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Implicit Theories of Teachers About the Importance of Teaching Music

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Abstract: Contemporary pedagogical literature emphasizes holistic upbringing and education, with the goal of developing the overall personality of students. In this regard, the aim of this study is to explore and determine how teachers perceive the importance of teaching music. This research was conducted in the second semester of the 2022/2023 school year on with a sample of Republic of Srpska primary school teachers (N=10). Empirical data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted both online and in person; a protocol with open-ended questions was developed. The data were analyzed using the method of qualitative thematic analysis. The research results show that teachers perceive music education positively and emphasize its importance for the comprehensive development of students. Additionally, teachers believe that certain changes are needed in the music curriculum, although they emphasize that they have freedom in choosing content in all teaching areas. There is a prevailing opinion among teachers which indicates the need for an increased focus of the educational system towards music education in the lower grades of primary school.

Keywords: *constructivism, implicit theories, music education, curriculum, teachers.*

Introduction

Constructivism and Implicit Theories

Constructivism, as an epistemological perspective, emphasizes the active role of the human mind in constructing knowledge and reality based on subjective experiences and interpretations. This perspective posits that our perception of the world involves a complex process of construction and interpretation, rather than merely passive reception of information. A fundamental premise of constructivism is that knowledge is not an absolute truth but rather a construct that emerges through the interaction between an individual and their environment. Consequently, each person develops their own subjective model of the world shaped by their unique experiences, beliefs, and the socio-cultural context. Thus, constructivism provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals construct knowledge and interpret their surroundings, while also highlighting the importance of active engagement in the learning process.

Implicit theories refer to the intuitive explanations' individuals use to understand the causes and motives of behavior, both their own and others' (Sternberg, 1985). These theories are not necessarily consciously articulated or defined but often represent unspoken assumptions that influence our judgments and interpretations. Implicit theories are frequently employed by individuals to comprehend complex social and emotional behaviors, adapting them to specific situations and contexts. Understanding implicit theories bears significance in various domains, including education, group psychology, and interpersonal

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relationships. Being aware of how implicit theories shape our behavior can enhance our consciousness and accountability in our judgments and interactions with others. Implicit theories constitute implicit assumptions that significantly influence our understanding of behavior and motivation, whether our own or others'. Despite often operating at an unconscious level, these theories wield substantial influence over our perceptions and actions. Thus, gaining insight into implicit theories can promote greater awareness of our judgments and interactions with others.

The Significance of Music and Music Education

The universality of the language of musical art makes it a dominant means of communication with countless creative possibilities and expressions, thereby serving as a crucial pillar for the development of individual personalities and society as a whole. As an art form, music can influence the creation of self-perception and perceptions of others, as well as categorize individuals into specific groups based on responses to questions such as "What music do you listen to?"; which was a frequently asked question among children and young people in the latter half of the 20th century, but is regrettably rarely asked nowadays. Music which is thoughtfully selected and of high quality typically evokes pleasant emotions, develops taste and stimulates brain development. For instance, both hemispheres of the brain are active during music performance (Parson; cited in [Habermajer, 2001](#)) which facilitates learning processes. Also, [Habermajer \(2001\)](#) found that listening to music enhances the acquisition of subject matter, thereby promoting overall psychophysical development in children. Key factors which influence the development of musical abilities include: heritage, family, nurturing environments, individual activities and motivation ([Jeremić, 2015](#)). The significance of early musical stimulation and education, ideally through play, along with a wide range of teaching methods, contributes to the development of fine and gross motor skills, speech, and overall cultural and musical upbringing. Classroom music education in the Republic of Srpska, with its diverse range of program content in the first and second triads of the nine-year primary schooling system, is realized through musical activities across three interrelated teaching areas: music performance (singing, playing, movement, and introduction to the basics of music literacy), music listening, and children's music creativity (*Curriculum for Primary Education*, 2014 and 2021). A competent, motivated, and creative teacher epitomizes the most important figure in not only the fostering of a love for work and learning, but also the creation of an atmosphere in which music can be introduced to children in order that they acquire knowledge and values, make decisions, collaborate in teams, nurture individuality, and where music classes become a source of joy and satisfaction. In this way, conditions are created for achieving the goal of music education in primary school – to develop the students' love and interest in music, or to develop musical taste (*Curriculum for Primary Education*, 2014 and 2021). "From the set goal of music education, which relates to developing interest, creativity, and critical thinking, tasks emerge that cannot be clearly differentiated regarding their dominant role in the teaching process as educational, instructional or functional" ([Vukićević and Stanojević, 2014, 128](#)). These tasks collectively contribute in the creation of a musical education environment which is rich and inspiring, and aims to develop students' musical abilities as well as a broader set of skills and values that will benefit them in life.

Music education holds a particular importance in the preservation and nurturing of cultural identity, national values, and folk traditions, as well as in the fostering of multicultural awareness ([Đurđanović et al., 2018](#)). Through this domain, respect for national and world cultural-historical, folk, and artistic heritage is cultivated. "Musical folklore adapts and transfers to areas of work in music education where students learn about and adopt it" ([Čalić and Grkić, 2013, 292](#)). Highlighting the importance of song, [Stošić](#) emphasizes: "song carries within itself a multifunctional potential and, through its structure, generates multiple functions, among which there are strong causal links that contribute to the versatile development of students' personalities" ([Stošić, 2008, 72](#)). Musical pedagogues and researchers have written about the educational value of folk music tradition and its insufficient presence in music education ([Gajić, 1996](#); [Spasojević-Stojanović and Trakilović, 2016](#)), emphasizing the values of musical heritage. Furthermore, the work of music teachers and their collaboration with classroom teachers can result in the creation of various school and extracurricular activities that contribute to familiarizing students with folk music traditions and other musical genres. [Martinović Bogojević \(2010\)](#) suggests that special attention should be paid to the use of experiential listening to music in early schooling to foster an emotional connection to it. Through empathy, humor, and successful execution of music culture tasks, as well as through the

teacher's attitude towards their students, a teacher can deliver quality education even in the absence of a specialized classroom, especially if open to undertaking various forms of professional development. The organization and structure of the class, the relationship between teacher and students, mutual respect, as well as opportunities for intellectual, moral, aesthetic, physical, health, ecological, national, patriotic, intercultural, and multicultural education, together with the application of the advantages of contemporary technology or simply *integrated pedagogy of the 21st century*, altogether contribute to comprehensive education. Music education in early schooling, in conjunction with a cluster of (skills-based) artistic subjects, should be a corner stone, which facilitates the branching out into all other knowledge and skills in various natural and social sciences. Through literature analysis in the region (Martinović Bogojević, 2010), it has been determined that the subject of music in the reformed educational system of Montenegro has achieved a significant status, closely linked to other subjects. The presence of music content also contributes to a more engaging acquisition of content from other subject areas. Therefore, the importance of music education is also reflected in its integration: "A well-organized class does not know only one activity in the classroom. The class should be dynamic, with various activities for students alternating or intertwining, but whenever possible (with exceptions when it is difficult to implement), they should fall under the same umbrella of the set task. Therefore, through an integrative approach, experientially going through two and/or three music activities for students and corresponding music content within them, the same or similar problem should be solved" (Stojanović, 2010, 6). It is evident that an integrative approach in classroom teaching, as well as the intertwining of music activities, contributes to a more successful achievement of learning outcomes and class goals.

Research Objective and Research Questions

In our study, we aim to explore teachers' perceptions of music culture education and comprehend their fundamental interpretations of the significance and impact of this subject on students. Therefore, the aim of our research is to examine teachers' implicit understanding of music culture education in the lower grades of primary school. The research questions are: (1) How do teachers perceive the importance of music culture for the comprehensive development of students? (2) How do teachers perceive the Music Curriculum?

Materials and Methods

Procedure

The research was conducted in June 2023. Participants took part in the study on a voluntary basis. Data were collected online via the Zoom application and in person on school premises where teachers conduct classes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed; each interview averaging about 45 minutes.

Sample

In this study, the population consisted of school teachers (Grades 1 – 5) employed in primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina/the Republic of Srpska. All participants were female. The sample consisted of 10 teachers from the Republic of Srpska. The main criteria for participation in this research were that the teachers have more than 10 years of teaching experience, a willingness to participate and it was necessary that they had completed a bachelor's degree in teaching. Interviews were conducted by a psychologist and two music educators.

Instrument

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. For the purposes of this research, a protocol with open-ended questions was developed. The questions in the protocol followed the thematic determinants of the research questions: How do teachers perceive the Music Curriculum?

Data Analysis

The data analysis method used was a qualitative thematic analysis. We investigated how teachers perceive music education. The first step was familiarization with the collected data, then we generated initial codes which were used as a basis to determined categories, and in the final step, we defined themes. In the selection of themes, we adhered to what is significant, that is “a set of criteria that help determine what is and what is not worth being a theme” (Viligi, 2016, 141). Although the instrument was wide-ranging, we analyzed responses to questions that were relevant to the research question.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented by means of seven thematic areas. The obtained responses are grouped into two thematic areas within the research question: What is the perception of teachers about the importance of music or students? The remaining five thematic areas explain the perception of teachers about the quality of the Music Curriculum for the lower grades of primary school.

Research Question 1: How do teachers perceive the importance of music for the comprehensive development of students?

Although the responses may seem generalized, they all relate specifically to the teaching contents of music. Therefore, they should be observed in that context. Within the category of student development, teachers identify aspects positively influenced by music education: 1) cognitive development, which is observed based on codes such as intelligence, creativity (imagination), critical thinking, attention, memory and knowledge (functional knowledge, general culture and awareness); 2) affective development defined by codes such as pleasant feelings (joy, relaxation, satisfaction and playfulness), sense of beauty, sense of musical taste and sadness (melancholy); 3) psychomotor development, where codes such as rhythm, motor skills, body posture, dance and singing are emphasized; 4) personality development, with codes such as self-confidence, patience and dedication; 5) speech development, evident through codes such as nursery rhymes and speech abilities; 6) student socialization, indicated by codes such as freedom of communication, community involvement, multiculturalism, collaboration and teamwork; and 7) representation of education. Table 1 shows the respondents’ responses regarding the mentioned codes.

Table 1. Importance of Classroom Music Education According to Teachers’ Perception

Theme	Categories	Codes
Comprehensive Development	Cognitive Development	Recognition (sound characteristics, types of music and musical instruments) Functional knowledge Understanding Musical memory in listening Musical memory in playing Intelligence Attention Creativity (imagination) Critical thinking
	Affective Development	Interest in singing Pleasant feelings (joy, relaxation, satisfaction, playfulness and enjoyment) Sense of beauty Sense of musical taste Sadness (melancholy)
	Psychomotor Development	Performance accuracy Performance skills in playing Coordination of movements Motor reactions in listening and reading sheet music Rhythm Body posture Dance Playing Singing

Theme	Categories	Codes
	Personality Development	Self-confidence Patience Dedication (in listening to and playing music)
	Speech Development	Nursery rhymes Speech abilities
	Student Socialization	Freedom of communication Community involvement (learning about tradition and culture) Multiculturalism Collaboration and teamwork
Representation of Education	Adequately Represented	Too many subjects Student overload
	Adequately Represented with Integration with Other Subjects	Correlation with other subjects Integration with other subjects
	Depends on Grade Level	Insufficient in the first triad Adequate in the second triad
	Insufficiently Represented	Increase the number of class hours Insufficient one class Eliminate one subject to increase the number of music culture class hours

The role of music as a positive stimulus is multifaceted, both in the prenatal period and in all stages of children's development. This topic has been investigated from the perspective of various scientific disciplines and in a multidisciplinary manner (Bašić, 1987; Matic and Mirkovic-Radoš, 1986), indicating that "favorable socio-economic conditions usually create a more musically stimulating environment" (Nešić et al., 2006, 128). School, as an adaptation space, can use music and play as factors in creating an educational environment crucial for the life and progress of students. Teachers in the Republic of Srpska are aware of the importance of music education for the comprehensive development of younger pupils' personalities. They observe this in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning and development (Bjekić, Aleksić and Vučetić, 2012), which is beneficial, given that music education occurs in all of these learning domains.

"Affective development is linked to perceptual and cognitive development. The nature of such a complex human experience as music is both cognitive and affective at the same time. These two aspects are hardly separable in reality: all cognition has a certain affective character and vice versa" (Nešić et al., 2006, 128). Movement, as a natural human need, is most pronounced in preschool and early school age. Music, whether rule-based or free, with its playful character, stimulates the harmonious development of the child. Research shows how "aesthetic sensitivity can be developed through movement in children aged six to seven years. It was found that children's affective response to rhythm was most intense, followed by the quality of sound, and less so for color, melodic line and shape" (Nešić et al., 2006, 1289).

In the realm of affective development, our respondents provided the most responses relevant to music pedagogy (*This is very important to me, meaning, their emotions, how they will experience it; I mean more emotional than cognitive because, for that cognitive part, a lot of theory and knowledge are required. For the emotional part, well, I think it's necessary too, but somehow the teacher more easily masters that emotional part*). They talk about affective development as separate but also something that can interplay with the cognitive. For instance, in the teaching area of music listening, teachers state that the "emotional-cognitive approach is one of the strongest and highest quality" (*And, it is very important to connect the cognitive-emotional approach; When it comes to the intensity of the piece, then, whether its dynamic is piano or forte. For children, if some... melodies are such that they get scared, to calm them down, I don't know. Emotions certainly influence some parts. That's why it's necessary to connect*). Viewing music listening in this way epitomizes good practice, which complies with leading research findings (Vidulin et al., 2020). The significance of music education for cognitive development is also recognized, especially the analytical approach to music listening that aligns with age (*Listening to music must be meaningful; ...first, of course, we globally listen to a composition, then selectively. Depending on the*

composition, we follow tempo, dynamics, instruments, then if there are any repetitions, whether the same instrument repeats it, whether other instruments?), which we consider good, although the combination of emotional and cognitive should dominate in the realm of music listening (Vidulin et al., 2020). Additionally, music can be listened to with movement involving the psychomotor domain (Fryberger, 1916; Swanson, 1969; Matić and Mirković Radoš, 1986; Metz, 1989; Juntunen, 2004; Hallam, 2012; Đurđev and Lukač, 2013; Stolić, 2018), which teachers discuss less frequently. The importance of music education for the development of students in the psychomotor domain is observed through the performance of children's music games and similar activities. When it comes to this development, teachers combine the content and activities of music education and physical education. However, although learning through movement is less commonly practiced in our schools, this is one approach to learning that is gradually gaining more attention. "A lesson in which material is conveyed through movement is much more understandable and interesting for students. Students become active members of the classroom because movement stimulates their creativity, increases motivation for work and cooperation. Learning through movement enables and encourages the development of children in all areas" (Obrenović, 2021, 2). The importance of (creative) movement for the physical, social, emotional and overall holistic development of children has been written about by many researchers (Dennison, 2007; Hannaford, 2007; Bergstein Dow, 2010; Gazibara, 2016). It would be desirable for a subject like Dance to be taught in our schools, especially in primary education. "Allow daily dancing, music, drama and learning visual arts where movement plays a significant role, and you could achieve wonders" (Jensen, 2005, 107). According to the Curriculum for the nine-year primary schooling system in the Republic of Srpska, art (music in the first grade) and sports are combined within the subject area of rhythmic, sports and music where appropriate implementation of the content can contribute to cognitive, affective and psychomotor development along with a sense of cultural identity. In this regard, traditional music, like – folk songs and dances are – unfortunately, insufficiently present in the primary school music curriculum which, both research (Gajić, 1996; Milovanović, 2009) and practice confirm. They should be a key educational aspect through the study of the content of the subject music culture from the second to the ninth grade of primary school.

When discussing the positive impact of music on personality development, this research has identified codes such as self-confidence, patience, and dedication. The presence of these components is evident in children's musical activities, which facilitate the expression of emotions. Public performances, while carrying responsibilities and excitement, can also enhance self-confidence. Engaging with music, whether in extracurricular activities or formally within primary music schools, demands dedication from students and fosters the development of work habits. Growing up in a stimulating family environment, children acquire the need for continuous effort towards achieving results in music education. Research findings confirm that "the most successful children also receive the highest level of parental support" (Davidson et al., 1996, cited in Bogunović, 2008, 169). Through daily deliberate practice of musical examples, in addition to learning methods, students become more conscientious, develop patience, a sense of responsibility and perseverance. Learning to play an instrument also cultivates general personal skills such as discipline, concentration, self-confidence, responsibility and self-esteem (Hallam, cited in Bogunović, 2008). Everything learned in music class can and should be applied by students in life and work.

Musical education, whether formal or informal, significantly influences the development of social skills: sociability, friendship, appropriate and patient behavior in groups, patriotism and a positive attitude towards national cultural heritage and the cultures of other nations. The variety of musical games, humor, and a positive emotional climate in music class encourage teamwork, communicativeness and understanding of the environment in which children grow up.

Key results of research on the impact of musical culture on various aspects of the development of younger students "indicate that respondents generally hold a positive opinion regarding various aspects of music education in the context of the socio-emotional development of their children. Parents whose

* The curriculum for elementary education and the educational program for the subject area Rhythmics, Sports, Music were downloaded on March 7, 2024, from the website https://www.rpz-rs.org/sajt/doc/file/web_portal/05/5.2/Nastavni_plan_za_osnovno%20obrazovanje/%D0% and https://www.rpz-rs.org/sajt/doc/file/Novi_nastavni_programi/Redovna_nastava/2022/_ritmika_sport_muzika_nastavni_program_za_prvi_razred..pdf2021, respectively.

children participate in extracurricular music activities have a more positive opinion regarding the influence of music education content on the socio-emotional development of their children compared to parents whose children do not participate in extracurricular activities” (Stipančević and Milošević, 2020, 281).

Regarding speech development, nursery rhymes play a multifaceted role. Music-making in the first grade of primary school should naturally extend from children’s free play. Developing creativity and freedom through movement, accompanied by nursery rhymes through clapping, tapping, and playing children’s instruments, is important. In addition to developing rhythmic abilities, processing nursery rhymes promotes speech creativity and facilitates learning foreign languages. Although nursery rhymes, often filled with humor and originating from folklore, are unfortunately less prevalent among children today, they play an important role “in describing, shaping, articulating, and correctly pronouncing sounds” (Milijević, 2015, 50). Our respondents advocate the mentioned attitude about the importance of music education for the versatile development of personality, but they differ in opinions regarding the presence of music education in primary school classes. Some believe it is not sufficiently present, especially in the early grades, while others think it is, considering other obligations of the pupils. Some assess it in relation to the grade, and others believe it is sufficiently present but only if its content is integrated into many or all subjects at a younger age.

The research findings are consistent with the stated attitudes of teachers. Some argue that the number of music education hours in primary school is insufficient, especially in the early grades, which has negative outcomes on the development of musical abilities (Lazarević, 2001). Other findings note that reducing the number of music education hours, especially in the early grades, can be compensated by integrating content into regular classes. We concur with Perić (2016) that although there are challenges in schools, teachers should not neglect this subject and should enable students to continuously acquire knowledge and skills in the field of music.

Research Question 2: How do teachers perceive the Music Curriculum?

In formulating the themes, we relied on three teaching areas (1. Music performance: singing, playing instruments, movement and introduction to the basics of music literacy; 2. Music listening; 3. Children’s music creativity) which intertwine in the primary school Music Curriculum in the Republic of Srpska (*Curriculum and Program for Primary Education and Upbringing*, 2014, p. 168; *New Curriculum/Regular Education/2021/Music Culture*”), as well as on the analysis of respondents’ answers.

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis providing answers within the research question related to the perception of the quality of the Curriculum and Program for primary school music, namely: Do you think certain changes to the program content of music teaching are necessary? And, if so, what would you change? Do you integrate program content of music teaching into the implementation of primary school teaching? Provide an example! Do you like the compositions you listen to in class (in accordance with the Curriculum)? What do you consider the most challenging aspect of music classes? How often do you “compose” with students in music class? What, in your opinion, is the most enjoyable aspect of music classes?

Table 2. Teachers’ Perception of the Quality of the Primary School Music Education Curriculum in Primary School

Themes	Categories	Codes
Satisfaction with the Curriculum	Satisfaction	Appropriate content Adequate number of hours Sufficient freedom
	Dissatisfaction	Inappropriate content Insufficient number of hours Limited content choice
Music Performance	Singing	Frontal and group singing of children’s and traditional songs

** Downloaded on March 7, 2024, from the website https://www.rpz-rs.org/sajt/doc/file/Novi_nastavni_programi/Redovna_nastava/2021/Muzicka_kultura_nastavni_program_za_cetvrti_razred.pdf; (https://www.rpz-rs.org/sajt/doc/file/Novi_nastavni_programi/Redovna_nastava/2021/Muzicka_kultura_nastavni_program_za_peti_razred.pdf)

Themes	Categories	Codes
	Playing	Instrument playing using Orff instruments
	Movement	Musical movement Traditional games Dance
	Introduction to Musical Literacy	Writing and reading notes (rhythmic reading and playing metallophones)
Music Listening	Global Listening	Cognitive-emotional listening to music
	Selective Listening	Analytical approach
Creativity	Musical Creativity	Musical additions
	Musical creativity with language	Nursery rhymes Songs
Intercorrelation and Correlation of Content	Correlation with Play	Hide and seek Social game wheel of fortune Quiz
	Intercorrelation of Content Areas	Correlation of content during music class Correlation of content with other subjects

The obtained responses indicate the existence of various opinions regarding the perception of the quality of the Curriculum for Classroom Music Education from the perspective of teachers. Although we did not focus on the degree of expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the existing Curriculum, but rather on identifying qualitative categories of respondents' answers, it can still be observed that they are generally satisfied with it, although they recommend certain changes or additions. Responses from the participants can be categorized into three groups: 1) those who do not want changes in the program content of music education (*I am satisfied with these topics and contents that I can really combine and use as needed. So, I wouldn't change anything for now*), 2) those who want changes but recognize that cooperation with music educators and university professors is needed for changes in the Curriculum (*It is necessary, therefore, to make some changes and of course we (teachers, university professors, music educators), all need to sit down together, everyone, to agree, give our suggestions and comments, and to make it easier, uh, music education*), and 3) those who want changes in terms of content (e.g. songs) that are repeated in different grades in such a way that they would prefer no repetitions or fewer repetitions, as children like learning new songs (*There is always room for innovation, to introduce some new songs, to have a wide range of compositions, to have a larger selection*). They believe that songs in the upper grades of primary school should be longer in duration because children want to perform such songs on field trips, excursions, and the like. For example, it is sometimes difficult for them to work on a song in the third grade that they sang earlier. This is particularly evident among students of primary music schools who hear such content several times during their schooling, and although they enjoy it, it can facilitate boredom. Therefore, teachers suggest additions (changes) in the field of musical performance, singing and playing, stating: *Well, introducing as many of these traditional songs as possible. Well, maybe there should be simpler compositions developed for children's orchestras*. When it comes to the field of musical performance, playing, and introduction to the basics of musical literacy, most teachers stated that they like compositions that children perform on metallophones, as well as Orff instruments that they made themselves due to the lack of original ones. Unfortunately, a smaller number of respondents do not use Orff instruments because schools are not equipped with them. They express that the examples are adapted to children, that they would like to have easier compositions for performance in textbooks, and that they need new compositions. Teachers emphasize that the Curriculum gives them a lot of freedom and that they thus overcome the difficulties of choosing content for singing or playing (*Well, I think, of all the subjects, music culture is quite well organized, that everything is covered, now, I don't know, maybe, but I'm talking about the number of hours. Although we have a lot of freedom*). Through the analysis

of teachers' responses, we determined that they are satisfied with the provided content for listening to music, they like the compositions, but they also strive for additions or changes in this area (*Listening to compositions could perhaps be refreshed. Well, of course, I like them, but again, I say, there should be a reform, uh, of the music culture curriculum expressed in these plans and programs of music culture in which they would participate. Teachers should also participate in this reform because I simply feel that we are excluded from these reforms. And yet, we know best what is most important to students up to the fifth grade in music education*). Teachers perceive the area of listening to music as relaxing, but also very demanding for quality processing of the teaching unit, mostly thinking about an analytical and cognitive-emotional approach to listening to music, which also indicates insufficient competence within the didactics of music education or the number of hours of this subject in undergraduate studies. The necessary refreshments should be more aligned to 21st-century students, and in the field of singing and listening to music, we confirm the opinions of teachers with this argument: *It should be refreshed a bit, the program content of listening to music and singing songs, to be ... a bit more adapted to children.*

If we talk about the perception of program content by grading them by the difficulty of processing for teachers, the area of musical literacy (music theory and rhythm setting) is foremost in its difficulty. Respondents state that the content area of introduction to the basics of musical literacy is the most challenging for them, followed by the content area of music listening (analytical and cognitive-emotional approach). Also, they consider the content area of musical creativity as one of the most challenging in music education, followed by pupil-influenced factors such as a lack of motivation to learn, as well as instances when pupils are embarrassed by or receive insufficient parental attention. These issues certainly require further investigation in future research studies.

There is a feeling amongst the respondents that they feel insufficiently trained to implement the prescribed number of classes as required by the Curriculum in terms of musical creativity (*So, as much as it is prescribed by the Curriculum, it's not that much, but there are, you know. I don't know, whenever something comes to mind during class..., we've come to something, someone wanted something, a rhythm was heard, so let's create, someone wrote a song, let's do it. And how often is that? Maybe 20 percent*). It is evident that teachers combine linguistic and musical creativity by adding visual illustrations, which are most often used in listening to music activities. However, there can be observed a difference in teachers' perception of the number of class hours. The first group of respondents believe that music education is not prevalent enough among students in the lower grades of primary school. This deficiency is compensated for by the integration of subjects in classroom teaching (*According to the current Curriculum, the number of class hours for music education is not sufficient, in... lower grades, so there should simply be much, uh, greater number of class hours to allow students to develop themselves as much as possible, uh, and their potentials. Well, I said that, with almost all classes, even with math, I integrate it. I don't know, I don't know if something is important, for example, we always, always listen to the composition to the end*). The second group of respondents falls into the category that the prescribed number of class hours is sufficient and that students in the primary grades are sufficiently burdened with the program content of other subjects, so any additional class would represent an effort for them (*Well, maybe it would be good if there could be a little more, but, looking at this, well, the number of class hours, somewhere it might be a little difficult to fit in without overburdening the children with additional classes, but certainly, music education can be, well, correlated with other subjects so it should be used whenever possible in other classes, not just in music classes. So I think that's about enough, but, well, if there is a need somewhere, it can always be added because there's never enough music*).

In exploring the sphere of experiencing music education, we could not overlook the answers to the question: What, in your opinion, is the most beautiful thing about music education? In all responses, the creation of a positive emotional climate in music education classes dominates as a result of the shift of musical activities in the class, where musical performance, singing, playing and vocal-instrumental group playing (according to teachers' and students' preferences) dominate, followed by musical games, movement and dance. As the most beautiful aspect of music education, some teachers also mention listening to and recognizing musical examples and developing musical taste. Namely, music performance, the creativity of both teachers and students, a positive emotional and stimulating climate and the development of musical taste are elements that characterize music education and are perceived by teachers as dominant, which is in line with the goals and tasks of teaching this subject at a younger school age. It is important that teachers are mostly ready for the challenges and new knowledge brought

by the 21st century.

The correlation in music education in the lower grades of elementary school involves linking various educational content to create a comprehensive and rich educational environment. Many researchers have dealt with the correlation and integration of educational content (Barry, 2008; Šulentić-Begić, 2013; Čudina Obradović and Brajković, 2009; Ratković, 2018). Skupnjak (2009) purports that correlation is easier to achieve in classroom teaching because it is entrusted to one teacher who teaches multiple subjects. For example, learning basic musical concepts can be expanded through activities such as singing songs or playing instruments, allowing students to practically apply acquired knowledge. Also, by getting acquainted with traditional music from different cultures, students can explore geographical, historical, and cultural contexts, contributing to a broader understanding of the world around them. Correlation in music education in the lower grades of primary school encourages active student participation and enables them to develop various skills and abilities through music education.

Conclusions

Teachers perceive music education positively, focusing on its positive aspects. They consider student activities in all areas of music crucial for their comprehensive development, believing that music fosters personality development on many levels. Although they find music lessons relaxing for both students and themselves, they express the need for refreshing the Curriculum and Program. Specifically, they highlight the need for adding new songs, more examples of traditional folk music and film music, as well as creating arrangements adapted to children's instruments; although they are willing to devise them in collaboration with students. Their experiences and attitudes indicate an urgent need for additional professional development in the field of music pedagogy, especially in the context of primary school music education and evaluation in that context. This research confirms our previous findings regarding the need to improve music reproduction skills – playing on harmonic instruments, as well as in the field of creative musical expression. It should be noted that the sample of respondents did not include the male gender, which means that the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of teachers. In the future, we plan to share with the scientific community the findings of related research analyzed in schools in this region. This research serves as an introduction to a series of topics on the attitudes, experiences and motivation of teachers in regard to teaching music.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M.D.P., O.B.B. and M.Đ; methodology, M.D.P. and O.B.B; software, M.D.P. and O.B.B; formal analysis, M.D.P., O.B.B. and M.Đ; writing-original draft preparation, M.D.P., O.B.B. and M.Đ; writing-review and editing, M.D.P., O.B.B. and M.Đ. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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