

Pécsi Tudományegyetem  
„Oktatás és Társadalom”  
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## **THE APPEARANCE OF CREATIVITY IN MUSICAL EDUCATION**

(Adaptation of Helga Szabó's book *Singing Improvisation at School I.* for flute)

**Theses of a doctoral (PhD) dissertation**

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## **Justification of the topic choice and problem statement**

My choice of topic was inspired by my experiences from my everyday work. I work in an elementary art school and music school. In terms of qualifications, I am a vocal music and flute teacher. Furthermore, I am a certified conductor. While teaching at the music school, I had the opportunity to meet talented students who directed my attention to the development of their creative abilities. The aim of our art education is to contribute to the development of creativity, the ability to recognise and solve problems, be more empathetic and open, and to the enrichment of imagination, taste, and emotional intelligence.

I have always been interested in the development of creativity. How can this be implemented into music lessons in a way in which the personality develops as efficiently as possible? Improvisation is also particularly important in the field of music as an aid in instrumental learning. Improvisation helps to internalise the music and makes it possible to play the instrument later. The improvement of creativity and creative thinking is one of the most important tasks in education, as it is transferred to other areas of life as well. The aim and purpose of music education, in this case flute teaching, is to develop the students' musical abilities, skills, improvisational activity and personality through creative education.

## **Introduction to the study**

This study will examine the musical education of students studying in an elementary art and music school and the possibilities of developing their creativity. What pedagogical methods can I use to aid the development of their creative personality traits in flute lessons? Improvisation is one of the most complex form of human creativity. How is this realised through musical exercises? The students participating in the individual examination already have musical knowledge, intelligence, music knowledge and some level of creativity.

I studied the tasks in Helga Szabó's book: Vocal Improvisation in the elementary school I. and adapted them to flute. The vocal material can be adapted to flute because its closeness to vocal sounds as the flute is known as one of the most singing instruments. I designed the exercises to be carried out by one student and one teacher, but if more people play together, the possibilities are naturally even greater and provide sufficient basis for improvisation.

## **The aim of the study**

This dissertation aims to answer the following questions: How does transferring the improvisational practices, of the singer Helga Szabó, to an instrument develop the students' creativity. The goal of musical education is to develop musical abilities, skills, improvisational activities, and personality through education for creativity. What tools does the teacher consider important to promote successful learning: practice, motivation, reinforcement of positive experiences, which is based on the practice of creation. The development of student creativity is one of the basic issues of modern pedagogy, and the condition for its implementation is the creative personality of the teacher.

The hypotheses refer to the assumption that the results of the research can be applied in everyday practice. The methods should offer a choice, increasing the chance of adapting to the students' individual abilities.

The purpose of my research is to fully reveal how creative thinking and creativity are applied in practice to music school children (including students from class "B" who are preparing for a career in music).

The other group I am examining are the students in class "A", who play music as a hobby and go to a music school, their creativity is also not negligible.

During the research, the time to solve the tasks was 1x30 minutes per week for the students in the "A" class, and 1x45 minutes per week for the "B" class students during the school year, with the principal's permission.

Musical creativity shows itself in the most complex way during the creation of music, one of its branches is improvisation. Music education should not be experienced as the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, but rather as a practical process, in which creativity, improvisation, self-realization, the free and honest expression of our thoughts and emotions, their fulfilment and living without inhibitions are important.

My goal is to develop and present creativity and improvisation during flute education in elementary art school.

## **Methods of the study**

To develop the chosen topic, I used the empirical method of educational research. During the research, I interpreted pedagogical concepts, analysed legal texts (sources), and performed a comparative analysis. From a methodological point of view, the research used a qualitative methodology, it did not strive for numerical results, but for a qualitative presentation of the pieces. I tried to use several methods, so in this research I combined the document analysis with the questioning procedure, this is a proven solution that is often used within the scope of empirical methods. The questioning proved to be an effective method for this study, as it was suitable for discovering the opinions, attitudes, experiences, and motives of individuals. I also used a comparative pedagogical method since I completed the tasks with students from class "A" and class "B".

Helga Szabó's music exercises are also exploratory because they examine whether they have an impact on the development of creativity. The research is qualitative and quantitative, empirical and based on observation. The discussion sheds light on how creative processes can be experienced in the language of music, according to pre-defined criteria or freely and informally through improvisation. Musical improvisation is a creative form of music education.

As a starting point, the student's situation is analysed, and then, during the experiment, the method of the musical exercises to be learned are implemented, the effect of which will be examined.

In the empirical part of the research, we examine the opinions of flute teachers on the questions asked.

## **Sources of the study**

Creativity relies on the research and definition of Guilford (1950), Landau (1974), Gyarmathy (2007), Csíkszentmihályi (2008), Sárosi (1999). I present the creative personality traits, based on the investigations of Torrance (1980), Guilford (1959). The levels of creativity are distinguished by five levels based on Taylor's (1959) research. Wallas (1926) divides the

creative process into sections, which I apply to music pedagogy, flute teaching. The definition of the concept of ability and skill is guided by the Pedagogical Lexicon (1977), edited by Sándor Nagy. A multifactor model of musical abilities was developed by Seashore (1919). Instrumental skill and ability development can be demonstrated on the basis of the curriculum used in practical teaching. *Fuvolatanterv* (2011). Introduction to the different kinds of *Furulyaiskola* in use Jeney, Bántai-Sipos (1970,1995).

The introduction of Helga Szabó: *Énekes improvizáció az iskolában I.-IV.* (1984). Kodály's 333 reading practice introduces students to the world of Hungarian folk song. Reading practice provides the guiding thread for the possibility of improvisation. You can get acquainted with the path of creation and playfully give the opportunity to create small forms, melodies.

In the chapter "The Importance of Creation in Music Teaching", reference is made to Szabó, (1976,1978), and the International Jazz Camp Music Pedagogy Workshop (1986), in relation to the importance of encouraging creation.

The tasks of improvisation and composing were analyzed with the help of the publications of Gonda (1996), Kokas (1972), Apagyi-Lantos (1986). In the same chapter, the definitions of Taylor (1960, cited in Gyarmathy (2011), Kratus (1991), and the study of Kratus (1991) provided the basis for describing the levels of instrumental improvisation. The goals of music teaching based on creativity were summarized by quoting a study by Kratus (1990). The individual studies were based on a case study with the help of Golnhofer (2001), Kormos (2004).

## **The structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation consists of seven structural units. In the introductory part, the choice of topic, the purpose and methodology of the research are presented. The second part is conceptual, in which the concept of creativity, the characteristics of a creative personality, creative thinking, aptitudes, and abilities are defined. The Flute Schools in use and Helga Szabó: Vocal improvisation at the school were included and presented in this chapter. In the third chapter, the importance of developing creative skills in music education, highlighting the importance of creation and improvisation will be discussed. Kratus' musical improvisation levels are presented here. I will also introduce some Hungarian creative methods. In the fourth part, the research question and hypotheses are formulated. The fifth part is the most comprehensive and deals with individual investigations. The test subjects, the tasks to be solved, and their evaluation are presented. In the sixth chapter, the answers to the hypotheses follow. In the final part, the questionnaire part of the empirical research, its results and its evaluation are presented.

## **Questions and hypotheses of the study**

Question: How does music education improve the development of creative abilities?

The following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: We assume that the joy of improvisation is a motivation for the child.

Hypothesis 2: Solving creative tasks will affect the student's performance.

Hypothesis 3: We assume that singing improvisation exercises develop the student's instrumental creativity.

Hypothesis 4: Musical interpretation is a creative activity.

Hypothesis 5: Examining performance skills and abilities reveal the current state of the student's individual abilities.

Hypotheses of the questionnaire survey of the empirical research:

Hypothesis 6: In the questionnaire, the question about music composition will result in a low score.

Hypothesis 7: In the questionnaire, musical creativity requires a creative teacher personality and a creative methodological toolkit.

### **Individual studies in improvisational flute teaching**

The individual investigations of the research begin with the introduction of the students. The test subjects perform various exercises during the research process. This is followed by an examination of presentation skills and abilities, and then an evaluation of the test subject. After the test subjects have completed the exercises, the researcher records the results, analyses them, and prepares the evaluation from the material.

Practices for individual examinations:

- Preparation of the exercises: "Rhythm should always come first"
- 1. The rhythm of the poem is expressed by the "jumping" of the children.
- 2. Rhythm improvisation: rarefaction, multiplication, rhythm accompaniment, exchange of rhythm for melody, improvisation of beats, repetition of given rhythm with variations.
- 3. Melody improvisation: thinning, multiplying, contracting melody, expanding melody, period composition, mirror image melody, pentatonic sequence, improvisation of fifth change, return of half of the melody, same melody with different ending, change in the melody
- 4. examination and evaluation of performance skills and abilities
- Zoltán Kodály: *333 Olvasógyakorlat* (Introduction to Hungarian folk music) EMB Z.3741 is the basis for the first volume
- Transcription of letter notation exercises into musical notation

Form creation:

- 1. The starting motif and form are given from the unknown melody, the student must complete this into a complete melody.
- 2. The form is given, the melody is freely improvised.
- 3. If only the rhythm is given, they sing variations on it.
- 4. They can create the improvisational task in many ways based on a melody written down without a beat or rhythm.
- 5. Improvisation of a variant based on a complete melody.
- 6. Let the child freely improvise a folk-song-like melody with only the tempo given.
- Creative suggestions in the field of polyphony: rhythmic dialogue, rhythm canon, two-part rhythms, question-answer, canon, colliding intervals, supporting the melody with long sustained notes, parallels, bagpipe bass.

Examination of presentation skills and abilities:

The task of examining the sense of performance was carried out in the examination of voice imitation on the flute. Considering the dynamics, the way of expression, the study of tempos, the way of shading, and the use of musical instructions.

We were interested in how the student can express this in rhythm and melody, as well as with the alternative ways of creating sound that can be solved on the flute. The original melody was invented by the student. Then it had to be performed jokingly or angrily, depending on the mood. Imitating animal sounds. Imitating weather phenomena. Imitating the sounds of objects. In a dance rhythm.

These exercises are suitable for getting an idea of the level of development of individual abilities and for revealing the connections between them. We can examine the child's current state of development.

## **Results of the study**

My results prove that transcribing letter notation into alphabetic names or musical instruments and the tasks performed with it provide an opportunity to develop creative skills.

H/1. The joy was best felt in the improvisation of the form reminiscent of our folk songs and the polyphony. Improvisation is a driving force for the child, it arouses their interest. Curiosity and knowledge guided them in solving the task. It has a motivating force for their further learning. Their work has become a source of joy. They found joy in playing music, and their creativity developed through their creative activity.

H/2. During the research, the creative tasks affect the components of the performer's performance, the intonation, rhythm, tempo, technical safety, sound quality, and memory safety. They played the adapted tasks on the flute, while the components of performance prevailed in their playing. This confirmed the 2nd hypothesis. The solutions to the adapted tasks can also help their later performance.

H/3. The students participating in the research sing in every music lesson. The songs are sung with lyrics, letter notation or ABC names. Music school students learn to read notation during solfege class. In the instrumental class, we use the sheet music, which we read with alphabetical names. In this way, the students have the opportunity to create independent exercises on the instrument. All of this can be the cradle of improvisation, which can be used to develop the imagination of the musical creator. When solving the tasks, the student's desire for knowledge guides them to the best solution.

H/4. In the research, all the singing improvisation tasks were interpreted by the students, which is the cradle for later performances, appearances, and concerts. The students understood and interpreted the tasks, recreated the melodies, i.e. brought the sheet music to life. They played with the possibilities of improvisation. In the musical interpretation, their entire personality, their inner world came into play during the performance.

H/5. The students showed their musical skills during the improvisations. Their musicality, their ability to perceive music, their sense of rhythm, their listening to music, and the emotions evoked by music played an important role. Skills that are also important in other areas, such as attention, willpower, intelligence, discipline, demandingness, receptiveness, and self-education are also important when solving tasks. The learning of instrumental music is individualized, the abilities of the students are different, during music creation and improvisation, all four students solved the tasks according to their abilities.

The empirical research, a questionnaire, in which I was interested in the opinions of the flute teachers based on the questions asked. The questionnaire was filled out by 125 music teachers.

Hypotheses were formulated here as well.

Hypothesis 6

In the questionnaire, a question related to music composition will result in a low average score.

Hypothesis 7

In the questionnaire, musical creativity requires a creative teacher personality and a creative methodological toolkit.

The results of the questionnaire research:

H/6. The question about music composition yielded a welcome result, as many music teachers (44.8%) use these tasks.

H/7. To the last explanatory question, the majority of respondents suggested a creative teacher personality and a creative methodological toolkit.

## Summary

In my study, we looked for the answer to the development possibilities of creativity during flute education. Music composition and improvisation are important tasks in the development of creativity. I focused on the concept of creativity, creative personality traits, the creator's thinking process, creative abilities, and improvisation. Students started learning instruments at an early age. The investigation focused on the development of creative traits. During the evaluation of the results, I received answers to my hypotheses and formulated the lessons learned from the study. There are promising signs that students' creative traits have strengthened and how individuals can become even more creative. The impetus for my research was to raise awareness of creativity. Nowadays, we often hear that you should be creative, whether in your everyday life, your profession, your work, or your studies. The European Union declared 2009 the Year of Creativity, the motto of which is: *Imagine! Create! Renovate!*

## New study results

The novelty of the dissertation is the transposition of the tasks in the book *Helga Szabó: Singing improvisation at school I*. converted to the flute. I presented the possibilities for developing creativity during flute teaching. What methods can be used to develop creativity and music making.

I shed light on the research from another angle with the help of a questionnaire, where I was interested in the opinions of flute teachers on the issue of music composition and improvisation. I evaluated quantitative and qualitative data and results.

## **Recommendations**

Practical activities play a very important role in flute teaching because this is how the knowledge becomes experiential. The results of the research showed that the adaptation tasks stimulated the students and developed their theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. They were motivated by improvisation, and the research also highlighted that the use of improvisation in music education is essential. Improvisation should be part of the music lesson. Be a motivating force that develops the student's theoretical and practical knowledge. In instrumental education, there is a great need to develop creative abilities. Improvisation tasks should be part of music school education, under the guidance of the teacher.

Improvisation could gain even greater importance in the curricula as a means of developing musical creativity.

How will the study continue?

Further research and surveys would be needed to put this topic in the centre of scientific interest.

The direction of the research's development could be the use of the seven-degree system and the transfer of the second, third, and fourth volumes of Helga Szabó to musical instruments and their use in music education. The natural basis of playing with instruments, especially wind music, is the sung melody. I would recommend the adaptation primarily to wind players because it is the closest thing to singing. It could be implemented in the form of sheet music, in elementary music education.

Chamber music is an exciting and beautiful task for students. The task of flute education should be to strengthen chamber music with creative tasks and improvisation.

A further course of research could be for flute teachers to push for the publication of a new methodological publications, in which creative and improvisational exercises are included.



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