

PLAYING INSTRUMENT IN REGULAR MUSIC CLASS: MUSICAL-PEDAGOGICAL AND DIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: The article elaborates the role and importance of introducing the activity of playing instruments in regular music class. Although represented in most previous curricula, in the 2006 curriculum playing an instrument has been given a great possibility for a qualitative realization. By studying through literature units, and interviewing teachers, the author systematized the advantages and limitations of playing instrument(s) in regular class. Also, the new model for playing instruments in class has been described.

Keywords: model; music class; playing instrument; primary compulsory school.

Preface

"The reason for learning and playing music is to improve the quality of life through countless opportunities and experiences that music provides."
(Johnson and Memmott, 2006)

Musical experience and expression of music are an integral part of human life. They depend on the person, its correlation with music, as well as on music work which, by its structure, becomes considerably closer to or distant from the persons' taste and preferences. In addition to singing, as the primary mode of expression, playing is another important factor in the musical expression of individuals and groups. It is a part of public and private everyday lives, a part of secular and spiritual events, and finds its place in kindergartens and schools.

Active music-making is the dominant activity in preschool. Besides singing, the activity of playing rhythmic instruments is frequent too. Kenney (1997) points out that playing an instrument is one of the first medium for musical development of children. Monighan-Nourot, Scales and Van Horn (1987) get along with this finding and statement. The same authors note that playing an instrument in early childhood is the central activity which introduces the children to the abstract world of music, and directly involves them in the music formation and creation.

Children at school continue their musical education through various activities. Active musicianship is the most direct way of acquiring music skills

and knowledge related to music (Reimer, 2003). One of the activities that are brought about is – playing an instrument. It enables students to perform and create music. Students are active, motivated to play, want to learn to play, and lessons are conducted in a pleasurable environment.

It is natural for children to want to be active, and since they love to play instruments and that the playing is considered pleasant activity, it is comprehensible why playing an instrument should be introduced at school. Besides that, playing an instrument enables experience, expressions and music understanding. In this way students learn, adopt and practically demonstrate the musical elements. Playing, therefore, is not only an enjoyable activity, but also the possibility for expanding their musical knowledge and skills.

Playing instrument in regular music class from the curricula perspectives

Including activity of playing an instrument in regular music classes¹ in Croatian schools commenced in the second half of the 20th century (Požgaj, 1988; Rojko 1996) and may be tracked through various curricula. It first appears in 1958, in the draft concept of the music teaching in compulsory primary school at the federal level² (*Osnovna škola, Programska struktura*, 1958), with intention for the children to play all the instruments available. The thesis that instruments contribute to a faster, easier and more comprehensive understanding of music and influence the children's creativity has been advocated for (*Osnovna škola; Odgojno-obrazovna struktura*, 1959). However, the prospects for its implementation were missing since not all schools had instruments at the time.

In the curriculum as of the 1960, playing an instrument was introduced for pupils from fourth to sixth grade, under two units: *Odgoj ukusa* (Upbringing taste) and *Odgoj za samostalno izražavanje* (Education for self-expression). Learning to play a melodic musical instrument was proposed as a free-form work (nowadays known as an extracurricular activities), while the rhythmical instruments were used in the regular classes. In the seventh and eighth grade, playing an instrument was proposed only as a free-form work. "Only instruments which, in terms of technical mastery, are not particularly difficult, those that may contribute to a faster, easier and more comprehensive understanding of music, and bring joy into the classroom musical life, are used for playing at school." (*Osnovna škola. Odgojno-obrazovna struktura*, 1960, 186)

In the re-edited curriculum of 1964, the program still covers the capacity of playing, with a note that "in general, work on the instrumental teaching should

¹ Throughout history the subject was entitled: Pjevanje (Singing), Muzički odgoj (Music Education), Glazbeni odgoj (Music Education), Glazbena kultura (Music Culture).

² The draft has resulted in the adoption of the Curriculum (1960).

be held during the regular classes” and also that it is “clear that the instrumental classes require higher technical mastering, and also that they are not suitable for collective training with the whole class, so those can take place within the extracurricular groups” (*Osnovna škola – odgojno obrazovna struktura*, 1964, 230).

The curriculum as of 1972 proposes songs for playing (*Naša osnovna škola. Odgojno-obrazovna struktura*, 1974). A novelty is the selection of the instruments in offer, and in addition to rhythmic instruments, the following ones are proposed: *tambura*, *melodika*, accordion, guitar and mandolin. The curriculum of 1983/1984 (*Plan i program odgoja i osnovnog obrazovanja*, 1989³) points out that playing instruments and singing does impact constant development of the student’s interpretive and expressive skills, and has the focus on traditional folk music, revolutionary and patriotic songs. It should be noted that playing an instrument is predominantly an activity that accompanies singing, and for this purpose the most suitable instruments are the rhythmic percussion. Moreover, the melodic instruments are desirable too, should the conditions exist. It is “necessary to be careful due to the poor quality of some instruments, which negatively affects the musical performance” (*Plan i program odgoja i osnovnog obrazovanja* 2, 1989, 20).

“The changes that have occurred in the social and political life of Croatia after multiparty elections in 1990 and the Croatian constitution as an independent state, have created the need of re-thinking the education goals and tasks.” (Duraković, 2016, 403) The tasks of teaching music were, among others, to have student focus on “playing the traditional instruments commonly in use in the area where the student lives (*tambura*, *sopile*, bagpipes, *gusle*, *dvojnice* and other folk instruments), and flute, *melodika*, metallophone, and other rhythmical instruments, but also to focus on the unconventional sound producers” (*Nastavni plan i program za osnovne škole u Republici Hrvatskoj*, 1991, 51). In the curriculum of the 1999 playing an instrument is set in the background. Thus, as described

³ In the introduction of the *Plan i program odgoja i osnovnog obrazovanja* A. Bežen points out that the curriculum was adopted in 1983, but was not published as a separate publication until 1988 and 1989. It has been published in several numbers of *Vjesnik Republičkog komiteta za prosvjetu, kulturu, fizičku i tehničku kulturu*, in the edition of *Školske novine*, during 1983 and 1984. In the *Plan i program odgoja i osnovnog obrazovanja* 2, *Predmetna nastava*, the curriculum for music teaching was included along with language and art, social area, foreign languages and students’ community fields. Since the year of publication has not been written, on the basis of an announcement in *Školske novine* No. 28, of 12th September 1989, in which it was stated that the innovated curriculum had just been published, we concluded that this happened in 1989. It is referred to the updated curriculum that had emerged after five or six years of its implementation in school. The 1988 curriculum introduced innovations for these areas: Foreign languages, Mathematics, Basic techniques and production, and in 1989 for the Defence and protection, course and elective classes, yet it remains uncertain whether the innovation was made in the music curriculum (language-art area has not been mentioned).

in the curriculum, music performance consists of (*Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu*, 1999, 69): “occasional application of instruments (primarily rhythmic instruments, while playing melodic instruments, as component of the earlier curricula, is now set within the content of the elective music courses)”. The knowledge of music art consists of different musical activities and “as a supplement to singing, students can sometimes freely play different simple instruments” (*Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu*, 1999, 69).

A different approach to playing instruments is brought about by the curriculum for the year of 2006, where it is stipulated that it can be the second area of the so-called open model⁴. According to the Curriculum (*Nastavni plan i program*, 2006, 67), among other things, students should be: “encouraged for independent musical activity (singing, playing)” within the task in which “playing is used simply for playing an instrument and not (just) for learning a concrete musical piece”.

The teacher can independently plan, organize, and realize the playing activity, having in mind given goal and purpose of activities, and taking into account the real possibilities of its feasibility and the final outcomes that the students can achieve. If playing an instrument is a part of a flexible concept of music teaching, students are interested and motivated, and the school has all the conditions set for carrying out these activities, it is possible to successfully realize playing instrument activity in regular classes.

Possibilities for playing instrument according to the curriculum and music textbooks

According to the aforementioned and currently applied 2006 curriculum, in the first three years of primary compulsory school activity of playing an instrument is proposed within the fields of: singing, listening to music, elements of musical creativity. Playing an instrument includes playing rhythm and playing meter with rhythm instruments. In addition to playing rhythm instruments, students learn to distinguish meter from rhythm. It can be used also as an accompaniment to rhymes and songs.

⁴ The open model enables a different view of the contents in music classes and of musical activities. The contents which by theory and verbiage hinder the implementation of the music teaching are excluded. There is one compulsory activity defined, while another one can be elective. Listening to music and music literature elaboration holds the dominant role in the music teaching, and provides that the second activity can be chosen from: singing, playing, musical literacy, creativity, dance, computer music, depending on the affinity of students and teachers. The goal of music teaching is oriented to education of music listeners and connoisseurs of music, and their active participation in the musical life of the environment. More in: Vidulin, 2016, 345-358.

In the fourth grade, playing an instrument is provided within the *Music games* field where, among other things, the playing is proposed for simpler instruments, *without great pretensions*. Analysing the music contents for the fourth grade, it is evident that they can be also realized by playing. Thus, by listening to music, learning about music and singing songs, students can play a C major scale, and songs in two, three and fourth time (meter). By playing, students show the level of knowledge and understanding of musical notation, solmization/music alphabet, rhythmic figures, tempo and dynamics.

Playing an instrument as music activity is present in the fifth and sixth grade under the unit *Free, improvised rhythmization, movement to music, dancing and playing*. In the curriculum (*Nastavni plan i program*, 2006, 73) the following is pointed out: "Teacher is completely free to create activities for this teaching area, taking into account their importance and quality." It is also mentioned that the students' activity is important, and that the abilities of the individuals are relative and different. Since folk themes are learnt from the fifth grade, folk songs, which are very simple to perform, are played.

The easier songs are performed in the fifth grade with the goal to repeat and determine all previously learned elements. Playing activity continues expanding major and minor tonality, with one or two signs. Songs from textbooks as well as fragments from the proposed art works from the curriculum are used. In accordance with the program, the knowledge related to the creation of musical works is acquired and applied (motif, phrase, sentence, period, two-part and three-part song).

In the sixth grade, songs from music literature that have up to two signs and fragments may be used for playing. By playing an instrument, student can demonstrate different music forms such as complex three-part song, and theme with variations. Considering the students' instrumental skills and the instrument that he/she plays, playing the thirds or adding accompaniment and playing with singing can be encouraged; but creativity also – where it is possible and feasible.

According to the curriculum for the seventh and eighth grade, playing an instrument can be realized within the framework of *Playing* (synthesizer), *creativity*, *PC* (midi-equipment) clusters, and carried out in harmony with the teachers' ideas and the concrete school possibilities. Besides certain songs that can be played, and the possibility of playing fragments from the musical literature, there are no greater links with the prescribed teaching contents for the fact that music class in the seventh grade is oriented mainly to listening and theoretical recognition and learning of instruments and instrumental music types. In the eighth grade, knowledge about musical and other vocal-instrumental types, popular music, electronic instruments, musical stylistic periods and jazz is acquired, and it is evident that greater attention to the activity of playing instrument cannot be given. Playing, however, can help in raising the

awareness of some music elements, and affect memorizing of some parts of the musical literature. In the seventh and eighth grade, in regard to the complexity of the curriculum, playing an instrument should not be an aggravating factor, but one of the possibilities for active musicianship.

Considering the problem of appropriate literature for playing instrument in primary compulsory school, we have analysed textbooks for music education⁵. The songs in the textbooks are of different genres: art, popular, authors, folk, traditional, religious, and patriotic. In determining the suitable songs to play in class, we were guided by the following criteria: major and minor tonalities up to two sign, simpler rhythmic structures, melody and genre diversity. In all textbook sets we have found the possibility of playing music on different instruments. Since the textbooks provide songs for singing and bring music sheets, some songs can be used for playing by notes. The textbooks consist of songs which have simple, and those of complex rhythmical-melody structures, so it is useful to extend playing by notes to playing by ear, especially for the songs that are more complicated to play by notes.

Besides offering a repertoire for singing, some music textbooks, just for some classes, favour the direct introduction to specific instruments. Specific characteristics of each instrument, e.g. way of playing recorders, keyboards – melodies and chords, guitar grips, *tambura* are presented.

Analysing the music textbooks make us conclude that there is a possibility for the realization of the playing activity. We have found total of 330 songs that may be used for this purpose. Some of them are included in the textbooks from several publishers. We found the greatest number of songs that can be performed in the *Svijet glazbe 4 – 8* textbook (Gašparđi et al., 2014; Raguz et al., 2014), while the approximate number of songs can be found in the textbooks *Allegro u glazbenom svijetu 4 – 8* (Dvořak, Jeličić Špoljar and Kirchmayer Bilić, 2014a,b,c,d,e), and *Glazbena četvrtica* (Sikirica, Stojaković and Miljak, 2014), *Glazbena petica* (Marić and Šćedrov, 2014), *Glazbena šestica* (Sikirica and Marić, 2014), *Glazbena sedmica*, and *Glazbena osmica* (Šćedrov and Marić, 2014a,b). In all the above – mentioned textbooks it is evident that most songs in the fifth and sixth-grade textbooks can be used for playing, but also that there is a difference in the types of songs suggested by the authors.

In the *Allegro u glazbenom svijetu 4 – 8* textbooks (Dvořak, Jeličić Špoljar and Kirchmayer Bilić, 2014a,b,c,d,e), the songs that may be used for playing are

⁵ We analysed music textbooks approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia: *Allegro u glazbenom svijetu 4 – 8* (Dvořak, Jeličić Špoljar and Kirchmayer Bilić, 2014a,b,c,d,e); *Glazbena četvrtica* (Sikirica, Stojaković and Miljak, 2014); *Glazbena petica* (Marić and Šćedrov, 2014) *Glazbena šestica* (Sikirica and Marić, 2014) *Glazbena sedmica* and *Glazbena osmica* (Šćedrov and Marić, 2014a,b); *Svijet glazbe 4 – 7* (Gašparđi et al., 2014a,b,c,d); *Svijet glazbe 8* (Raguz et al., 2014).

located in a part called *Glazbena pjesmarica i slušaonica* and *Glazbena pjesmarica*, but also in the part *Hrvatska tradicijska glazba*. The total number of tracks is 93, and the great possibility to play songs in relation to the textbooks can be found in the sixth grade, namely 28 songs. We should point out that in the textbook *Allegro 5*, there is a special section called *Playing recorders*, documenting the tones from c^1 to c^2 , f sharp, b sharp and d^2 .

In the edition *Svijet glazbe 4 – 8* (Gašpari et al., 2014; Raguž et al., 2014), regardless of playing, 138 songs can be taken into account. The largest number of songs is offered in the fifth grade – 35 songs. In the textbook for the fourth grade, most of the songs are in the part called *Pjesmarica*, while few are in the part *Sviramo blokflautu*.

From the textbook set *Glazbena četvrtica* (Sikirica, Stojaković and Miljak, 2014), *Glazbena petica* (Marić and Šćedrov, 2014), *Glazbena šestica* (Sikirica and Marić, 2014), *Glazbena sedmica*, and *Glazbena osmica* (Šćedrov and Marić, 2014a,b) we can use 97 songs of which 32 are in the textbook for the fifth grade. In the textbook *Glazbena četvrtica*, under the elected content, we can find the area *Svirajmo blok-flautu* which brings didactic examples, and parts of certain songs that serve as recorder accompaniment for singing songs in class. Thus, the students learn the tones: h^1 , a^1 , g^1 , c^2 , d^2 , and also cover other tones: f^1 , e^1 , d^1 , c^1 . The *Glazbena sedmica* textbook brings instructions on how to play chords on the keyboard and guitar.

Contents that are to be adopted by playing are introduced gradually, starting from the fourth grade. In fourth grade, students play the songs in C major, which contain simple rhythmic figures, ranging from c^1 to c^2 . In fifth grade the extent known tones are increased (a – d^2), new rhythmic structures are introduced (syncope, sixteenth and combinations, breaks), and measures changed. In sixth grade longer, rhythmically complex songs (triplets are introduced) and melody (interval) are demanding, but more musically available. In the seventh and eighth grade, the songs are more complex, and it is important to learn a song by ear. That way the student hears what he/she has to play. In these classes the focus is on the theoretical approach to the contents, with greater concentration on listening to music and learning about music, and, at the same time, the songs are more challenging, so it is clear that the time for playing is limited. Therefore, it is important to keep playing in, already familiar rhythms and major-minor tonality to sign or two, or play the rhythmic instruments to accompany the song which is sung. The teacher will decide if it is necessary to insist on playing an instrument, and if so – which way to carry out this activity.

Advantages and limitations of playing instrument in the classroom: theoretical template and teachers' point of view

Playing an instrument in a regular class has its advantages and limitations. Music educators emphasize the benefits that are achieved by playing – from the development of professional (music) competencies to the achievement of the emotional stability, social interaction and even the improving of the academic achievement. Mark (1987) points out that playing affects the development of cognitive skills and fine motor skills. Students learn how to become self-disciplined, diligent and engaged, they learn to deal with success and defeat (Covay and Carbonaro, 2010). Schellenberg (2004), on the grounds of the research results, deducts that children who have had instrument lessons increase their IQ. Schumacher (2009) points out that playing an instrument influences for better academic achievement. Reich (1963) cites a multitude of arguments in favour of this activity, such as: a child wants to be active, playing creates working habits, children can enter the essence of music more easily and they develop the discipline and habit of subordinating to the collective. By playing, a student learns to appreciate the work of others, to be responsible for the success of the collective, develops a competitive spirit, and starts to be proud of himself/herself. Likewise, student exercises his/her concentration, precision, and patience, as indicated by Plavša, Popović and Erić (1961). They also mention that by playing the student acquires responsibility for the success of the collective.

Plavša, Popović and Erić (1961) note that playing an instrument is a synthesis of music experience with experience in conformity with performer's movements, so it is desirable that each student spends some time playing an instrument (author's note – rhythmic instrument). Požgaj (1988, 62) suggests that it is necessary to play an instrument because that way "students who, for some reason, are not able to sing, can actively participate in the playing activity". Regner (1980) considers that it would be hard to imagine music lessons without instruments, because it is not possible to learn music without the hands-on activities.

We will also highlight the limitations in carrying out playing activity, with the (non) availability of instruments for classroom musicianship being the leading one. Limitations arising from daily practice, to which the music teachers surveyed point in one research⁶, are: lack of literature, difficult acquisition of

⁶ In September of 2016, the questionnaire was, by electronic means passed to the teachers of Music Culture from Croatia – those who have been conducting the activity of playing for several years. The sample was obtained on the basis of knowledge and insights into teaching practice by county advisers for the subject of Music Culture. Twelve teachers responded to the poll aimed at exploring the advantages and disadvantages of playing instruments in regular class. The respondents, pointed out to the following: the reasons for conducting the activities

instruments, lack of instruments in the classroom, group too large for playing, no time for the realization of the activity, one hour per week for music lesson. Rojko states that playing in the school is without any artistic value, naming three reasons for such a statement: "(...) the instruments available (e.g. instruments of Orff's collection, block flute, *melodika*, and other school instruments), their poor quality, and insufficient time to practice. Although psychologically justified – for children are motivated to play, such activity cannot be justified musically, i.e. artistically. Playing in compulsory school can make sense if students perform real music on real instruments." (Rojko, 1996, 122)

However, taking into account both, the advantages and limitations, we believe that playing in a regular class still has more advantages. The goal of playing an instrument in regular class is not to teach students to play the instrument with excellency, nor make them in to artists⁷, but to give them the opportunity to become active participants in music lesson, enable them for better understanding of music by raising awareness of the musical elements, and make music teaching interesting, practical, and useful. While playing an instrument in a regular class has no artistic value (artistic contribution cannot be expected in regular music classes!), the playing itself still represents a pleasure for students, and it increases the desire for a better exploration of music, which is very important to achieve in their music education. Požgaj (1988, 17) points out that the child's pleasure in playing an instrument is a "sufficient reason for playing to be considered as possibility, and that this activity is a legitimate one".

As indicated by Neely (2001), the fact is that young people like to play and often choose this activity if offered. Interest and students' inner motivation are on the side of playing as an activity in regular class. What remains as questionable is the teachers' commitment, a strategy that would encourage playing to a greater extent and in a more concrete form, and the (financial) support from schools.

It is visible from teaching practice that only a small number of teachers decide to carry out playing an instrument in regular classes, but also that the strategy of those who carry out the activity is very clear and concrete, and even despite the lack of equipment, they introduce the activity. In the aforementioned research, music teachers have pointed out to the value that playing has in the regular class:

"I notice more interest for music lessons, but also for music in general."; "Children are always interested, happy, smiling, they all are active in the lesson, it is very lively, and also useful."; "The atmosphere in the classroom is at ease, students are involved in active musicianship, they develop motor skills, and are more agile. By playing, they understand the musical forms better.";

of playing in regular class, the problem of school instruments, the ways to popularize the playing activities, and the ability of students participate at concerts.

⁷ The great instrumental skill can be acquired in state/public music schools, and also by means of private courses led by musical associations.

“The students in the class who are not academically excellent or even have a disciplinary problem, become recognized in another way.”; “Students are doing their best, they are joyful and feel proud of their results.”; “The children are satisfied and have a positive attitude for the music lesson.”

Education practice in Croatian schools shows that students in regular music class play primarily on rhythmic and melodic percussion, and self-made instruments⁸, but also play music on block flute, *melodika*, *tamburica*, synthesizer, guitar, mandolin, accordion, and piano. According to the responses of the teachers surveyed, we have noticed that there are schools that have all the instruments, but also the ones with just a few instruments.⁹ In many schools that do not have instruments, students would bring their own, usually a block flute. It is necessary that a student really plays the functional instrument, and that the lessons are conducted in specialized classrooms. An important part of equipment in the music classroom is the piano or synthesizer, then a guitar, an accordion, *tamburica* and/or any other instrument that, with a help of a teacher, may be used to explain and demonstrate different music works, and to perform harmonic accompaniment.

The activity of playing instrument is not performed in schools often, even in the same school it may vary – in relation to the classes and grades. The survey results show that some teachers introduce playing in all grades and classes, but most of the teachers decide to realize the activity in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade while students in the seventh and the eighth grade play rarely, or do not play at all. Some teachers have introduced playing only in certain classes, regardless of grade, which depends on the potentials but also on the interest of students. The reason for this is the lack of interest detected at so-called higher grades students. The fact is that great interest of students to play, recorded in the fourth grade, in most cases remains present throughout the fifth and sixth grade. However, it is evident that the popularity of playing decreases in seventh and eighth grades, along with students’ motivation and interest. The reasons for it can be in the following: the interest for other ways of musical experience and expressions, other students’ needs and desires, more school obligations, etc. The state of play as such is also influenced in regards to the musical works proposed; more complex ones, demanding much more time and effort to be invested so as to play the song.

Having this in mind, a teacher has three options. The first one, in which he/she still gravitates towards playing in regular classes, but to a lesser manner and with

⁸ Regarding the hand-made instruments, one polled teacher writes as it follows: “I gave up on the absurd ‘instruments’ in which a vegetable grater, or a plastic tray for meat, served as the guiro, a trashcan replaced the drums, and a rubber on the stick the stick....”

⁹ One interviewed teacher shared a case in which he was personally engaged in obtaining the sponsor’s funds in order to purchase high-quality instruments for the school.

less intensity, the second, in which only some students play an instrument, and the third one, in which the teacher completely abandons the activity of playing instrument(s) in regular class. Playing to a lesser extent can be implemented with all students, yet without burdening them with the song and learning it. In that way, playing serves only as an additional way of explanation of a particular musical phenomenon. In this case, the musical notation is not important, but the phenomenon itself, which can be achieved through playing by ear. Furthermore, it can be left with students to choose whether they still will insist on playing, and this represents a possibility for the process of individualization in the class. Also, the teacher can give up activity of playing an instrument and move the focus to another activity.

It is important to point out that, whatever a teacher and his/her students decide, playing can be offered as an extracurricular activity that provides for better conditions (independent students' selection of the activity, two hours per week) for the developing of the instrumental skills and the acquisition of certain musical experience in solo or musicianship in a group.

In regards to the question of how the teachers popularize playing an instrument in regular class, the respondents emphasize that pupils have performed a short class concerts at school and/or at city events, either independently or as an accompaniment to choir. An interesting viewpoint is the one in which teachers indicate that students need not be particularly encouraged to play because they are self-motivated; they love this activity and as soon as they see the instruments they do want to play. They are also motivated through participation in school orchestras, which gives school a specific quality (*The whole school is a playing environment*).

Playing an instrument has been suggest by teachers to their other colleagues due to standing that it is a way to bring something new into their classes, create a pleasant classroom environment, enrich school events, and motivate students to acquire the instrumental skills. Playing an instrument encourages children's creativity. They learn about music, demonstrate the learned music contents, and they play. Teachers indicate that holding to students' interest in playing an instrument requires a considerable commitment.

Summarizing the reasons for carrying out playing an instrument in regular class, and according to the responses of the surveyed teachers, we have noticed different approaches and classified those into three categories: professional aspect, emotional and social aspects, and external factors. Professional aspect, in sense of acquiring musical knowledge and skills, is associated with applicability and better understanding of musical elements, listening identification and correction of errors, learning quickly to play by notes, practical application of knowledge, expression through music, and musical creativity encouragement. Emotional and social aspects have been recognized in the fact that the students

love to play, are interested, and joyful in collaborative musicianship. The classroom environment is favourable, deepens the intensity of playing together, and students actively participate in class workshops. We have identified the influence of external factors in the following: the continuation of the successful tradition of playing in regular class, available instruments in a school, and the fact that the current music education for students favours the implementation of activities at school.

Playing instrument in regular music class: didactic implications

The research conducted as experiment with parallel groups in 2010 in one Istrian primary school was guided by the hypothesis that by playing an instrument students understand music better (more in: Vidulin, 2013, 23-39). The study sample consisted of 25 ten-year old fourth grade students. The music lessons with the control group have been realized through two activities: listening to music, and singing (IVa), while in the experimental group, instead of singing, the experimental factor was introduced – playing synthesizer (IVb). The work started by identifying the inception state, then an experimental factor was introduced, and at the end, the final outcomes of the students from both groups within the regular musical classes were established.

The results of the experimental group in raising awareness of musical components were compared with the control group. In both groups, the control and the experimental one, following music contents have been elaborated: two, three and four measure, melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, repetition, corona, and small musical phrase. The results (Table 1) obtained show that students of both groups have achieved a high level of recognition of the musical elements (rhythm, melody, dynamics and tempo), however, the students in the experimental group have also gained the elementary instrumental skill. The biggest difference recorded was in the level of students' knowledge. In the control group (singing) all the elements have been learned at the level of recognition, but the students weren't able to demonstrate all the components. The students could distinguish rhythm from melody, tempo from dynamics, but they could not use the acquired knowledge independently. One of the reasons is that most students did not have the correct (exact) singing intonation so they weren't able to reproduce the melody accurately. In spite of their knowledge about what the tempo and the dynamics are, they were not able to apply it to new songs, because they were not musically literate for singing at sight. In class they sing by ear, repeating after the teacher's singing. The results of the experimental group showed that the students during the school year have learned to play simple songs by notes, but also to observe and remember the musical concepts so that they were able to apply it to the new songs. Students proved able to analyse the music

autonomously and play simple songs by notes. By playing, they have acquired the basics of musical language which resulted in a higher level of understanding and application of musical elements. They have knowledge about playing the C major scale, and songs in C major, play in various measures, they learn to recognize and perform simple rhythmic figures, recognize and use the basic tempo and dynamics marks. They become aware of the measures, rhythm and musical notation, and the application of this specific knowledge is effectuated.

Control group	Experimental group
both classes had achieved an enviable level of knowledge of musical elements (rhythm, melody, dynamics, tempo)	
contents were taught both in the control and in the experimental group: double time, triple time and quadruple time measure, melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, repeat sign, corona, double bar, small musical phrase	
all elements were learned at the level of recognition, and not all elements could be demonstrated	high level of understanding (and application) of musical elements
despite the fact that they knew what tempo and dynamics were, they were no table to apply them individually in a new composition	much better identified and remembered musical concepts that they were able to demonstrate in other songs
	learned to play simple songs by notes
	basic playing skills

Table 1. Research findings

For the purpose of the above-mentioned research, the didactic model for the elementary playing instrument in regular class is elaborated (more in: Vidulin, 2013, 23-39). It has four phases, out of which the first three are introduced in the fourth grade, when the students start to play. The first phase involves mastering of the rhythmic patterns and performing by playing different rhythmic structures (from eight notes to whole notes). Teacher works with students but working independently is also intense. At this stage, it can be played in many voices, in pairs, groups, with different research tasks, and at the same time it can encourage the children's creativity. In the second phase the musical notations are introduced and practiced by playing of various didactic exercises. The students learn the solmization, and read notes by music alphabet. After that, the whole class reads the didactic example with rhythmic syllables and solmization/alphabet, with teacher demonstrating on how to play each bar, and then students practice to play the example. The third phase includes the independent learning of a song, and is based on the songs from the textbooks that students sing by ear. Knowing

the song melody is of a great help in mastering the song by the notes because, in the process of learning to play, the content that the student hears and that what the notation shows can be treated as *partners*. Regardless of whether a student sings the song correctly or incorrectly, in the auditory impression, he/she will remember and keep the perception about how the song should sound. The fourth phase is introduced and carried out as of the fifth grade, and is characterized by the independent work of students. The only part of the lesson to which the frontal approach in work is applied is the joint analysis of the example which will lead to the explanation of some music issues (tonality, melodic leaps, and rhythmic patterns). After a common work with teacher activity, each student learns the song and plays autonomously, and teacher helps each student.

It is important to plan the time for playing, from the common analysis of examples, independent students' work, to the public performance of the song. Playing can be relatively encouraged by the textbook that offers different songs, but an important link is also with other materials prepared by a teacher: from didactic to art and popular songs, or fragments from music literature prepared for the elementary playing in primary compulsory school.

On the regular class, students play shorter and less musical-technical complex songs or they can play simplified fragments of a lengthier musical work. Also, they may play a melody with elementary harmonic accompaniment, which all depends on the students' music skill. Students who are not interested in playing melodic instruments can be included in the music lesson by playing rhythmical instruments, or singing. It is important that they make the music, feel the music, and that they are actively engaged in music.

From professional-music point of view, and in regular education process, while student playing, the attention is paid to the identification, analysis, and demonstration of different types of melody movement (ascending, descending, headlong, gradually, in or out tonality, in varying volume), rhythm diversity (simple and complex rhythms, dotted rhythms), playing in a variety of measures, with different tempo, dynamics, agogics. Students demonstrate the musical elements that are part of curriculum for a particular class. In addition to all the mentioned musical aspects, it is important to point out to the phrasing and aesthetics of the song, to the extent that this can be achieved, and in relation to the students' skills and knowledge and the instrument in which music is performed. The goal is to play some simple songs by notes, but also to make music, express music, and memorize music.

The fact is that playing an instrument is a highly effective activity because the concentration of students, their awareness, activity and self-activity is expressed. The observing and learning from mistakes, a better understanding of music contents and the use of acquired knowledge is noticeable. Playing melodic instrument greatly affects the creativity of students. In fact, the student's usage of

the known musical elements but from a different angle and leading it in a different direction gets them the possibility to create new things and original products.

The teacher can identify gifted and talented students who will be referred to further musical training, or included in extracurricular musical activities. The possibility of playing an instrument in the school is one of the possibilities by which schools contribute to the development of a child and encourage him/her for taking the direction of additional music education that can be realized both in music schools and by instrumental courses.

Conclusion

The teachers' experiences shared indicate that, in the regular music classes, the initial level of playing by notes can be achieved in favour of a better understanding of music and its acceptance. Students learn by playing and what they learn can be practically demonstrated. In that way it is possible to realize their level of instrumental skill and application of knowledge. The students can process a substantial part of the fourth to sixth grade curriculum, and a part of seventh and eighth grade curriculum. The musical contents which may be realized by playing encompass different rhythmic figures, simple and complex measures, tempo, dynamics, tonality, and musical forms. By playing songs or short music fragments they become aware of music and remember different types of musical works. They are also ready to improvise and to create music. Didactic model presented in this work is a proposal of manner to introduce students to the area of playing, and how to achieve the ultimate goal regarding the development of knowledge about music through the guided but also independent work. The fact is that the music knowledge affects understanding of music, and better understanding affects its acceptance. By playing an instrument it is possible to accept musical work that students do not consider as a primary one in their life and to which they do not naturally incline.

Focusing on music is in second plan regarding students' thrust and their competences. In addition to the positive effects of playing on children's overall personality, the efficiency of playing is reflected in the peculiar concentration of students, in mindful and active work, observing and learning from the mistakes, hands-on activity, better understanding of learning contents, and utilising the knowledge acquired. In music terms the students play the melody by notes, play the melody and harmonic accompaniment, play what they hear, create and perform songs. Furthermore, playing in regular class can motivate them for getting in to music school where they can continue developing the instrumental skill on the same or some other instruments. Also, the students may be encouraged to play in the orchestra or to form a music band. The students can acquire habit of visiting the concert events where they would closely monitor the performers,

their technique and interpretation. Due to the positive experiences, there is no obstacle for students to play instrument in the regular music classes.

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