

Peculiarities of Pupils' Learning to Learn: Insights of Music Teachers

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Abstract: The mission of schools today is not only to develop experts in various professions, but also to cultivate autonomous lifelong learners. Learning to learn is recognised as an essential prerequisite for continuous learning to educate and develop individuals, who are motivated, self-confident and able to evaluate own capacity, to critically reflect, to make decisions and self-assess. The advantage of a music lesson is its attractiveness and complexity, so purposefully strategized musical activities influence the development of learning abilities. The aim of the study is to reveal the peculiarities of the context of learning to learn during music lessons of fifth and sixth formers in basic education from the teachers' point of view. During the semi-structured interview, attention was paid to the insights of music teachers (sixteen teachers) while reflecting on the peculiarities of pupils' learning to learn during music lessons. The research results disclosed that teachers see learning to learn as the basis for pupils' successful learning and seek to find appropriate ways of fostering the development of this competence in musical activities they organise. Educational activities that are planned and organised in a targeted way, involving the learner's experience, based on appropriate learning strategies, positive emotions and cooperation, comprise a significant factor in changing the situation of pupils' learning to learn music, and an important opportunity for improving their ability to learn.

Keywords: learning to learn, music education.

Introduction

In the context of lifelong learning, the significance of learning to learn has been increasingly emphasised. Active engagement of learners and their striving for improvement and ability to manage their learning result in successful overall development. Learning to learn is a key factor for success in education, work, individual and social life (Vainikainen et al., 2020; Visentin, 2017).

The analysis of the role of learning to learn discloses the multifaceted nature of this concept. In the work of A. Kazlauskienė et al. (2012), the concepts “*learning to learn*” and “*learning to learn competence*” are presented as synonymous and are assigned the same definition. V. Lukošūnienė et al. (2013) also state that these concepts vary in educational literature and this proves the complexity of the phenomenon in question. Analysing learning to learn, C. Stringer (2006) notices that the current understanding of learning to learn is a combination of different concepts: metacognitive, social constructivist, socio-cognitive and socio-historical approaches, lifelong learning and assessment studies. According to K. Waeytens et al. (2002), teachers apply this concept in a wide variety of meanings and describe learning to learn in terms of their individual perception of it.

Authors (Chisholm et al., 2009) emphasise that understanding of learning to learn as a competence leads to a narrower concept of learning how to use but there is no evidence that namely *learning how to learn* is more important than learning what to learn, why to learn and when to learn, etc. In the theoretical literature, learning to learn is usually defined as both a process and an outcome. P. Candy (1990) makes attempts to separate the process and the outcome defining *learning competence* and *learning competence development* to determine the process and results of learning to learn. V. Lukošūnienė (2014) suggests using the concept of learning to learn competence to define the results of learning to learn, whereas learning to learn can be used to characterise the process. However, there is a clear emphasis on the position that pupils' learning to learn is developed through the process of their active learning.

A. Moreno et al. (2007) distinguish metacognition, learning strategies and learning to think as essential components of learning to learn. Learning to learn is based on a principle characterised by cooperation, perseverance and integrity. P. Hofmann (2008) stresses the importance of setting learning goals, choosing the most appropriate learning approaches and working together. Observing how others learn, reflection, challenges, and learning in teams support the process of knowing and create opportunities for

further development of learning to learn competence. (Stonkuvienė, 2018; Sala et al., 2020; Caena, 2019).

Pedagogical aspects of learning to learn. Music education is considered to be a stimulating factor in human intelligence. Music education is multifaceted, it not only cultivates culture, but also develops pupils' abilities, improves social skills, and broadens their horizons. According to Z. Grigienė et al. (2012), singing develops musical thinking, memory, imagination and creativity, concentration, focus and listening skills. J. Trainor et al. (2012) also emphasise that playing music in the classroom strengthens involvement and collaboration in learners' groups of all ages. According to R. Kirliauskienė (2017), self-regulation is of particular importance for musical activities. Self-regulation is defined by the author as the ability to have a positive attitude towards learning and to control thoughts. Active participation in music lessons and opportunities for self-expression increase self-confidence, resulting in a positive attitude towards the learning process itself and an adequate response to failures.

In today's music culture, with the emergence of music computer technologies, the development of music listening and musicianship skills is becoming a necessity for a changing society. It is relevant to the development of a personality with sound self-control skills and a sense of emotional sensitivity and subtlety to the sounds of music. In music education pupils learn to learn and cooperate, discuss, and formulate questions (Hoskins et al., 2008).

General Curriculum of Basic Education (2008) emphasises that art education evokes positive emotions, helps to overcome tension, and facilitates communication, thus creating conditions conducive to mental activity. It is noted that learning in a musical environment is more engaging, faster-paced and longer-lasting. A music lesson creates an environment suitable for the joy of learning, satisfaction of experiencing and development of self-confidence. In the general curriculum musical expression is defined as an activity in which pupils come up with ideas and address issues of expression on the basis of their own experience, imagination and use of a variety of means, methods and techniques. The creative process enables pupils to discover the most effective ways of organising their learning. Thus, music education awakens the cornerstones of learning to learn – motivation, positive attitudes towards learning, organising learning and choosing the most appropriate learning strategies.

The role of the music teacher in planning pupils' learning to learn. The role of the teacher in general education is increasingly discussed. According to G. M. Linkaitytė et al. (2005), teachers have a particularly important role to play in fulfilling educational goals: to create a learning process that encourages pupils' learning and gives them the prospect of lifelong learning. J. A. Hatch (2010) states that the goal of teaching is to organise the process in a way that every pupil gets an opportunity to invent and discover. Successful development of competence in learning requires from pupils abilities: to discuss with their teacher and classmates the relevance and meaningfulness of learning tasks, and the possibility of transferring their learning to other contexts; to set individual learning tasks, and discuss them with others; to clarify their existing experiences; to discuss their new experiences and knowledge; to apply a range of learning strategies and methods appropriately; to reflect on and evaluate their own learning activities and achievements and those of other people; to experience success (Munna et al., 2021). It can be stated that the collaboration mode of music teaching classroom has great flexibility and wit in teaching skills and methods. Music activities help the teaching and learning process to proceed smoothly. Classroom interaction is of utmost significance in the process of teaching and learning. By using classroom interaction, the learners' engagement in the learning process can be strengthened.

According to R. Žukauskienė (2012), the 5th-6th forms is the transition period from middle childhood to early adolescence, that is, the first stage of adulthood. This means that the child develops the ability to solve problems logically and rationally. In adolescence, pupils focus more on the overview of possibilities than on reality. This sequence of thinking is manifested in the search for a strategy to solve a problem or for new, alternative solutions. The author notes that due to the newly opened possibilities of thinking, adolescents are able to discuss more freely with adults or peers and to argue their ideas better. Thus, for pupils in 5th-6th forms, during music lessons it is particularly important to learn to understand music, both by playing music and by listening to it, reflecting on it, evaluating and discussing their own learning activities (General Curriculum of Basic Education, 2008). Pupils learn to appreciate themselves and others as important and full participants in individual or group music performing, to express their opinions in a tolerant manner, and to respect the musical culture of their own country.

During the lesson pupils are encouraged to reflect and their ability to properly evaluate own potential is also developed.

The study aims to reveal the peculiarities of the context of learning to learn during music lessons of fifth and sixth formers in basic education from the teachers' point of view.

Methodology

Participants. During this research music teachers, who deliver music lessons for fifth forms in basic education, were interviewed. The interviews were conducted with 16 music teachers of different ages and teaching experience (14 women and 2 men). Their qualification category ranged from the senior teacher to the expert teacher. Ethical principles were followed during the observation: oral consent of the research participants was obtained, anonymity (the real names of the research participants were coded) and data confidentiality were guaranteed. Sixteen teachers from nine schools expressed their willingness to take part in the study. The schools are of different types and located in one of the Lithuanian cities.

Materials or Measures. A qualitative study was conducted to reveal music teachers' insights into the characteristics of music learning during music lessons for 5th-6th formers. Qualitative research explains how a person observes, understands, interprets and makes meaning of the specific phenomenon under study in the natural environment (Neuman, 2011). The collected qualitative research data reveal the person's accumulated experience. The research raises the following questions: Why is it important for pupils to develop learning to learn competence? How is it manifested during music lessons? How to plan music teaching and learning?

Analysis of scientific literature was used to define the concept and meaning of learning to learn in basic music education. *Semi-structured interview.* In order to reveal a deeper analysis of music teachers' attitudes towards pupils' learning in music lessons, semi-structured interviews were conducted. A semi-structured interview is similar to a structured interview in that the questions to be asked and the topics covered in both types of interviews are planned in advance. However, instead of closed-ended questions, open-ended questions form the basis of such an interview (Yin, 2017). A semi-structured interview is defined as a standardised interview in which the interviewer formulates targeted questions and seeks answers that can be interpreted in a qualitative way.

Procedure. The interview process was designed and conducted following the steps of semi-structured interviews suggested by M. DeJonckheere et al. (2019): determining the purpose and scope of the study; identifying participants; considering ethical issues; planning logistical aspects; developing the interview guide; establishing trust and rapport; conducting the interview; memoing and reflecting; analysing the data; demonstrating the trustworthiness of the research; presenting findings in a paper or report. Qualitative content analysis was used as a research method to analyse the text data. This method focuses on the characteristics of the communication process conveyed by the language, emphasizing the content itself or the meaning of a text conditioned by a particular context (Erlingsson et al. 2017). Ph. Mayring (2021) states that content analysis procedures are significantly superior to other methods of text analysis, as they can rely on research from other communication sciences. Content analysis is not a standardized instrument, which is always the same. It should be tailored to the particular object or material in question and designed for the specific problem. Therefore, a research data analysis strategy was developed in the first phase of semi-structured interview planning. The transcription of the interviews in separate extracts was applied to identify the information that is of utmost significance for the study. The interview text was analysed applying content analysis in three stages: text compression → text coding → division into categories. The first stage aimed to shorten the text and divide it into separate parts according to the meaning. In the second stage, the codes were assigned to the systemized parts of the text, allowing the essence of the extract to be extended to several words. During the second stage, the codes were assigned to systemized parts of the text, which generalized the essence of the extract in one or two words. In the third stage, the codes were categorised.

Results and Discussion

The interviewees consider music education in 5th - 6th forms to be particularly important because these forms (especially 5th one) represent a new stage of learning. For this reason, 5th form is a bridging form

aimed both to revise the content of the previous forms and to acquire new learning skills. According to M. Radovan (2019), learning skills can be acquired at any age, but are most effectively developed in early adolescence. Therefore, music teachers were asked what factors influence pupils' success in learning and the development of lifelong learning. They identified pupils' self-knowledge, independence, ability to select and organise information, and the important role of the teacher as key factors (Table 1).

Table 1

Success aspects of learning to learn		
Category	Subcategory	Statements of informants
Success aspects of learning to learn	Self-cognition	<i>"It is essential for children to discover themselves first, to learn to be independent and to be able to answer questions from an early age: what they want, why they want it, how to set goals, how to achieve them" (T15); "It's important to notice your weaknesses. If you see what you lack, you can motivate yourself to keep learning." (T1)</i>
	Independence	<i>"In many families, parents learn rather than their children. Mother sings together and completes tasks together. The child loses self-dependence." (T3); "You must be able to learn independently, to have a plan and schedule." (T9); "You have to dedicate time for learning, to work productively and consistently, to take an interest in everything." (T5); "You have to know how to plan, to feel responsibility for learning." (T11)</i>
	Selection and organisation of information	<i>"You must know how to find information here and now, use information technology, organise information by topic and apply it." (T1)</i>
	The role of the teacher	<i>"To evoke learner interest. To teach through a favourite activity and after interest is aroused, to move to what is important" (T16); "Teachers should encourage critical thinking, not put everything 'on a plate' and let pupils do their own research, and provide them with more creative tasks." (T2); "It's important to make a pupil feel safe - to praise, to listen to as many opinions as possible. If the pupils want, they should have the right to express themselves." (T3); "From the very first lesson, the teacher should clarify what he/she wants to achieve: to be a teacher who only demonstrates things, or to develop pupils' creativity and autonomy." (T6)</i>

The research participants state that it is important for pupils to know themselves - to understand what they want to achieve and why (Table 1). Teachers stressed the importance of the pupil's awareness of his/her strengths and weaknesses as a motivation for setting learning goals. The pupil should be aware of what learning means to him or her. Some teachers stressed the importance of autonomy, knowing how to set goals and how to achieve them. By allowing children to be independent, we give them the opportunity to discover themselves. The informants state that independent learners need to make a learning plan, work consistently and productively. An independent learner is able to motivate himself or herself, take an interest in his/her own inclinations and take responsibility for his/her own learning. Pupils should know how to search for information and how to put their knowledge into practice, as well as how to select and organise the information they find. During the interviews, teachers identified their own role as an important aspect of pupils' learning success. According to the research participants, the most important task of a teacher is to keep pupils interested. Teachers can have a significant impact on learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning. The interviewed teachers point out that a teacher must be able to communicate with pupils, because only when pupils feel support from their teacher will they be able to confidently raise discussions and share ideas. It is important for the teacher to understand pupils' needs, praise their progress and encourage independence. E. Bala et al. (2018) argues that pupils should get acquainted with the learning strategies to make the learning process more efficient and enable pupils to learn autonomously. Thus, they will explore new ways of learning, be more efficient and become satisfied with their own efforts rather than just depend on the teacher-centred system or teaching.

During the interview, it was important to find out how teachers describe a learner with an inclination for learning. Participants have similar views on this issue, with learning being influenced by a pupil's personal qualities, his or her ability to do the relevant activities (Table 2).

Table 2

Attitude towards learning		
Category	Subcategory	Statements of informants
Pupil's attitude towards learning	Pupil's personal qualities	<i>"Diligence is important. It is important that the pupil wants to work and is used to working." (T12); "The pupil is confident, knows what he/she wants and is not afraid to answer." (T7); "The pupil is interested in all questions." (T5); "Being able to answer questions such as: what they want, why they want it, how to set goals, how to achieve them. Feeling free to express their own opinions." (T13); "An independent and critically thinking learner." (T2); "He/she responsibly delivers completed tasks on time." (T14)</i>
	Pupil's ability to plan his/her learning	<i>"A pupil has a goal and knows why he/she needs this." (T13); "It is very important to complete the work started and explain why learning is important." (T7); "You need to see your weaknesses. If you can see what you lack, where you are weak, you can motivate yourself to continue learning further." (T11); "He/she is able to plan own day, plan own tasks and manage time." (T1); "When learning a song, they know that they need to learn the words, then the melody, and the third step is the performing music." (T3)</i>

As it can be seen from the table (Table 2), the informants highlight the importance of pupils' diligence. A pupil who knows how to learn is inquisitive, productive and confident. He/she should be responsible, perform assigned tasks on time, and not procrastinate. Teachers identified an inquisitive desire to learn as the most important factor in learning. Other researchers have also noted this. Pupils must be aware of what information means to them, identify their needs and make changes in their behaviour in that direction, and self-dedicate themselves to achievement of their goals (Isman et al., 2013; Meral, 2019).

The teachers consider the most important elements of learning to be related to pupils' knowledge, attitudes and skills. After summarizing the answers, the ability to learn can be treated as the ability to set learning goals and know how to achieve learning goals, the ability to learn independently, the ability to find and apply information, the ability to take responsibility for own learning, the desire to learn, etc. Concentration, focus, planning and self-directed work are important for learning to learn, autonomy being most important for this competence. In this context, pupils' motivation to learn is known to be one of the key components of learning to learn. The importance of verbal praise and good marks, the role of individual attention and the teacher's personality, the variety and differentiation of tasks, the presentation of relevant examples in the classroom were also emphasised by the research participants (Table 3). D. L. Rodriguez et al. (2022) argues that the management of motivational learning strategies enables the pupil to maintain a state conducive to learning by optimizing concentration, reducing anxiety, directing attention, organizing activities and study time. In the same way, they can vary depending on factors, both personal and contextual, allowing for strategic learning.

Table 3

Promoting pupils' motivation		
Category	Subcategory	Statements of informants
Promoting pupils' motivation	Verbal incentives and marks	<i>"Rewarding. When you reward your pupils, they do their best." (T15); "Don't spare marks." (T6); "I try to see what learners do best and give them as much praise and recognition as possible." (T14); "Never say to pupils it's bad. Encourage them not to be afraid to try." (T2)</i>
	Individual attention to the pupil	<i>"To evoke interest through the attitude towards them and attention to them." (T16); "It's a psychological thing. It's about seeing what the child lacks, assessing his/her potential and trying to help him/her succeed." (T1); "I try to get to know my pupils and give them opportunities to fulfil themselves." (T10)</i>
	The personality of the teacher	<i>"Our task is not to 'fail them' but to try to make them learn something." (T12); "Your pupils need to see that the teacher is genuinely trying to help them and wants them to succeed." (T10); "If you work yourself a lot, are energetic, have ideas, the child will follow the teacher's example." (T5)</i>

	A variety and diversification of tasks	<i>"Differentiation of tasks. Trying to keep them interested." (T13); "Through presentations of all kinds, with visuals and animations." (T14); "If the pupil is not motivated at all, I let him/her present what he/she likes, for example rap music. It doesn't matter that this is off-topic." (T8); "If there are highly unmotivated learners in the class who often disturb the classwork, I give them special tasks. If we all sing, such a pupil is the only one I give an instrument to, and then he/she listens very attentively, takes an interest and participates actively in the lesson." (T9)</i>
	Presented relevant examples	<i>"I talk to pupils, explain why all musical activities are necessary." (T4); "If the pupils don't want to sing or don't see the point, I explain that we don't sing to become singers, but when we perform we gain courage, confidence, in the future we won't be afraid to present our work, our project, we will be free to communicate with strangers, we won't be afraid to speak our mind." (T16)</i>

According to the research participants, to motivate learners it is necessary to know them. They must be motivated from the very first lesson and it is vital to set assignments that help the pupil to set learning goals and for the teacher to get to know their learners better. As it can be seen from the table (Table 3), the teachers have observed the impact of praise and good marks on pupils' motivation in their practice. Each pupil is an individual and therefore has different needs, abilities and motivational factors. Learner motivation is influenced by the differentiation and application of assignments according to pupils' interests. It is pointed out that there is no need to ask pupils to do something for which they are not yet sufficiently motivated. It is more important to involve the pupil in the learning process in small steps, with assignments that are clear and relevant to personal interests. As the pupil becomes more motivated, a deeper learning process can be organised. The interviewed teachers noted that before any task during music lessons it is very important to explain to the pupils the possibilities of its application and the benefits for further learning.

The interviews discussed how to help pupils develop the ability to set learning goals, plan a learning process to achieve the goal, find the information they need (Table 4).

Table 4

Planning/organising the learning process		
Category	Subcategory	Statements of informants
Organising the learning process	Setting learning goals	<i>"We do projects in groups. We organise creative contests. This year, a rap competition is held. They have to create their own lyrics, choose a beat from the internet and record it." (T11); "Teaching to notice the nearest achievable goal." (T2); "It is essential to start with small goals." (T9)</i>
	Planning the process for achievement of the goal	<i>"If the teacher teaches to do this with examples, pupils will develop this skill." (T1); "Pupils should get used to the usual learning sequence: learning a piece of music starts with note-taking, then analysing the rhythm, then learning how to play the notes on the instrument." (T9); "Creative works help a lot" (T12)</i>
	Search for information	<i>"We make slide presentations. learners have to choose one of several topics, find information on the internet and prepare a presentation." (T4); "If the topic of the lesson is related to the history of music, I encourage them to find a few musical examples for the next lesson on that topic." (T7)</i>

According to the research participants, the fifth form usually includes pupils who do not always know how to set goals or organize their learning, so it is essential to develop these abilities. Fifth formers find it harder to set learning goals, which is why discussion and mutual understanding between pupils and teacher are crucial (Table 4). The teachers highlight the importance of cooperative learning, as learners

can discuss and find the best solution together. The research participants attach great importance to the search, selection and systematisation of information.

The interviews raised the question of what promotes reflection in the classroom (Table 5).

Table 5

Learning reflection

Category	Subcategory	Statements of informants
Learning reflection	Self-analysis	<i>“At the end of the lesson, we talk about who did their best, where they could have done better.” (T5); “It is important to compare yourself against others. When a pupil knows how to compare his or her own work with that of others, there are no more questions about why some marks are better than others.” (T10); “I encourage pupils to observe their own progress. We learn how to apply what we’ve learnt in different activities - if a task is difficult, the pupil sees what he/she hasn’t learnt in the previous lesson.” (T2)</i>
	Argumentation	<i>“The assignments have a self-evaluation component. We recommend that you rate yourself on a ten-point scale and justify why.” (T3); “We play music in groups. After one group has played a composition, another group evaluates it and expresses opinions.” (T1); “It is important to teach a child to express his or her thoughts and explain why he/she has made a particular decision.” (T16)</i>

According to the informants, pupils like to reflect in the classroom, but they tend to underestimate themselves when self-assessing. The table shows (Table 5) that teachers often encourage reflection in music lessons - analysing lesson work through discussion, written reflection, written self-assessment used to review longer stages of learning. The teachers point out that it is important for learners to evaluate others as well as themselves in the classroom, as this helps them to better understand their environment and the people in it. J. Velzen (2016) refers to similar activities, when teachers are suggested encouraging learners to perform critical reflection on the work of other learners by comparing their own work with that of peers, and by indicating the limitations of evaluated works. Such activities can contribute to pupils better understanding of the essence of learning and to increasing their meta-cognitive knowledge.

The pupils’ learning to learn determines the success of a music lesson, so it is relevant to learn about pedagogical situations when teachers experience success or failure, positive or negative feelings in the lesson. The informants stated that negative attitudes before a lesson can negatively affect it, so they try to enter the classroom in a good mood and have a positive attitude. Unsuccessful teacher experiences show learners’ reluctance to learn and lack of positive attitudes towards learnings. Negative attitudes lead to discipline and irresponsibility problems that undermine the learning process. Positive experiences of music teachers show that a positive attitude towards learning is a key to a successful lesson. Positive attitudes motivate pupils to improve through active learning. It is interesting to note that, across countries, music teachers’ experiences of success or failure in music lessons are quite similar. The research, which was conducted together with music educators from Lithuania, reveals how pupils describe music lessons they like. They want to perform more with friends and in groups. The learners want to choose repertoire, create their own music in groups, use technology, and listen to popular music. In general, they indicate their wish for more practical, hands-on musical activities during music lessons at school. It is obvious from their answers that the pupils in the study strongly feel the need for their voice, perspective, and opinion to be heard and taken into account when their teachers plan music lessons (Economidou Stavrou et al., 2020).

Conclusions

An analysis of the scientific literature suggests that learning to learn is a complex phenomenon. The use of “competence” and “ability” with this concept highlights its problematic nature. However, the authors agree that ability/skills are at the core of this phenomenon and that learning to learn is often seen as a set of abilities consisting of motivated activities that depend on a positive attitude towards learning and awareness of the meaning of learning. Semi-structured interviews with music teachers reveal that pupils’ learning to learn is key to successful learning. It must to be fostered by creating as many pedagogical situations as possible in the music classroom in which pupils can experience success and self-confidence

through music playing or discussions. They would not only share the subject knowledge but would also develop their learning skills during music lessons in basic education. Motivation, positive attitude towards learning, the role of the teacher, the use of information sources and learning tools, the organisation of the learning process, and cooperation are important for learning to learn. It is important to underline that according to this research, pupils' attitude towards learning is not based only on personal qualities, but also on the ability to plan their learning, which can be learned in the process of music education. It can be done in a few different ways, such as setting learning goals, planning the process for goal achievement and/or searching for information. Furthermore, motivation in music education can also be promoted applying various methods, such as verbal incentives and marks, individual attention, a variety and diversification of tasks or/and the relevance of the topic. Cognitive and creative learning skills are revealed in the process of creative, independent, and group musical activities, while social and personal skills are most evident when discussing the learning process and its outcomes.

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