

DOI [https://doi.org/10.32405/2308-8885-2021-1\(99\)-6-9](https://doi.org/10.32405/2308-8885-2021-1(99)-6-9)

УДК [37.018.54 : 78 (438)] : - 042.2 : [(015) : (4)] : [165.173 : (076.5)]

Miroslaw Grusiewicz,

*Dr hab., Professor, Department of Pedagogy of Culture, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland;
m.grusiewicz@umcs.pl; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1717-2445>*

MUSIC EDUCATION AT SCHOOL IN POLAND AS COMPARED TO EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL ASSUMPTIONS AND PRACTICES

У статті розглядаються питання, що стосуються сучасної освіти. Використовуючи провідні педагогічні парадигми, що переважають у всьому світі, а також освітні практики, запроваджені в різних країнах, автор здійснює аналіз умов, що вплинули на стан загальної музичної освіти в Польщі. Піднімаються проблеми ширшого контексту викликів і потреб нинішньої системи освіти та змін, запроваджених останньою польською освітньою реформою 2016 року.

У підсумку в статті запропоновано зміни в універсальній музичній освіті, включаючи відхід від розгалуженої, збалансованої системи викладання на користь вибору селективних специфічних форм та змісту або посилення зв'язків освіти із сучасною культурою. Основний меседж статті – це дисертація, в якій розглядаються сприятливі зміни, що можуть поглибити трансформацію перетворень у музичній освіті, системі підготовки вчителів у музичній освіті з метою глибокого удосконалення всієї системи навчання, переходу від централізованого управління до демократичного управління школами та індивідуалізації освіти.

Ключові слова: музична освіта, освіта в усьому світі, освіта в Польщі, освітні реформи, педагогічні парадигми.

Introduction. In this article, we will try to answer the question of how music education is conducted in Poland in comparison to Europe and the rest of the world, as well as what we can and should do in Poland to bring music education closer to contemporary needs and expectations. In this paper, we also refer to general problems of the education system because we believe that without significant changes in the current system and without making room for culture and art in schools, new solutions related to music education will not bring the desired results.

Education is developing individually in specific countries. Nevertheless, mainstream education still relies on Herbart's pedagogical method, based on classroom instruction, with the primacy of knowledge arranged in accordance with the fields of contemporary science. Education is strongly centralised, with extended administration [5]. One of the subjects within this system is music, which is also one of the less important elements of the curriculum [13].

However, necessary changes and the required revision of our way of thinking about school are being

discussed and described more often. What is emphasised when it comes to core competencies are social skills and shaping various traits of character. What is discussed is the problem of making school more democratic, making teaching more individual and building a friendly and partnership-based school system, which also refers to school as an institution that would play a culture-forming role [1; 7; 14; 16; 17; 19].

Organisational and systemic solutions for music education. Individual countries are also more eager to adopt solutions which try to meet the above mentioned demands. The leader, which achieves very good results and effectively implements the presented assumptions, is Finland, but other countries that should be listed here are Canada, the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands and Estonia [16, p. 140–145], and in all of them going in this direction has brought positive results.

Artistic subjects and cultural education benefit from the introduction of education systems that focus on strengthening interests and developing social and individual aptitudes. It is visible and the reinforcement of cultural education can be observed in the member states of the European Union. The number of mandatory artistic subjects is growing in European countries. According to a report from 2010, European students had on average 800–1200 hours of mandatory artistic classes in the whole education cycle. Until 2010, in Poland it was about 200 hours and now it is a little bit over 400 hours, including music classes in early school education, which are not always conducted. [1, p. 26–30; 15]. Even though the report provides rather precise numbers, they should be treated as estimates. In many countries, early school education is practised as integrated teaching, whereas in upper grades, it is sometimes hard to differentiate between mandatory and elective subjects. Nevertheless, what is visible are huge differences between mandatory artistic classes in Poland and in other countries. First of all, it is because cultural education in Poland consists of two subjects, 'music' and 'visual arts', whereas in European countries, the

standard that is gaining popularity includes four subjects. Apart from the two mentioned above, they include theatre or dance classes and classes devoted to handicraft or architecture. These four subjects may vary and often it is students who choose them, but there are four subjects on average. Fewer hours of artistic classes in Poland is also a result of disregarding these classes in early school education. Across Europe, students in upper grades do not have many more hours of mandatory music classes than in Poland, as it is usually one hour a week. In Poland, the number of hours of mandatory music classes in upper primary school is within the European average.

In Europe and around the world, cultural education, including music classes, is to a large extent carried out outside mandatory school classes and many European countries focus on developing these forms of teaching. According to a report from 2020, central authorities in the majority of European countries require schools to provide specific extra-curricular classes, which are usually free or co-financed by the state. They are dominated by catch-up courses in mandatory subjects, but recreation and cultural classes, including music classes, are in the second place. They can have various forms. The most popular ones are students' visits to institutions of culture, such as museums, theatres, concert halls and operas, as well as participation in artistic events [2, p. 204–207]. According to the report from 2010, in the majority of European countries it is statutorily recommended to conduct this type of classes and in countries such as Finland, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia such visits are mandatory. At central level, there are organisational and financial solutions which make it easier for schools and students to access cultural heritage [1, p. 37–40].

Another popular feature of European school systems are elective classes. They have a unique role in the field of culture and art. They make it possible to individualise teaching, develop interests and passions, support skills and talents and fulfil the need for making an artistic statement and showing one's creative

expression. The reports from 2010 and 2020 include many detailed legal solutions conducive to the introduction of elective classes for students in various countries. In this respect, it is worth paying attention to France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Finland and Slovenia [1, 43–46; 2, p. 204–207].

In the report from 2020, authors pay attention to the systems of 'all-day schools', which are supposed to be open in the afternoon to provide additional educational and cultural services. Countries which promote such solutions include: Germany, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Austria and Portugal. [2, p. 206].

Polish schools conduct optional extra-curricular classes. It is a given school that makes decisions on their scope and scale. From a formal point of view, it is not a bad solution. These classes include artistic activities, but the dominating and recommended ones that are fully funded by the authorities are catch-up classes and classes that extend the curriculum for mandatory subjects [2, p. 205]. Their main purpose is carrying out the curriculum and preparing students for tests and exams rather than developing their interests and passions. Moreover, in Poland, we do not have a tradition of elective classes.

Concepts and practice. A tendency which can be observed around the world in relation to music education is walking away from extensive and balanced teaching in favour of choosing specific forms and content of teaching. When it comes to music education, teachers do not pursue a traditional method of teaching music, which would involve systematically going through specific material that would cover all the most important achievements in this field and would fully show students the principles and theory of music. Instead, teachers consciously choose specific activities. The dominating one is joining instrumental ensembles, instrumental and vocal ensembles and choirs. Focusing on this aspect seems to be justified. Such an approach to education gives students a chance to derive satisfaction from their contact with music, which is possible with a certain degree of professionalism and artistic skills, but they will not be

acquired if performing music in the classroom is one out of many equivalent forms of a child's contact with music.

For over 40 years, universal music education in Poland has been based on the Polish concept of music education, formulated in the 1970s by Maria Przychodzińska, in cooperation with Ewa Lipska and others. This concept introduced a model of extensive and balanced teaching based on five activities: listening to music, singing, playing (school) instruments, engaging in creative activities, moving to music [9; 10; 11; 12]. They were all brought together by knowledge of music culture and music theory, which became dominant in particular in upper grades. Changes introduced almost 50 years ago had many positive effects. Thanks to them, we moved closer to global achievements and the methodology of teaching music was significantly developed. In practice, the most significant change was extending the scope of music education to forms which used to be absent or were treated as marginal.

However, it is not without a reason that teachers around the world are moving away from this model of teaching, which does not quite work in contemporary school practice. It generates a multiplicity of topics which are covered only briefly. Instead of satisfaction, experiences, reflections and emotions, students get specific tasks to be filled in, lose skills which are not consolidated and forget what they have learnt.

When conservative and authoritarian politicians came to power in Poland in 2015, previous actions aimed at the democratisation of schools were brought to a halt. Schools burdened with various tasks give up external projects and collaboration with social institutions and organisations, which used to be like a gust of fresh air and broke the school routine.

The tone of reflections in Polish scientific circles has changed as well. In 2015, debates concerned the following problems: 'Competencies of the future', 'What kind of school do we want in the 21st century?', 'How should schools welcome and support newcomers from other cultures?', 'Relationships in a

friendly and safe school”, ‘Innovative teachers and students in the school of the 21st century’, ‘Schools are waking up – what we should learn today to meet the needs of tomorrow’, ‘Let education be the revolution in Poland!’, ‘How can you tell that a school is open?’, ‘How can we change education?’ [Chosen discussion panels at the *3rd Polish Education Congress*, Katowice 2015]. Currently, the following topics are brought up at conferences: ‘Dissatisfaction and helplessness. Education and the collapse of the educating society’, ‘The destruction of education (and/in) democracy’, ‘Culture in crisis’, ‘Educational evaluation. A sketch to a portrait of missed opportunities’, ‘The twilight of public local government education’, ‘Memory, ideology, power. Learning to forget’ [Topics addressed at a conference entitled *Questions about the present and changes*, Wrocław 2017].

Education in Poland is in a difficult situation. Despite the fact that Polish students still get rather good PISA results [18; 8], there are many signs of a profound crisis and the detachment of school from the needs of the contemporary times and the expectations of students. A disturbing phenomenon are very critical opinions of students themselves, who do not like school, do not want to spend time there, believe they are mistreated, see their relationships with teachers and peers as bad and think that they learn many unnecessary things. In global comparative studies, the opinions of Polish students are among the most critical ones [6, p. 72–84].

The situation has been significantly worsened by a recent reform of the school system, which created a lot of confusion that is detrimental in itself. Another problem of the reform is that it was made without consultations, without the approval of those involved, i.e. teachers and students, without a rational justification and without the participation of experts. Moreover, it has strengthened the conservative approach towards education. After the reform, our educational system is even more centralised, various projects and interdisciplinary activities were limited, the core curriculum was extended, the number of hours of mandatory classes

was increased, and junior high schools were closed down, even though they levelled educational opportunities in villages and small towns. Today, the Polish school teaches many unnecessary things, it is authoritarian, it teaches without any discussion and it fails to shape core competencies [3, p. 106–107]. Constant changes in laws and regulations lead to uncertainty and a lack of job security for teachers. Due to the reaction of the government to the strike of educational staff in 2019, as well as low wages in this sector, the profession of a teacher is losing its prestige, a negative selection for the teaching profession is growing and an increasing number of schools report staff shortages. A real challenge for the education system is also the coronavirus pandemic, whose consequences are difficult to assess now.

Proposed changes. In the current social and political situation, the changes we propose cannot be introduced in Poland. The current government reinforces a conservative approach towards school. We can only hope that the current system and core curriculum will not prevent teachers from making students interested in their subject and that music classes will not be the least liked ones.

In the future, the most important thing will be to move away from extensive teaching in favour of choosing specific forms and content of education. The extensive model should be maintained only in integrated early education. At this age, music should naturally accompany children when they play and study, it should be present in various forms throughout the time they spend in kindergarten or at school, it should lead to natural upbringing in musical culture. And this is how this education is planned in Poland. When it comes to assumptions, no changes are needed. The problem is entrusting music classes to teachers without music training. They often distort the meaning of such education and sometimes do not conduct it at all.

If we want to maintain natural contact with music in upper grades, it needs to be more professional. We should stop teaching about music and start practising it. Knowledge is also needed,

but it cannot take precedence. Moreover, it does not have to cover all topics, they can and should be just specific points related to two separate forms of contact with music – performing it and listening to it.

The foundation of mandatory music classes should be performing music in instrumental ensembles, vocal and instrumental ensembles and choirs. Such classes should teach a student certain issues related to the theory and history of music, but the essence should be music itself and experiencing it. When a student regularly joins school music ensembles, we give the student a chance to derive satisfaction from music and to authentically shape his or her sensitivity.

The second form of music education which should be developed is attending concerts and listening to music performed by professionals. Students should visit various institutions. It would be possible at school if there were adequate architectural conditions. We would have to modernize gyms and assembly halls and adjust them to minimum acoustic, aesthetic and ergonomic requirements.

From the formal and organisational point of view, music education, other artistic subjects, physical education and religious education should be made separate from subjects that are graded or end with exams. They should be given a new status. While we should maintain certain mandatory artistic subjects, we should also give schools and teachers more freedom and optionality, limit mandatory material and give up traditional grades to start supporting, encouraging and positively motivating students. A large part of such activities could be attended by students from different classes because they would be elective and extra-curricular. Artistic classes should definitely differ from those in which knowledge is the most important.

It is also worth paying attention to the music that is included in the teaching content. Practice in Poland and around the world shows that music education is not always based on art music of high value, even though it definitely should be. Art which should shape an individual, his or her personality and sensitivity,

cannot be just any music. It cannot be banal, ordinary or kitschy. It applies not only to what we listen to, but also to what we perform with students. Even the songs we choose for children should be artistically defined.

Of course, art music is not only Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin, it is also present in contemporary culture, even in contemporary songs. At present, it is difficult to find geniuses and masterpieces that measure up to the above mentioned great composers, but let us not deny the artistic value of contemporary music culture. On the contrary, the most important thing in education is for it to be based on contemporary music culture (or rather its elements that have a significant artistic value). Education should take into account current cultural contexts and contemporary ways of participation in culture. School must be an element of contemporary culture and be connected with real life outside its walls. It should be a local centre of culture. Unfortunately, it is not. In one of my articles, I commented on the current situation of music education in Poland as follows: 'The current school system refers to contemporary music culture only to a limited extent, both when it comes to the teaching content and its broader activities. It does not take into account current cultural contexts and popular forms of participation in culture. When it comes to music education, school has become a backwater detached from music culture. Even if it preserves values, it takes the form of a museum, with old music examined through the dusty glass of old display cabinets' [4, p. 93].

When it comes to music education, Poland has some capital, i.e. many excellent teachers, an extensive methodology, academic programmes which provide artistic education in music and a great choir tradition, including Śpiewająca Polska (Singing Poland), a project that has been going on for many years. Today, we just need to put it all back in order. We need profound changes in the whole education system and as we introduce general changes, an appropriate place should be given to music education.

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Miroslaw Grusiewicz, Dr hab., Professor, Department of Pedagogy of Culture, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland; m.grusiewicz@umcs.pl; ORCID: 0000-0002-1717-2445

Music education at school in Poland as compared to European and global assumptions and practices

The paper addresses issues related to contemporary education. Using the leading pedagogical paradigms prevailing worldwide, as well as educational practices implemented in different countries as his background, the author analyzes the condition of universal music education in Poland. The problems are put in a broader context of challenges and needs of the current education system and changes introduced by the last Polish educational reform of 2016.

The paper ends with proposed changes in the universal music education, including departure from extensive, balanced teaching system to the benefit of selecting specific forms and content, or stronger links of education with contemporary culture. The main message of the paper is a thesis stating that favourable changes in music education presented in the paper, are possible following in-depth transformations of the entire teaching system, departure from centrally managed education to the benefit of democratic governance of schools and personalized education.

Keywords: music education, education worldwide, education in Poland, educational reforms, pedagogical paradigms.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 05.01. 2021 р.