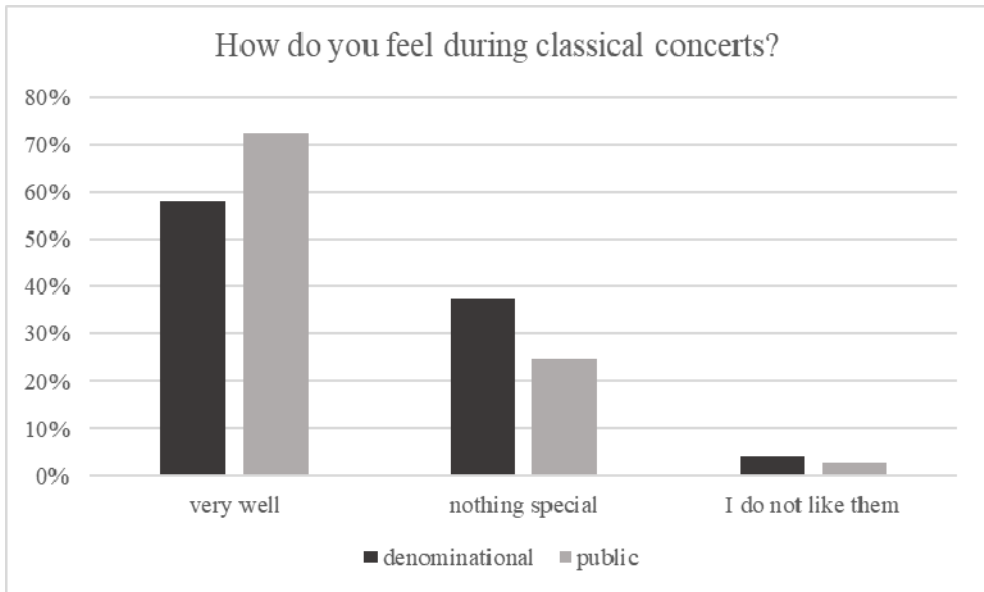


**Figure 11: Attitude towards concert attendance**  
Source: own work 2017

The other question about the qualitative aspects of concert attendance (which asked how pupils feel during classical concerts) was answered by 195 children, 122 from church schools and 73 from public schools. The majority of pupils from both school types feel very well during concerts: 71 of them (58.2%) from denominational schools and 53 of them (72.6%) from public schools. A passive answer (“nothing special”) was given by 46 pupils of church schools (37.7%) and 18 from public schools (24.7%). There were only 5 (4.1%) and 2 (2.7%) respondents from denominational and public schools, respectively, who reported not liking concerts ( $p=0.000$ ) (Figure 12).



**Figure 12**



**Figure 12: Emotions during concert attendance**  
Source: own work 2017

## Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that the practical and experience-based approach to teach musical arts is prevalent in both public and church schools: in both school types, pupils listen to music during music lessons, although there is some divergence in the number of music lessons and in respondents' subjective attitudes.

With respect to infrastructural background, we have found that church schools are equipped with more and a larger variety of instruments, most classrooms for music lessons have a piano, music teachers know how to play instruments, and teachers in church schools use various instruments significantly more often than in public schools. Fortunately, music teachers sing during music lessons quite often. In church schools, children sing canons significantly more frequently, which is a great preparation for polyphonic singing, but it is also a standard practice in public schools. Surprisingly, only less than half of pupils from church schools sing in a choir, which is still a larger proportion than in public schools. This can be explained by the long, corresponding tradition of church schools.

By comparing extracurricular factors between school types, we have found that more than 90 percent of pupils in church schools have been to live classical concerts, and it is mostly the schools, choir, or parents that organise these visits. Pupils of public schools attend concerts less frequently and mostly in school organisation. This implies that church schools, in accordance with their tradition, put a stronger emphasis on musical art education both inside and outside the curriculum. We believe that the practical teaching of “singing and music” lessons should be reinforced by teachers’ demonstrations and presentations, playing instruments and singing, which offer a great experience to pupils. Furthermore, the opportunity of singing together with the children should also be created as often as possible because it is also a source of experience. As concert pedagogy does not fulfil its role as experience pedagogy perfectly, there is responsibility and room for improvement among teachers as well as concert organisers and performers, communities, institutions. Teachers have a special responsibility in finding the suitable extracurricular event for their pupils’ age group and in making them curious and excited about classical music.

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