

COMPETENCE BASED MUSIC TEACHING

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SUMMARY. Lately there have been some modernization tendencies in education that aim to concentrate the teaching process on students acquiring competences necessary to life. The paper hereby begins by evaluating various approaches to the concept of competence, than it deals with the problem of music competence.

Keywords: competences, capabilities, abilities, attitudes, musical talent

In primary education there emerged modernization tendencies aiming a shift from the encyclopedic knowledge to a culture of contextualized actions; from assimilating systems of knowledge to concentrating the teaching process on students acquiring competences necessary to life. The process of elaborating the modernized curriculum for Musical education focused on forming competences and concentrating the teaching process on the student.

1. Competences: conceptual boundaries

Competence is an attribute of the person meaning that the person has the knowledge and abilities necessary to carry out the tasks and activities specific to a certain field of expertise. Competence is a differentiated feature: a person can have competence in one field and lack competence in another, while in the same field of expertise we find persons with different levels of competence. Competent actions of a person mean that the person is capable of accessing and processing various types of pieces of information at a superior level, the person has the capacity to mobilize mental resources and patters of action, the person can make transfers and can act with the help of the resources he or she selected, the person can exercise cognitive and emotional control and self-control in designing and carrying out a task².

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² *Curriculum National*, Seria Liceu, Bucuresti, 2000, p.8.

To be competent it means to mobilize and call into play a set of knowledge and capabilities and behavioural attitudes in real life situations³. Competence in itself is an internal capability, which cannot be observed externally and which includes latent and potential elements that would generate some performances in time and context of action. Potential elements of competence can be highlighted by specific actions in real life, in social and professional situations. Competence is not an attribute of an isolated person, but it is formed, trained and evaluated in interaction with others and with their competences in a context of cooperation or competition.

Within the structure of a competence two interdependent substructures can be distinguished: the internal and the external or contextual structure. Viewed from the internal structure competence does a functional integrative system comprise three elements: knowledge, abilities and attitudes.⁴ The elements of the external structure are: the task, the situation and the context.

Knowledge is a system of information organized according to some principles, which transform it into a conscious instrument of knowledge aimed at an object, a phenomenon or a process⁵. Knowledge is not a memorized finite product, but a series of elaborated processes of knowing, cognitive strategies. They combine knowledge with mechanisms of understanding. Traditionally knowledge meant an acquisition of theoretic information, but the competence approach made knowledge to be understood as theoretical and practical synthesis, as units mediating between knowledge and action. Cognitive psychology distinguishes three types of knowledge: declarative knowledge (knowledge on the world, independent of their conditions of usage), procedural knowledge (knowledge on action, which will condition the effectiveness of an action) and conditional knowledge (strategic knowledge, which will condition how effective an action will be carried out). To these the super ordinate category of meta-knowledge is added, which is responsible for the administration of the body of knowledge. Meta-knowledge has also the role to control and monitor the usage of the body of knowledge and to evaluate its possibilities and limitations.

³ Scallon, Gerard, *L'évaluation des apprentissages dans un approche par compétences*, series Pédagogies en développement, De Boeck, Bruxelles, 2004, p.104

⁴ Potolea, D, Toma, S, „Competența”: concept și implicații pentru programele de formare a adulților, a III-a Conferință națională de educație a adulților, 19-21 martie, 2010, Timișoara

⁵ Perrenoud, Philippe, *Des savoirs aux compétences. De quoi part-t-on en parlant des compétences?*, In: revue *Pédagogie Collégiale*, Vol. 9, nr. 1, Association Québécoise de Pédagogie Collégiale, Montréal, 1995, p. 20-22.

In the classical perception the concept of ability is synonymous to aptness, skill, proficiency, and knack. Its meaning is qualitative. Having the premise that abilities being in a close relationship with knowledge are the basic material to competence Gilbert Paquette emphasizes the following features of abilities⁶: they vary by individual and take an entire lifetime to be learnt; they can be defined by relating to the knowledge to which they can be applied; they can be developed in several fields of expertise; they are generic processes.

Attitudes can be defined as personality structures, as fundamental structures of the character. As far as the internal structure of attitude is concerned, it is a three-dimensional integrative structure, which has cognitive elements (knowledge, beliefs, convictions), affective elements (emotions, sentiments) and behavioural elements (will, intentions, motivation). Attitude is the subject's manner of relating to its own person, to others and to its environment. Distinctive features of attitude are: relatively stable; polarized; various intensities; guidance by values. Attitudes influence the character profile of a person. They influence the level of competence by character traits like correctness, conscientiousness, responsibility, autonomy and perseverance.

Among the external factors of competence the task is the basic unit of a competent action. Usually activities comprise multiple and varied tasks organized in networks and series. Each task combines various types of demands in a specific way. Demands can be physical or intellectual, repetitive or changing, algorithmic or heuristic. The various resources of a competence or various competences from a body of competences of a competent person will be called into play according to the combination of demands of a task.

The second external factor, the situation is created when the person carries out tasks. Three groups of main conditions can be identified: technical, material and logistic conditions (instruments, materials, communication networks, etc.); temporal conditions (phase, duration and rhythm of performing tasks); conditions having a psycho-social impact (work conditions: individual / teamwork; types of interaction: cooperation, competition; the evaluation and compensation system). To be competent does not merely mean to mobilize the internal resources of competence (knowledge, abilities, attitudes), but also to combine these to the external resources of the situation in which the tasks are carried out. For example, the professional, specialized or pedagogical practice of students in factories, companies, institutions, schools is quite similar to the real professional situation. It is important that these learning

⁶ *Modélisation des connaissances et des compétences. Un langage graphique pour concevoir et apprendre*, Presses de l'Université de Québec, 2002, p.216-220

situations should be as similar as possible to the technical, material and logistical, to the temporal and to the psycho-social condition of the real professional situations; to require the student to take cognitive steps and to take actions specific to competent action: mobilization, integration and transfer of knowledge, abilities and attitudes and manifestations of autonomy and responsibility. This way the student will manage to transfer the competences developed at the university in real situations of which he or she will be part after graduation.

The third factor, the context is the element that integrates the person, the task and the situation and their relationships. The context acts as a network of interactions, which hallmarks each component of competence influencing the level at which the competence is practiced and the level of the performance.

2. Musical competences

The general competence specific to the art curriculum is the aesthetic competence, which consists of a series of acquired attitudes, behaviours, emotions and actions expressing people's ability to perceive and appreciate beauty in accordance with the culture and with the spirit of the age they live in.

The musical competence represents an integrated series of knowledge, practical abilities and attitudes acquired by learning and mobilized in specific contexts of realizations in order to solve problems the person can confront with in real life, all interlocked in a national and universal musical value orientation system⁷.

Competences specific to musical education are: knowing and understanding the diversity of the phenomenon of music; identifying the means of musical expression; demonstration of musical abilities and their integration in cultural and artistic activities; using the specific musical terminology to characterize and appreciate music; participating emotionally in the act of interpreting music; receiving and promoting musical values.

Competences are structured on the main domains of musical education: musical reception, vocal, choral and instrumental interpretation of music, elemental musical creation, and musical analysis. Musical competences can be formed only if the person has an innate predisposition and sensory abilities specific to this field. Criteria for the existence of a formed musical competence are: interest, will, motivation for music; work and responsibility regarding the results; musical knowledge and knowledge about music.

⁷ Morari Marina, *Educația muzicală, Ghid de implementare a curriculumului modernizat pentru învățământul primar / gimnazial*, Lyceum, Chișinău, 2011, 15.

As far as the pedagogical model is concerned, the curriculum recommends as a norm an educational vision on learning anticipating the expected results of education on teaching levels in a flexible curricular context. The competence based modern curriculum projection provides a higher effectiveness to the teaching, learning and evaluation process. It allows for a unitary operation at all levels. Competences formed during education can be divided into two categories: general competences formed during the entire high school period and specific competences studied only within one year of musical education.

Formed general competences are: reception and analysis of a variety of musical creations; using the musical interpretation as a means of artistic expression; raising awareness on the contribution of music to the creation of the common cultural foundation of society; development of autonomous and critical thinking by reception and interpretation of musical creations; development of a reflecting attitude on the value of music in the life of the individual and of society.

Specific competences are derived from general competences, since the former are stages in the acquisition of the latter. Let us see some examples of specific competences regarding the reception and analysis of musical creation: auditive identification of some rhythm and melodic elements in a song, their correlation to the corresponding notions; deciphering the songs with the help of the instrument on which the student has learnt to play; auditive identification of the motifs, themes and structural components specific to some musical genres and forms; identification of the types of instrumental bands⁸.

Musical competences can be formed only if the person has an innate predisposition and sensory abilities specific to this field. Musicality means a qualitative complex of abilities making the musical performance possible. A person's musicality depends on his or her innate personal inclination and abilities, but finally it is the result of learning and education. Inclinations develop into abilities by acting on one's inclinations from early childhood under the influence of one's environment. Some of the most important influences of the environment are teaching and education. The main difference between inclination and ability is the development process of the individual. The ear for music itself is a result of actions and its development depends on the way a person's personality is developed.

An excellent ear for music is not enough to become a great musician, but it is a premise however. In the case of a musical ear reflexes

⁸ Vasile Vasile, *Metodica disciplinei educație muzicală*, Suport de curs, p. 18-20

responding to complex stimuli created by several analyzers simultaneously are involved. Both the relative and the absolute musical ear can be developed only by long and constant practice, for the ability to discern between pitches, timbres of voice, volume and duration is only one structural element of a proper musical ear. Identifying the key, identifying and understanding the relationship between the melodic and harmony relations indicate a musical ear of a higher level. Successful practice of any kind of musical activity depends on an entire series of abilities.

By musical talent the quantitative and qualitative development of certain abilities is meant to such an extent that the person is able to successfully practice one of the fields of music. Categories of musical abilities as elements of musical talent are as follows: musical perception – sensory ability (perception of pitches, timbres, volume, intervals and chords), musical memory – ability to retain music (inner musical ear, musical memory), complex musical perception – synthesizing ability (perception of motif, sentences, theme, tonality, rhythmical structure, harmonic relations, tempo, musical dynamic) and the ability to understand and enjoy music – ideative and emotional ability.

The model of the music teaching process is a circular process progressing in a spiral like manner and continuously expanding, which has the inclination for music at its starting point. New theoretical knowledge to be taught, abilities to be developed and the musical material at the basis of the teaching process should be selected according to the level of the person's abilities. Abilities form by practice and need to become automated. Musical education is not limited merely to theoretical elements, since the main abilities students shall be acquiring aim to make them understand some representative musical works and have them interpret an adequate repertory.

Specific competences of musical education formed and developed during high school should be: knowing and understanding the diversity of the phenomenon of music and art from the perspective of its emotional, aesthetic, social and spiritual significance; identifying the means of musical expression related to the role of each participant in the recreation of the artistic image and the ideatic message of the musical work; demonstration of musical abilities and their integration in cultural and artistic activities; using the specific musical terminology to characterize and appreciate music; participating emotionally in the act of interpreting music; receiving and promoting musical values.

Formation of musical abilities needs allocation of an adequate time frame, since there are several separate phases that need to be passed through. The phases are: acquisition of basic musical knowledge and elemental initiation in musical activities that involve audition, interpretation,

creation and reflection; transformation of basic musical knowledge into functional knowledge; formation of attitudes; exteriorization of emotional, cognitive and behavioural acquisitions in the field of musical art.

Lately competence became a term of reference in designing the curricula. There is a tendency that competence should govern the entire structure of the curriculum. However competence is a complex issue. There are different viewpoints as to what its components or sources of derivation are. A set of basic competences should be selected and reported to key and professional competences. If all this would be applied to the curriculum quality would be ensured. Hopefully this aim shall be completed in the future.

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