

# Music? But how to Teach It??

## Problems and Their Solutions in Teaching Music in Lower Secondary Schools in Czech Republic

Kateřina Jakřova  
*University of Ostrava, Czech Republic*

### Abstract

*An interesting fact is that based on the testimony of czech pupils we can generally say, that they like music very much. They have a positive attitude toward it. But they don't like music lessons, they are uninteresting and boring for them. There are several reasons, but the most important reason is the music teacher and his approach to music education. Music has its own specifics, that need to be in the music education to take into account, in order to meet the objectives of the music teaching. In the following article the author attempts to determine the most serious problems in the teaching of music education in lower secondary schools in the Czech Republic and outline possible solutions to some of these problems so that music educators were aware of these mistakes and were able to avoid them.*

### 1. Introduction

Music is in Czech primary and lower secondary schools compulsory subject and its contents is defined in the curriculum for basic education entitled the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (FEP BE). FEP is mandatory educational document, issued by the Ministry of Education, which defines the top level of knowledge, skills and abilities of the students and education requirements. FEP BE therefore defines a kind of framework for education in primary and lower secondary schools and applies to all Czech elementary schools [1]. The actual implementation of these requirements, it is called School Education Programme (SEP), which is based on the Framework educational program and each school create it itself. More informations about Czech national curriculum and Czech education you can find in the Vlekova's text *Curriculum in the Czech Republic* [2]. Our goal is not to present Czech school system and its documents, but it is very important to mention that in order to build up a image of position music education in Czech primary and lower secondary schools.

As one of the biggest challenges in teaching music education consider non-certificated teacher [3]. It should be noted that according to the Czech

school law should teach music lessons only specialist teachers. And "if the teacher wants to teach the subject, who have not study, he must just usually supplement their education through various courses and training" [4]. The reality is quite different. Today, it is common practice that music education is taught PE teachers, teachers of History or teachers of Physics. Music is generally regarded as marginal and unimportant subject, and so it often happens that heads of schools rather leave to teach music lessons non-certificated teachers than to pay specialist music teachers. They didn't realize, that each subject, music as well, has its own specifics, which certificated teachers should to know. Only in this way can be the subject useful for pupils.

Music education is focused on experience through music. If music education has be quality and interesting and beneficial for the pupil, they need to be taught certificated teacher. Specialist teachers of music education should not only be a good instrumentalist, who understand the music, but mainly as a teacher qualified to teach it and pass it on. So he should to manage didactics and methodology of musical education. If music is taught non-certificated teacher, who has not these knowledges and who has no relationship to music, then you cannot be surprised that the level of music education is low, and that this subject is not so popular.

Another, not smaller of a problem is the lack of motivation of music teachers. Even when the teacher has the required qualifications and specialism, it happens that depending on the reacting of students completely abandons any creative activity. Music lessons are then usually pretty boring and do not bring anything new for pupil and they don't develop his creative abilities and skills.

Teachers and students are "coupled receptacles", two interdependent factors teaching. Relationship between them is very important because the task of the music teacher is to bring a sense of trust, mutual respect and peace to the classroom. It can be very difficult to implement creative activity without atmosphere like this. Good atmosphere in class is a prerequisite for successful work and faster and funnier mastering the curriculum. If the teacher will

enthusiastic and excited about his work and if he will be motivated, he can inspire his pupils and he can pass this enthusiasm to them. The aim of the music teacher should be, he brings, that students love music, to show them the value of music and pleasure of music. However, this objective can be met only on the assumption that the music teacher knows the value of music, has a warm relationship to music and loves it. In short, he will be so motivated, that his own positive relationship gives to his pupils. As in other subjects, even here, if the teacher is enthusiastic and motivated, he can impart to students more and the more motivate them. If music education be quality and beneficial, we need a quality teacher who is willing to sacrifice for this work their own leisure time.

One of the most demotivating factors may be salaries of teachers. Table 1 and Figure 1 show that the average salary of a Czech teacher in lower secondary schools after 15 years experiences compared with the OECD average is very low. The average salary of a teacher in OECD with 15 years experience in the lower secondary school is approximately 40000 USD per year. The average salary of a Czech teacher with the same practice is a little over 20000 USD per year [5].

It is big problem and it is connection with social status of teachers. Teaching profession in Czech society has not proper weight, it is not significantly valued. Educational profession is not longer considered an elite profession that has its weight and importance. But it is also because of the fact that more and more students are reported to Pedagogical faculty, even those who do not want to be a teacher. "Why to do it, when there are other options that are better financially rewards..." Their intention is graduating from University and Pedagogical faculty perceive as the most feasible way.

Equally problematic is the question of the content of music education. As already mentioned, in the FEP is determined highest level of knowledge and skills of the student, we know, what the pupil at the end of ninth grade had to manage. These requirements are in themselves very problematic, as they place great demands on the student and assume continuity to the curriculum of the first degree. Unfortunately, it often happens that a student in lower secondary school doesn't know notes; he cannot read sheet music, therefore, cannot even sing from the notes. The teacher therefore has a difficult task ahead, when he plans the content of individual music lessons, to they were benefit for pupils. Music is perceived as an school subject that is not so important, and therefore it is not too popular with the students.

Often, however, it is because the teacher really doesn't know how to grab music education. Music teacher, as well as teachers other subjects, has only a limited number of hours of music lessons per year.

During these hours the teacher has to convey pupil basic knowledge and skills as defined by the School educational program. Time allocated to music lessons is quite a big problem when you realize that for one school year, the music teacher should teach 43 hours. This corresponds to one music lesson per week. Unfortunately, however, we must reckon with the fact, that during school year some music lessons can be canceled for various reasons (holidays, vacation, unexpected situations). Realistically during the school year take place approximately 30 hours of music education. Of course there is a possibility to increase the number of hours of music education in the extras hours. In this case, the teacher meets with his students during the school year approximately  $70 \times - 105 \times$ ! Higher subsidies hours in the aesthetic subject are of course preferable. There is a closer contact between teacher and pupil, getting to know each other is faster, and it gives a space for a substantial deepening and repetition habits and knowledge.

I believe that the important specific of music is an its internal experience, therefore music education should be experiential, practical activities should therefore prevail over theoretical knowledge. The development of practical skills in music education I regard as key, but this, however, does not mean that would be completely neglected music theory and music history. The teacher should often work with effective and targeted listening to music, obviousness there is singing and instrumental activities and also rhythmic and intonation training, which can learn through games and fun exercises. What is certain is that the more practical activities within hour teacher gives, the more student love music and they cultivate a positive and lifelong relationship to music. However, the reality is quite different. During research focused on experience with music education has shown that the majority content of music education consists of teaching the history of music and singing folk songs. Listening activities are included only occasionally, instrumental activities are included more often. According to research by Olga Suchá [6] even a quarter of those surveyed pupils during music education never came in direct contact with musical instruments! This fact is all the more striking when we consider that contact with a musical instrument should be an integral part of music education.

Teaching music education entails at least elementary facilities of music class by relevant didactic and musical equipment, music sheets, sound equipment and musical instruments. For absolute foundation I consider equipment music class by piano or at least a good electric piano. The teacher uses it to play the melody, intonation exercises, rhythmic exercises and of course during training and accompaniment of songs. As variegation (not replace piano), may serve using guitar, if teacher can play it.

Furthermore, music teachers should have Orff's tools that should be used primarily by students. Also, for effective teaching music education is indispensable a sufficient number of high-quality CD or DVD recordings or films with musical themes. Very helpful in the theoretical lessons can be pictures of composers and pictures of musical instruments. It should be emphasized that it is not enough to have music classroom well equipped, but this equipment effectively use. There is nothing special that Czech music teachers cannot even play well on the piano or on other musical instrument. Instead to accompany pupil's singing playing the piano or guitar, pupils sing with totally inappropriate accompaniment in karaoke form. To improve this situation, in my opinion, need to strengthen the teaching didactics of music education at universities and also focus on instrumental training university students. Unfortunately, in the Czech Republic too far not penetrated trend use of computers and computer programs (used for editing and composing music and its recording) in music education. For example in England or Norway is using computers and music software in music lessons normal. The question is whether, in the Czech Republic found these technology applying. Czechs are generally considered conservative nation. Also, it's a question of money. Such equipment is not cheap and really just few headmasters are willing to spend more money than is really necessary. I therefore think that the use of this technology in music education in the Czech Republic still has a long way to go.

Quite difficult is the question of evaluation and grading in teaching music education. Pupils should receive marks for their theoretical knowledge as well as their practical skills. Evaluation practical skills of students is considerably complicated, because each child develops differently, one pupil may have in 6th grade very well developed musical skills, but another one does not reach this level in the 9th grade.

Marking for example singing skills is difficult, because the pupil is usually shy to sing alone in front of their classmates and this is often an extremely stressful situation for him. In this case I see the solution in in-depth observation of pupils and marking their activities. The teacher should have an overview of how the pupil is active, if he is trying or not, and accordingly also assess pupil. A good alternative may be the individual work accordance with their, own music preferences or household chores.

Problematic factor which we have to mention here and which influence teaching music education (not only in lower secondary schools in Czech Republic) is constantly changing musical preference of pupils. Music teacher has to take into account the music taste of young people and respond to it, show students the pros and cons of different musical styles, but also leave space for children to create their own

view to them. From music lessons in the Czech Republic increasingly disappearing teaching folk songs in favor of man-made and popular songs. Pupils have no relation to folk songs; they consider them as boring, unattractive and unfashionable. It is for this reason that children are not used to sing folk songs, because parents do not lead them to it. The vast majority of students in lower secondary school like listening to music, but most of them gravitated to the popular music, rock or hip hop. Even classical music is not too popular with the students. No wonder, classical music has always focused more on the experienced listener, for children is too difficult and incomprehensible. Teaching classical music should be therefore tailored to the psychological and musical maturity of pupils and the teacher should always complement the theoretical interpretation by listening selected tracks so, that the children recognized the sense of this listening. Mostly, however, in Czech schools meet with teachers, who release music samples without any goals or purpose. And that's why pupils have nothing from this kind of listening, but in addition the teacher reinforces the feeling that classical music is boring and uninteresting.

## 2. Conclusion

In this short article we have presented the most serious problems in the teaching of music education. Several times it was stressed that music education is not a popular subject, and it is considered boring and unimportant. In doing so, the vast majority of children have a positive attitude towards music. The key to effective, quality and fun teaching music education is teacher quality music, so I think that the change should occur already in the education of future music teachers – strengthen the didactics of music education at universities and strengthen the practical training of future teachers in lower secondary schools.

Unfortunately no longer true that "Every Czech man is a musician". In my opinion, however, music education can be taught in such a way, that entertained both teachers and pupils. It is important to realize, what is problematic and what I, as a teacher of music, can do to these problems restrict or completely eliminated.

## 3. References

- [1] JEŘÁBEK, Jaroslav. *Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání: s přílohou upravující vzdělávání žáků s lehkým mentálním postižením*. Praha: Výzkumný ústav pedagogický v Praze, 2005. ISBN 80-870-0002-1.
- [2] VLČKOVÁ, Kateřina. *Curriculum in the Czech Republic* [online]. 2006 [cit. 14. 8. 2014]. Available from:

<[http://is.muni.cz/el/1441/podzim2006/PdZZ\\_CES/um/CD-ROM\\_Curriculum\\_EN.pdf](http://is.muni.cz/el/1441/podzim2006/PdZZ_CES/um/CD-ROM_Curriculum_EN.pdf)>

[3] HOLAS, M. Hudební pedagogika na každý pád. *e-Pedagogium* [on-line], 2003, roč. 3, č. 1 - mimořádné. [cit. 2014-8-18]. Dostupné na [www: <http://epedagog.upol.cz/eped1.2003/mimo/clanek08.htm>](http://epedagog.upol.cz/eped1.2003/mimo/clanek08.htm). ISSN 1213-7499.

[4] DOUBRAVA, Lukáš. Potřebují školy třetí aprobaci?. *Učitel'ské noviny* [online]. 2002, č. 41 [cit. 2014-08-17]. Available from: <<http://www.ucitelskenoviny.cz/?archiv&clanek=3847>>

[5] OECD. *Education at a glance 2013: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD, 2013. ISBN 978-926-4201-040.

[6] SUCHÁ, Olga. *Vývojové tendence současné hudební výchovy na základní škole*. Brno, 2008. Available from: <[http://is.muni.cz/th/105579/pedf\\_m/diplomka\\_text\\_na\\_vytisteni.pdf?zpet=%2Fvyhledavani%2F%3Fsearch%3Dolga%20such%C3%A1%26start%3D](http://is.muni.cz/th/105579/pedf_m/diplomka_text_na_vytisteni.pdf?zpet=%2Fvyhledavani%2F%3Fsearch%3Dolga%20such%C3%A1%26start%3D)>. Diploma thesis. Masaryk's univerzity in Brno. Supervisor Doc. PhDr. Bedřich Črha, CSc.

**Table 1 available from:**

OECD (2013), Teachers' salaries, *Education: Key Tables from OECD* [online], No. 1 [cit. 2014-12-12]. Available from: <[http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/teachsal-table-2013-1-en/index.html?contentType=%2Fns%2FKeyTableEdition%2c%2Fns%2FStatisticalPublication%2c%2Fns%2FTable&itemId=%2Fcontent%2Ftable%2Fteachsal-table-2013-1-en&mimeType=text%2Fhtml&containerItemId=%2Fcontent%2Ftable%2Fteachsal-table-2013-1-en&accessItemIds=&csp\\_=5a30924472149fc57bf8780370b124ec](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/teachsal-table-2013-1-en/index.html?contentType=%2Fns%2FKeyTableEdition%2c%2Fns%2FStatisticalPublication%2c%2Fns%2FTable&itemId=%2Fcontent%2Ftable%2Fteachsal-table-2013-1-en&mimeType=text%2Fhtml&containerItemId=%2Fcontent%2Ftable%2Fteachsal-table-2013-1-en&accessItemIds=&csp_=5a30924472149fc57bf8780370b124ec)>. ISSN 2075-5120

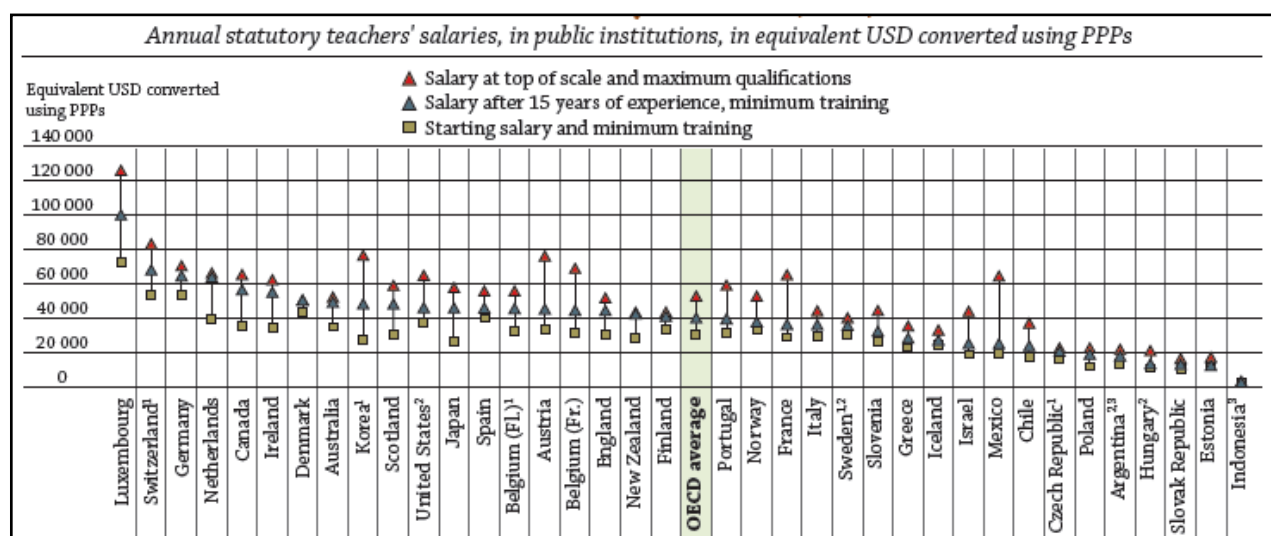
**Figure 1 available from:**

*Education Indicators in Focus* [online]. 2014 [cit. 2014-12-12]. Available from: <[http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202014--No21%20\(eng\).pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202014--No21%20(eng).pdf)>

**Table 1. Teachers' salaries in USD (2011)**

Equivalent USD converted using PPPs

	2011 or latest available year										
	Primary education			Lower secondary education				Years to top salary	Upper secondary education		
	Salary			Salary			Salary				
	Initial	15 years	Maximum	Initial	15 years	Maximum		Initial	15 years	Maximum	
Australia	34 610	48 522	48 522	34 746	49 144	49 144	9	34 746	49 144	49 144	
Austria	31 501	41 633	62 129	32 973	45 105	64 510	34	33 398	46 317	67 444	
Belgium (Fl.)	32 095	45 413	55 619	32 095	45 413	55 619	27	40 102	58 398	70 430	
Belgium (Fr.)	31 515	44 407	54 360	31 515	44 407	54 360	27	39 230	57 071	68 803	
Canada	35 534	56 349	56 349	35 534	56 349	56 349	11	35 534	56 569	56 569	
Chile	17 385	23 623	31 201	17 385	23 623	31 201	30	18 034	25 027	33 002	
Czech Republic	16 680	20 185	22 236	16 472	20 360	22 455	27	17 244	21 733	24 130	
Denmark	43 461	50 332	50 332	43 461	50 332	50 332	8	44 710	58 347	58 347	
England	30 289	44 269	44 269	30 289	44 269	44 269	12	30 289	44 269	44 269	
Estonia	11 621	12 306	16 985	11 621	12 306	16 985	7	11 621	12 306	16 985	
Finland	30 587	37 886	40 160	33 034	40 917	43 372	20	34 008	43 302	45 900	
France	25 646	33 152	48 916	28 653	36 159	52 090	34	28 892	36 398	52 362	
Germany	47 488	58 662	63 286	53 026	64 491	70 332	28	57 357	69 715	79 088	
Greece	22 803	28 184	34 037	22 803	28 184	34 037	33	22 803	28 184	34 037	
Hungary	10 654	13 115	17 497	10 654	13 115	17 497	40	11 642	15 515	22 083	
Iceland	23 988	26 991	28 145	23 988	26 991	28 145	18	22 628	27 159	28 412	
Ireland	33 484	54 954	62 166	34 604	54 954	62 166	22	34 604	54 954	62 166	
Israel	18 692	27 174	38 377	18 692	24 997	35 177	36	14 254	21 316	31 973	
Italy	27 288	32 969	40 119	29 418	35 922	44 059	35	29 418	36 928	46 060	
Japan	26 031	45 741	57 621	26 031	45 741	57 621	34	26 031	45 741	59 197	
Korea	27 581	48 251	76 528	27 476	48 146	76 423	37	27 476	48 146	76 423	
Luxembourg	64 043	93 397	112 997	72 499	100 013	125 962	30	72 499	100 013	125 962	
Mexico	15 081	19 590	32 136	19 252	24 910	40 886	14	..	..	..	
Netherlands	36 626	52 292	53 974	38 941	63 695	66 117	15	38 941	63 695	66 117	
New Zealand	28 225	41 755	41 755	28 251	42 241	42 241	8	28 277	42 726	42 726	
Norway	33 350	37 585	42 055	33 350	37 585	42 055	16	36 712	40 430	44 595	
Poland	10 362	16 506	17 200	11 663	18 806	19 600	20	13 181	21 518	22 429	
Portugal	30 946	39 424	52 447	30 946	39 424	52 447	34	30 946	39 424	52 447	
Scotland	30 078	47 984	47 984	30 078	47 984	47 984	6	30 078	47 984	47 984	
Slovak Republic	10 241	12 858	13 864	10 241	12 858	13 864	32	10 241	12 858	13 864	
Slovenia	26 486	32 193	33 817	26 486	32 193	33 817	13	26 486	32 193	33 817	
Spain	35 881	41 339	50 770	39 693	46 689	55 603	38	40 308	46 479	56 536	
Sweden	30 059	34 387	39 865	30 571	35 495	40 025	..	31 978	37 584	42 775	
Switzerland	47 330	..	73 585	53 599	..	83 105	27	61 437	..	94 038	
Turkey	23 494	25 189	27 201	..	..	..	..	24 053	25 747	27 758	
United States	37 595	46 130	53 180	37 507	45 950	56 364	..	38 012	49 414	56 303	
OECD average	28 854	38 136	45 602	30 216	39 934	48 177	24	31 348	41 665	50 119	
EU21	29 123	38 602	45 001	30 510	40 526	47 283	25	31 738	42 834	50 175	



**Figure 1. Teachers' salaries (minimum, after 15 years experience and maximum) in Loir secondary education (2011)**