

# MUSICAL EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF HUNGARY, ROMANIA, SERBIA AND SLOVAKIA

Judit Váradi  
University of Debrecen Faculty of Music  
Debrecen, Hungary

## Abstract:

The study is a part of international research, the aim of which was to examine a less known aspect of music education in four Central European countries: Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. The research focused on school students aged between 8 and 12, N=805. The study explored the educational structure and curricula of the participating countries. It also put the emphasis on the teaching methods for introducing music to student; furthermore, it examined the presentation of live music. In the course of our research we examined the role of social variants with regard to the cultural activities of the children. Moreover, we explored the correlation between parental cultural capital and children's interest in classical music. Another important aspect of our study was the international comparison focusing on the differences and similarities in music education between various countries. The third issue examined in detail was the relationship between the formal and non-formal education, i.e. how the extra-curricular education (such as experience pedagogy and concert pedagogy) can become part of the everyday pedagogical work of the schools.

**Key words:** Keywords: music education, music pedagogy, concert pedagogy, extra-curricular

## INTRODUCTION

Each pedagogical paradigm shift brings about a strengthened and focused goal to establish interactivity with children, which provides motivation to study to a large extent. Raynor (1983) argued that teachers can influence the intrinsic motivation by choosing adequate exercises, therefore the creation of intrinsic motivation is largely the teachers' task (Bowles, 1998). Art education is aimed to enrich children's personality through the process of emotional sensitization. Interactive and experience-based practical exercises present a way to teach theory in art education. By contrast, teachers in public education often focus on conveying a body of lexical knowledge rather than making children like music, playing music together, singing, and conducting creative musical exercises (Váradi, 2016b). Why is it important that children should get to know pieces of classical music through direct experience? The advantage lies in the reality of the context (Nahalka, 2003). Studies in the literature have shown that frequent encounters with classical music in childhood and adolescence which are accompanied by positive feelings are closely connected to the development of affinity toward classical music (Neuwöhner, 2006). If the relationship with art does not become natural; if children do not know the joy of creating, performing, and singing, then they will not be "educated into" music. High artistic standards in all branches of art are distant from popular influences. As a consequence, the everyday popularity of art is shrinking (Johnson, 2002). A dichotomy has emerged due to the crisis of the integrating power of music. Classical music is different from other genres as it presupposes an artistic category and represents timeless value.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Pedagogical studies often revolve around success at school, children's achievements, as well as determining causality. The general development effects of music education have been explored by Hungarian and international analyses (Knappek, 2002; Janurik, 2008). Researchers have investigated primary school pupils' attitudes toward classical music (Roulston, 2006; Guth, 2006; Schmidt, 2012). The findings are significantly influenced by affective factors of attitudes toward different subjects. However, many studies focus only on "academic" subjects, while art subjects, for which György Kontra coined the term "joy subjects", are often neglected (Báthory, 1997).

According to international analyses, the popularity of subjects decreases with more time spent in school (Csapó, 2000). The motivation to study is strongly influenced by the nature of the material and the teacher's personality (Kocsis, 2000). From the pupils' point of view, the covered material can be evaluated in three dimensions: interesting-boring, necessary-unnecessary, easy-difficult. Visual arts, physical education, and music are typically deemed interesting and easy. Báthory has found that the most popular subject among fourth and eighth graders is physical education, followed by arts, crafts, and music (Báthory, 1997). Gender differences may arise in the preferences over subjects and musical activities (Lucas, 2011). As for subject attachments, Báthory (1989) has found in the whole population that girls prefer music as well as Hungarian grammar and literature in a statistically significant manner. McPherson and O'Neill (2010) investigated preferences over music and five other subjects in 8 countries among 24,143 children and young adults of ages 9-21. They have reported that music got a lower score and was deemed less difficult than mathematics and arts but received a higher score than physics or the native language. Females have demonstrated a higher affinity toward music than males. The low scores of the music subject may be explained by the fact that some children cannot overcome socio-cultural hindrances, which prevents them from realizing their full musical potential (O'Neill, 2002).

Csíkos (2012) conducted a survey in the Hungarian Csongrád county. Of the 570 pupils in the sample, 3 people (0.5%) marked music as their favorite subject, and 24 people (4.2%) choose arts. Music was the least liked subject for 15 pupils (2.7%), and art for 5 pupils (0.9%).

Other surveys have found that in a similar way to other subjects, interest toward musical activities is inversely proportional to years spent in school (Haladyna & Thomas, 1979; Vander Arka et al. 1980, Bowles, 1998). By contrast, it has also been shown that the enjoyment of playing instruments does not change over the years, as pupils in later years also have positive attitudes toward it. Many studies have investigated pupils' musical attitudes, the correlation between singing and choir participation, and extracurricular musical experiences connected to singing. In Mizener's research (1993), the sample consisted of sixth graders from seven city schools (N=542). It has been found that 78% of girls and 64% of boys like to sing. The author has concluded that most pupils are happy to sing regardless of the circumstances. It has also been hypothesized that great singing skills and success in music make children more self-confident, resulting in positive attitudes toward singing and music as a subject, which should be used by teachers (Siebenaler, 2006).

The general development effects of music education have been explored by Hungarian and international analyses. Knappek (2002) and Márta Janurik (2008) have studied the effect of musical abilities on school achievement. There are also various researchers who have investigated primary school pupils' attitudes toward classical music (Roulston, 2006; Guth, 2006; Schmidt, 2012).

## RESEARCH GOAL AND QUESTIONS

Our analysis is aimed at discovering whether musical experience is present in class through singing, whether children like to sing, and what influences attitudes toward singing. We have analyzed classroom activities such as singing, playing percussion instruments, and singing in a choir separately. These offer pupils a real individual or community experience and brings them closer to music. Our principal research question regards the presence of the listed pedagogical segments in music education and international differences in the everyday practice (Váradi et al. 2016a).

## SAMPLE AND METHOD OF THE ANALYSIS

Our study focuses on an international comparative survey with the participation of nineteen primary schools from seven towns of four countries. Hungary is represented by Debrecen; Serbia by Subotica; Romania by Oradea, Satu Mare, and Târgu Mureş; while Komárno and Banská Bystrica participated from Slovakia. The towns have been selected to avoid differences in settlement type since they are similar in regional importance. The sample (N=805) has 164 respondents from Serbia, 268 from Hungary, 102 from Slovakia, and 270 from Romania. Of all respondents, 45.2% are known to be male and 47.8% female, with the remaining 55 people unable to specify their gender due to strict data privacy policies in Slovakia. The survey was developed for 8-13-year-old pupils, although in the final sample age varies somewhat more, with 2.8% of respondents in the age group 14-15. Due to reasons described above, 6.5% of pupils lack data on their age. Sample selection has not been representative; therefore, the findings do not characterize countries as a whole and conclusions should be drawn only very carefully. Nevertheless, we believe that the data offer a valuable glance into education practices at certain schools of some countries.

In our research we have employed survey methods. The nature of the topic does not allow for a standardized survey; thus, we created our own tool of measurement. The paper-based survey was carried out in class. Responses were voluntary and anonymous. Of the 46 questions, 41 were multiple choice, where students had to mark their responses with circles or by underlining their choice. The remaining questions were open-ended, requiring text input. The data have been processed using SPSS 22 through two-dimensional cross table analysis and linear regression. The tables only feature statistically significant findings.

## EVALUATION, FINDINGS

First, we look into attitudes toward music as a subject. We have received 777 valid responses from pupils to the question as to whether they like music as a subject. Music education has evoked positive emotions in 616 respondents (76.5%) and negative associations in 161 people (20%). In accordance with the previously explored literature, gender differences are also present as most girls like music as a subject (Table 1).

Table 1.

		GENDER	
		boy	girl
Do you like music lesson?	yes	69.7%	89.4%
	no	30.3%	10.6%
Total		100.0%	100.0%

As for the difference between countries, pupils from Serbia like music education the best, followed by Hungary and Romania, whereas the proportion of children who like the subject is almost 20 percentage points lower in Romania (Table 2).

Table 2.

		COUNTRY				Total
		Hungary	Serbia	Romania	Slovakia	
Do you like music lesson?	yes	82.2%	83.6%	79.4%	64.6%	79.3%
	no	17.8%	16.4%	20.6%	35.4%	20.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

We believe that music education practices and their experience-based transformation should start with the most fundamental form of music, namely singing. Corroborating the findings in the literature, we have observed that girls like to sing significantly more ( $p=0.000$ ) (Table 3). The result is an explanation for why girls love the music lesson better.

Table 3.

		GENDER		Total
		boy	girl	
Do you like singing?	yes	68.0%	90.0%	79.2%
	no	32.0%	10.0%	20.8%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The survey has asked participants whether they sing during music lessons and if so, how much they believe they do. We have also analyzed whether teachers sing during class because live music performance exerts a greater effect and provides a better experience than recordings. Moreover, pupils can see how the voice comes to life, how the sound is created, what the right breathing technique is, and what gestures the performer has.

It has also been investigated whether it is the teacher or pupils who sing the most. The table shows affirmative answers and subjective frequencies. There are notable differences in the frequency of singing. It is interesting to highlight that teachers and pupils sing with the same regularity in Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia, yet in Romania it is the teacher who sings much more according to pupils' judgement.

Singing as a leisure activity has been included in the survey because the answers provide relevant information as to whether pupils derive enjoyment from singing. Children sing somewhat less as a leisure activity than they do in class in Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia. While pupils in Romania, in spite of the fact that they have no opportunity to sing in the music lessons, sing on their own the most (Table 4).

Table 4.

	Does teacher sing during music lesson? (yes answers)	Do students sing in music lesson? (yes answers)	How often do you sing? (yes answers)
Hungary	<b>98.9%</b> rarely:15,6% often: 88.8%	<b>98.1%</b> rarely: 10.5% often:87.6%	<b>93.5%</b> rarely: 35.5% often:58.0%
Serbia	<b>98.8%</b> rarely: 27.8% often: 70.4%	<b>96.3%</b> rarely: 25.9% often: 70.4%	<b>90.3%</b> rarely: 29.7% often: 60.6%
Romania	<b>97.8%</b> rarely: 17,6% often: 80,6%	<b>66.0%</b> rarely: 31.6% often: 36.4%	<b>95.9%</b> rarely: 34.9% often: 61.0%
Slovakia	<b>98.0%</b> rarely: 12.2% often: 77.9%	<b>97.0%</b> rarely: 9.9% often: 87.1%	<b>82.2%</b> rarely: 44.6% often: 37.6%

The experience of music education is enhanced by the possibility to play instruments in class. The survey has asked whether pupils play percussion instruments or have the opportunity to do so. We have found that music education in Slovakia features percussion instruments remarkably often, which is not surprising since the Orff Approach is part of the Slovakian national curriculum Hegyi, 1996; Váradi, Strenacikova (2017) (Table 5). The Orff concept was also famous in the former Yugoslavia, they also created a separate Orff instrument factory. The international Orff-Schulwerk Associations, the organizations for music and dance teachers works world-wide in many countries, for example in Slovakia and Croatia, Slovenia, but not in Serbia. In recent days Orff method is not guidance in the music education in Serbia.

Table 5.

		Country				Total
		Hungary	Serbia	Romania	Slovakia	
Do you play rhythmical instrument during music lesson?	often	18.5%	13.8%	21.5%	46.2%	100.0%
	rarely	41.6%	22.0%	25.5%	10.9%	100.0%
	never	25.2%	19.0%	47.7%	8.1%	100.0%

Polyphonic singing, in particular its simple form, the canon, serves as a great community building exercise and an opportunity to practice music together during music lessons. We have explored the subjective frequency of singing canons and the proportion of those who have never sung canons in music education. The findings by country have revealed that more than a quarter of pupils in Serbia and more than a fifth of children in Slovakia do not sing canons in class. Despite differences in frequency, most children from the investigated countries get to experience polyphonic singing. Although with varying regularity, teachers often turn to the tool of singing together during their classes, which is a basic activity of music education (Table 6).

Table 6.

		COUNTRY			
		Hungary	Serbia	Romania	Slovakia
Do you sing canon in music lessons?	often	27.1%	7.5%	21.8%	32.7%
	rarely	65.4%	65.2%	64.2%	45.5%
	never	7.5%	27.3%	14.0%	21.8%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

In Hungary the fundamental concept of school-based musical education was laid down by Zoltán Kodály, as his philosophy of music pedagogy was of utmost importance from nursery schools to teaching music to future professionals. *"What should be done? Singing and music should be taught in schools not as something that is a torture for students but as a source of delight, and a thirst for noble music should be implanted in them for a lifetime"* said Zoltán Kodály in 1929. (Kodály 1982: 207). Although singing is the main activity which children encounter in primary music education, many studies have pointed out that choir participation rates are relatively low and even tend to fall after primary school (Mizener, 1993). This is in spite of the fact that singing in a choir, which is a community activity, assists the process of socialization (Siebenaler, 2006). We have also inquired as to whether children in our sample attend choir practice. In Hungary the music education is based on singing (according to Kodály), but we have found that less than a third of pupils in Hungary sing in a choir. The result is the same in Serbia, while in Romania, choir participation rate is 22.6%, while in Slovakia, it is 16.2% (Table 7).

Table 7.

		COUNTRY				Total
		Hungary	Serbia	Romania	Slovakia	
Do you sing in the choir?	yes	31.3%	30.9%	22.6%	16.2%	26.4%
	no	68.7%	69.1%	77.4%	83.8%	73.6%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In accordance with previous studies, we have been able to show gender differences in attitudes toward singing and in the popularity of music as a subject, therefore it is not surprising to find that choir participation rate is 35% among girls and only 19.1% among boys (Table 8). As we see the differences between gender in the previous results, girls prefer to sing, prefer more music lesson so it is not surprising that they sing more often in choir.

Table 8.

		GENDER		Total
		boy	girl	
Do you sing in the choir?	yes	19.1%	35.0%	27.2%
	no	80.9%	65.0%	72.8%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Following Bourdieu's categorization, we have investigated by logistic regression how institutional cultural capital and internalized, incorporated cultural capital, which are both components of cultural capital from the family, affect attitudes toward singing. Years of schooling provide evidence for cultural capital, while institutionalized cultural capital is established through the objectivization of incorporated cultural capital in the form of titles. Incorporated cultural capital cannot be inherited and can be acquired only through dedicated time and energy after a learning process. The independent variable of our analysis is whether the child likes to sing or not. Dependent variables include components of institutionalized and incorporated cultural capital, such as the father's and mother's level of education, whether parents sing, and whether they play any instruments. In our analysis, neither the father's nor the mother's level of education has proved to be significant, thus they are omitted from the following table. Statistical examination has shown that among the investigated variables, the attitude toward singing is influenced by whether parents play instruments, and there is a strong relationship between parents' and children's singing habits (Table 9).

Table 9.

Do parents sing?	Do children like singing?	
	Exp(B)	Sig.
	<b>2.398</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Do parents play a musical instrument?	1.971	0.046
<b>Nagelkerke R Square</b>	<b>0.155</b>	

The primary sphere for socialization is the family, which plays a truly vital role in the transfer of values and determines the background of social capital in a fundamental way. Some variants of social capital are transferrable to success in school to a certain extent (Fényes-Pusztai, 2004; McPherson, 2008). Besides the family, the process of cultural sensitization is also largely dependent on education, which constructs cultural capital and compensates for or corrects possible deficiencies (Ferge, 1980). We can conclude that the role of education is generally decisive in all countries of our research. Learning songs in the family is essential because this generation could remember vividly the rhymes and children's songs taught by their parents or grandparents. The importance of music education in learning songs is the highest in Hungary and the lowest in Slovakia (Table 10).

Table 10.

		COUNTRY			
		Hungary	Serbia	Romania	Slovakia
Where did you learn songs, you sing at home?	at home	35.1%	25.9%	30.9%	21.6%
	in schools	67.5%	51.2%	56.3%	35.3%

## SUMMARY

We have conducted a survey in primary schools of Debrecen, Subotica (Szabadka), Oradea (Nagyvárad), Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti), Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely), Komárom (Komárom), and Banská Bystrica (Besztercebánya). We have investigated what pupils' attitudes are toward music lessons, how practice-oriented music education is, and whether singing as an activity receives the appropriate emphasis. A special feature of our analysis is that almost all surveys were in Hungarian, due to the characteristics of the region, although translations in the respective languages were also provided, which mitigated errors stemming from language differences. In our sample, 76.5% of children have a positive disposition toward music lessons. In accordance with the explored literature, gender differences seem to be present: most girls like music as a subject better and enjoy singing more. Music lessons provide a better experience if there is an opportunity for pupils to play percussion instruments. Our findings reveal that curriculum methodology in Slovakia results in more appearances of percussion instruments in class than in other countries. Among the investigated regions, less than a third of pupils are choir members in Hungary and Serbia, while choir participation rate amounts to 22.6% in Romania and 16.2% in Slovakia. These rates are quite low even if we consider that studies in the literature forecast decreasing choir participation rates after primary school (Mizener, 1993).

When analyzing the relationship between attitudes toward singing and components of cultural capital from the family, namely incorporated cultural capital and institutionalized cultural capital, we have shown that the attitude toward singing is not influenced by socio-cultural background, in particular the parents' level of education.

In a previous study, we have found no significant impact of parents' specialized music education on children's specialized music education (Váradi et al., 2017). However, if the father or the mother plays an instrument at home, it affects children's attitudes toward singing. Furthermore, there is a highly significant connection between parents' and children's singing habits. The family plays an important role in transferring values, although at this age education also has a vital part as it enhances cultural capital. We may conclude that despite different curricula and methodology guidelines, singing and playing percussion instruments are employed as activities in music education in all countries. Teachers also sing often, which is the most natural form of listening to music and captures children's emotions better (Váradi, 2010).

Art education is aimed to recognize, transfer, revitalize, and traditionalize values with the purpose of creating a superior attitude toward art by involving well-trained and dedicated pedagogical work. In art education, teachers should not necessarily focus on transferring knowledge; instead, they must establish an environment for experiencing creation, sensation, and sensitization. Pupils' attitudes to study are affected by the teacher's professional knowledge, methodological culture, and pedagogical creativity. A progressive method in art education is practice-oriented, experience-based teaching, which presupposes highly qualified teachers to meet the high standards of quality art education in our day.

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### Glazbeno obrazovanje u osnovnim školama u Mađarskoj, Rumunjskoj, Srbiji i Slovačkoj

**Sažetak:** Studija je dio međunarodnog istraživanja čiji je cilj bio ispitati manje poznati aspekt glazbenog obrazovanja u četirima srednjoeuropskim zemljama: Mađarskoj, Rumunjskoj, Srbiji i Slovačkoj. Istraživanje je usmjereno na učenike u dobi između 8 i 12 godina, N = 805. Studija je istraživala obrazovnu strukturu i kurikule zemalja sudionica. Također se stavlja naglasak na nastavne metode za uvođenje učenika u glazbu; nadalje, ispitivala se prezentacija žive glazbe. Tijekom svog istraživanja ispitali smo ulogu socijalnih varijanti s obzirom na kulturne aktivnosti djece. Osim toga, istražili smo povezanost između roditeljskog kulturnog kapitala i interesa djece za klasičnu glazbu. Drugi važan aspekt našeg istraživanja bila je među-

narodna usporedba koja se usredotočila na razlike i sličnosti u glazbenom obrazovanju između različitih zemalja. Također je detaljno ispitan odnos formalnog i neformalnog obrazovanja, tj. kako izvanškolsko obrazovanje (poput iskustvene pedagogije i koncertne pedagogije) može postati dio svakodnevnog pedagoškog rada u školama.

**Ključne riječi:** glazbeno obrazovanje, glazbena pedagogija, koncertna pedagogija, izvannastavne aktivnosti

### **Musikalische Bildung in den Grundschulen von Ungarn, Rumänien, Serbien und der Slowakei**

**Zusammenfassung:** Diese Untersuchung ist Teil einer internationalen Studie, deren Ziel es war, einen weniger bekannten Aspekt in der musikalischen Bildung in vier mitteleuropäischen Ländern, Ungarn, Rumänien, Slowakei und Serbien, zu erforschen. Die Studie richtete sich auf Schüler im Alter zwischen 8 und 12 Jahren, N = 805, und untersuchte die Bildungsstruktur und die Lehrpläne der teilnehmenden Länder. Der Schwerpunkt lag ferner auf den Unterrichtsmethoden, mittels welcher die Schüler in die Welt der Musik eingeführt werden. Außerdem wurde die Präsentation von Livemusik untersucht. Im Verlauf der Studie haben wir die Rolle der sozialen Varianzen in Bezug auf die kulturellen Aktivitäten der Kinder hinterfragt. Ferner haben wir die Verbindung zwischen dem kulturellen Kapital der Eltern und dem Interesse der Kinder für klassische Musik erforscht. Ein weiterer wichtiger Aspekt unserer Untersuchung war der internationale Vergleich, der die Unterschiede und Ähnlichkeiten der musikalischen Bildung in den verschiedenen Ländern im Fokus hatte. Außerdem wurde die Beziehung der formellen und informellen Bildung eingehend untersucht, d.h. auf welche Weise die außerschulische Bildung (wie etwa die Erlebnispädagogik und Konzertpädagogik) Teil der täglichen pädagogischen Arbeit in den Schulen werden kann.

**Schlüsselbegriffe:** Musikalische Bildung, Musikpädagogik, Konzertpädagogik, außerschulische Aktivitäten