

## MUSIC EDUCATION AS PART OF ESTONIAN BASIC SCHOOL STUDENTS' VALUES EDUCATION

Kristi Kiilu<sup>a\*</sup>, Maia Muldma<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tatri 13, Tallinn, 10116, Estonia*

<sup>b</sup>*University of Tallinn, Narva mnt 25, 10120 Tallinn, Estonia*



### Abstract

In today's educational landscape of Estonia one of the priorities is values education, which is viewed as the main component in the development of students' personality at school. Each educational activity immanently carries values, which, when recognised and purposefully implemented, may increase the effect of education in the desired area. With this study, the researchers are turning the spotlight on the opportunities for applying the potential effect of music in the process of the transfer from knowledge-based education to values-based education at Estonian schools. The objective is to ascertain the ways of expression of the effect of music education on the development of values in students of forms seven to nine. The study looked for the answers to the following questions: 1) What do students of the third stage of study of basic schools consider values and who has influence on them?; 2) What basis do music lessons provide for the development of students' values?; 3) What music activities support the development of students' values? Quantitative method was utilised to conduct the study. As the research instrument questionnaire was selected, which allowed involving a large number of respondents (n=243) and thus increase the reliability of study results. The results of this study confirm that through its learning activities music education gives diverse support to the formation and development of students' values, because the emotional and communicative nature of music allows students to first of all get to know and thereafter develop themselves.

*Keywords:* Values education, music education, basic school student, Music education as part of Estonian basic school students' values education

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\* Corresponding author.  
E-mail address: kristikiilu@ema.edu.ee

doi: 10.15405/ejsbs.152



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## **1. Introduction**

Society is considered to rely on the foundation of values and value-judgements, which correspond to the educational objectives adopted by the state (Gustavson, 2000). Throughout times, the task of education has been to guide people towards goodness, to give human beings something that they do not inherently have (Vseviov, 2009). In the development and shaping of values an important role belongs to people who surround children and young people, their school, teacher and rearing environment, including musical rearing environment

The development of Estonian society has a profound effect on the shaping of the school system's values education priorities. Education does not only mean knowledge transfer, first of all it means educating and developing people. Thus, education is related to the acquisition of values, since it is based on the understanding of who a person is and how he or she should act, behave and think. Music as a school subject fulfils the aims that are linked to values education and the shaping of values.

With this study, the researchers are turning the spotlight on the opportunities for applying the potential effect of music in the process of the transfer from knowledge-based education to values- based education at Estonian schools. The objective is to ascertain the ways of expression of the effect of music education on the development of values in students of forms seven to nine.

### *1.1. Theoretical framework*

Based on the objective of the study, various attitudes to values and principles of music education will be elucidated. Different schools of research define values in different ways. Ronald Inglehart (1995) views values as people's reactions to environmental changes, emphasising, that values are formed at an early age in the process of socialisation (Inglehart 1995). According to Graham Haydon, people in the modern society need to have personal values, and understand and consider the values of the others. Through compulsory education it is possible to make people understand values much more deeply and widely than in any other society up to now (Haydon, 2009).

For Milton Rokeach (1989), values represent fundamental concepts that each person individually and the society as a whole should possess. Values are like desirable goals of varying importance that act as guiding principles in human life. Rokeach Value Survey relies on terminal and instrumental values. Terminal or internal values include, for example, a strong family, happiness, true friendship, national security, social recognition, etc. He regards instrumental values as means of achieving the desired terminal state: e.g. honesty, justice, tolerance, responsibility, helpfulness, clean environment, etc. (Rokeach, 1989).

Values are ordered by their relative importance. A narrower distinction is drawn between moral, material, economic, political, legal, aesthetic, cultural and historical values. These values can be directed by the society by highlighting certain ideals and principles, and making appraisals. Generally, it may be stated that these are external values. In a broader sense, the so-called classical core values are truth, goodness, beauty, faith, hope and love. It is difficult to interpret core values because they are abstract concepts with personal rather than collective meaning. These values of internal nature cannot be abandoned. (Inglehart, 1995; Rokeach, 1989).

Researchers of value theories Shalom Schwartz and Wolfgang Bilsk argue that personal values are people's universal needs all individuals and societies desire to satisfy. These are the needs of individuals and biological organisms, social interaction needs, survival and wellbeing needs. At the same time, they have also outlined motivational goals: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, benevolence, tradition and security. Values can be ranked according to their importance relative to one another (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990, 1994; Schwartz 1995).

In a broader sense, values education is character education, which besides moral education aims to support children's development into active citizens and creative, analytical and enterprising people. This in turn will ensure the sustainability of the country, which depends on the extent its citizens value freedom and democracy and understand the true meaning of these core values. Today's progressively more versatile and rapidly changing life requires young people to make increasingly more choices and decisions. Therefore, guiding and supporting young people's moral development, preparing them for making responsible and mature choices has become especially important and topical.

In the context of this article, the concept of values is viewed as follows: values are mechanisms that help people to make right decisions and express conformity with the well-established norms and attitudes in the society. Values inform people's practical activity and the outcomes of human activity may in turn change these values (Muldma, 2010, 2011).

Estonian schools face a complicated challenge – to change from knowledge-centred schools into values-centred schools. Since knowledge is not free from values, it is important to acknowledge value issues, therefore values should be addressed in every subject, including music education. Values education in a subject lesson involves activities that may be closely related to each other. In music lessons, it is possible to teach students to notice values and reflect on them, and therefore values are objects of perception or discussion (Sutrop, 2009; Kiilu & Muldma, 2013).

In music education, the development of knowledge, skills, abilities and values is based on students' inherent forms of intelligence that can be advanced: emotional, musical, bodily- motor and spatial intelligence. Personal and social values and abilities help students to understand themselves, to be compassionate, tolerant and open with their companions. At the same time, these values help to maintain balance between freedom and responsibility, diversity and choice. Music education allows students to develop ethical-cultural and social-societal values through different musical activities: listening to pieces of music and discussing them; performing a joint song (developing cooperation skills and tolerance); music making alone and in a band (taking different roles and adjusting to them); students' own creation as an opportunity for self-expression (daring to be original and unique), etc. (Muldma, 2010).

Today's music education is characterised by its interdisciplinary nature. Music is related to every area of human activity and thinking of the era. Music integrates with all other subjects – literature, art, languages and social subjects. Educational and developmental factors are amplified by emotionality and communicability characteristic of music education. Both general and specific skills and abilities develop. Music education has an effect on the value students attach to their family and home, their sense of national and ethnic identity, patriotism and citizenship, the development of their communication and self-expression skills (Kiilu & Muldma, 2013). Through musical activities and various forms of active learning students also learn to honour their own and other people's feelings, respect differences, behave in a sensitive and tolerant way – skills that help them to adjust to different situations in their daily life and cope with themselves (Ruokonen & Muldma, 2007).

The above approaches of distinguished values theoreticians and views of music pedagogy researchers form the theoretical basis of this study.

## **2. Research Questions**

The study aimed to ascertain the influence of school music education on the development of students' values. The study looked for the answers to the following questions:

- i. What do students of the third stage of study of basic schools consider values and who has influence on them?
- ii. What basis do music lessons provide for the development of students' values?
- iii. What music activities support the development of students' values?

### 3. Research Methods

Quantitative method was utilised to conduct the study. As the research instrument questionnaire was selected, which allowed involving a large number of respondents and thus increase the reliability of study results. The questions of the questionnaire were based on the value categories by researchers represented in the article (Rokeach, Inglehart, Schwartz, Bilsky, Haydon). Value categories were grouped into two clusters – ethical - cultural and social- societal values.

**Table 1.** Values addressed in the study

<b>Ethnical-cultural values</b>	<b>Social-societal values</b>
honesty	music appreciation skills
human dignity	listening skills
justice	analysis skills
consideration	choice making skills
forbearance	discretion
responsibility	responsibility
openness	self-expression skills
tolerance	ability to express one’s feelings
home and family	ability to express one’s opinions
patriotism	ability to accept others’ opinions
national pride	communication and cooperation skills solidarity or sense of unity
respect for oneself and others	creativity
	courage to be original
	ability to gain an experience of success
	ability to appreciate one’s own national culture
	ability to acknowledge and respect different ethnic cultures

The multiple-choice questions of the questionnaire were grouped into three blocks and rated on a three-point Likert scale. The first block of questions aimed to ascertain students’ awareness of the meaning of the concept of values. The purpose of the questions of the second block was to find out who or what shapes students’ values. The third block collected information about the effect of music education on the development of values and value-judgements.

### 3.1. Description of the sample

One of the criteria for sampling was to involve schools from different regions of Estonia to ensure reliability of the study. The other criterion was the age group of students – forms seven to nine of basic school. Ninth-form students represent the conclusion of a stage of education by which students are expected to have developed core values, which should provide a basis for the choices at the next stage of their life. To get a comprehensive overview of the development trends of values, in addition to form nine also students of forms seven and eight were included.

Altogether 243 students across Estonia participated in the study. Data analysis was carried out on 242 questionnaires, eliminating one incorrectly completed questionnaire. Respondents were distributed more or less evenly: students of form seven - 78, students of form eight - 92 and students of form nine - 72. There were 102 male and 141 female students among the respondents. The participants represented both rural and urban schools as well as different school types (basic school, upper secondary school). The study was conducted in a web-based study environment in January 2014.

## 4. Findings

The results of the analysis of the collected research data are presented in accordance with the objective of the study formulated through three research questions. The first research question ascertained students' understanding of the concept of values and the factors influencing the formation of values. The analysis deployed categories based on value clusters suggested by Shalom Schwartz (1994).

The first category – *attitudes and rules by which I must behave* was rated considerably higher by students of form seven than students of forms eight and nine (60%, 40%, 46%). The sequence of percentages given here and later in the article follows the pattern the seventh, eighth and ninth form and only the highest rating on the rating scale – *very much* – has been taken into consideration.

In the second category – *everything that is important to me*, the data analysis produced equally high results in respondents of all forms (87%, 63%, 81%). On this occasion, the highest indicators also belonged to students of form seven. While commenting on the results obtained, the authors see some potential drawbacks – ratings that rely on students' self-centredness may not always prove to be values-based.

The third category – *what friends consider important* was rated lower than previous categories by all respondents (16%, 13%, 11%), on which basis it may be inferred that students do not directly adopt their friends' values as their own. Given the age of the

respondents, this result may be considered controversial since according to developmental psychologists, friends have great impact on teenage students' attitudes (Kikas, 2010).

Students' ratings in the fourth category – *precious material items* – offered a positive surprise (28%, 17%, 16%), although not being considerably higher than previous ratings, they still indicate the prevalence of students' spiritual values over pragmatism.

In an analogous way, while clarifying the concept of value, students of forms seven and eight defined the fifth category – value is everything that is highly valued everywhere, which means values accepted in the society (29%, 15%, 4%). Students of form nine gave especially low ratings to this category. The authors of the article infer from that, that societal norms, rules and values are not sufficiently accepted by them. These ratings may be linked to the political-economic and social- educational inconsistencies and contradictions taking place in the society. School is the state institution reflecting values of the society.

The ratings of the last category – *my beliefs that help me to make the right decisions* can be regarded as significantly high and uniform (75%, 71%, 70%). The obtained results indicate that students' self-image is sufficiently developed, which creates a basis for making responsible choices and decisions.

The investigation of the factors influencing students' values allowed the authors to make the following observations. Students consider family one of the factors that has the strongest effect (85%, 74%, 69%), which gives proof of ethical-cultural values shaped and developed in students, such as honesty, justice, human dignity, consideration, respect for themselves and others. The factor that deserved extremely low ratings was – *school and the teacher's example* (26%; 10%, 9%), which may be due to lack of student-centred approach and disregard for learners' interests of today's knowledge-based school.

The research results reveal that the effect of friends on students' values (19%, 15%, 15%) and the above-mentioned friends' influence on defining values are equally low. Parallels can also be observed in the results based on self-image – *I know myself what is important and how to act* (56%, 60%, 62%).

In summary, it can be concluded that the first research question of the study has been answered. A rather positive result occurred in the defining of the meaning of values of students participating in the study – home and family were regarded as the highest values by students of forms seven to nine.

Next, answers were sought to the research question: What basis do music lessons provide for the development of students' values? The authors had not anticipated the results of data analysis that disclosed that the seventh form students' ratings of music lessons as the shaper of values were generally higher than those by students of other forms.

The following categories were more strongly represented: *ability to acknowledge and accept different ethnic cultures* – higher ratings from more than two thirds of the seventh form students (67%) and lower ratings from students of forms eight and nine (41%, 58%). Similar proportions applied to the *ability to appreciate one's own national culture*, seventh form students (61%), other respondents (39%, 44%). The ratings of the categories *courage to perform in public and creativity* showed an analogous trend: form seven 60%, forms eight and nine 46% and 55% respectively. Unfortunately, the categories that received lower ratings were *choice making skills* and *discretion* (39%, 21%, 21%), which may be viewed as a signal of the need to pay more attention to these. Nearly half of the students of form seven (47%) and a third of forms eight and nine (33%, 39%) shared the opinion that music education helps to develop their *responsibility* and *ability to accept others' opinion*.

Students had conflicting views in the categories appreciating music and *ability to achieve an experience of success*. In spite of the relatively high ratings of the importance of music (59%, 54%, 42%), achieving an experience of success in the lessons of music education deserved significantly lower ratings (39%, 16%, 29%). The authors had expected that the reason for high ratings of appreciating music would be the gaining of an experience of success, which, however, was not confirmed by the respondents. It could be assumed that students' rare experience of success is due to weak communication between the teacher and students.

Exceptional assessments by all students defined *communication, cooperation and listening skills* as an important social category. In this category high ratings by students of forms seven and nine were relatively close (61%, 58%) and those by students of form eight somewhat lower (46%). Noteworthy are categories *self-expression skills* and *ability to express opinions*, in the ratings of which the seventh form students stand out again (55%), followed by form nine (42%) and form eight (35%).

The third research question – music activities that support the development of students' values – yielded the results outlined below. Based on Estonia's long-standing singing tradition and the specific nature of music education, where from kindergarten to upper secondary school children acquire knowledge with the guidance of a professional music teacher, the greatest effect of singing as a musical activity on the development of values may be considered logical (52%, 52%, 42%). Respondents also considered important *listening to music* (52%, 47%, 42%). Evenly low ratings were given to the music educational activities – *music history* and *playing a musical instrument* (36%, 33%, 35%).

Students rated relatively highly different forms of work in music education: first, *an opportunity to make presentations* (64%, 50%, 47%) and second, *group work* (51%, 46%,

42%). These results indicate students' willingness and motivation for self-expression. The above results are also supported by evenly high ratings of *creative activity* (49%, 48%, 49%), the more so that one of the priorities of the current National Curriculum is students' own creation.

The effect of *textual and visual information of music textbooks* on values proved one of the weakest (37%, 23%, 31%). The authors think that the reason may lie in an alternative to music textbooks – availability of attractive and diverse materials on the Internet.

## 5. Conclusion

The research results allow us to draw the following conclusions. The ratings of all questions and areas of study given by students of form seven were generally higher than those by other students. Among the responses to the three research questions the ratings of the first question – what students of the third stage of study of basic schools consider values and who has influence on them – stood out. The fact that respondents gave high ratings to definitions of values and beliefs indicates a sufficient level of development of respondents' self-image, which creates a basis for making right choices and decisions.

## Acknowledgements

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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