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The Impact of Arts and Cultural Education on Pupils' Opinions of Musical Culture – Interdisciplinary Project

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Abstract

In contemporary education, the arts and cultural education provide the possibilities for the development of pupils' creativity, critical thinking and critical attitude towards art and culture. In this respect, we present an interdisciplinary project, based on the implementation of arts and cultural education objectives in didactic units of music education and history, and cooperation between music and history teachers and the composer. The experimental programme was performed in four classes of two Slovenian primary schools. The results of the research confirmed positive effects of the implementation of arts and cultural education regarding the pupils' opinions of musical culture (classical music, musicians, consumerism, musical education and classical music of the 20th century) and the overall popularity of the subjects connected. The example of the designed interdisciplinary project can serve as the guideline for systematic implementation of the arts and culture education in the learning process as well as contribution to raising awareness about the importance of collaboration between schools and artists.

Keywords: *arts and cultural education; collaboration with the composer; history; interdisciplinarity; music education*

Introduction

In the last decade, the acknowledgment of arts and cultural education in educational spheres is rising. As we review the literature, we can observe different uses of concepts from country to country, even within a specific country. Alongside arts and cultural

education, the most frequently used terms are »cultural education«, »arts education«, »arts and heritage education« (*National Guidelines for Arts and Cultural Education*, 2009). As authors (Tome, 2008; Rotar Pance, 2008) suggest, the term arts education is too narrow and cultural education too wide, therefore the use of arts and cultural education is appropriate.

The foundation for characterization of the field was contributed to by Bamford (2006), who distinguished two different approaches towards art education, namely *education in art* (the development of skills and knowledge within specific art discipline) and *education through art* (the art is understood as the means for learning contents from other subjects and for the realization of more general learning goals). The positive effects of the approaches are being explored (Upitis & Smithrim, 2003; Bamford, 2006; Road Map for Arts Education, 2006; Cheung, 2008; Sicherl-Kafol & Denac, 2011; DeBacker et al., 2012), researchers are observing improvements of pupils' attitude towards school; in addition, *education in art* has an impact on the cultural identity of pupils, improves personal satisfaction and develops the artistic abilities, sensitivity and respect towards art. Furthermore, *education through art* enables the development of general learning skills and knowledge, and positive cognitive transfer. The approaches are complementary and both are important for the effective development of pupils. Our research is mainly focused on education in art, but in regards to interdisciplinarity the approach to education through art has also been included.

The significance of the arts and cultural education is emphasised by numerous documents (*Road Map for Arts Education*, 2006; Požar Matijašič & Bucik, 2008; *National Guidelines for Arts and Cultural Education*, 2009; *Draft Model of Culture and Arts Education*, 2009; *National programme for culture, 2014-2017, 2018 – 2025*), however, there is still a wide gap between the declaration of the importance and conditions provided for realization of arts and cultural education in schools, especially regarding the paramount principle of arts and cultural education, the cooperation between school and cultural organizations/artist, of which positive effects were already proven (Upitis & Smithrim, 2003, Cheung, 2008; Sicherl-Kafol & Denac, 2011). The authentic experience of working with an artist can offer teachers and pupils the opportunities for different views, methods, approaches, which can represent the alternative to one-sided cognitive stimulations and diminish the distance between pupils and the art (De Backer et al., 2012). Furthermore, it can improve the quality of teaching, foster creativity, improve teacher knowledge and self-confidence (Bamford, 2006). So far, relatively little is known about which school systems in Europe offer that kind of cooperation (Eurydice, 2010). The example of good practice can be found in Italy (more open curriculums) and Austria, where a school can employ artists, through the form of projects. The artist is given the role of a consultant available for teachers to consult about the approaches to include the cultural contents into practice (*Arts and cultural education and the non-governmental sector in culture*, 2015).

In addition to schools collaborating with artists, the theoretical aspect of arts and cultural education encompass the general objectives and principles such as the development of creativity, critical thinking, aesthetic sensibility, active attitudes towards art and culture, experience of cultural creations and encouragement of awareness about one's culture (*Road Map for Arts Education*, 2006).

In the field of music education, the *Draft Model of Culture and Arts Education* (2009) defines specific measures, among others emphasising the encouragement of creativity, concern about the quality of the sound environment and the awareness and critical evaluation of music culture that is referring to massive and popular culture. The music industry is in the business of selling as many products as possible and therefore forced to seek new marketing possibilities where the quality of the product is seldom irrelevant. Young people are the main target group of the music industry that is known to have a great impact on the musical preferences of youth (Negus, 2006; Evans, 2010). The most popular leisure activity among young people is listening to (popular) music (Vries, De P., 2010; Dobrota, S. & Ercegovic, I. R., 2017). As North and Hargreaves (1995) emphasized, the formation of musical preferences is set by late adolescence and then they stay equivalently unchanged. Therefore, it is necessary that music education provides the opportunity for pupils to gain knowledge about the facts of the musical industry and enables the development of pupils' creative and critical thinking while shaping positive attitudes towards art and culture.

The main focus of the present research is the design of the interdisciplinary experimental programme with the integration of different aspects of arts and cultural education and, additionally, evaluate the effectiveness of the programme regarding the pupils' opinions of musical culture and their preferences towards specific school subjects.

Methodology

Research Aims and Hypotheses

The aim of the research is:

- to design the experimental programme comprised of:
 - a) the implementation of the general objectives of the arts and cultural education into music and history education;
 - b) the interdisciplinary project based on the collaboration between music and history teachers and the artist;
- to examine the effects of the experimental programme and interdisciplinary project on:
 - a) pupils' opinions of musical culture (classical music, musicians, consumerism, musical education and classical music of the 20th century);
 - b) the overall popularity of the subjects connected.

In consideration of the formulated aims, hypotheses based on the conditions after the experiment regarding the experimental (ES) and control (CG) group were set.

H 1.1. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a higher level of agreement with opinion, *classical music is relaxing*.

H 1.2. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a lower level of agreement with opinion *I would not go to see a concert of classical music by my own choice*.

H 1.3. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a lower level of agreement with opinion *people are going to concerts of classical music, for the purpose of prestige*.

H 1.4. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a lower level of agreement with opinion, *the tickets for the concert of classical music are too expensive*.

H 1.5. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a higher level of agreement with opinion *the musician should be the one who likes to sing, dance and is visually attractive*.

H 1.6. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a lower level of agreement with opinion *when I am choosing my favourite music, I am also paying attention to the external appearance of the performer*.

H 1.7. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a higher level of agreement with opinion *the music industry is promoting massive consumerism*.

H 1.8. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a higher level of agreement with opinion *the search for financial profit is paralysing the arts and culture*.

H 1.9. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a higher level of agreement with opinion *the musician should be musically educated*.

H 1.10. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a higher level of agreement with opinion *the musical education of the listener, aids towards a better understanding of the music*.

H 1.11. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a higher level of agreement with opinion *I like classical music of the 20th century*.

H 1.12. Pupils of the EG (considering the pupils of the CG) will express a lower level of agreement with opinion *classical music of the 20th century is hard to understand*.

H 2.1. Pupils of the EG will rate the level of popularity of music (as school subject) higher, considering the pupils of the CG.

H.2.2. Pupils of the EG will rate the level of popularity of history (as school subject) higher, considering the pupils of the CG.

The experimental programme

The experimental programme was designed, based on the collaborative planning of music/history teachers and Slovenian female artist. The interdisciplinary didactic units of music education and history have been constructed on the basis of implementation of the general objectives of arts and cultural education, namely the development of pupils' critical thinking, critical attitude towards culture and art, creativity, aesthetic

sensitivity, cultural awareness, cultural identity, attitudes towards preservation of art and cultural heritage and enabling to experience and re-experience cultural creations.

A key concept of collaboration with the artist was the engagement of pupils in the authentic musical experience. Artist has led the pupils through exploration, self-discovery, thinking about feelings and inspiration, towards exploring the world of sounds, playing on the instruments and improvising in small groups. The main integrative part was based on the creative process itself. The outcome was the creation of a musical composition constructed in a way so that every pupil had the chance of self-expression and presentation of one's creativity. One of the creative process paths was the expression and discovery of feelings, emotions, attitudes towards historical events of the 20th century.

Method

For assessing the effectiveness of the experimental programme, we used an experimental method of empirical/analytical pedagogic research paradigm.

Sample of Participants

The research included four classes of ninth graders from two primary schools (aged fourteen to fifteen), that represented the control group (n = 33) and the experimental group (n = 43). In terms of statistical hypothesis testing, the two selected groups of pupils represent a simple random sample from a hypothetical population.

Data Collection and Instruments

Before the experiment, we selected the participating classes from the chosen primary schools, which provided us with some general information. Then we gathered information on the initial and final states of the control group and the experimental group by means of a questionnaire, which had been designed specifically for this research. The data regarding pupils' opinions were gathered by Likert-type of frequency scale, measuring levels of agreement or disagreement. As there is no closed categorization of the different musical genres, we have conducted preliminary research where pupils defined the following genres: classical music (music from the Renaissance – Romantic era); classical music of 20th century; popular music (pop, rock, turbo folk, metal, R'n'B, reggae, rap, house, techno, punk, popular-folk music); folk music; jazz. The level of popularity of the school subjects was established by pupils' rankings of the 11 school subjects.

Data Processing

The data was processed at the descriptive and inferential level, using the following statistical methods:

frequency distribution of variables (f, f %); Mann-Whitney U Test; χ^2 test (Pearson's χ^2 test) of the hypothesis of independence.

Results

The pupils' opinions on some aspects of musical culture

Before the experiment, there were no statistically significant differences between comparison groups, regarding the pupils' opinions of musical culture.

As indicated in table 1, after the implementation of the experimental programme, the results of Mann-Whitney test (U, P) show statistically significant differences between the pupils of the experimental group and those of the control group regarding some of the aspects of musical culture. Pupils of the experimental group are expressing higher level of agreement with opinions: *Classical music is relaxing* (U = 517; P = 0.039); *Musician should be the one who likes to sing, dance and is visually attractive* (U = 530; P = 0.049); *Music industry is promoting massive consumerism* (U = 506; P = 0.024); *The search for financial profit is paralysing the art and culture* (U = 503; P = 0.024); *The musician should be musically educated* (U = 481; P = 0.012); *Musical education of the listener aids better understanding of the music* (U = 479; P = 0.012); *I like classical music of 20th century* (U = 399; P = 0.001) and lower level of agreement with opinion *Classical music of 20th century is hard to understand* (U = 384; P = 0.000). Therefore we confirmed hypotheses H 1.1., H 1.5., H 1.7. – 1.12. As there were no statistically significant differences between the comparison groups regarding the opinions: *People are going to concerts for the purpose of prestige* (U = 612; P = 0.287); *The tickets for the concert of classical music are too expensive* (U = 616; P = 0.297); *When I'm choosing my favourite music, I am also paying attention to external appearance of the performer* (U = 700; P = 0.919), the hypotheses H 1.3, H 1.4., H 1.2., H 1.6. are not confirmed. There is, however, the recognition of tendency regarding the opinion: *I would not, by my own choice, go to see a concert of classical music* (U = 532; P = 0.057), where pupils of the experimental group expressed a lower level of agreement with this opinion, compared to pupils of the control group.

Table 1

Level of agreement with specific opinions between the pupil of the EG and CG

Opinions	\bar{R}	U	P
O. 1: <i>Classical music is relaxing.</i>	EG 42,98 CG 32,67	517,0	0,039
O. 2*: <i>I would not go to see a concert of classical music by my own choice.</i>	EG 42,63 KS 33,12	532,0	0,057
O. 3*: <i>People are going to concerts of classical music for the purpose of prestige.</i>	EG 36,23 CG 41,45	612,0	0,287
O. 4*: <i>The tickets for the concert of classical music are too expensive.</i>	EG 40,67 CG 35,67	616,0	0,297
O. 5*: <i>Musician should be the one who likes to sing, dance and is visually attractive.</i>	EG 42,67 CG 33,06	530,0	0,049
O. 6*: <i>When I am choosing my favourite music, I am also paying attention to the external appearance of the performer.</i>	EG 38,28 CG 38,79	700,0	0,919

Opinions	\bar{R}	U	P
O. 7: <i>The music industry is promoting massive consumerism.</i>	EG 43,23 CG 32,33	506,0	0,024
O. 8: <i>The search for financial profit is paralysing art and culture.</i>	EG 43,30 KG 32,24	503,0	0,024
O. 9: <i>The musician should be musically educated.</i>	EG 43,81 CG 31,58	481,0	0,012
O. 10: <i>Musical education of the listener aids better understanding of the music.</i>	EG 43,86 CG 31,52	479,0	0,012
O. 11: <i>I like classical music of the 20th century.</i>	EG 45,71 CG 29,11	399,5	0,001
O. 12*: <i>Classical music of the 20th century is hard to understand.</i>	EG 46,07 CG 28,64	384,0	0,000

*Converted negative opinions; EG – pupils from the experimental group; CG – pupils from the control group; \bar{R} - Rank average

The popularity of school subjects – music education and history

The initial and final state of the level of subjects' popularity was established based on the pupils' rankings of 11 school subjects (chemistry, English language, music education, visual art, mathematics, Slovenian language, physical education, history, biology, physics). Before the experiment, there were no statistically significant differences between pupils of the experimental and control group.

After the experiment, the results of the χ^2 test of the hypothesis of independence shows that there is a statistically significant difference between comparison groups regarding the popularity of subjects.

Table 2.1

The popularity of the school subject - music education

Level of popularity	EG		CG		All	
	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%
1	3	7,0	1	3,0	4	5,3
2	7	16,3	1	3,0	8	10,5
3	9	20,9	2	6,1	12	15,8
4	9	20,9	4	12,1	12	15,8
5	6	14,0	8	24,2	14	18,4
6	4	9,3	4	12,1	8	10,5
7	1	2,3	4	12,1	6	7,9
8	2	4,7	7	21,2	9	11,8
9	1	2,3	1	3,0	2	2,6
10	0	0,0	1	3,0	1	1,3
11	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
All	43	100,0	33	100,0	76	100,0

$$\chi^2 = 17,609; g = 10; P = 0,040$$

As seen from table 2.1, music education gained a higher level of popularity among pupils of the experimental group where most of them ranked the subject on the second

(16.3%), third (20.9%) and fourth (20.9%) place. Most of the pupils of the control group ranked music education on fifth (24.2%) and eight place (21.2%).

After the experiment, pupils of the experimental group additionally assessed history as more popular than pupils of the control group (table 2.2).

Table 2.2
The popularity of the school subject - history

Level of popularity	EG		CG		All	
	f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
1	4	9.3	1	3.0	5	6.6
2	9	20.9	3	9.1	12	15.8
3	8	18.6	1	3.0	9	11.8
4	4	9.3	2	6.1	6	7.9
5	7	16.1	0	0.0	7	9.2
6	3	7.0	3	9.1	6	7.9
7	4	9.3	1	3.0	5	6.6
8	1	2.3	4	12.1	5	6.6
9	2	4.7	4	12.1	6	7.9
10	0	0.0	5	15.2	5	6.6
11	1	2.3	9	27.3	10	13.2
All	43	100.0	33	100.0	76	100.0

$\chi^2 = 32,830; g = 10; P = 0,000$

Most of the pupils (EG) ranked history on the second (20.9%) and third (18.6%) place, as opposed to pupils of the control group who ranked the subject on the tenth (15.2%) and eleventh (27.3%) place. Based on the presented result, the hypotheses H 2.1. and H 2.2. are confirmed.

Discussion and Conclusion

The experimental program was established based on the interdisciplinary approach, with an emphasis on general objectives of arts and cultural education. Didactic units of the experimental group were designed to intentionally integrate the development of critical thinking in different subjects and musical contents. In addition, pupils were encouraged to self-discover the connections between consumerism and the structure of the music industry, where the aspects of quality of the music were also discussed. The main starting point was the continual experiential-analytical approach of listening to music and pupils' critical evaluation of the musical pieces, based on parameters such as the expressive potential, the complexity of the form, the skills of the musician, originality, and complexity of melody and rhythm, potential of the intellectual challenge, aesthetic features, etc. The gradual changes in pupils' thinking and their views have already been observed by teachers in between the process of the experimental programme, which has then been confirmed in the end results of the research. After the experiment pupils of the experimental group have shown higher

levels of agreement regarding the following opinions: *Music industry is promoting massive consumerism; The search for financial profit is paralysing the art and culture; The musician should be musically educated; Musical education of the listener aids better understanding of the music;* and lower agreement with opinion *Musician should be the one who likes to sing, dance and is visually attractive.* The results show that pupils started to acknowledge the importance of musical knowledge while being a part of the musical sphere, which applies to the musician as well as to of the listener. Furthermore, pupils have developed the perspective where financial profit is recognized as unfavourable for art itself and the awareness of the goals of the music industry, one of them being the production of music, based on the profit of marketing consumer goods, regardless of its quality and inner expression of musicians. As Cotreell (2017) explains, systematic focus on our reasons and the examination of the foundation of these can help uncover one's assumptions and enables possibilities of sharper awareness. However, the predictions that pupils of the experimental group will, after the experiment, attribute lower level of agreement with opinion *When I am choosing my favourite music, I am also paying attention to the external appearance of the performer,* was not confirmed. This indicates that pupils still give emphasis on the external appearance of the performer and that the experimental programme proved not to be efficient in this account. That can be explained with the nature of today's (visual) media that have a great impact on adolescent lives, and beyond. As other researches (Wapnick et al., 1998; Tsay, 2013) found out, even when formal judging of the classical musicians is taking place, the judges give priority to the visual information before the ones based on audio features, given the quality the music's subordinate position.

As regards to opinions referring to classical music, higher level of agreement of pupils of the experimental group with statement *Classical music is relaxing* could be seen as a starting point for hypotheses that could not be confirmed, as pupils did not change their perceptions and did not assign statistically significant lower level of agreement (compared with pupils of the control group) with opinions: *People are going to concerts of classical music for the purpose of prestige; Tickets for the concert of classical music are too expensive; I would not go to see a concert of classical music, by my own choice.* Focusing on the perspective of prestige, we can not assume about the efficiency of the experimental programme due to the facts that pupils of the experimental group expressed statistically significant difference (compared with pupils of the control group), prior to the experiment ($\bar{R} = \text{EG: } 33.69/\text{KS: } 44.77; U = 640.5; 0, 434$). Furthermore, the experimental programme did not have an impact (in a statistically significant way) on the pupils' (of the EG) lower level of agreement with the price overratedness of the classical concert ticket. In this regard, we stress the limitation of the research, arising from the concern of not acquiring important additional data for the viable analysis which would provide us with the opinion of agreement with the price rate of a ticket for the pop, rock or other non-classical concerts. That would allow us to establish the reasons more precisely.

Even though the hypotheses connected with the opinion *I would not go to see a concert of classical music by my own choice*, could not be confirmed, there is the existence of tendency, which we find encouraging. After the implementation of the experimental programme pupils of the experimental group express the existence of possibility that they would go to the classical concert, for their pleasure. Simultaneously, as mentioned before, pupils of the experimental group (compared to pupils of the control group) expressed (statistically significant) higher level of agreement with opinion that classical music relaxes them. In accordance with other research (Stalhammar, 2010) the results insinuates that pupils can describe and associate classical music not just with the objective evaluative terms, control and compulsion but with the “outside of school” perception, leisure, free, and wellbeing. All the above is possible with the awareness that experience based approach is paramount in the educational settings. Therefore, besides focusing on providing pupils with musical experiences to the greatest extent possible, we established the collaboration with a Slovenian female artist where pupils had the opportunity to be a part of authentic experience, to discover, to grasp the environment of sound and see on their own the features of the creative process, while becoming the ones who create. The process was directed towards modern classical music with a specific feature of 20th-century classical music, which had resulted in a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group. Namely, pupils of the experimental group (in comparison with pupils from the control group) expressed a higher level of agreement with the opinion *I like classical music of 20th century* and lower level of agreement with opinion *Classical music of 20th century is hard to understand*. The presented results match the results of other research findings, as most often the negative experience comes from unfamiliarity with a music genre (Green, 2006), perception of difficulty of music is related to pupils’ motivation and, more specifically, music of the 20th century is often rejected because of the lack of understanding (Johnson, 2011). Furthermore, researchers (Cheung, 2008; Sicherl-Kafol & Denac, 2011) confirm that the cooperation with an artist has an impact on the cultural awareness and expression, and on the transformation of the attitudes towards art.

The effects of the experimental programme were additionally assessed from the aspect of the school subjects. Pupils ranked 11 subjects by popularity. Before the experiment there was no statistically significant difference between the groups, as opposed to the state after the experiment, when a statistically significant difference was observed. Pupils of the experimental group (compared with the pupils of control groups) ranked both subjects involved in the experiment, namely musical education and history, higher by the level of popularity. Therefore, we can confirm the effect of the experimental programme from the aspect of subject popularity. The ground for these results are situated in the learning process carried out in the experimental group and comprised of the interdisciplinary integration of arts and cultural education goals, and the cooperation between the artist and pupils/teachers, which was also based on interdisciplinary connections. Pupils had the opportunity to critically evaluate, self-

discover, self-express, create and self-explore the possible connection between the subjects. These results are supported by various researchers (Sicherl-Kafol, 2007; Cheung, 2008; Michelsen & Sriraman, 2009; Serrano Pastor, 2013), confirming that with the realizations of connections between subject the level of motivation and interest towards the learning process rises, furthermore, the integration of art education increases the popularity of social science-based subjects (Bolak et al., 2005).

The realization of the connectedness between the fragmentation based learning process and the development of transferable lifelong learning abilities, such as critical thinking and creativity, should be at the center of the educational system. Arts and cultural education can be used as an interdisciplinary tool for meeting those standards. In this sense, the results of the research can contribute to a greater awareness of the importance of collaboration between schools/teachers/pupils and the cultural institutions/artist. Furthermore, the designed experimental programme can offer an example of the possible implementation of arts and cultural education into the learning process, as the potential direction towards the agenda of Slovenian *National programme for culture* (2018-2025, pp. 26), expressed with the courageous statement »*In the year 2025, the field of art, cultural heritage... will be broadly accepted as the paramount carriers of social cohesion, shaping and representing identity of community and as lever for the international prominence of Slovenia, the country that appreciates the creativity and is attentive to cultural needs and potentials of the citizens...«.*

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Utjecaj umjetnosti i kulturnog obrazovanja na mišljenja učenika o glazbenoj kulturi - interdisciplinarni projekt

Sažetak

U suvremenom obrazovanju umjetnost i kulturno obrazovanje pružaju mogućnost razvoja kreativnosti učenika, kritičkog mišljenja i kritičkog stava prema umjetnosti i kulturi. U tom smislu predstavljamo interdisciplinarni projekt koji se temelji na ostvarivanju ciljeva umjetničkog i kulturnog odgoja u didaktičkim jedinicama glazbenog obrazovanja i povijesti te suradnji između učitelja glazbe i povijesti i skladatelja. Eksperimentalni program izveden je u četiri razreda dviju slovenskih osnovnih škola. Rezultati istraživanja potvrdili su pozitivne učinke primjene umjetničkog i kulturnog obrazovanja na mišljenje učenika o glazbenoj kulturi (klasična glazba, glazbenici, konzumerizam, glazbeno obrazovanje i klasična glazba 20. stoljeća) i ukupnu popularnost povezanih osoba. Primjer dizajniranog interdisciplinarnog projekta može poslužiti kao smjernica za sustavnu primjenu umjetničkog i kulturnog obrazovanja u procesu učenja te doprinos podizanju svijesti o važnosti suradnje između škola i umjetnika.

Ključne riječi: *umjetnost i kulturno obrazovanje; suradnja sa skladateljem; povijest; interdisciplinarnost; glazbeno obrazovanje*