

Research Paper



Opportunities for Elementary Level Music Education in the Partium Region

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Abstract

The aim of our research is to compare the music schools in the area of Partium (Beregszász, Nagyvarad, Szatmarnemeti, Nyiregyhaza, Debrecen) based on their function and opportunities for development. In all three countries effective music teaching of high quality is done. During the research we wanted to know whether the different functional conditions may influence the primary level of music education, and if yes, how it is influenced. We wish to compare the music schools of all three countries according to identical viewpoints in the course of the research. It is important to examine the position of the music schools in the system of education and to map the spatial network of the music schools, their maintaining and institutional background. The comparison of the teaching staff number, their preparedness, their faculty proportions, the student number and their faculty proportions may seem to be interesting. The comparison of the curricula, the course books and the examination system of the music schools is also worthy of the research. After the analysis of the documents of the music schools we would like to prepare unique case studies with the music schools of the above mentioned towns. In these studies we would examine the teachers, students and parents' motivations to find the reason why they undertake the plus burdens and activities related to music learning.

Keywords: music school, Partium, comparison, case study

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About the study

We conducted a series of researches in 2013 in the elementary level music education art institutions of the Northern Great Plain region in the framework of the research “Learning regions in Hungary: from theory to reality” managed by Tamas Kozma and supported by OTKA (K-101867). We are looking into and examining the connection between learning potentials of the regions and the state of socio-economic development. There are six teams working in the research delegated to each area.² The effects of informal and non-formal learning in elementary art institutions were conducted by the Personal Learning team. We intended to extend our empirical investigations based on the experiences gathered, so we launched our new research in the Partium region. The main aim of this research is to present the institution system of music education of the three countries belonging to the historical Partium region through finding both the similarities and the differences. We considered it important to map the basic principles of musician education, since these are the factors that define the structure of music education institutions. As music education is effective and of high quality in all three countries, during the course of the research we were curious whether the different operational conditions have any influence on elementary level music education and if they do, how they exert it.

While analyzing the data we deemed it essential to compare elementary music education in the three countries based on identical aspects, so we used the same half-structured interview outline during the interviews. We chose a qualitative method for our investigations (interview), because we thought we could gather more information if we do not limit the options for answers, thus it could yield deeper and broader findings. This is why we conducted half-structured interviews, and we looked at themes such as the structure of music education, the place of music schools within the education system, spatial network of music schools, maintainer background, proportion of departments, statistical data supply, programs, etc. (The interview outline is attached to the appendix to the study.)

Since the geographical definition of Partium has had different meanings throughout history (Suli-Zakar 2006), it is important to define which public administration regions we included in this denomination during our investigation. “When we say ‘Partium,’ we always put it within quotation marks. The reason for this lies in the fact that the name we use to describe the region under investigation is, so to speak, a simple made-up name” (Kozma 2006: 21). The region we call “Partium” is situated on the premises of three countries – Ukraine, Romania and Hungary. In Hungary Hajdu-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg counties, in Ukraine Sub-Carpathia and in Romania Bihar, Szatmar,

² The six teams are the Theoretical team, the Cartographer team, the Formal Learning team, the Vocational Education team, the Personal Learning team, and the Social Learning team. On the first findings see Juhasz (ed.) 2014.

Szilagy, and Maramaros counties belong to the examined geographical units (Suli-Zakar 2006).

Thus the name Partium indicates a geographical and historical area, whose scope and political content has changed during the history of the Carpathian Basin, but its latent spiritual and cultural unity can be traced in several social phenomena (Pusztai-Torkos 2001). The social situation of this area is determined by the Trianon Treaty after which the previously unified area was divided into several secluded parts. This decree influenced the rate of economic development of the area as well. So, the areas lying on both sides of the border are characterized by the so-called dual peripheral situation (Baranyi 2004). Beyond this a natural depopulation can also be detected in the region. The trend has been present in Hungary since 1981, since 1991 in Romania, and since 1999 in Sub-Carpathia (Teperics 2006).

The towns of the region are connected through various transport, economic cultural, and educational relations, this is why Partium may serve as a bridge in the future connecting the countries of the region and may contribute to the socio-economic rise of Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine.

Map 1: Partium



Source: Suli-Zakar 2006

Some of the major findings of the research

As part of the research we took a look at the public schooling system in all three countries as a first step: elementary education, secondary education, and music education. The first two are only partly mentioned based on relevant professional literature, while music education is to be described in more detail via the interviews.

Even at the level of elementary education differences appear between Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine. In Hungary elementary schooling is divided into a lower and a higher section. The lower section covers the first 4 years and the higher one starts with year five and ends with year eight. Pupils can apply for an 8- or a 6-form secondary school after the 4th or 6th year. Elementary schooling in Romania and Ukraine can also be divided into two sections. The lower section lasts from form 1 to form 4, the second part of elementary education, however, starts with year five and ends with year 9. That is, elementary education covers nine years (European Commission 2014, Educational system in Ukraine 2014).

The system of secondary education yields bigger differences. There is a threefold division in Hungary: secondary school, vocational school, and technical school. The Romanian schooling system is also divided into three sections, only the names are different. Lyceum functions the same way secondary schools do in Hungary, the notion of vocational school corresponds to the Hungarian counterpart, and technical schools are called industrial schools in Romania. The biggest difference can be seen in Ukraine: the Hungarian type of secondary school is identical to the general secondary school offering a maturity certificate (school-leaving certificate); however, as regards vocational training, there are different special areas and not levels of education. The general secondary schools teach classical subjects, lyceums deal with natural science and technology, and in boarding schools (kollegium) students mainly learn humanities subjects (Luko, ed. 2010).

The music education structure of the countries was examined through the interviews, as no unified professional literature had been published on the subject, so the rest of the paper will cover the results of the interviews in a thematic and country breakdown. Studying music education it turned out that the education structures of Hungary and Ukraine are similar, but there is a totally different structure in Romania.

In Hungary it is possible to start music education at a very early age: although it is not institutionalized, music for babies is an existing branch. External professionals teach small children in several kindergartens. In elementary art schools children may start their music education on a shorter or longer course after a preparatory period of one or two years (solfege and instruments). The short course means 4+4 years of training period, the long one (piano, violin, cello) means 6+4 years of further education. The further education course is based on a requirement of an elementary exam in both solfege and the chosen instrument. The age limit is 22 years in these institutions. In the 3rd year on the basis of the student's performance a decision is made whether they should continue their studies

on course A or B. The preparation of course B students for a musical career starts here (out of 1300 students approximately 300 are on course B). In the elementary art institutions not only music studies can be pursued, but also dance, theatre art, and puppet art as well as applied and fine arts. In this research, however, we only dealt with music education. At secondary level there are 23 vocational music schools operative in the country. In the morning there are general education lessons, just like in a traditional secondary school, while the afternoon is for musical: the instrument 2 times a week, solfege 2 times a week, harmonics 1 lesson, chamber music, 1 obligatory piano lesson, 2 lessons of music history, 1 lesson of folk music. Orchestra and choir are obligatory. After the fifth year students can take an OKJ (nationally accredited) exam in the music subjects. In higher education, students can learn in divided and undivided courses. The divided course based on the Bologna System remained, where students can attend to an artist master course after they have finished their performer or musical creative arts and musicology studies at bachelor level. Students can gain teacher degree as a musician teacher during 2 semesters. They can continue their studies in the artistic doctoral program (DLA) after they got their master's degree. The undivided training program restarted in 2013, which 4+1 year length, 5+1 for theoretical majors. In the undivided program students can obtain theoretical, instrumental and teacher education. This teacher major authorizes students to get a job in basic arts education. With this degree they can start their PhD studies. From 2017 they get the chance to obtain music teacher degree at different majors in a 2-year short-cycle training based on their teacher qualifications.

In Ukraine we see a system of institutions in music education similar to Hungary. There are art schools on the elementary level, vocational schools on the secondary level, and conservatories on the tertiary (only the names differ from those in Hungary). Art schools (elementary level) teach not only music, but drawing and choreography, too.

In Romania the music schools within the system of public education are similar to other schools, with musical training added. More specifically they are not music schools, but art schools, which along with general mandatory education provide training in music and fine art. The greater art schools operate from first year up to maturity exam, but in smaller towns only up to 8th form. In these art lyceums children are trained for a musical career from the first day on. Thus at the beginning of their studies they must decide upon the kind of career. Naturally there is mobility among the institutions, so if the student has changed their mind or cannot meet the requirements (level exams), then they may enroll in another course. A reverse case is also possible, after taking the level exams children can enter their music training who could not previously decide if they wanted to become professional musicians. This institution provides a music school maturity certificate. While this form of training is an integral part of public education, it is supervised by the Ministry of Education. Apart from this there are five-year art schools (successors of people's art schools), which may be enrolled without respect to age or the level of

education. These are of course tuition-based (there are yearly fees) and are not maintained by the Ministry of Education but the Ministry of Culture.

In the case of all three countries we may observe that on the elementary level the institutions do not perform pure musical training, but in these art schools, as per the name, children may choose from several fields of the arts.

The spatial network of music schools is the densest in Hungary out of the three countries. The home page of the Association of Hungarian Music Schools and Art Schools (MZMSZ 2017) lists all the elementary institutions of art education in Hungary, which total 695. Of these in our region of investigation, in Hajdu-Bihar County there are 42, in Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County 50. In Sub-Carpathia there are 62 music schools, and in Romania there is at least one music school in all county seats with forms 1-12. In addition there are music schools in other towns with forms 1-8. Altogether there are about 50 some schools in the country.

In Hungary elementary institutions of art education are state-owned, but there exist private schools owned by foundations, such as MEA – Music-playing Health Foundation, Rocksuli (Rock School), etc. In Ukraine with the exception of one or two institutions music schools are state-owned, in Romania they are all state owned.

In Hungary in elementary institutions of art education students pay a tuition fee, which is defined for a year. In addition, students using the school's instruments have to pay a rental fee. In private schools the fee is higher, approximately 1 month's worth of tuition fee equals a term's fee in the state schools. In Ukraine they have a fee, too. In Romania art lyceums are a part of public education, so they are free (professional training), while art schools are tuition-based schools with an annual fee.

The management of institutions is structured in a similar way in all three countries, with a principal and deputy principal on top. The middle managers have similar tasks but their names vary from team manager in Hungary to department manager in Ukraine to chairman in Romania.

In Hungarian cities all kinds of instruments can be learnt, but a smaller number of them in smaller communities. The smaller settlements have instruments that are on demand. The most popular are the piano, the guitar, and percussion instruments. Apart from this there another trend in Hungarian elementary institutions of art education: institutions in smaller towns offer a wider choice of art fields than in cities, as in small communities the same institution has to meet all demands, while in the bigger cities there are several of these institutions so there can be some with clearly musical profiles.³ In Ukraine we mostly find departments teaching the piano, brass and wind instruments, string

³ Based on an earlier study entitled "Learning functions in music schools of the Northern Great Plain Region" (Szűcs 2014).

instruments, and folk instruments. In Romania the existence of departments depends on the qualification of teachers. On a national level we find all instruments (piano, strings, bass strings, wind and brass, percussion, private singing, and folk instruments in some places), but not all schools teach, for instance, the bassoon or the harp. The organ is only taught in some towns, too, for example, in Kolozsvár, Székelyudvarhely, Temesvár and Csíkszereda.

The proportion of departments is different in the three countries, but the piano is high in the first place in all three areas. In Hungary the distribution of students by departments is the following: 1/3 learn the piano; another 1/3 the violin, the cello, and the guitar; and the final third learn wood and brass instruments and percussion instruments. In Ukraine ¼ of children learn the piano, the rest is broken down proportionally between folk, brass and wind, string, and singing departments. In Romania the violin and the piano are in a majority, followed closely by wind and brass and singing.

In all three countries statistical data supply is obligatory but only Hungary has a unified national system. In Hungary data is to be supplied within the deadline of 1 October, just like from other public education institutions. KIR (Public Education Information System) contains the data received. The majority of data can only be reached with a master password, but there are public parts, too. Here we may find data necessary for identification (name, address, phone number, head of institution, etc.), qualifications, training branches, etc. (Office of Education 2012). In Ukraine the data are sent to the county management, in Romania the county school inspectorate.

In the countries investigated there are entrance exams to music education institutions and students wishing to learn music may only start their studies after a successful exam. In Hungary the entrance exam consists of singing, rhythm echo, even walking, imitating the instrument's sound, and improvising. In Ukraine entrance exams assess rhythmic skills, hearing, and vocal skills. In Romania the requirements include tests of hearing, singing, and rhythm tap.

Music studies provide the students with lessons several times per week. In Hungary students go to lessons two to three times a week, in Ukraine three to five times, in Romania three times a week. These subjects in Hungary mean 2 lessons of solfege, 2 lessons of instruments, and 2 lessons of orchestra. After the basic exam they may choose from music history, choir, chamber music and solfege in 2 lessons a week in addition to instrument and orchestra lessons. In Ukraine mandatory subjects include instrument lessons, solfege, and music history. In Romania the requirement is instrument, solfege and music theory, and orchestra.

In Hungary the number of obligatory programs varies according to the choice of courses (A or B). Course A students have a concert at the term's end, and a concert and mandatory exam at the end of the year. Course B students have three hearings a year. We find a treasury of optional programs in elementary institutions of art education, such as, for

instance, teachers' concerts which can be visited with season tickets, foundation concerts, orchestra concerts, opera visits, concerts introducing instruments in elementary schools, on festive occasions the students have concerts in kindergartens and old age retirement homes, in summer they have ethnography camps, and so on. In Ukraine instrumental and solfege exams are obligatory. Extra instruments, four-handed play, and reading music notes are not obligatory. In Romania optional programs vary from institution to institution such as choir, orchestra, drama club. Another interesting difference is that in the neighboring countries extra lessons are allotted for optional programs, while in Hungary such events are connected to leisure programs and national holidays.

Studying the social stratification of music students we found that in Hungary those children enter elementary institutions of art education whose parents have also learnt music. There is an outstanding number of medical students and children of doctors. In Ukraine no such tendency is observable, there the composition is rather mixed. In Romania music is studied by mainly children of middle-class and graduate parents.

Summary

On the bases of the interviews similarities and differences in the elementary music education of Partium become conspicuous. Romanian music training is special, as education for a professional musical career starts in the first form of elementary school, and teachers can follow and guide a student's development for 12 years. This is extremely important for talent development, as when starting secondary and tertiary studies children may experience a serious break with the change of tutors and the long preparation phase before their entrance exam.

In Hungary and Ukraine the goal of elementary art schools is different. Professional training is not an objective, but of course there is a possibility to do this in elementary institutions of art education. Unfolding the students' personality, utilizing the transfer effects of music education, creating a good community spirit and social life are extremely important aspects of the Hungarian music education.

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