

IMPROVEMENT OF MUSIC TEACHERS' COMPETENCE VIA PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

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***Abstract.** Professional pedagogical performance is an important condition for a successful implementation of national education policy. Creative and understanding the evolving process of today – a competent music teacher is competitive both in the domestic employment market and abroad. Music as art is creative in its essence. However, in practice it is often found that reproductive activity often dominates the preparation of music teachers. Being the most creative of arts – music in the course of acquiring the art of playing music loses its inherent creativity. Primarily, the preparation of music teachers is focused on activities based on the quality of learning by heart and remembering. The matter of research is related to raising awareness of productive activity in the improvement of music teacher competency. The objective is to study opportunities for improvement of music teacher competences within productive activity. The research is developed by theoretical and empirical methods involving discussions and a questionnaire. In order to improve the professional competence of a music teacher via productive activity, a procedural – structural model titled “Improvement of Music Teacher’s Competence via Improvisation” was developed, the utility of which is evaluated on the basis of various specific criteria. An exercise system is also developed and approved. As a result of verifying the model, we assure the utility thereof in the improvement of the professional competence of music teachers. The developed improvisation exercises are useful for practical productive activities.*

***Keywords:** productive activity, music teacher’s competence, improvisation.*

Introduction

Professional educator’s performance is an important condition for successful implementation of national education policy. Creative and transformational leadership pursuing – a competent music educator is competitive at labour market both in Latvia and beyond. Music as an art is creative from its very commencement. Yet practice reveals that the reproductive activity dominates in the music teacher training. Music, being the most creative art, loses partly the element of creativity in the process of music acquisition. Primary the activities deciding memorising and retention quality dominate in the music teacher training. The research is aiming at actualising of the productive activity in development of the music teacher competence.

The aim is to research possibilities for development of the music educator competence by the productive activity. The research is developed by theoretical and empirical methods involving discussions and a questionnaire.

Materials and methods

The professional competence for the contemporary music teacher has become more demanding. Professional knowledge has to be advanced in intellectual as well as emotional and social skills aspects. Latvian scientists: I.Tiļļa (2003), I.Plaude (2003), E.Maslo (2003), I.Maslo (2002) highlight the significance of experience, personal qualities and activity quality for development of professional competence. Researches by L.Kriumane and M.Marnauza also emphasise the music educator competence (Kriumane, Marnauza, 2007). Their music teacher’s competence understanding is based on the conception worked out by M. Pabst–Krüger, which accentuates four aspects of music educator’s competence content in the process of improvement of study programmes in music teacher education (See Table 1 based on Pabst- Krüger, 2006).

Table 1. Content of the music teacher competence (based on Pabst – Krüger, 2006)

Subject competence	Basic knowledge in music pedagogy, music psychology, music science and skills to use them in practice; receptive acquisition of music styles (conversion of elements belonging to another age, another nation, social stratum and culture) and mastering of instrument playing and singing both at appropriate technical and artistic level.
Methodological competence	Continuous development of own knowledge and skills; scientific activity; music presentation; educational, exercising and rehearsal strategies; planning and project management; reflection skills.
Personal competence	Artistic eloquence; presentation skill; motivation for continuous advancement of new knowledge and skills; appropriate self-esteem; flexibility.
Social competence	Cooperation in music skill; verbal and artistic persuasive skills; communication skill; discussion skill.

Thus, development of competence is major for each music educator, for routine needs:

- Evolution in science and art based on theoretical and practical pedagogical performance;
- fostering of intellectual and artistic growth, creative activity,
- acquiring of advanced knowledge for pedagogical, artistic creative skills and attitudes development for work at different type educational institutions;
- compilation, analysis and generalisation of personal and other teachers pedagogical and artistic activity experience;
- Latvian and global pedagogy, psychology, including music pedagogy and music psychology scientific problem issue recognising and resolving, thus, their promotion (Kriumane, 2010).

The contents of music teacher competence are in absolute compliance with the competence content included and implemented at professional Master degree study programme for music teachers at RTTEMA (Sile, 2014) -

- competence – skill;
- competence – proficiency in connection with the professional performance activities;
- competence – abilities;
- competence – prosperity, knowing, eloquence as characteristic features of the human activity efficiency (Tiļļa, 2003).

Therefore, a competent music educator needs – synergy of knowledge, skills, attitudes that are being developed through the whole pedagogical performance period and upgraded by experience (Sīle, 2014).

Findings of research

Total of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquisition, primarily, can be facilitated by creative productive activity enriched by improvisation. So one of ways for productive activity in the music teacher competence development for creative resolving of pedagogical tasks is improvisation.

Improvisation is creative activity of immediate musical composition at the moment of performance. Traditionally music pedagogy identifies improvisation as an elementary music making form. Nevertheless, the simplest is the mightiest learning/teaching method. E.Umbleja explains “the term “elementary” mostly is used, meaning simple, understandable for everybody, but composer and pedagogue, founder of elementary music making Carl Orff has introduced another meaning to this term – primordial, primary, something that relates to the foundations. Then, what are these foundations in music – the art of sounds, which translates reality into sound images, and which expresses and influences human thoughts and feelings in sounds? ... If there is a human being in any place, or better - two of them, musical improvisation can start immediately!” (Umbleja, 2013).

As experienced educator trainers we have to agree that although improvisation can be commenced “elementary” – it means, from the very foundations Melodic improvisation in a group sometimes can create problems – harmonic progressions must be memorized. (Umbleja, 2013).

The experience of the music educators proves that improvisation is: creative from the origin, complex, multi-meaningful process, purposeful social and individual activity, exciting life-long activity, engaging in experiment, daring to make mistakes, actualisation of new opportunities.

Improvisation should be perceived as the most efficient productive activity, development of it is needed for music teacher professional competence; students, pupils competence development at gnostic – (knowledge in subject, knowledge in pedagogical communication, comprehension of psychological

traits, own personality and activity comprehension), prognostic - (prognosticating of learning/teaching and educational perspectives, strategies and work tactics for attaining of goals) aspects (Kriumane, 2010).

The authors concur that improvisation can be both individual and by group. Improvisation by musical group requires certain behaviour models, which essentially differ from other music making ways. Here it is exclusive that creativity, empathy and reaction ability are both prerequisites and results of improvisation. Further I.Bērziņa emphasises significant issues during improvisation: make music without fear and excitedly, yet by serious attitude; be rooted in music, act upon the heard; overcome conventionalism: many performers possess non-verbalised (and also non-acknowledged conviction to the traditional standards, thus, refusing the very idea of entering an experiment (Bērziņa, 2010).

The current experimental improvisation activities during the process of studies have proved that by giving up the custom standards, creatively daring and playing, most easily own prejudices, ambiguity can be overcome: personal skills developed, beliefs established: fear to go over certain thresholds eliminated, coming to daring to self-expression and showing of one's own ability and skills in presence of other humans, feeling happiness through own activity and raising self-esteem.

Therefore, we concur with the abovementioned authors that improvisation as a creative productive activity is characterised by – inquisitiveness and tolerance, tolerance to new and non-traditional, daring to risk, daring to make music without additional safe-guarding measures, joy to create innovations, to understand music as a exploration object.

I.Bērziņa (2010) and also A.Beitāne (2011) consider that in-group improvisation springs up due to interpersonal cooperation. Thus, it becomes possible to: develop collaboration skills, give up overwhelming desire to monitor, learn to react appropriately and join in answering to musical impulses; develop shared in-group responsibility and satisfaction bringing in positive, joyful feeling: feel responsibility for the product created by shared efforts both in social as well as in music world.

By acquiring improvisation through productive activity we recognise the development of skills able to enter diverse roles and spontaneously change and transform them: guide, lead; generate impulses, inspire others; suggest opposite opinion; support, accompany; take a step back, keep silence when necessary; learn how to merge own and in-group needs to musical demands (Bērziņa, 2010).

Therefore, each music teacher should implement into her/his pedagogical practice improvisation exercises appropriate to her/his own and the student's individuality. As the further included samples reveal the improvisation exercises transfer great sustainable development energy proving the students that their previous learning in respect of knowledge, skills, attitudes has been proper and

suitable for further development. The sustainability feeling brings in trust, satisfaction and joy for the positive way of development.

As useful and by pedagogical practice approved is a following set of exercises for initial acquiring of improvisation skills: playing along the black keys, basic tuning approaches (touch expressions), *accelerando* and *ritardando* exercises, dynamic contrast exercises, playing with intervals, along a definite sound row, questions and answers, melodizing of certain rhythms, improvisation of accompaniment, interpretation variations, add melody by improvisation at ostinato or recorded harmonic sequence; play a phrase, transforming its character; play a phrase as a question; play a phrase as a statement; play a phrase by accentuating each sound; play a phrase and sing along name of each note or score.

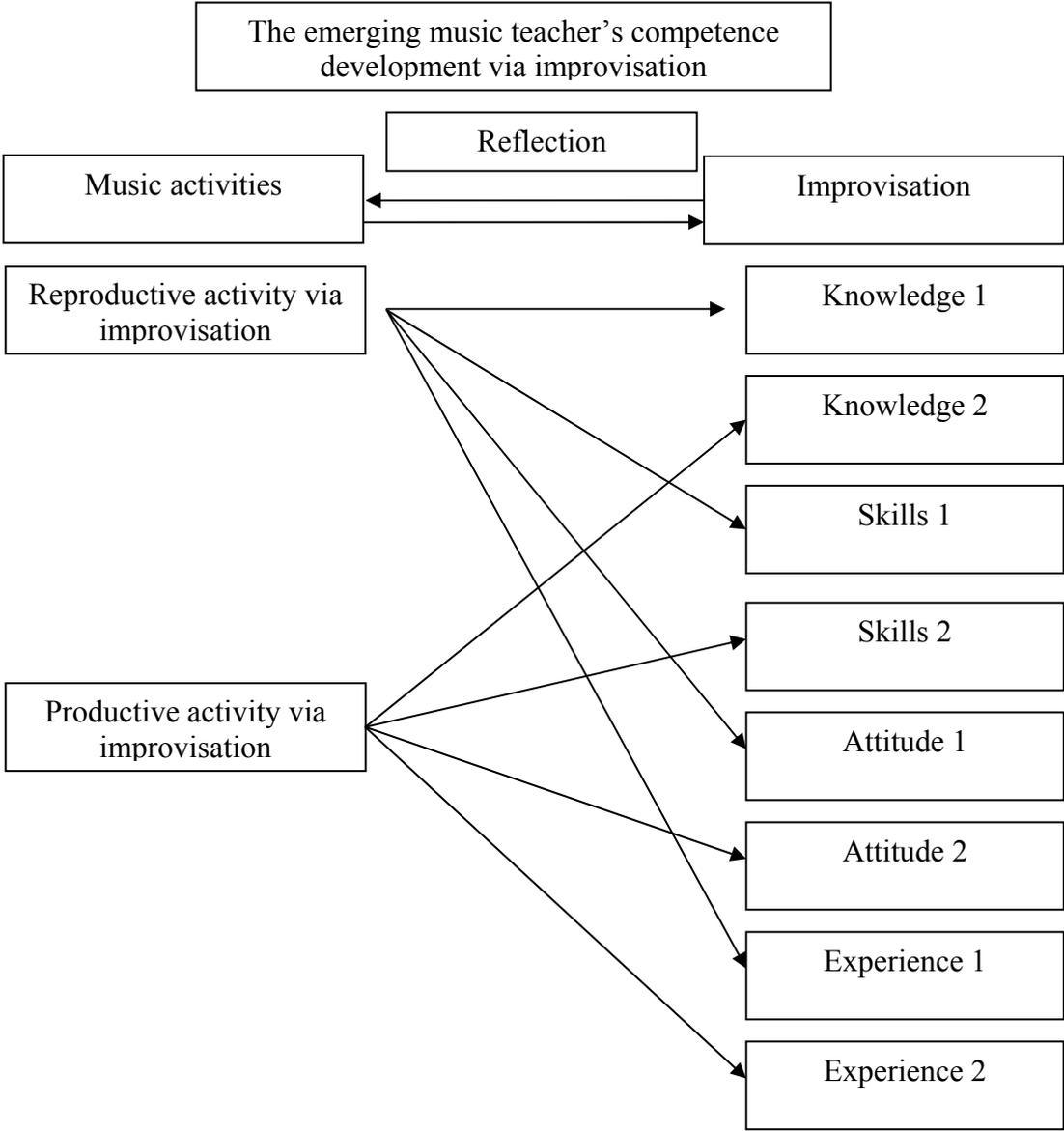


Figure 1. The emerging music teacher's competence development by improvisation

As other actual samples for development of improvisation skills can be suggested two methodical approaches, when neither theme material nor any creative impulse is provided, which could provoke and stimulate improvisation, no limits of form are set, neither stylistic nor genre framework is provided.

And in juxtaposition to the abovementioned: theme material is provided - melody, melody with harmony; any creative impulse is given either formulated, which could provoke improvisation. Further limits are set referring to forms (canon, rondo), stylistic or genre framework is provided song, dance).

In order to enrich practice by theory and theory by practice, furthermore, believing that most useful for reproductive and productive activities is improvisation; the model of the reproductive and productive activity of “The emerging music teacher’s competence development by improvisation” has been constructed. See Figure 1.

Discussion and findings

The emerging music teacher’s competence development through reproductive and productive activities involving improvisation has been discussed and considered at the seminars of the Year 2 emerging Bachelor degree music teachers (BSc) and the emerging Master degree music teachers (Mg) in ac.yr.2013/14 stimulating focusing on efficient qualities for development of the music teacher competence as transformational leader in the 21st century.

As the basis for idea generation for competence development through reproductive and productive activities involving improvisation the students were suggested to use the model of Criteria, indices and levels for measurement of trainee teacher advanced competences highlighting collaboration (Ratniece, 2013) as well. This model the students had used for self-assessment in e-environment at the commencement of their foreign language course. It is of crucial value due to inclusion of education for sustainable development (ESD) issues.

Student opinion poll was carried out at two seminars referring to components of music teacher competence development in each respective study year. The first discussion and assessment was done at the beginning of the foreign language course (See Table 2 Reproductive activity via improvisation). The second discussion and assessment followed the emerging music teachers’ school practice (See Table 2 Productive activity via improvisation).

In ac.yr.2013/14 the discussion group of the emerging Bachelor degree (BSc) music teachers consisted of 10 female students and 4 male students. At the first seminar at the beginning of the study course (prior to their school practice) the students discussed the qualities the teachers as transformational leaders needed for their successful professional performance in the 21st century. Then the qualities were grouped according to their connection with knowledge, skills, attitudes. During the first step of assessment the students assessed the

necessary amount of knowledge, skills and attitude individually – carried out their self-assessment. The second stage of assessment was carried out in pairs by comparing their opinions, negotiating and coming to consensus. Then the students discussed their decisions in two groups.

One group consisted of female students; the other group included only male students. They decided on the needed percentage of knowledge, skills and attitude for successful professional performance. Reflecting on the amount of the needed knowledge, skills and attitude, the students decided that reflection constituted a part of experience. They decided to include the item “experience” into the table of the common assessment recognising the necessity of reflection for development of their competence. Yet in their opinion experience was of a little importance. In general in their opinion it could be substituted by charisma in case the professional possessed it. Some students insisted on the necessity of the skill to bring joy and positive attitude into both teaching and learning. The female students agreed on the following components percentage: knowledge 1 – 35%; skills 1 – 39%; attitude 1 – 23%; experience 1 - 3%. The male students agreed on the following components percentage: knowledge 1 – 43%; skills 1 – 35%; attitude 1 – 20%; experience 1 - 2% (See Table 2).

At the second seminar “Productive and reproductive activity including improvisation,” the discussion and assessment was held after the emerging Bachelor degree music teachers’ school practice (See Table 2 Productive activity via improvisation). The students were greatly impressed by the change of the situation when they experienced belonging to the position of the teacher in class in practice. This time they also did their individual self-assessment first, then compared it with their neighbour’s self-assessment data. Directly after that they assessed the significance of knowledge, skills, attitude and experience in two groups – belonging to their respective gender group. The female students agreed on the following components percentage: knowledge 2 – 35%; skills 2 – 36%; attitude 2 – 23%; experience 2 - 6%. The male students agreed on the following components percentage: knowledge 2 – 41%; skills 2 – 33%; attitude 2 – 20%; experience 2 - 6% (See Table 2).

We can see that major significance goes to knowledge (35% and 41%, though the males group has decreased the estimation of knowledge by 2%) and skills (36% and 33%, female group has diminished the respective amount by 3%, while the male group by 2%). Their opinion about the importance of the Attitude 1 and Attitude 2 is approximately the same. Although the students maximised on benefits of positive teaching/learning atmosphere in class again. A significant change referred to their opinion to experience. The females group has increased the significance of “experience” by 3% and the males group has even increased it by 4%. Their common conclusion was that improvisation brings in reflection and further reflection generates further improvisation resulting in development of competence.

Table 2. The emerging music teacher’s competence development through reproductive and productive activities involving improvisation

Criteria	10 female students(BSc)	4 male students(BSc)	18 female students(Mg)	5 male students(Mg)
Reproductive activity via improvisation				
Knowledge 1	35%	43%	24%	24%
Skills 1	39%	35%	45%	46%
Attitude 1	23%	20%	19%	17%
Experience 1	3%	2%	12%	13%
Productive activity via improvisation				
Knowledge 2	35%	41%	27%	30%
Skills 2	36%	33%	41%	40%
Attitude 2	23%	20%	20%	16%
Experience 2	6%	6%	12%	14%

The discussion group of the emerging Master degree music teachers (Mg) at both seminars consisted of 18 female students and 5 male students (See Table 2). At the beginning of the study course during the first seminar “Reproductive activities including improvisation” the Mg students were invited to discuss the qualities teachers needed for their successful professional performance as transformational leaders in the 21st century. Then the qualities were grouped according to their connection to knowledge, skills, attitude and experience via improvisation. During the first step of assessment the students assessed the necessary amount of knowledge, skills, attitude and experience individually – carried out their self-assessment. The second stage of assessment was carried out in pairs by comparing their opinions, negotiating and coming to common terms. Then the students discussed their decisions in two major groups.

One group involved female students; the other group included only male students. They decided on the needed percentage of knowledge, skills, attitude and experience via improvisation for successful professional performance acting as transformational leaders. Reflecting on the amount of the needed knowledge, skills, attitude and experience, the students agreed that reflection constituted a part of experience. They also included the item “experience” into the table of the common assessment recognising the necessity of reflection for sustainability development of their competence. Yet in their opinion experience was of a little importance if it did not generate positive feeling towards the process of teaching/learning. In general in their opinion it could be substituted by charisma in case the professional possessed it. Nevertheless, the further analysis disclosed that charismatic teachers or transformational leaders are appreciated more if they create positive passion and joyful learning environment. Positive attitude also helps to bridge the generation gap, which stimulates sustainable development of competence. The female students agreed on the following components percentage: knowledge 1 – 24%; skills 1 – 45%; attitude 1 – 19%; experience 1 - 12%. The male students agreed on the following components percentage:

knowledge 1 – 24%; skills 1 – 46%; attitude 1 – 17%; experience 1 - 13% (See Table 2). In comparison with the Bachelor degree music students' opinions, again the major importance was given to knowledge and skills, attitude was rated approximately the same significance, while experience was considered much more important by both genders.

At the second seminar “Productive and reproductive activities including improvisation,” discussion and assessment was held at the end of the course of the emerging Master degree music teachers (See Table 2 Productive activity including improvisation). The new knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences gained via improvisation during their studies had greatly impressed the emerging professional Master degree music teachers by the changes suggested by teacher trainers and by exchange of experiences with co-students.

At this seminar Mg degree students again did their individual self-assessment first, then compared it with their peer's of the same gender self-assessment data. Right after that they assessed the significance of knowledge, skills, attitude and experience via improvisation in two bigger - their respective gender groups. The female students distributed the professional competence components via improvisation percentage as follows: knowledge 2 – 27%; skills 2 – 41%; attitude 2 – 20%; experience 2 - 12%. The male students agreed on the following components percentage: knowledge 2 – 30%; skills 2 – 40%; attitude 2 – 16%; experience 2 - 14% (See Table 2).

Once again a major significance goes to knowledge (27% and 30%, though the females group has increased the estimation of knowledge by 3%, while the males group has increased the estimation of knowledge by 6%) and skills (41% and 40%, female group has diminished the respective amount by 3%, while the male group by 6%). Their opinion about the importance of the Attitude 1 and Attitude 2 has remained approximately the same. Although now joyful improvisation is being recognised relevant to both – in reproductive and productive activities. The females group has not increased the significance of “experience” and the males group has increased it only by 1%. Still experience via improvisation is considered as really valuable by both groups of the emerging Master degree music teachers. The males group pointed out that improvisation serves as a messenger of sustainability in every criterion. They had reconsidered their competence development components and decided that a certain balance has to be achieved among implementation of knowledge, skills, attitude and experience for successful professional performance bringing satisfaction and even better - joy into daily collaboration of the teacher and the learner. So improvisation in music activities stimulate creativity or improvisation for better understanding of the professional performance as well.

Their common conclusion was that improvisation brings in reflection and further reflection generates further improvisation resulting in development of competence due to enriched experience by improvisation and reflection.

Conclusions

Reproductive activity is prior to productive activity, without it no productive activity appears, yet both can be developed by improvisation. Yet reproductive activity can be perceived as a primary unique process, because it is impossible to repeat twice the performance exactly the same way.

Productive activity via improvisation is generated more by creative environment, which fosters mental, intellectual engagement and nurtures joy in learning, provides opportunities for teaching/learning growth, opportunities to join in activity and gain content, provides opportunity to individualisation, encompasses any possible way of work.

The common conclusion of both emerging music teachers' groups after experiencing in practice the situation of being in the teacher's position was that improvisation brings in reflection and further reflection generates further improvisation resulting in development of competence.

For music teachers as transformational leaders improvisation constitutes a major important component for the competence development to transfer responsibility for our common future.

Though, the authors believe in maximized competence development through reproductive and productive activities involving improvisation due to synergy environment based on education for sustainable development (ESD) issues, appropriate promotion of them need more credits and time beside pure enthusiasm.

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