

# THE REQUESTS OF THE MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY ON TRANSFORMATION OF A CONTEMPORARY MUSIC TEACHER

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of the paper is to expose the role and the significance of teacher in the contemporary society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as the different forms of transformations the modern way of educating is forced to go through in Slovenia.*

*A special emphasis will be on music education in primary schools and on searching answers on the following questions:*

- *how is the importance of the present migration streams reflecting on the transformation of the education process and on the renovation of the program for music education*
- *how does the renewed program for music education corresponds on the requests of the multicultural society and how are the teachers qualified for its representation*
- *in which way does the contemporary education of teachers consider the role of mass media and its significance in formation of a »mass opinion« in the field of music*

*In the last chapter of the paper, some activities during the study will be represented, which should be attended if choosing teaching at schools as a profession.*

**Keywords:** *multicultural music education, primary school, transformation in the field of music education.*

## **Introduction**

Republic of Slovenia has gone from 1990 till today through different social, political and economic transformations. Two of them, the independence of the Republic of Slovenia in 1991 and the association of the Republic of Slovenia with the European Union in 2004, has radical interfered all the levels of living, from the politics to the school system.

The primary school in Slovenia, that as a state institution has made efforts to attend all the social, political and economic transformations in the Slovenian society, has been confronted in 16 years from the independence on with huge challenges, of which because of their extension will be mentioned only the most fundamental one:

- the migration streams from 1990 on, because of the war circumstances in the previous state Yugoslavia, respectively because of the economic, political, law disintegration and disintegration of the state institutions in former Yugoslavia and connected with this the immigration of a lot of people from the states that used to be a part of the former state Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo) to the Republic of Slovenia and their integration into the Slovenian society,
- the return of the descendants of Slovenian emigrants to Slovenia after the Slovenian independence and their integration into the Slovenian society,

- the renewal of the primary school syllabus, after the independence of the Republic of Slovenia,
- the consciousness, that the primary school in Slovenia can not be a monocultural or monolingual institution, and that there has to be made more attentiveness in the field of linguistic, religious and cultural socialisation of the pupils in primary school, respectively that the primary school has to be multicultural orientated and in accordance with this the primary school syllabus,
- the consciousness, that it is necessary to prepare and to acquaint the teaching staff with the above mentioned transformations and to help them with educational seminars or symposiums etc.,
- the consciousness, that there should be made an emphasis on certain school subjects, that could give a contribution in reducing of stigmatisation and segregation of pupils, who are different in the view of nationality, religion, culture or psychophysical abilities.

In which way has all the mentioned transformations in the Slovenian society followed the school subject »music education« in the primary school and the music teachers, will be pointed out in this paper with a special accent on three viewpoints:

- how is the importance of the present migration streams reflecting on the transformation of the education process and on the renovation of the program for music education in the primary school,
- how does the renewed program for music education in primary school corresponds on the requests of the multicultural society and how are the teachers qualified for its representation,
- in which way does the contemporary education of teachers consider the role of mass media and its significance in formation of a »mass opinion« in the field of music.

## Methodology of Research

The paper is not written on the ground of an empirical research; it is a miscellany of two decades of own experiences in the field of educating music education in the primary and secondary schools as well of educating at the university.

It includes also the experiences of various teachers who have or are educating music education in the Republic of Slovenia, qualitative data obtained from different interviews made in the Republic of Slovenia with pupils who are Slovenians and not-Slovenians from 1992 on till 2002, as well with their parents.

The paper is a reflection of events that occurred and are still occurring in the Slovenian society, and from those viewpoints there are represented topics in the paper that seem to be the most burning questions.

## The influence of the present migration streams on the transformation of the educational process and on the renovation of the program for music education in the primary school

*The influence of the migration streams on the transformation of the educational process in the Republic of Slovenia*

The Republic of Slovenia had to face after 1990 with huge migration streams, first of all because of the disintegration of the former state Yugoslavia and the war circumstances in her previous republics Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.<sup>1</sup>

The number of refugees and immigrants who came to Slovenia to seek for a safe shelter and a new homeland was in 1992 approximately 45.000 thousand (Vrečer, 2007, p.9) among them

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<sup>1</sup> The war in Croatia has started in autumn 1991, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the beginning of 1992.

a lot of children, who had as their parents to leave overnight the wellknown environment, home, friends and school.

As the primary school is obligatory for each child in Slovenia,<sup>2</sup> thus also for children-immigrants,<sup>3</sup> the first step was to organise a school in the areas where it was possible, with the staff who had come also as immigrants to Slovenia from previous Yugoslavia and in the language that is spoken among the children-immigrants.

That kind of organisation of the educational process which preserved the national and cultural identity of the children-immigrants, was only a temporary solution, but proper regarding the standpoints of the Republic of Slovenia.

Because of the inappropriate educational level of the teachers-immigrants, their return to their fatherland, lower requirements at the school for immigrants regarding the higher requirements at the Slovenian primary school, it became clear, that the children-immigrants are to be integrated into a Slovenian school system, that happened indeed in the scholastic year 1995/96.<sup>4</sup>

For a great number of children-immigrants, was such an integration a stressful occurrence, for the Slovenian primary school and her staff a very exacting task, in view of the space availability in school classes and the requests in educating those children.

The Ministry for School of the Republic of Slovenia, has send in year 1992 a circular to all Slovenian schools with recommendations and instructions how to solve the specific situation caused by the migration streams, but the practical work in the primary school has showed, what does it mean to integrate the children-immigrants from the former state Yugoslavia into the Slovenian school system.

None of the participants in this integration process, children-immigrants as the Slovenian school and its staff, was not prepared on the problems, caused by the integration, for example problems with understanding and succeeding the education of different subjects because of the insufficient knowledge in Slovenian language, problems with a lower percentage in excellent marks etc.

None of the participated did not know, that the integration process will be followed with undesirable appearances, as a more or less uncovered stigmatisation and segregation of the children-immigrants from the side of their Slovenian school mates and unfortunately also from the side from their Slovenian teachers.

Problems, to a certain extent,<sup>5</sup> has appeared also in the integration process of descendants of Slovenian emigrants after the independence of the Republic of Slovenia.

After only five years, it was clear that Slovenia, as all the countries that had to deal with the migration fluctuations, has to renovate the primary school system and to search for new directions in educating and breeding.

The awareness of tasks with priority were in the scholastic year 1996: a) acting in the direction of changing the mentality and attitudes toward a foreign culture by all the participated in the educational process in the primary school, from pupils, their parents till school staff, and b) acting in the direction of the renovating of the school program.

It has showed particularly, that it is necessarily to transform the way of educating from the school staff. The education should contain:

- the awareness of traumatic occures which with the children-immigrants had to face with,
- the consideration of a language, religious and cultural socialisation of children-immigrants as also of children-descendants,

2 The fiftieth article of the Law of primary school in the Republic of Slovenia, says that every pupil has to attend the school in frame of the obligatory program and to fulfil all the obligations and tasks, determined with the official documents of the primary school.

3 Regarding the tenth article of the Law of primary school in the Republic of Slovenia.

4 From 5252 pupils from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who attended the schools for immigrants in the scholastic year 1992/93, were already 1994/95 integrated into the Slovenian school system (Vrečer, 2007, p.111.)

5 For example: a) in/sufficient knowledge of the slovenian language and its influence on succeeding in different school subjects, b) stigmatisation of the descendants of slovenian emigrants although they are Slovenians from the side of their school mates, because of the insufficient knowledge of the slovenian language, or because they were born in an other country and are used to react and live on a different way, with different values etc.

- the consideration that the integration in the Slovenian school system can not be solved as an assimilation in the Slovenian culture, but as an integration,<sup>6</sup>
- the consideration, that being a teacher/educator means to seek permanently for new ways of educating to reach a higher level and quality in educating, and to be in touch with all the transformations that are occurring in a modern society, because it is the only way how to content the requests of the society.

On such requests, at the beginning, many of the educational staff in the primary school was not prepared. Now, after 16 years after the independence of the Republic of Slovenia there is a progress, that has due not only to seminars, organised by different state institutions but also to due to the morality of the educational staff.

*The influence of the migrations streams on the transformation of the subject music education in the primary school*

The renovation of the primary school system in the Republic of Slovenia took place in the scholastic year 1996, and till 2006 there were several supplements. This school system has showed, that a successful fulfilling of fundamental goals in the area of primary education, is dependent on consideration of the significance of migration streams and multicultural orientation in educating pupils.

In the integration process of children-immigrants and descendants of Slovenian emigrants in the Slovenian school system, it would mean for instance breeding and educating of the Slovenian domestic pupils for tolerance and respect for other cultures, for respect of human rights and connected with this goals educating for living in a democratic society etc.

After the disintegration of the former state Yugoslavia, which part till 1991 was also the Republic of Slovenia, has come especially after the independence some undesirable prejudices toward other cultures and expulsions of people of non-Slovenian nationality in Slovenia, that could be traced also in the primary school system, for example stigmatisation of pupils because of a different social, culture, religious, ethnic and national background.

Several researches (eg. Banks, James A., Gee Banks, Cherry A., 1995; Breznik, I., 2007) have showed that multicultural education can contribute to reduction in above mentioned problems.

That the subject music education in primary schools can also give such a contribution has verified itself in schools that are multicultural orientated, with teachers that are willing to educate in accordance with it and are qualified for it.

In the Slovenian primary school system, there is to be felt a progress in the field of music education in the last scholastic years, in which extent, will be known after more detailed scientific researches.

The fact is, that the identification of an individual occurs through the culture he belongs to, the most through his language and particularly music, which is not only a sound structure because of its capability to express the values of a culture.

The music teachers in primary schools should be aware of this, and educate their subject not only in a way of giving informations connected with music and not only through the Slovenian ethnic area but radical widely, from the European and world perspective.

The significance of the music education in primary school in Slovenia is not only in music practical and theoretical educating or in preserving the Slovenian music heritage but also in educating pupils for a respectfully attitude toward foreign cultures and their music.

In accordance to above mentioned, can music education as a school subject in primary school fulfil also the requests from the society caused by migration streams, which are not only a curiosity of the nineties in Slovenia, but will remain till there will be poorness that is obviously extending in the period of globalisation and technological as well as inquiry development, that are promoting migrations of people.

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<sup>6</sup> Integration means, that immigrants can practice their own culture in a country that isn't their fatherland (Vrečer, 2007, p. 41).

## **The requests of a multicultural society toward music education in the primary school, its multicultural orientation and the qualification of the music teachers**

### *The multicultural society and the multicultural orientation of the subject music education in the Slovenian primary school*

It is almost difficult to find a society that is not diverse: all societies are more or less different from the point of view of nationality, culture, politics or economy.

The thought, that the only way in preserving national identity is to close people within a state, is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century out, because it is possible (hypothetical) to acclaim, that multiculturalism can better assure the preserving of the national identity than inferiority to only one culture (Igličar, 2002, p.7).

Furthermore, a widely open state toward other cultures is a kind of protection against political inferiority and cultural assimilation, which could happen in case of one-sided political or cultural orientation, for instance in case of isolation (Igličar, 2002, p. 7).

It is true, that every modern state has, because of preserving her existence and independence, the duty to conserve her own cultural and national identity on all levels of a society, especially in the field of school (Novak, 2002, p. 129), but it has to be considered that such demands can be performed only if human rights and basic liberties are respected, which are one of the international law obligations.

It can be expected, that in such way the contemporary Slovenian primary school will function and that there will be a strengthening of skills and knowledge, who helps to understand foreign cultures, that is possible only if the children in Slovenian primary schools know their language, culture and past.

In this way is to be understood the action of a contemporary and multicultural orientated subject music education in the primary school. In 1990 on the Music Educator National Conference in Washington were given to the music teachers recommendations regarding multicultural educating (Pesek, 2004, p. 8-9):

- the teachers should help the pupils to understand, that there are existing different, but equivalent forms of music expression;
- multicultural approaches should be present in music educating in the very first years of a child;
- children should become music experiences from other cultures and compare them;
- music should not be treated as a sound phenomenon but in the context of values of a culture that it is expressing;
- it has to be assured, that the syllabus of music education will contain a multicultural approach in all the elements of music expression: listening to music, singing, playing on instruments, dancing and music creativity;
- multicultural approach should be present in different kinds of music activities at schools (music education in general, diverse instrumental ensembles, choruses...);
- multicultural music activities should be present in different fields of music science (history of music, music theory, composition etc.).

In the Slovenian syllabus of music education in primary school, an explicit notice of multicultural orientation of this subject can not be found, except in two clauses that are mentioned among the goals of this subject in general:

- to develop a positive attitude toward the Slovenian and world music culture,
- to recognize the significance of music values for the preservation of Slovenian independence and European art.

Such short definitions are not enough for a faster establishment of multicultural education and breeding in music education and it is obviously that it will be necessary to renovate and to rebuild

the syllabus of this subject, if the pupils should be acquainted with different foreign cultures and with cultures of national minorities living in the Republic of Slovenia.

*The qualification of music teachers, their abilities and achievements in educating multicultural orientated subject music education*

As the syllabus of music education in primary school does not have explicit goals in multicultural educating and breeding and as there are no clear guidelines for music teachers regarding the integration of multicultural in basic music educating (listening to music, music creativity, development of music terms, execution of music) is this domain of educating still in the competence of music teachers.

That means, that the music teacher decides, if, when and where are the multicultural elements to be integrated.

Above mentioned unfortunately depends also on:

- willingness of a music teacher for multicultural approach
- qualification of a music teacher and his abilities
- educational instruments
- different proposals for multicultural music educating .

The multicultural approach in music educating in Slovenian primary schools is present not earlier than in the last decade and therefore relatively new for music teachers that are still qualifying themselves for such an approach.

The problems the music teachers in primary schools have to face with are today not connected with the lack of educational instruments, because they are essential for contemporary music education in primary schools.

It is also true, that all primary schools do not have enough financial supports for purchasing of different educational instruments which should make the multicultural music education easier, but there is still the possibility for using the internet sites that are offering different pages with music videos, mp3, pictures of instruments, musicians, music ensembles etc., which seems not to be used enough.

A serious impediment is the insufficient qualification of some music teachers, because it causes the absence of multicultural approach in the subject.

The contemporary music education in primary schools with a multicultural approach requires educational skills, innovation, creativity and knowledge how to create such a music lesson .

For example, a music lesson with Slovenian folk music should not only present this music but also expose the values of other cultures and their folk music, especially from those that are living in the Republic of Slovenia as national minorities, so that the pupils can compare and recognize different cultures.

Such multicultural approach demands from a music teacher to enter deeper into foreign cultures as also a higher level of preparing for the music lesson, on which some of Slovenian music teachers are not willing to, because of different non-stimulating factors (low salary, insufficient qualification, too much work that is not connected with educating eg. staff meetings, educational trainings that are not connected with their subject etc.).

*The mass media, their influence on attitudes of pupils in primary schools and the role of the music teacher*

The contemporary literature that treats the (dys)function of mass media doesn't contain only an »apocalypse vision« according to their bad influence on children as it was common in the period of their appearance. It has become clear that the dysfunction of mass media appears only when the child is left alone to their influence and if there is no mass media education.

The fact is, that the mass media are more and more present in the life of children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and because of their significance for this part of population it is almost impossible to speculate about renovation or rebuilding of the primary school system without having in mind mass education and a proper qualified staff that is aware of all the (dys)functions of mass media and their influence on children.

In the context of music education in primary school it would mean the following:

- the music teachers have to realise, that the mass media are on the first place regarding their distribution of music in visual, auditive or written shape,
- the music teachers have to realise, that the contemporary generations of children grow up together with mass media from their very first years of life and that they are exposed every day toward their influence and distribution of different music contents that are often very commercialized. That means, that the music teachers should discuss such music commercialized contents also on their lessons,
- the music teachers have to realise, that mass media can have influence on forming attitudes by primary school children toward particularly foreign cultures according to this also on forming of prejudices toward foreign cultures. That means, that music teachers should pay attention on this dysfunction of mass media and expose it on their lessons because prejudices toward foreign cultures and negative attitudes are not welcome in a democratic society,
- the music teachers should pay attention on their lessons on all those music products that are distributed by mass media and have a positive message about a foreign culture,
- the music teachers should be aware of the applicability of mass media in music lessons regarding their educational function, because the music contents they are distributing in visual, auditive or written shape are not only a pleasant way how to make the music lessons more attractive but they are also educational instruments.

With such direction becomes the subject music education in primary school widely open, because it integrates the most contemporary technological and inquiry development of the society that is only feasible in case of proper qualified music teachers and their ability to educate music considering the role of mass media.

## Conclusion

The primary school in the Republic of Slovenia has become nowadays an institution, with a significance that is exceeding; it is »an family extension« because it does not only educate but it breeds as well.

In this context has the subject music education in primary school a special place, because it is a subject that does not only inform and educate about music elements, music theory, music history etc., but it also enables the children to express themselves on a creative way, or to contradict with it. Music is for children a device which has the possibility to influence on their intellectual progress, a device for socialisation, having fun, or device for overcoming stress as well for identification.

Music is one among the arts which contains elements or devices that enables a communication without words. It is »a language« that is understood in Scandinavia or in far East, a message or entertainment to a very diverse population.

That means, that it is possible to build with music and with the subject music education in the primary school relations between pupils that have different social, religious, cultural, ethnical, national background.

Considering of course, a multicultural orientation and considering all the functions music has, has the subject music education in primary school also the possibility to influence on the undesirable negative attitudes and prejudices toward foreign cultures that are present also in the Slovenian primary schools.

Unfortunately is the subject music education in primary school still on the edge of all Slovenian school subjects which means that its rebuilding and renovating has a priority.

That is reliant from music teachers who will have to qualify them better and to acquaint themselves with technological, economical and political transformations in the Slovenian society without it is not possible to establish the subject music education as a subject that has the same significance as all other subjects in the primary school system.

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