

ASSESSMENT OF MUSICAL ABILITIES AT CONSERVATORIES – RESULTS OF A PILOT STUDY

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The aim of this study is to investigate the improvement of the musical abilities, the metacognitive, cognitive and affective skills of students through instrumental music in conservatory education. According to *Longley's* research (1999), music education provides a significant improvement for cognitive skills, such as critical and analytical thinking, problem solving or decision making. *Zhukov's* (2007) study of music also supports the development of metacognitive skills through instrumental music. *Hollenbeck's* research (2008) explored the effects of learning an instrument on general education courses such as Mathematics, English or Sciences among high school students. The time the students spend on learning the instrument plays an important role in school curriculum as well (*Janurik*, 2010).

Our research was carried out in October, 2012 at SZTE Vántus Conservatory during Solfege lessons. Our sample consists of 65 students; 21 boys and 44 girls aged 14–19 years filled out the online questionnaire. 78% of the students play the piano, 30% are string players, 22% of them play woodwind instruments, 10% are brass players. We asked them to fill out the questionnaire about some important aspects of the backgrounds of their choice of instrument, the effects of family conditions and about practicing habits. I found *Rózsáné's* test for instrumentalists (2007) a good starting point of it. Twenty questions were in connection with musical abilities. These questions were based on the Kodály Conception, on Seashore's Model of Musical Abilities (1919) and on Erosne's Model of Basic Musical Skills (1993). The results show that 61% of the students have appropriate music memory, 70 % of them have clear intonation and 73% have accurate rhythm skills. 64% of the students understand music vocabulary, musical expressions and signs, 57% are able to analyze folk music and 61% can analyze classical compositions. Only 53% of the student can do sight reading, 47% can recognize and recall different musical time periods, styles and composers. 40% are able to read music in different C-keys, 33% can transcribe music and 42% are able to improvise. According to the survey, students felt that they have strong metacognitive abilities, like cooperation, teamwork, communication and concentration. Correlation was shown between imagination and musical imagination. The data pertaining to the academic performance of instrumental music students in Math, Literature, Grammar and English seem to demonstrate that the majority students perform well, scoring at grade averages of 4 or 5 grades in general subject areas.

The aim of our further research is to create an online assessment system for testing the musical abilities in conservatory students. We would like to compare the results of the different age groups and examine the relationship between the development of mathematical, reading and writing skills and musical abilities.