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Preschool Teachers' Music Competencies Based on Preschool Education Students' Self-Assessment

Blaženka Bačlija Sušić
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education

Abstract

In view of numerous benefits of music in a child's overall development, music education is increasingly becoming an imperative and a challenge of the contemporary education practice. In this respect, every educator should have some level of music competency. The purpose of this paper was to examine the music competencies of early and preschool education students at the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Zagreb. The basic competencies, as well as those pertaining to teaching methodology and musical creativity were tested along with their implementation in the education practice. The study was based on students' self-assessment and a questionnaire designed for this purpose. In order to further the education practice, respondents were asked about the competencies they wanted to improve during their graduate study. A total of 223 students of the full-time and the part-time graduate study program of Early and Preschool Education at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, took part in the survey. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied, and the results obtained show respondents' very positive assessment of their basic competencies and those pertaining to teaching methodology and musical creativity. However, their self-assessment of practical competencies and an expressed desire for improvement indicate an awareness of the need for further development of their musical competencies. Research results can serve as a guideline for improving the quality of music education, both at undergraduate and graduate preschool education study programs of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb.

Key words: *early childhood and preschool education; music competencies; preschool teacher; self-assessment.*

Introduction

Considering its immense contribution to children's holistic development, music should be an integral part of education at education institutions, where children usually spend more time than they do at home with their parents. According to Levinowitz (1998), early childhood is a phase characterized by a fast development pace, which can be supported by exposure to music. The development of basic music competencies should take place in early childhood because children's experiences with music between the ages of 3 and 5 have an important effect on their musical abilities later in life (Gordon, 1998).

Preschool teachers' professional competencies and professional identities (Coldron & Smith, 1999) determine whether or not they will recognize and encourage the development of children's potential in music and their unique talents. Šagud (2006) also emphasizes that preschool teachers encourage (or inhibit) children's development by applying appropriate (or inappropriate) teaching practices. Hence, teachers need to develop a variety of competencies in different areas, and higher education institutions should help teacher education students develop a wide array of competencies.

One set of competencies that every early childhood and preschool education teacher should develop are musical competencies. Many believe that they do not have a sense of rhythm or musical talent, implying that musical talent is an innate ability that some possess while others do not. Blacking (1995) considers music as a universal property of humanity, whereas Hodges and Haack (1996) point out that "all people, regardless of time and place, participated in musical behaviors" (Hodges & Haack, 1996, p. 473). Some researchers also consider that the potential to create music is as inherent to humans as language abilities (Wallin et al., 2000).

Ehrlin and Wallerstedt (2014) found that the majority of early childhood and preschool teachers believe that musical and artistic skills are innate and can be improved under certain conditions up to a certain extent. However, according to Kempe and West (2010), such competencies are socially determined and it is therefore wrong to consider someone musical or non-musical.

McPherson and Williamon (2006) emphasize the general environment as the most critical factor affecting the development of a child's full musical potential. It depends on the support the child receives from parents, teachers and peers in relation to participation in artistic activities (Rose, Jolley, & Burkitt, 2006). Early childhood and primary school teachers have the most important role in children's creative development, because they are qualified to plan and conduct artistic activities.

According to Olson (1994), all good teachers' interventions are based on the understanding of children. Therefore, teachers' competencies should be based on research, validation, evaluation, and procedural learning. In addition, teachers need to be reflective practitioners who engage in introspection, take responsibility for their decisions and actions, and are open to new ideas, self-criticism, and the possibility of

making mistakes at the workplace. They should develop that practice by reflecting on their actions before and after an activity, as well as during its course (Šagud, 2006). Self-reflection allows people to give meaning to their experiences, explore their understanding and beliefs about themselves, conduct self-assessment, and change their opinions and behavior as a result of those processes (Bandura, 1986).

Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher education students' current music competencies and the areas of desired improvement in order to identify the opportunities for improvement in music competency teaching within initial teacher education programs at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb. In accordance with its purpose, this correlational study addressed the following research problems:

- Examining the following music competencies in students (MC): (a) basic (BMC), (b) teaching methodology (MTMC), (c) creative musical activity (CMAC), (d) teaching methodology - practical (MTMC-P), and (e) creative musical activity – practical (CMAC-P) music competencies.
- Investigation of the correlations between students' self-assessments of the aforementioned competencies.
- Identification of the competencies needing improvement during initial teacher education.

A total of 223 respondents were included in the study. The respondents were enrolled either full-time or part-time at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb. All respondents were enrolled in the first and second year of early childhood and teacher education study programs. The number and percent of respondents according to the year of study and enrolment status is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample size according to year of study and enrolment status

Enrolment Status	Year of Study		
	1st	2nd	
Full-time	54 (24.22%)	38 (17.04%)	92 (41.26%)
Part-time	64 (28.70%)	67 (30.04%)	131 (58.74%)
Total	118 (52.92%)	105 (47.08%)	223 (100.00%)

The questionnaire applied in this study was used for the collection of demographic data and students' self-assessment of fundamental, methodological and practical music competencies. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was satisfactory, Cronbach's alpha = .84. A five-point Likert scale was used to determine how respondents evaluate their music competencies, whereas two open-ended prompts were included to collect the students' attitudes and opinions in order to identify the

competencies they would like to develop further during their initial teacher education. According to Cohen and Manion (2007), those types of responses are suitable for finding "gems" of information that would otherwise remain undiscovered. Therefore, they are necessary for obtaining the information that can be used as guidelines for course improvement in teacher education study programs. The items used to evaluate the students' skills were grouped into five subsets of competencies: fundamental, music teaching methodology, creative musical activity, practical music teaching methodology, and practical creative musical activity competencies. In the final subset, the students were asked to provide both quantitative and qualitative responses in order to identify the competencies they would like to improve in the course of their studies.

Results

Results of students' self-assessment are reported as frequencies of their responses in Tables 2-9. The questionnaire items were grouped in accordance with the following music competencies: fundamental, music teaching, creative musical activity, music teaching in practice, and creative musical activity competencies.

Table 2

Self-assessment of basic music competencies

Competency	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very Good		Excellent	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Music literacy	12	5.2	49	21.2	108	46.8	45	19.5	17	7.4
Singing	9	3.9	41	17.7	77	33.3	76	32.9	28	12.1
Sense of rhythm	4	1.7	17	7.4	46	19.9	79	34.2	85	36.8
Playing Orff's instruments	45	19.5	52	22.5	55	23.8	53	22.9	26	11.3
Playing lead instruments	36	15.6	42	18.2	77	33.3	58	25.1	18	7.8

In the first subset of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to assess their basic music competencies. The majority of respondents (46.8%) assessed their music literacy as *good,* which indicates that almost half of the respondents in this sample consider themselves musically literate and therefore capable of conducting musical activities in the classroom. The majority of respondents also evaluate their singing abilities as *good* (33.3%) or *very good* (32.9%), whereas 12.1% of them assess their singing abilities as *excellent*. Furthermore, students report having a *good* (19.9%), *very good* (43.2%) or *excellent* (36.8%) sense of rhythm. However, fewer respondents see themselves as competent in playing Orff's (23.8% *good*, 22.9% *very good*, and 11.3% *excellent*) or lead instruments (33.3% *good*, 25.1% *very good*, and 7.8% *excellent*).

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, a Swiss music pedagogue, emphasized the importance of the physical processes, rhythm, and movement as the fundamentals of musical expressiveness and pedagogy (Seitz, 2005). The simplicity of Orff's instruments enables both children and teachers to participate in reproducing and creating music by singing, talking, dancing and playing. "That is music people make themselves, so we are respondents rather than listeners." (Orff, 1963, p. 4). Therefore, the results show

the necessity of motivating teachers to actively conduct those types of activities and further improve their competencies in that area.

Table 3

Self-assessment of competencies in music teaching methodology

Competency	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very Good		Excellent	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Learning and singing songs	0	0.0	11	4.8	47	20.3	107	46.3	66	28.6
Learning and singing songs to a melodic instrument	10	4.3	35	15.2	76	32.9	69	29.2	41	17.7
Learning and repeating nursery rhymes	1	0.4	5	2.2	26	11.3	71	30.7	128	55.4
Games involving singing	0	0.0	5	2.2	30	13.0	71	30.7	125	54.1
Playing with handcrafted rattles or children's instrumentarium	1	0.4	15	6.5	39	16.9	73	31.6	103	44.6
Active listening to music	1	0.4	3	1.3	37	16.0	65	28.1	125	54.1
Creating music	18	7.8	38	16.5	69	29.9	72	31.2	34	14.7

According to respondents' self-assessment, their best-developed competencies are: learning and repeating nursery rhymes (55.4% *excellent*), games involving singing (54.1% *excellent*), active listening to music (54.1% *excellent*) and playing with handcrafted rattles or children's instrumentarium (44.6% *excellent*) (Table 3). A large number of respondents rated their learning and repeating nursery rhymes (30.7%) and creating music (31.2%) as *very good,* whereas the most frequently reported level of competency in learning and singing songs to a melodic instrument (32.9%) was *good*.

A study conducted in the Istria County on a sample of 80 early childhood and preschool teachers (Vidulin, 2016) found that the majority of teachers aimed to develop a sense of rhythm (between 59% and 76.4%), and the most common activity used to achieve that aim was learning and repeating nursery rhymes (more than 87% of respondents). Furthermore, listening to music tends to be a passive (between 66.6% to 81%, depending on the group – nursery, combined, or kindergarten) rather than an active task, which aims to familiarize children with the characteristics or elements of specific pieces of music or composers (between 27.2% and 44.1%).

According to the results presented in Table 4, the highest-rated competency in relation to creative music activity was listening to and mimicking sounds (36.8% *good*, 32.9% *very good*, 20.3% *excellent*). Most respondents assessed their competency in conducting the following creative music activities as *good*: body percussion (30.7%), speech level singing, asking musical questions and completing musical phrases (38.1%), varying the melody, rhythm, tempo dynamics and/or the characteristics of a familiar song or nursery rhyme (34.2%), improvising/composing lyrics and melodies (40.3%), improvising music for stories and songs (36.8%), and composing music for lyrics (34.6%). The competencies pertaining to "small orchestra" activities and listening

to music while dancing or drawing/painting were evaluated as very good by 30.7% and 32.5% of respondents, respectively.

Table 4

Self-assessment of competencies in creative musical activity

Competency	Insufficient		Sufficient		Good		Very Good		Excellent	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Listening to and mimicking sounds	8	3.5	15	6.5	85	36.8	76	32.9	47	20.3
Body percussion	18	7.8	52	22.5	71	30.7	52	22.5	38	16.5
Speech level singing, asking musical questions and completing musical phrases	32	13.9	51	22.1	88	38.1	47	20.3	13	5.6
Recreating nursery rhymes and songs	14	6.1	34	14.7	79	34.2	74	32.0	30	13.0
Improvisation/ Composition, words and melody	29	12.6	55	23.8	93	40.3	44	19.0	10	4.3
"Small orchestra" activities	17	7.4	37	16.0	63	27.3	71	30.7	43	18.6
Improvising music for stories and songs	26	11.3	45	19.5	85	36.8	55	23.8	20	8.7
Composing music for lyrics	50	21.6	73	31.6	80	34.6	21	9.1	7	3.0
Listening to music while dancing or drawing/painting	11	4.8	29	12.6	49	21.2	75	32.5	67	29.0

Early childhood is a time when children discover new ways of creating and manipulating sounds. Those behaviors are characteristic of one of the earliest phases of creative thinking associated with music (Hickey & Webster, 2001; Moore, 1990). Remaking existing and creating new nursery rhymes and similar activities are the most flexible tools for the development of children's fantasies and wants "because children are free to use irrational words and syllables without restrictions" (Marić & Goran, 2012, p. 157).

Spontaneous vocalization is a specific form of creative musicality and one type of spontaneous improvisation that children develop while they are engaged in unstructured free play. Mang (2005) conducted a longitudinal study on early songs among children between the ages of 2 and 4 by observing the way they sing their favorite songs and the way children and adults interact with each other.

The results were grouped into three categories: learned songs, improvised songs created by children and other forms of vocalization. Ryan and Brown (2012) concluded that children between 2 and 3 years of age sing their own songs, which they devise as a result of *creative singing* (Voglar, 1989). Those songs are a combination of fragments taken from the songs they know and improvised songs. Young (2003) researched

spontaneous musical interactions with percussion instruments among 95 preschool-aged children, who were divided into three groups, and found that children's creativity in music has three structural traits: repetition, grouping, and connecting ideas.

Table 5

Students' self-assessment of competencies in music teaching methodology as a practice

Competency	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very often	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Learning and repeating nursery rhymes	29	12.9	73	32.6	61	27.2	38	17.0	23	10.3
Learning and singing songs to a melodic instrument	21	9.4	41	18.3	65	29.0	54	24.1	43	19.2
Games involving singing	52	23.2	66	29.5	50	22.3	34	15.2	22	9.8
Playing with handcrafted rattles or the children's instrumentarium	38	17.0	56	25.0	60	26.8	34	15.2	36	16.1
Active listening to music	44	19.6	69	30.8	53	23.7	29	12.9	29	12.9
Creating music	17	7.6	46	20.5	68	30.4	55	24.6	38	17.0

The results presented in Table 5 indicate that the respondents *sometimes* conduct the following activities in practice: learning and singing songs to a melodic instrument (29%), playing with handcrafted rattles or the children's instrumentarium (26.8%), and creating music (30.4%). Most respondents reported conducting other activities *rarely*: learning and repeating nursery rhymes (32.6%), games involving singing (29.5%), and active listening to music (30.8%).

The results based on respondents' self-assessment regarding their implementation of music teaching competencies in practice are not consistent with their self-assessment presented in Table 2. Respondents' self-assessed level of competencies in learning and repeating nursery rhymes, games involving singing, playing with handcrafted rattles or the children's instrumentarium and active listening to music does not correspond to the self-assessed frequency of conducting those activities in practice, which was reported to happen only rarely or sometimes. According to Garvis and Pendergast (2011), teachers' perceptions of their own self-efficacy in teaching are associated with their actual teaching competencies in practice. Vannata-Hall (2010) specifically emphasizes those values in music education. Inadequate music competencies are associated with teachers' insecurities, which is why teachers tend to neglect music activities in practice. This has been investigated in previous research on the role of self-confidence, motivation, and knowledge in art education (Henessy, Rolfe, & Chedoy, 2001; Russell-Bowie, 2004). A weaker assessment of respondents' practical competencies in music activities suggests that additional attention should be given to the development of those competencies during initial teacher education.

Table 6

Self-assessment of creative musical activity as a competence in practice

Competency	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very often	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Listening to and mimicking sounds	7	3.2	13	6.0	82	38.0	70	32.4	44	20.4
Body percussion	18	8.3	49	22.7	67	31.0	48	22.2	34	15.7
Speech level singing	31	14.4	49	22.7	84	38.9	42	19.4	10	4.6
Rhythmic speaking	18	9.6	46	24.5	70	37.2	42	22.3	12	6.4
Varying songs and/or nursery rhymes	14	6.5	32	15.0	76	35.5	65	30.4	27	12.6

The results in Table 6 show that listening to, recognizing, and mimicking sounds is the most frequently conducted activity in practice (38% *sometimes*, 32.4% *often*, and 20.4% *very often*), as well as varying the melodies, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and the character of familiar songs or nursery rhymes (*sometimes* 35.5%, *often* 30.4%, and *very often* 12.6%). Body percussion is conducted less frequently (31% *sometimes*, 22.2% *often*, and 15.7% *very often*), whereas speech level singing and rhythmic speaking are conducted the least often (Table 6).

Creative activities and creative teachers are essential for facilitating the development of creativity in children. Several authors (Craft, 2000; Edwards & Springate, 1995; Mellou, 1996; Runco, 1990; Tegano et al., 1991) emphasize the role of teachers in providing the optimal balance between structure and freedom of expression in early childhood and preschool education. Teachers and other respondents in the process of child education can stimulate children's creativity using various activities. Imaginative games and activities by choice are imperative components of creativity in early childhood (Mellou, 1994a; Prentice, 2000; Russ, 1996; Tegano et al., 1991).

The results are not completely consistent with those relating to self-assessment of students' basic music competencies and competencies in the music teaching methodology, which can be seen in Tables 2-3. Although students mostly assess their music literacy as *very good* and *excellent* (Table 2), the majority recognized the need for *moderate* (37.2%), *significant* (26.8%), or *extensive* (14.7%) additional development of their music literacy. Similarly, respondents reported a desire to *moderately* (26%), *significantly* (28.1%), or *extensively* (15.6%) improve their singing competency. Furthermore, most respondents (29.4%) think that their sense of rhythm (Table 2) only needs *slight* improvement, which is consistent with the results presented in Table 7. Playing Orff's instruments should be *moderately* (27.7%) or *significantly* (28.1%) improved according to most respondents, which is for the most part consistent with their previous self-assessments (Table 2). On the other hand, most respondents consider the need for only *slight* improvements at most when it comes to playing handcrafted rattles or the children's instrumentarium. The majority of respondents would like to further improve their competencies in playing lead instruments (24.7%

Table 7

Students' self-reported level of desire to develop a music competency during the university study

Competency	None		Slightly		Moderately		Significantly		Extensively	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
Music literacy	11	4.8	29	12.6	86	37.2	62	26.8	34	14.7
Singing	15	6.5	46	19.9	60	26.0	65	28.1	36	15.6
Sense of rhythm	36	15.6	68	29.4	51	22.1	38	16.5	28	12.1
Playing Orff's instruments	13	5.6	35	15.2	64	27.7	65	28.1	43	18.6
Playing lead instruments	14	6.1	31	13.4	57	24.7	72	31.2	48	20.8
Learning and singing songs	29	12.6	70	30.3	61	26.4	38	16.5	23	10.0
Learning and singing songs to a melodic instrument	19	8.2	41	17.7	64	27.7	54	23.4	43	18.6
Learning and repeating nursery rhymes	49	21.2	62	26.8	57	24.7	28	12.1	24	10.4
Games involving singing	49	21.2	63	27.3	50	21.6	34	14.7	22	9.5
Playing with handcrafted rattles or the children's instrumentarium	36	15.6	56	24.2	60	26.0	33	14.3	36	15.6
Active listening to music	42	18.2	69	29.9	52	22.5	29	12.6	29	12.6
Creating music	17	7.4	45	19.5	68	29.4	53	22.9	38	16.5

moderately, 31.2% *significantly*, and 20.8% *extensively*). In this respect the values are higher than those pertaining to those presented in Table 2 (33.3% *good*, 25% *very good*, and 7.8% *excellent*). The results associated with the need for additional improvement in music teaching methodology, learning and singing songs (30.3% *slightly*, 26.4% *moderately*, and 16.5% *significantly*) and learning and singing songs to a melodic instrument (27.7% *moderately*, 23.4% *significantly*, and 18.6% *extensively*) also do not correspond to initial self-assessments (Table 3), according to which the familiarity with learning and singing songs is assessed as *very high*. This is possibly due to the use of audio recordings for that activity. On the other hand, students' evaluation of the same activity performed with a melodic instrument is slightly lower, which indicates the need for further improvement of those competencies. In this respect the results are in accordance with the findings of previous studies (Ehrlin & Wallerstedt, 2014; Hallam et al., 2009; Hennessy, 2000; Ruddock & Leong, 2005; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008; Stunell, 2010; Young, 2009), which confirm the frequent lack of teacher competencies in playing instruments with children. The responses pertaining to learning and repeating nursery rhymes, games involving singing, and listening to music (Table 7) are mostly consistent with the respondents' previous self-assessments of the same competencies (Table 3). Self-assessments of creative music competencies (Table 2) are close to the results displayed in Table 7.

In addition to the aforementioned results obtained by analyzing the quantitative part of the questionnaire, respondents answered two open-ended questions, which

served to identify the competencies they would like to further improve during their studies (Table 8). The open-ended questions also contribute to the objectivity of respondents' self-assessments.

Table 8

Student self-reported desires for further development of competencies during their university study

Competency	f	f %
Music literacy	31	24.8
Playing lead instruments	31	24.8
Singing	17	13.6
Creative music activities	16	12.8
Learning and singing songs to a melodic instrument	7	5.6
Active listening to music	7	5.6
Playing Orff's instruments	5	4.0
Games involving singing	4	3.2
Handcrafting the children's instrumentarium	4	3.2
Working with gifted children	3	2.4
TOTAL	125	100.0

A total of 125 respondents provided the answers to open-ended questions. According to their responses presented in Table 8, music literacy is the most frequently mentioned competency (n = 31; 24.8%) in which students need further improvement. The respondents who want to further improve their musical literacy believe that it will help them improve other competencies, such as playing lead instruments and singing during music activities conducted with children. Playing lead instruments and singing are also listed by 24.8% (n = 31) and 13.6% (n = 17) of respondents. Furthermore, 12.8% (n = 16) of respondents want to improve their competency of creative music activity, which is consistent with the results in the quantitative part of the study (Table 7). Furthermore, 16 respondents (12.8%) expressed a desire to further improve their competency in conducting creative music activities, which is consistent with the results of their self-assessments (Table 7). Overall, the results shown in Table 8 indicate that respondents recognize the need to acquire and continue improving their music competencies.

Table 9

Creative music competencies students would like to further develop during their studies

Competency	f	f %
Speech level singing and rhythmic speaking	6	37.5
Body percussion	5	31.2
Playing with handcrafted rattles or the children's instrumentarium	3	18.7
Improvisation/Composition, words and melody	1	6.2
Varying the melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics and/or the characteristics of a familiar song or nursery rhyme	1	6.2
TOTAL	16	100.0

In addition to the aforementioned desire to further improve their music competencies, the results in Table 9 indicate that the students are motivated to further improve the following creative music competencies: speech level singing and rhythmic speaking (37.50%), body percussion (31.25%), playing with handcrafted rattles or the children's instrumentarium, improvisation/composition of words and melodies, and varying the melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and/or the characteristics of a familiar song or nursery rhyme.

Correlation Coefficients

The descriptive statistics of composite variables (basic music competencies, music teaching methodology competencies, creative musical activity competencies, music teaching methodology competencies – practical, and creative musical activity competencies – practical) can be seen in Table 10. Seven incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. According to the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, none of the variables were normally distributed, so Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated to measure the nature and strength of the correlation between each pair of variables.

Table 10

Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S	
								D	p
BMC	217	1.00	5.0	3.22	0.84	-0.04	-0.47	.06	.04
MTMC	217	1.86	5.0	4.05	0.69	-0.55	-0.35	.10	< .01
CMAC	217	1.60	5.0	3.73	0.88	-0.46	-0.44	.08	< .01
MTMC-P	217	1.00	5.0	3.69	0.76	-0.65	0.77	.09	< .01
CMAC-P	217	1.00	5.0	3.10	0.78	-0.28	-0.02	.06	.04

Notes: BMC = basic music competencies, MTMC = music teaching methodology competencies, CMAC = creative musical activity competencies, MTMC-P = music teaching methodology competencies – practical, CMAC-P = creative musical activity competencies – practical, N = sample size, SD = standard deviation, K-S = Kolmogorov-Smirnov

The Spearman correlation coefficients are shown in Table 11. All correlation coefficients were statistically significant, but the strength of the correlations between the variables varied.

Table 11

Spearman's correlation coefficients

	BMC	MTMC	CMAC	MTMC-P	CMAC-P
BMC	1.00				
MTMC	.73**	1.00			
CMAC	.64**	.77**	1.00		
MTMC-P	.28**	.42**	.46**	1.00	
CMAC-P	.21*	.33**	.45**	.71**	1.00

Notes: BMC = basic music competencies, MTMC = music teaching methodology competencies, CMAC = creative musical activity competencies, MTMC-P = music teaching methodology competencies – practical, CMAC-P = creative musical activity competencies – practical

* p < .05 ** p < .01

A strong positive correlation (r > .50; Cohen, 1988) was observed between the following variables: (a) *basic music competencies* and *music teaching methodology competencies*, (b) *creative musical activity competencies* and *music teaching methodology competencies*, (c) *music teaching methodology competencies – practical* and creative *musical activity competencies – practical*, and the variables (d) *basic music competencies* and *creative musical activity competencies*.

Moderate positive correlation coefficients (.30 < r < .50; Cohen, 1988) were observed between the following variables: (a) *music teaching methodology competencies* and *music teaching methodology competencies – practical* (b) *music teaching methodology competencies* and *creative musical activity competencies – practical* (c) *creative musical activity competencies* and *music teaching methodology competencies – practical*, and (d) *creative musical activity competencies* and *creative musical activity competencies – practical*.

Weak positive correlations (r < .30; Cohen, 1988) were observed between the variables *basic music competencies* and *music teaching methodology competencies – practical*, as well as between the variables *basic music competencies* and *creative musical activity competencies – practical*.

The correlation coefficients shown in Table 11 suggest that there is a statistically significant and strong positive correlation among the respondents' reported competencies associated with theory (i.e., *basic music competencies*, *music teaching methodology competencies*, and *creative musical activity competencies*) and between their competencies associated with the practical application of musical knowledge (i.e., *music teaching methodology competencies – practical* and *creative musical activity competencies – practical*). Furthermore, weak and moderate correlations could be noted between the respondents' competencies and their practical implementation in the classroom. Those results indicate that students did not apply the fundamental and methodology competencies in the classroom to the extent to which they had acquired them. Moderate association between creative music activities and those pertaining to methodology also indicates that creative music activities, regardless of their importance for the holistic development of children, are not well-represented in the teaching practice and are not integrated as activities of the music teaching methodology. Weak correlations between the assessment of fundamental music activities and the practical competencies of music teaching methodology can be attributed to the respondents' low level of musical competencies, which means that they cannot actively participate in music activities with children and, consequently, need to use various audio and visual materials instead. According to Gospodnetić (2015), applying those teaching practices in music activities, such as learning and singing songs, is restrictive because teachers rely on music reproduction equipment and children sing along to one tempo, so their singing is neither spontaneous nor creative.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study it can be concluded that in spite of the high level of respondents' self-assessed basic music competencies, as well as the competencies in music teaching methodology and creative musical activity, their self-reported practical competencies show the awareness of the need for further improvement. Also, their expressed desire for further development of music competencies indicates an awareness of the importance of professional development and continuous improvement. The results are also supported by the correlation coefficients, as the relationship between the theoretical command of the competencies and their practical implementation in music education is currently weak and should be strengthened.

The results of this study can be used as guidelines for the improvement of music competency during initial early childhood and preschool teacher education at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb.

A high level of awareness of the importance of music activities and their encouragement by educators forms the basis for all kinds of activities in contemporary education practice. In addition, it encourages educators' interest and motivation to acquire and further develop their music competencies. According to Robinson (2015), preschool teachers, apart from formal education, can be responsible for suppressing children's creative potential lest their own competencies and the awareness of the importance of nurturing imagination early on are well developed.

Criscius (2016) describes the development of music competencies as a unique process comprising the experience of music through discovery. He sees it as a process of message reconstruction by means of deciphering the elements of musical language. Providing children with the opportunity of participating in a direct and active musical experience is invaluable to their holistic development, but the teacher needs to acquire certain competencies in order to implement the appropriate teaching method. If teachers are not active themselves during the music activities in the classroom, the intensity of the musical experience is reduced for the pupils. This is especially true for the teaching methods involving Orff's instrumentarium, as it includes activities based on collaborative communication and music making with children (Steen, 1992, p. 6). An actual hands-on experience of music also awakens pupils' interest and love of music, and increases the frequency of music activities in the education process. Music affects the development of cultural consciousness and aesthetic qualities. Children use it to express their emotions and thoughts. It is a natural means of communication for them (Andress, 1998; Custodero, 2002b; Levinowitz, 2001), adorned with an aesthetic quality of promoting sensibility and enriching children's development path.

Music influences an individual's cultural awareness and aesthetic qualities. Children use it to express their emotions and thoughts. Music is their natural means of communication (Andress, 1998; Custodero, 2002; Levinowitz, 2001), which influences their perception and enriches their development with its aesthetic value.

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Blaženka Bačlija Sušić
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education
Savska cesta 77, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
blazenkabs@ufzg.hr

Glazbene kompetencije odgojitelja u svjetlu samorefleksije studenata ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja

Sažetak

S obzirom na brojne dobrobiti glazbe u djetetovu cjelovitom razvoju, glazbeni odgoj sve više postaje imperativ i izazov suvremene odgojno-obrazovne prakse. U skladu s time svaki bi odgojitelj trebao posjedovati određene glazbene kompetencije. Cilj ovoga rada jest ispitati glazbene kompetencije studenata diplomskog studija Ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja Učiteljskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. Samorefleksijom studenata, putem anketnog upitnika oblikovanog za potrebe ovog istraživanja, ispitane su temeljne, metodičke i glazbeno-stvaralačke kompetencije, kao i njihova praktična primjena u odgojno-obrazovnoj praksi. S ciljem dodatnog unapređenja odgojno-obrazovne prakse prikupljena su stajališta i mišljenja ispitanika o kompetencijama koje bi dodatno željeli usavršiti tijekom diplomskog studija. U istraživanju su sudjelovala 223 ispitanika, studenata redovitog i izvanrednog diplomskog studija RPOO Učiteljskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. Primijenjena je kvantitativna i kvalitativna metoda znanstvenog pedagoškog istraživanja. Zaključeno je da bez obzira na to što ispitanici samorefleksijom visoko procjenjuju svoje temeljne, metodičke i glazbeno-stvaralačke kompetencije, samorefleksija njihovih praktičnih kompetencija, kao i izražena potreba za dodatnim usavršavanjem, ukazuju na to da su ispitanici svjesni potrebe za daljnjim razvojem svojih glazbenih kompetencija. Dobiveni rezultati istraživanja predstavljaju smjernicu za daljnje unapređenje kvalitete nastave glazbe, kako studenata diplomskog tako i dodiplomskog studija Ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja Učiteljskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.

Ključne riječi: *glazbene kompetencije; odgojitelji; rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje; samorefleksija.*