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9 Bridging the past, present and future in Estonian music education

Anu Sepp, Urve Läänemets and Kristi Kiilu

Introduction

Estonia, represented by Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, joined the Nordplus-funded Nordic Network for Music Education (NNME) in 2008. Since then there have been continuous contacts and cooperation with the network members from different countries. It has been a most interesting and rewarding period, full of numerous discussions, meetings, exchange of experience and knowledge in our very special field of music education. It is appropriate here to express our gratitude to the NNME as an organization, and especially to Torunn Bakken Hauge and David Hebert for their wonderful work providing opportunities for many to be part of this community.

It has been very interesting to follow the developments and characteristic features of music education in different countries and learn from the best practices during these eight ten years, especially in terms of the thorough and high-level research. An important event, especially for us (but hopefully the entire network), was the annual NNME conference in 2014 that was held in Tallinn. It gave the opportunity to involve more of our students as well as teachers and lecturers in the field of music education, and give participating members of the network a brief insight into Estonian music education. The role and position of music education in social life has grown everywhere and meaningfully contributes to sustainable development of cultures, lifelong learning and identity construction. At the same time, there are diverse local and regional practices to be analysed and considered, including how implementation of democracy, globalization, social justice and inclusion have taken place in different societies under different power relations. The field of folk music and teacher training has enriched all participants in the network with new ideas to be considered for music education practices in different societies.

We are in a curious position between the Nordic and the Baltic countries: geographically and historically we share a lot with other Baltic countries, yet culturally and educationally we also have a lot in common with Germany and Scandinavia, especially with Finland, as we share a lot in language and music (we even have the same melody for both of our national anthems!). Yet, in music education we have chosen and developed our own different paths. Perhaps that is the reason why influences on Estonian music education and culture can be traced back from different directions.

A brief historical overview

Common knowledge is that it is extremely difficult to make a smart selection of the educational content recognized as necessary for a particular society. The knowledge, skills and values recognized as content for learning must be carefully explained why they are relevant for learners of different social groups and society at large. Even the lists of school subjects differ greatly in various countries, and accordingly, music is a school subject not always present in national curricula (NC).

However, music education in Estonia has enjoyed the position of a compulsory subject in general comprehensive schools at all times, starting with the first curriculum document of 1874. It is also worth mentioning that all teachers at the end of the 19th century were also music teachers at the same time, and active leaders of cultural life in all rural areas, conducting choirs and orchestras. Long traditions of old folk songs – *regilaul,* Estonian runo – and joint singing in the church on Sundays have also greatly contributed to music becoming a part of everyday life, including studies at schools, the necessity of which has never been questioned. It has to be mentioned that music or singing

has been a compulsory school subject in Estonia since 1874, when still part of the Russian Empire.

Since the establishment of statehood in 1918, development of the national educational system started with compiling first official curricula for general comprehensive schools (in 1919, 1921, 1928, 1939 and 1938), in which music education was specified as a compulsory subject. me The initial decades of national educational development were characterized by professionalism and close contacts with European educationists, especially with German-speaking countries in music education. As a result, by the end of the 1930s, Riho Päts developed Estonia's own music education approach (as described in detail later in this chapter).

However, there was a totally new context for development of music education in Estonia both during and especially after World War II, as the country became again part of the Soviet Union, and all education had to follow the educational paradigm used in the empire. The Soviet power exercised psychological and physical destruction of the cultural, political and economic elite (including family members). In addition to various ideological restrictions, there were two waves of deportation (1941–1949), when approximately 30,000 people were sent to remote parts of the USSR. Riho Päts, the main organizer of music education at schools, was also sent to a Siberian prison camp among thousands of other innocent victims. When Päts was released in 1955, he returned to Estonia and continued his interrupted work for development of Estonian music education. He managed to write a very important and influential handbook for music teachers "Muusikakasvatus üldhariduskoolis" ("Music education in general comprehensive schools"), which was published in 1962. This textbook must be considered a milestone of music teacher education in Estonia, providing the general theoretical and practical foundations for the nation's music education (Päts 1962, 2010).

The 50 years of Soviet power had rather diverse effects on music education. Fortunately, the so-called Stalinist years did not last long, and after 1953 more peaceful times came as the deported people, including several musicians, could return home to Estonia. Since 1960, some of the local leaders of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic have been smart enough to use their power to support Estonian culture and education. This was very much thanks to Ferdinand Eisen (1914–2000), the Minister of Education at that time (1960–1980), and his provident educational policy. Estonia managed to maintain its local language, Estonian, for instruction in schools. Although most of the educational content for general comprehensive schools was centralized, several original textbooks for school subjects were compiled in Estonia, and music as a subject in the curriculum (called "programmes" these days) was thereby preserved (Selke 2007). In the 1960s, a network of specialized schools (in math, foreign languages, sciences, arts, sports) was established all over Estonia. This included the Tallinn Specialized Music High School, which functions up to the present day and provides specialized music education to children and young people aged 7–19. Suffice it to say that the majority of graduates of that school usually continue their studies in the field of music.

The Soviet period can also be characterized by continuation and reactivation of the choir movement among children and youth. Choirs were organized at every general comprehensive school and also at some vocational schools. As a result, a special song festival[1] for schoolchildren and youth was organized in 1962, and remarkably, the tradition has lasted through the present (Sepp, Ruokonen, & Ruismäki 2012). It has to be highlighted that music education and the choir movement during these years were as means of double-identity building. Despite some songs with clear ideological manifestations in the repertoire of the song festivals, there were many where the real essence and soul of the event was expressed by folk songs and songs by Estonian composers.

In Estonia, singing as a part of ethnic culture starts at home, so it becomes developed since childhood. Accordingly,

[1]The tradition of Song Festivals (also called Song Celebrations) dates back to 1869, when the first all-Estonian Song Festival was organized in Tartu. Since then, the tradition has been ongoing – there are four nation-wide song and dance celebrations in the course of every ten years: every second and seventh year of the decade a youth song and dance celebration, and on every fourth and ninth year of the decade, a general song and dance celebration.

the next step has to be related to preschool education. There have been progressive developments in music education in kindergartens. There is an in-depth study available, "The development of the concept of music education in Estonian kindergartens 1905–2008" (Kiilu 2010), where we can also find analysis of what are probably the best music programmes of the period – those of 1968, 1974, 1979 and 1987, accompanied by materials for teachers, which could be used for singing and other musical activities as well as organizing musical events in all preschool institutions. It can be concluded that the so-called Soviet period need not be described in dark colours only, for there were also positive developments and achievements in music education, which could take place only thanks to some most dedicated people at different levels of their respective activities.

As Estonia regained its independence on August 20, 1991, significant changes followed in all spheres of life influencing also education. A search for a new educational paradigm commenced and since then several new reforms have been initiated at different levels of the Estonian educational system. New ideals and aspirations towards freedom and democracy also included possibilities for innovation of the learning process; teachers started to focus more on child-centred approach; there were changes in lifestyle, considering the impact of globalization and lifelong learning (Raudsepp & Vikat 2009). Free mobility of students, labour force and academic staff enabled more to learn from the Western experience and, as a result, numerous new textbooks and workbooks were compiled and published in Estonia. According to Lindeberg, mostly examples of European, especially Finnish textbooks for school music followed (Lindeberg 2007). A situation of instability developed, caused by introduction of the "market economy approach" in society, which became further reinforced by considerable economic differences between schools in different regions of Estonia. All of these developments understandably meant changes in teachers' in-service training, which also affected music education at large.

Organization of music education in Estonia today

The new millennium has brought along major changes in education, especially within the European Union (which Estonian joined on May 1, 2004), requiring decisions concerning how to deal with local, regional and national differences. Globalization of the political, economic and cultural developments needed a common approach, and at the same time, it was important for every country, region and nation in Europe to maintain its own characteristic features, and keep their own cultural traditions alive.

Music education in Estonia is unique in all institutions of general comprehensive education as it can be characterized by the fact that it forms one holistic system, starting from kindergartens (Kiilu 2010) and continuing up to the end of upper secondary school. The aims, essential content features and expected outcomes are specified in the NC of respective educational levels. Music as a school subject is studied throughout the comprehensive school as a compulsory subject in all grades. According to the allotted time of studies (number of lessons), there are two music lessons per week in grades 1–4, and one music lesson per week in grades 5–9. In upper secondary school, there are three music courses, every course lasting 35 academic hours. At all levels, music is taught predominantly by specialist music teachers (Sepp 2014). It means that like all other subject teachers in Estonian comprehensive school, also music teachers must have a master's degree, which became a requirement in 2009. Thus, the duration of music teacher training since 1923 at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (previously Tallinn State Conservatoire and Estonian Academy of Music) has also been five years and the obtained educational qualification corresponds to the present-day master's level. It has to be mentioned that students choosing music teacher training get a very wide-ranging education (including choir conducting, vocal training, piano, recorder, zither, rhythmic music instruments – percussion, guitar, bass, music history, solfeggio, harmony, ensemble and choir singing, etc.) as well as pedagogical training and music teaching didactics (Kodaly method, Orff approach, activity learning, etc.). After graduation, they are able to work as comprehensive school music teachers but they also conduct choirs and ensembles, coach soloists, lead bands in hobby centres and work for nongovernmental organizations.

Today we have to be extremely happy with the fact that the music education system in Estonia is still functioning from the preschool age (children aged 3–7) up to the end of upper secondary school (students aged 18–19). It is a great opportunity to offer all the population access to music education despite its socio-economic costs considering provision of study aids and music teacher education. It has to be accepted that pre-service training of music teachers takes considerably longer than training of teachers for other school subjects, and learning environments required for music education (musical instruments, special room requirements, etc.) cost considerably more than those needed for other school subjects. It has been generally accepted that all school subjects represent particular fields of culture, the knowledge of which has been recognized as relevant to personality development. However, we have to seriously think about how to maintain bridges between the present and the past, as well as to how envisage the future using such a rich heritage.

Pedagogical approaches in Estonian music education

There is one person, Riho Päts[2] (1899–1977), whose contacts with leading European specialists allowed him to lay foundations for systematic music education in Estonia and training of music teachers for general comprehensive schools. In the 1920s and 1930s, Päts visited several countries: Germany, Austria, Italy, Finland, the Soviet Union, Lithuania and Czechoslovakia. From these travels, he learned about current trends and approaches to music education in the respective countries. In the Soviet Union there was already a functioning system of music education from kindergarten up to the end of compulsory basic schools. In Germany he studied solmization, development of music listening skills and how to use instruments in school lessons. In Finland he studied the analytic-synthetic method of singing developed by Vilho Siukunen[3] (Raudsepp 2013, 60). Päts analysed and synthesized the underlying ideas and components of these foreign music education practices and created his own music education approach appropriate for the Estonian sociocultural and educational context. His ideas are considered priceless, as he was able to present them to Estonian music teachers for practical implementation in school music lessons, with repercussions to the present day.

Researcher Inge Raudsepp, who has studied the contribution of Riho Päts in detail, has summarized his innovation

[2] Riho Päts (1899–1977) was a "professor, Estonian composer, music teacher and educator, conductor, author of numerous music books. He laid the foundations of present-day Estonian music education during the 1920s–1930s, synthesising and combining the ideas of Vilho Siukonen, Zoltan Kodaly and Carl Orff with Estonian traditional joint singing. He emphasised the ideas of relative music learning and participating in active musicing. His compositions included mostly choir music, arrangements of folk music and music for children. Riho Päts studied at Tallinn Konservatoire, graduating first composing (1926) and then piano (1927). Since 1921 he worked as a music teacher in Tallinn (founded and conducted a big childrens' choir and recorder orchestra). He taught future teachers at Teachers' Seminar and Tallinn Pedagogicum (1941–1944) and worked as a lector at Tallinn Conservatoire (1940–1941, 1944–1950). In 1950 he was arrested as a bourgeoisie nationalist and sent to prison camp in Siberia, was released in 1955 (rehabilitated in 1968). As he was denied the position in Tallinn State Conservatoire, he continued to teach in Tallinn Pedagogical Institute during 1956–1971, teaching music education didactics and conducting the pedagogical practice. He also organised numerous in-service courses for music teachers. In 2002 the Riho Päts Foundation of School Music was established to commemorate his great mission in developing Estonian music education" (Sepp & Raudsepp 2017, 3).<COMP: set the text highlighted in aqua colour as display text.>

[3]The idea is to activate pupils' musical thinking, highlighting the relations and connections between the elements of melody and functional meaning of pitch, and developing the "inner ear" and independent musical thinking by using acoustic pitch model – melodic images and associations using the pitch symbols when learning a song, so the theoretical knowledge could be acquired through music practice.

as follows:

1.Use of analytical-synthetic relative method;

2. Use of analytical commentaries and synthesis in studies;

3. Use of improvisation as means of activating musical thinking;

4. Development of analytical music listening skills;

5. Developing vocal skills and singing through differentiated teaching-learning;

6. Developing cognitive abilities through playing instruments;

7. Using joint singing to preserve and shape national identity.

(Raudsepp 2013, 61)

Riho Päts managed to develop a music teaching approach which combined traditional methods (joint singing, choir singing, playing instruments) and innovative ideas from Europe (e.g. Z. Kodály-method and C. Orff approach) into one holistic entirety. The principles created by Päts were most innovative and ahead of his time, yet they were well accepted by music teachers.

In the so-called Soviet period there was another important person who started to work with Päts, compiling music textbooks and developing Estonian music education. This person was Heino Kaljuste (1925–1989) and they both were members of the Estonian delegation participating at International Society for Music Eduaction conference in 1964, in Budapest. The opportunity to attend the mentioned conference was one of the greatest impetuses to new developments in music education in Estonia, mainly focusing on the ideas of Orff and Kodaly. Päts and Kaljuste, inspired by the idea of Kodaly's relative match pitch method, worked out their own JO-LE-MI method, which was practically introduced into all recently founded music specialized schools and classes in Estonia. The first class using the new system was organized in 1964 at Tallinn 22 Secondary School, and the first teacher to follow it was Ene Üleoja.

The present Estonian music education still uses the foundations laid by Riho Päts and Heino Kaljuste, where, besides music making (singing and playing instruments), it involves activation and development of (musical) thinking through the relative pitch matching, improvisation and analytical music listening skills. Also, it underlines the importance of differentiated instruction not only taking into consideration individual differences and development of the child but also involving the teaching methods being used. All in all, Päts's music education approach includes joint singing and instrument playing (recorders, six-string zithers, guitars, Orff instruments), developing of aural imagination, listening skills and elementary music literacy as well as use of movement and improvisation.

According to previous research (Sepp, Ruokonen, & Ruismäki 2015), the music education methods and approaches that have most influenced Estonian music teachers are these of Riho Päts, Carl Orff and Zoltan Kodaly. Thus, Estonian music education today arguably follows ideas associated with a praxial music education approach, which emphasizes teaching and learning music through direct involvement, in order to understand its real meaning and purpose, and keeping in mind the holistic development of a person when education her "in music, about music, for music, and through music" (Elliott & Silvermann 2014, 17). Thus, one of the key issues is the choice of repertoire for singing, listening and other musical practices, the wide range of musical pieces from different cultures, different

epochs, different styles and genres that are used to open the vistas for understanding the diversity and richness of human musical cultures.

Curricula and syllabi

When talking about curricula for general comprehensive schools all people have to attend, we come across the perennial question, "what knowledge and skills are worth learning?", and the selected content of education. Understandably, all societies decide themselves about educational policy specifying the responsibilities of both the state and individuals, access to education and organization of education, especially the compulsory part of general education (Läänemets 2003).

The 21st century has brought new approaches to learning and schooling for various reasons. Governments have to decide primarily about the financial side for providing the population with education considered necessary for functioning of society at large. It also means decision-making about the content based on accepted philosophical, ethical and cultural values in society. Education is still considered the main mechanism for developing sustainability and cohesion of a society while also protecting the cultural heritage of a nation for development of the distinctive identities of its people. In Estonia, music education has a special position because of its traditionally, as well as officially recognized and widely accepted, value as part of people's identity building. Music is often called the second mother tongue after the native language Estonian.

Development of a new national curriculum for kindergartens and general comprehensive schools has not been an easy process since 1991. Estonia could have better studied and made some use of the experience gained in 1918–1940, during which the content of education was professionally well selected and adequately prepared for practical implementation in schools with specified materials for teachers. However, the new NC of 1996, 2002 and the most recent one – that of 2010/2011 – have all preserved music education as a compulsory subject throughout the system of general education (grades 1–12). There is also music education in kindergartens preparing preschool children to enter school at the age of seven. All new curricula tend to follow the American framework model, which makes teachers responsible for development of local curricula at schools and kindergartens. Such a policy has created quite a great diversity, which in turn has made the mobility of children, when changing residence or school, particularly difficult.

There is a lot of innovation considering the new music syllabi. The new music syllabi contain several innovative changes, and although these documents stress the use of music instruments, the problem with economic differences and insufficient skills of some music teachers to play the guitar, recorder or Estonian six-string zither remain the main obstacles. In terms of musical content, the syllabus for general comprehensive schools contains rock, pop, jazz music as well as folk, world and classical Western music, but also children's songs, and it is supported with the systematically renewed study aids and teaching materials to support instruction. The constant number of music lessons specified in the national curriculum provides an opportunity for sustainable development of pupils' musical abilities in basic school.

The selection of the most relevant content for music education is a complicated task for educationists, as it specifies the knowledge and skills learners are expected to obtain. The principles and criteria for selection of the content of school subjects can be divided into two big groups: common didactic principles relevant for all school subjects and specific subject–related principles.

According to Taba (1962) and Sowell (2005), the first group of principles applicable to all school subjects are the following:

- Validity and significance of the content for the intended purpose of education;
- Learnability of the content by students for whom the curriculum is planned;
- Appropriateness of the content for the needs and interests of these learners; and
- Consistency of the content with the realities of society and culture.

As can be observed, general principles for selection of the content for learning are culture, society and learner based. However, there are also specific principles elaborated for selecting content for particular school subjects. Sowell has specified criteria for selecting the content for math (Sowell 2005), Kalamees-Ruubel for Estonian and literature (2014); Kokkidou has developed a model for analysing the content of music education, which at the same time could be taken as a set of criteria for designing a syllabus or curriculum for music education. The axes of evaluation pay attention to the following features: the role of traditional music, ideas of multiculturalism, cross-curricular connections, use of new technologies, involvement in music – kinetic activities, the role of music theory knowledge and music listening skills (Kokkidou 2009).

Accordingly, the structure of the content of music education in Estonian National Curriculum (presented in the subject syllabus for music education) contains all the above-mentioned aspects describing knowledge, skills, practical activities as well as environments and learning outcomes. The characteristic features include the importance of singing, playing different musical instruments, also musical creativity and thinking, developed through rhythmic and melodic improvisation and accompaniment. New learning environments provided by digital technologies have opened new vistas for listening to most wide and diverse repertoire performed by musicians all over the world.

The entire syllabus is developed around the learning outcomes which also make up the content of the subject and it quite precisely indicates the components of elementary musical literacy, the repertoire of joint singing and some themes introduced in musicology. It still leaves much freedom for teachers to make decisions how to compose their weekly plans and design activities for regular lessons.

As specified in the music syllabus of the national curriculum of 2011, the main goals of music education in comprehensive schools in addition to general competencies to be developed as described in the general part of the curriculum are the following: to derive joy from music and discern, realize and develop students' abilities through making music; to become interested in music as a form of arts and shape pupils' personal aesthetic tastes; to think and act creatively and also express themselves creatively through musical activities; to apply the acquired basics of musical literacy skills in musical activities; to value music and musical activities as they enrich people, culture and daily life (Põhikooli Riiklik Õppekava 2011). These goals are meant to be achieved through pupils' involvement in different musical practices – singing, playing musical instruments, musical movement, composing, listening to music and musicology, musical literacy and educational outings (Põhikooli Riiklik Õppekava 2011). The respective syllabi are constructed around these practices, so that the objectives and content for all three stages of comprehensive school are described.

A unique and special feature, not only in comprehensive schools but rather thanks to it, is the enormous popularity of choir singing among the whole society/population and the number of school choirs of different kinds (children's, boys', girls', mixed and chamber choirs). For example, according to the statistics, almost 24.8% from the total number of schoolchildren participated in the Youth Song Festival in 2011 (Sepp, Ruokonen, & Ruismäki 2012), so

we share the same love for choir singing and Song Festivals as Latvia and Lithuania.

The opportunities for formal education (organized and specified in the national curriculum) and informal ("hidden curriculum", or everyday life around us) supportive activities for learning music are rather diverse and they can be seen in the following scheme (see Figure 9.1).

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Future prospects

It seems that we are facing the same kind of problems connected with the future of music education: how to find balance between new and traditional learning environments? How to introduce the treasures of classical and folk music in the rapidly commercializing world? Is music going to be only entertainment or can we refer to it as art also in the future? The most promising results of neurosciences have proved the positive effect of music to humans in every generation. However, so far, the consumer-based world seems to ignore all these facts as music is the phenomenon that cannot be measured in Excel tables or often doesn't have a price. Although the political documents point out the importance of multi-literacy in education, musical literacy seems to have been forgotten and left out of the list. It could be expected that organization and the content of music education will probably remain an actively disputed issue for years to come. Nevertheless it has turned attention to the possibility of comparative analyses of educational documents regulating music education in different countries (Sepp 2014). The 21st century with its activities called Organisation of Curriculum Change has initiated discussion about the content of education after a long time being focused on methods of teaching and testing. Accordingly, philosophical debates about education – about new and modern values, compulsory and optional school subjects, proportions of traditional and new updated knowledge and skills – have also come to the foreground.

A study was carried out in 2016 (Sepp, Läänemets, Kalamees-Ruubel, & Kiilu 2017) with the aim of determining how Estonian students (N = 367, aged 13–16) perceive the need to study art subjects. It clearly demonstrated the meaning of studies in the arts for this most critical age group, as 94.6% of respondents considered them important, interesting and relevant for their school activities.

Perhaps comparing the Estonian music education system with others can give new ideas and offer different perspectives to be considered for developing and creating the best possible version for our children. The statement *All children in all countries deserve the opportunity to participate and enjoy the wonderful world of music* should be wider understood and recognized as a powerful tool for personality development both at individual and collective level. Curricula and syllabi as national education policy documents can demonstrate the potential of music education for sustainability of culture and cohesion in societies as well as mutually rewarding cooperation between educators. The activities of professional networks uniting music teachers of different countries can further most meaningfully contribute to professionalization of music education in all countries by sharing their research and practical experience. The past experience and achievement deserves recognition, and maybe – rediscovering in certain fields. At the same time we have to carefully monitor developments in music education in different countries as well as recent results in brain research (e.g. Gruhn 2011; Huotilainen, Putkinen, & Tervaniemi 2009), which have clearly shown the positive potential of music education for development of human brain and learning at large. Accordingly, many countries have started to pay attention to enlargement of music education, especially in kindergartens and basic schools. It is necessary to build meaningful bridges between the past and present pedagogical experience, if we want to preserve original cultures and bolster the sustainability of societies.

The most outstanding Estonian-born curriculum theorist Hilda Taba emphasizes the interaction between school and cultural environment as follows:

> Schools function on behalf of the culture in which they exist. The school is created by a society for the purpose of reproducing in the learner the knowledge, attitudes, values, and techniques that have cultural relevancy or currency.... of the many educative agencies of society, the school is the one which specializes in inducting youth into the culture and is thus responsible for the continuity of that culture.
>
> (Taba 1962, 17)

The same dilemma is illustrated here: what kind of proportions are desirable between the traditional and innovative, considering both the content of learning well asand methods of teaching? Moreover, there is also the issue of learning environments: real or virtual. Future generations will definitely live in a different world compared to the one we are now living in today. However, the musical culture, and culture in its wider sense – as a way of living – has to be both real and realistic. Decision-making about the sustainability of individual musicking in its different fields and forms for the future is a crucial question, deserving much wider discussion than that of a school subject. Music as a very special field of arts must be preserved and developed instead of considering it as a means of entertainment, "edutainment" or fun only. We must recall that music is – according to Joseph Addison in "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" – "the greatest good that mortals know" (Smithers 1954).

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