



The Perspectives of Music Education in Slovakia

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Abstract

In Slovakia, music education has more than 1000 years of tradition. Preserved historical documents and available sources confirm that during this long period, music education has undergone not only positive, but also less favorable changes. It underwent periods of both significant progress, and stagnation. Often, it resisted the impact of power, national and political struggles. On the other hand, it strengthened its position in times of social and cultural blossoming in society. Music education was also marked by the school system reforms. Nowadays, music is a mandatory educational component in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. The scientists examine its effect on the emotional and cognitive personality features of students. The miscellaneous impact of music education is verified by exact science and confirmed by empiricism. Thus, the perspectives in music education are a point of interest of all who are involved in education: teachers, educators, counselors, researchers...

Keywords: Slovakia, music education, music school, artistic education

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History

Slovakia, a country with over five million inhabitants, is situated in Central Europe. In 1993, it became an independent state, and later also a member state of the United Nations and a part of the European Union. In the territory of Slovakia, music education was already mentioned in the mid-8th century. At that time, churches created schools to form priests, and focused on liturgical singing. In the 9th century, schools were instituted by the two educated brothers Cyril and Methodius. While they were in Great Moravia, in addition to Latin, the language understood by the common people was used in liturgical chants and spiritual songs.

In the Middle Ages, in the 10th - 13th century, organized music education was imparted in schools in monasteries, chapters and parishes. It was led by members of religious orders who taught mainly church singing, music theory and notation. In the 11th century, the first choral school - Schola Cantorum was established in Nitra. It was inspired by the Roman school of Pope Gregory the Great. Cantors and succentors taught students figural singing and music theory on a scientific level.

In Slovakia of the 14th and 15th centuries, the parish schools generally developed into urban schools – particular schools. In addition to liturgical music, singing and music theory, pupils had to learn instrumental playing (especially playing on wind instruments).

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the organization and operation of schools fundamentally changed under the influence of the Reformation and Protestant movement. High-quality Latin schools were established in large cities (Bardejov, Levoca, Kežmarok, Presov, Banska Bystrica, Banska Stiavnica, Kremnica, and Bratislava). Music and singing (cantus et musica) became mandatory and equivalent components of education. Students attended these schools daily for several hours, and everyday music classes were no exception. Students sung polyphonic songs, played string instruments and organs, played in popular instrumental bands and singing choirs, and performed at public trimester ceremonies on a regular basis. (Gregor - Sedlický, 1990)

The parameters of Baroque music education were determined to a large extent by the constitution of universities and gymnasiums (secondary schools), where music played an important, though not a formative role. This was especially so at the University of Trnava (1635), Kosice University (1657), and the Presov Collegium (1667). At the time of the reinstatement of Catholicism, the schools were founded by religious fraternities and orders which had at their disposal foreign music sheets, valuable music literature, and musical instruments. The Franciscans, Piarists and Jesuits raised a number of cantors and organists. The pupils performed in so-called School dramas - musical theaters. An elaborate system was systematically implemented in teaching musical disciplines. During Classicism, the Slovak education system had an important position in the whole Central European region. The first public music school “Musikschule” was founded in

Bratislava; a special class of music education and instrumental music was successfully functioning in Trencin; the first professional cantors - teachers were taught in Spisska Kapitula; the student teachers studied in Kosice. The quality of theoretical knowledge, vocal and instrumental skills of pupils, and also the work of the teachers were controlled. The criteria were fixed and published in the Pressburger Zeitung in advance. In terms of the school reform by Maria Theresa, Ratio educationis (School code) of 1777, the school system included three types of schools: the national - folk schools with a single-teacher, schools with two to four teachers - so called normal schools (schola normalis), and finally, the Latin schools and universities. Pupils in normal schools learned music two hours a day under the supervision of a special teacher (magister musicae). They sang, played the organ, violin; they studied music theory, and also, they could take an optional subject - playing wind instruments. (Gregor - Sedlický, 1990)

The 19th century became a very complicated period for the Slovakian educational system. The language of instruction was Hungarian; the teachers in folk schools were unqualified, and the school attendance was sporadic. A more positive situation was found in gymnasiums, lycees, and teacher colleges, where music education received considerable attention. The students in teacher colleges attended four-five hours of singing and music weekly, they gained interpretive skills in playing piano (they played technical exercises and songs), organ (they played chants, overtures and postludes), and violin. They performed in singing choirs, and were able to orient themselves in harmony, song analysis, and in music theory. They also had at their disposal classical music and period music literature.

Music education encountered many developmental changes in the 20th century. Progress meant not only stabilized teacher colleges with excellent pedagogic staff, but also the emergence of new educational institutions (Music School for Slovakia in Bratislava - 1949, which, after its transformation, focused on musical and artistic education (Kupkova, 2014)). The inter-war period was directed towards improving the quality of teaching, developing active musicality in children, implementing receptive musical education, and accentuating the importance of folk songs. In the 50s, following the Law about Unified school (1948), schools became centrally managed and they respected many ideological content verdicts. Nevertheless, progressive attributes of music pedagogy entered the scene. These were linked to communicativeness of music, to the detailed specification of the perception process, to the anticipation of developing children's musical creativity, and to the methodology of instrumental activities. The 60s were characterized by stagnation tendencies, because the schools and education were increasingly politicized. Starting from the 70s, the music education process became more dynamic, and in accordance with the so-called New conception (since 1976), the effort to modernize it, gained its more realistic form.

After November 1989 (Velvet Revolution), it was necessary to *“implement changes in the school system organization, make curricular transformation, and also implement changes in the field of teacher preparation and lifelong learning”*. (Kupkova, 2014, p. 157) The public

became familiar with the projects “*School spirit*”, “*School of the Year 2000*”, and in 1994, with an interesting National Program of Education: “*Constantine*”. The music education was specified as follows: “Teaching music should lead to knowledge of musical styles and the most important music works, to the core competencies associated with the perception of music; it should interpose basic instrumental skills in singing and in playing at least one musical instrument.” (Projekt, 1994, p. 17) The project *Constantine* was not put into practice. More successful was the “*Millennium*” project. Its concept was gradually transformed to education reform and to the latest Law on Education (2008). According to renowned music teachers, it is a step backwards, and it represents a regressive interference in music education.

The school system

The school system includes the institutions of formal and informal education. Under the new classification ISCED 11 (International Standard Classification of Education 11), there are four levels of education: pre-primary education, primary, secondary, tertiary.

In the following text, we bring detailed specification in the continuity of teaching music.

Pre-primary education

In the State educational program, music education is included in kindergarten’s educational field “*Art and Culture*”. Music education consists of a complex of six musical-educational activities, which form six sub-fields of educational field “*Art and Culture*”:

- Rhythmical activities that are determined by personal experience in making rhythms out of rhymes, words, phrases, dialogic games, and so on. The child beats to the rhymes in 2/4 and 3/4 bars and creates elementary accompaniments.
- Vocal activities are interpretative in nature; they provide space for voice and breathing exercises and for work with child’s voice.
- Instrumental activities allow children to use the Orff instrumentation for the completion of singing songs and music pieces. They respect musical feeling and imagination of children.
- Perceptive activities are directed towards building a relationship to music and towards educating an active and receptive music listener.
- Music-movement activities cultivate physical movement of children and ensure the elementary dance training for children.
- Music-dramatic activities integrate musical expressions with verbal, visual arts, and movement expressions and with music-dramatic improvisation and interpretation. (According to ISCED 0)

Primary education

Primary education is divided into two stages:

Stage 1 = primary education has a duration of four years - 1st and 4th grade in primary school for children aged 6-10. Music education is covered in 1 hour per week.

Stage 2 = lower secondary education has a duration of five years - fifth to ninth grade of primary school for pupils aged 11 to 15. Music education is covered in 1 hour per week.

In primary education, music education is included in educational field *“Art and Culture”*.

It has three content goals:

- Cognitive goals.
- Socio-affective goals.
- Psycho-motorial goals.

The golden rule of the music education in primary level: the whole educational process must come out from music and head back to music. In education, it is essential to follow the procedure from the musical experience to knowledge and through the knowledge to the transfer within active listening and accessing the content of art pieces.

The subject Music education is the complex of musical activities, which intersect and influence each other. These activities are:

- Vocal-intonation activities
- Instrumental activities
- Perceptive activities
- Music-movement activities
- Music-dramatic activities.

Music education is based on activities and experience. According to the State Educational Program, the music for pupils should be *„simultaneously a game and a subject matter of a child experimenting, and a source of exploring access to the musical cognition“*. (SVP, 2009)

In lower secondary education, similarly to the primary education, the progression from music experiences to knowledge and cognition is followed. Through them, teachers lead pupils to the transfer in perception and interpretation of new artistic works. *“The main purpose of music education is an optimal personality formation and efficient development of pupil’s musicality, so that the pupil - through communication with music - creates his progressive and creative way of being for his life in the 21st century.”* (SVP, 2010) In lower secondary education, the whole process of music education takes place within the

purview of creative-human education. The complex of activities is identical to that in primary education.

The content of music education is precisely stated in the educational program. It is based on three key thematic areas:

- How the music speaks to us. Music associated with other forms of art (creation of an integrative project). Through music, we learn about our musical culture and about the culture of other nations.
- Music of the past and the present. Through music, we learn about the cultures of different nations.
- Musical strolls through centuries. Diverse variety of popular music. Music on the border (permeation of different kinds and genres of music: pop music, classical music, jazz, ethno, world...). (SVP, 2010)

Secondary education

Secondary education can be completed in six types of schools. However, students are offered contacts targeted exclusively at music only at some of them. These are schools providing complete specialized secondary education with graduation exam – maturita (pedagogical and social academies, and conservatories), and higher specialized schools (5th and 6th grade at conservatories).

At the other secondary schools with four-year education program (e.g. gymnasiums), the subject Art and Culture is taught, but it is not focused specifically on music. It focuses on *“the complex perception of the culture and art in the context of current cultural, social, economic and political processes”* (SVP, 2012, p. 1) It covers all art forms and synthetic arts. Music is only a part of the selected thematic units and, by content standards, the pupils should reflect it actively. Each year, the subject Art and Culture is taught 1 hour per week.

Pedagogical and social academies

These schools have a number of departments. Music education has a major position, justified and proven by history, in a teaching department for teachers in kindergartens. Students acquire basic theoretical knowledge and extensive practical skills to carry out educational activities independently. Graduates of these schools must master propaedeutic music theory and various practical disciplines (basic conducting techniques, instrument playing, singing, etc.).

The intensive study is reflected in the time devoted to subjects such as specialized subject Methodics of Music Education. It is taught 3 hours per week in the 1st and 2nd years of studies, and two hours a week in the third year. In the 3rd and 4th years, students can choose an elective subject: Creative Music Education, recommended four hours a week.

The conservatory

“The Conservatory is, in Slovakia, a specialized secondary school which provides education for future professional artists in music, dance, singing and acting. In terms of the founder, conservatories can be divided into three groups: state, church and private, and in terms of the focus, in two groups: dance and music conservatories.” (Strenacikova, Jr., 2016, s. 1)

According to the educational program, musical art is studied in two main streams: the first one is “Singing” and the second one is “Music”. Music stream includes various departments: composition, conducting, and playing instruments: piano, organ, brass and percussion instruments, string instruments, accordion.

After four years of studies, the pupil passes the graduation exams (maturita). (S)he can continue to study at the university, or work as a professional artist – a soloist or a member of artistic ensembles. Also, (s)he can continue studies at the Conservatory, and after two more years obtain “absolutorium” and receive a title DiS. art. (diplomovaný umelec). Thus, (s)he finishes the pedagogical-artistic education and becomes a qualified teacher at primary art schools. (Strenacikova, Jr., 2015)

The study at conservatories develops a creative personality and a talent of the pupil. It provides the whole complex of skills and knowledge in the main field of study.

“The aim of the main subject is to teach pupils to play, sing, conduct and compose at the professional artistic level, to achieve professional mastery associated with the personality development, to develop the ability to work independently, and to work at educational-artistic positions.” (SVP for conservatoires)

The schools similar to conservatories were founded in Bratislava, Kosice and Žilina. In the 20th century, they were transformed from the higher music schools for educating teachers of music schools. State Conservatory in Bratislava (1941), State Conservatory in Kosice (1951), and the State Conservatory in Žilina (1961) (Strenacikova, Jr., 2016).

After 1989, the number of conservatories expanded. Currently, students can study music and singing at five public schools (Bratislava, Kosice - two schools, Žilina, Banská Bystrica), at six private schools (in Nitra, Topoľčany, Zvolen, Presov, Kosice, Michalovce), and at one church school (Bratislava).

Tertiary education

Study at universities is diversified into three degrees:

- Bachelor degree with the title Bc.
- Master’s degree with the titles Mgr., and Mgr. art.
- Doctoral degree with the titles PhD., or ArtD.

Academic education sector follows the principles of the Bologna process and European Higher Education Area (both terms are used interchangeably), applies the credit system, encourages the academic mobility, and focuses the teaching on students. Teaching is understood as a mission of the university.

Music studies at the university are provided by schools with a different focus: on art, musicology and teaching.

Artistic education

Artistic education for domestic and foreign students is available at three schools: Academy of Performing Arts Bratislava - Music and Dance Faculty, Academy of Arts in Banska Bystrica - Faculty of Music and Jan Albrecht Music and Art Academy in Banska Stiavnica. The schools contribute to profiling the representatives of musical life, and they educate professional artists.

Their graduates have almost a 100% use in practice. The university in Bratislava offers the opportunity to study at the Department of keyboard instruments and church music, composition and conducting, singing, string and wind instruments, and at the Department of theory of music. In Banska Bystrica, two study programs were constituted: Performing arts (includes singing, playing keyboard instruments, orchestral instruments, accordion, and conducting), and Composition study program. Likewise, two study programs are available in Banska Stiavnica: Music theory and interpretation and Theory of music and creation. Teaching competences are obtained by completing four-semester supplementary pedagogical education.

Musicological education

Faculty of Arts at Comenius University in Bratislava is the only one university in Slovakia that focuses on the Musicology study. The department has a scientific character, and its content consists of historical-philosophical, theoretical and applied humanistic sciences. The department is *“focused on the study of the theory of the musical styles, compositional techniques, music theory concepts, types and methods of musical analysis, respectively on the interpretation of the music and the musical works, and the existence of music phenomenon.”* (<https://fphil.uniba.sk/katedry-a-odborne-pracoviska/katedra-muzikologie/>) The graduates acquire knowledge about music in its sounding, fixed-writing and socially received form of realization.

Pedagogical education

Teacher education as a university teacher preparation has, in Slovakia, the longest tradition and the richest history. It gained its current form by transformation – first existed the Higher Pedagogical Schools, later the Pedagogical Institutes, then independent Pedagogical Faculties, and now, the Faculties/Departments of Education, which are part of major universities. Music teacher education is currently offered by the

Faculties/Departments of Education at the following universities: Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, Comenius University in Bratislava, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, University of Presov in Presov, University of Trnava in Trnava, Catholic University in Ružomberok, and University of J. Selye in Komarno.

- Students can obtain a teaching qualification by attending one of the following programs: *Preschool and Elementary Pedagogy*: it provides education for teachers at pre-primary and primary education, i.e. kindergarten teachers and teachers at the first stage of primary school. During the studies, the students attend obligatory lectures, seminars and trainings: Education of music in kindergartens and primary schools, Basics of music education, Playing a musical instrument, Musical Practice, Didactics of artistic-educational subjects with praxis, Instrument and movement in music education.
- *Teaching Music Education*: it can be attended as one-field study, or in a combination with any other subject. Graduates obtain a qualification for the second stage of primary schools, for secondary schools, and for teaching music theory at elementary art schools. The range of compulsory and elective subjects is significantly wider, and it varies in accordance to the specific programs of schools. However, the core disciplines have a common base: Music theory, Harmony and polyphony, Voice education, Study of musical instruments, Forms and analysis of music works, History of music, Music in Slovakia, Playing the main and obligatory instrument, Intonation, Conducting and leading the singing choir, Praxis in instrumental ensembles, Basic composition, Jazz and pop music, Arranging for school ensembles, Music aesthetics, Music pedagogy, and more.

Contemporary music education

Music education at all levels and types of schools is granted by fully qualified teachers. They are aware of a versatile impact of music education on pupil's personality, and they participate in innovative processes aimed at improving the quality and attractiveness of teaching. They participate in a number of short- and long-term projects that are verified through research. In schools, they apply original methods and forms of teaching, they build on international experience and cooperation across borders, and they implement new teaching bases. All efforts are overarched by the educational concept of humanistic and global education, and by strategies of multicultural and environmental education.

In Slovakia, there are also primary schools with extended music education programs that closely co-work with primary art schools. In addition, one could notice an increasing number of schools focused on regional culture, which has a positive effect on the development of key competences; experiments with the use of ICT (information and communication technologies), interactive whiteboards/smartboards and multimedia textbooks on music lesson are carried out; new forms of activating students are sought; interdisciplinary linking of music education with other arts, humanities and sciences is applied; standard content of music lessons is enriched by elements of folk, ethno and

world music, musicals, pop music, and so on. New educational media - unconventional, innovative textbooks are created...

Educational work of Slovak music teachers is marked by the legacy of the great person of Hungarian and world music pedagogy:

"...Finally, we can also live without music. The path leads even through the desert. But we, who care about every child to be given into his hands the key to good music, and with it also the protective talisman against bad music, we want each child to pass through life not as if walking through the desert, but through the flower garden."

Zoltan Kodaly (1974:468)

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