

CROATIA: COMMENTS ON THE NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM FOR THE TEACHING SUBJECT OF MUSIC

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- The draft of Croatian music curriculum has been drawn up carefully and with expertise. I have read and evaluated the draft by comparing it with the chapters of music education in the Finnish National Core Curriculum in 2014. According my view, comparing your music curriculum with the Finnish version is the only intelligible and relevant way to examine the draft, because musical learning is always a cultural matter, as well as music is a cultural phenomenon. I think there does not exist the thing like an average musical competence in a certain age. I think that musical learning and the development of musical skills are always depending on the culture and musical environment you live, and of course, on opportunities for involvement in music and music making.
- In our Finnish education system, our basic education is nine years education for all children. Children start basic education when they are seven years old. When they are completed basic education, they can apply to upper secondary education. In our general upper secondary education (high school) students have an opportunity for music studies, too; in fact they have to study at least one mandatory course of music in high school.
- What I have done, is, that I have equated your music curriculum for grades 1-8 with our music syllabus for basic education. I have also equated your upper secondary studies with our general upper secondary education, although your upper secondary education seems to begin at the ninth grade. I hope I have understood your system in a right way.
- In our National Core Curriculum for basic education we have defined the objectives of music education for the syllabus that consists of eight weekly lesson hours, which means 1 lesson hour per week per each grade from 1-8. (Education provider decides the allocation of lesson hours.) We have not defined the objectives and content areas for music (or any other subjects) for each grade, but instead of that for grade units 1-2, 3-6, 7-9. That is why I have compared objectives of your second grade with our grade unit 1-2, your sixth grade with our grade unit 3-6, and your eighth grade with our grade unit 7-9.

Comments based on my comparisons

- The ultimate aims of music education are very similar in Croatia and in Finland: broader world view or broader musical skills and understanding different cultures, development of expression skills, understanding on the language of music / musical meanings, identity building etc.

- The strands (HR) or objectives areas (FI) are quite similar too, except that based on the seven transversal competences defined in the general part of our national curriculum, we have expanded the objectives areas of music education to include also participation, safety and well-being, and learning-to-learn skills. The Croatian strands of music education are musical ones, which is fully justified and works perfectly. However, what I think, is, that learning-to-learn skills are included to your curriculum, too, when you define, for instance, that student/pupil “evaluates his/her own performance, performances of others and joint performance”.
- The philosophy of music education on the background of the objectives/learning outcomes seems to be a bit different in the Croatian music curriculum than in the Finnish one. The Finnish music curriculum is grounded on the theory of praxial music education, emphasizing that pupils and students are active music makers, who develop their musical skills and knowledge by singing and playing instruments, listening, through movement, improvising and composing. The Croatian music curriculum perhaps emphasizes more analytical thinking skills, by using verbs like to distinguish, recognize, explore, compare, and in later years your students should be able to also to analyse and explain different matters. I think that both solutions are good ones, but they developed students’ musical skills and knowledge in a different way. [Obs! I am not stating that our approach is better.]
- However, in spite of a different emphasize, both curricula include very similar kinds of objectives for singing together with others, creative music making, bodily movement, reading notation, and for the development of musical expression skills. Also objectives for playing instruments resemble each other, although I understood that the objective for playing instruments is an optional one in your curriculum.
- Both curricula also include the idea that ICT has an important role in music education. Very good.
- I also think that your learning outcomes and our objectives are both very suitable for the 2nd year, 6th year, and also for your 8th year and for our grade unit 7-9, and also for the high school. As well, the achievement outcomes seem to be reasonable, although your way to describe achievement outcomes is very different than ours. You do it in a very detailed way, which perhaps support teachers to assess of their students’ learning and help them to understand what kinds of competences students should learn.
- As you know, our curriculum system is based on idea that education providers draw up their own curricula based on the national curriculum, and they have a quite a lot freedom to define many things by themselves. We think it is a way to get teachers think by themselves, what is important and how to arrange all learning activities. I think that you provide much more detailed information than we do.

- At high school level the differences between your curriculum and our curriculum is more obvious. In the Finnish national core curriculum for music education, we have general objectives for music education, and then short descriptions for two national compulsory courses and for two national specialisation courses (please find a sample below p. 5).

An sample of my comparisons (your and our 6th year)

CROATIA	FINLAND
Music, as a school subject, offers unique experiences to students which result in:	Task of music education (for instance)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broader world-view • Understanding relationship between art and reality • Interpretation of messages conveyed through the language of the music • Identity building (personal, cultural, national, global) • Formation of a personal system of values • Expression of thoughts, feelings and attitudes that encourage critical thinking • Development of creativity as a meta-competency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create opportunities for versatile musical activities and active cultural participation • to interpret the multiple meanings of music in different cultures as well as in the activities of individuals and communities • to broaden musical skills • positive attitude towards music • to appreciate and be curious about music and cultural diversity • development of musical skills and understanding • development of expression skills
Strands of music education	Objective areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A: LISTENING AND EXPLORING MUSIC • B: EXPRESSING THROUGH MUSIC AND WITH MUSIC • C: MUSIC IN CONTEXT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Musical knowledge and skills and creative production • Cultural understanding and multiliteracy • Safety and well-being in music • Learning-to-learn skills in music
6th year, learning outcomes	6th year, objectives of instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows a specific number of musical pieces (whole musical pieces, movements or fragments) of different types of music (classical, traditional, film, jazz, popular music). • Distinguishes between singing voices and recognises their role. • Distinguishes between the sound and appearance of instruments. Classifies instruments in the appropriate instrument families. Recognizes the roles of instruments (solo, chamber, orchestral). • By listening to music, distinguishes between: Vocal, instrumental and vocal/instrumental music / Different vocal, instrumental and vocal/instrumental ensembles (solo, chamber ensemble, choir, orchestra) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to encourage the pupil to participate in playing music together and building togetherness • to guide the pupil in the use of natural voice and singing and to develop his or her skills in using body percussion and rhythm, melody, and chord instruments as a member of a music-making group • O3 to encourage the pupil to express music, images, stories, and emotions through movement using his or her whole body • O4 to offer the pupil opportunities for experiential listening of the sound environment and music and to guide the pupil to analyse and describe what he or she has heard • O5 to encourage the pupil to improvise as well as to plan and implement small-scale compositions or multidisciplinary art projects

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By listening to music, distinguishes between certain musical forms: • Required - rondo, theme and variations/Recommended - complex ternary form • Participates in the joint musical performance, co-ordinates his own performance with performances of others, shows persistence and concentration, enriches the performance with new expressional elements and evaluates his/her own performance, performances of others and joint performance. • Sings author and traditional songs from Croatia and the world, considering all the expressive elements of music and the rules of voice culture. According to his/her own individual abilities, the student respects intonation, rhythm/measure, text and stylistic features of the song. • Plays the accompaniment to familiar musical pieces and/or independently plays shorter instrumental musical pieces by using standard or computer musical notation for playing instruments. Expresses himself/herself through dance and movement along the music. Participates in different musical games and activities of musical creativity. Presents his/her own performance in the classroom and/or outside of it. • Explores music in an authentic, adapted and virtual environment: Visits at least one music & cultural event / (Virtually) visits famous cultural institutions in Croatia and the world / Distinguishes between different forms of presenting musical art (concert, recital, play, experiment, street performance, sound installation, etc.) / Explores music & cultural offer in his/her environment • Expresses his/her own musical experience in different ways (oral or written review, presentation, visual artistic expression, dance and movement). • Distinguishes between and compares features of different types of music (classical, traditional, popular music) by listening. • By listening, explores the features of Croatian traditional music of a broader area and the music of at least one national minority. 	<p>using different tools and information and communication technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O6 to guide the pupil to explore his or her musical experiences and the aesthetic, cultural, and historical diversity of music • O7 to guide the pupil in understanding musical concepts and the principles of music notation in connection with making music • O8 to guide the pupil to recognise the impacts of music on well-being and to ensure the safety of the music-making and sound environment • O9 to guide the pupil to develop his or her musical skills by practising, to participate in setting goals for his or her learning, and to assess his or her progress in relation to the goals.
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COMPULSORY COURSES (MUSIC, UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION)

1. Music and me (MU1)

The objective of the course is that the student finds his or her own ways of operating within the field of music. By taking part in musical activities, the student gathers experiences of music making, advances his or her competence, and reflects on his or her role in listening to, interpreting, and making music as well as using cultural services. Through his or her personal relationship with music, the student understands the meanings of music in life and interpersonal interaction. In the course, the students learn about each other's musical activities and local music life.

The student develops his or her voice control and instrumental skills as devices of musical expression and thinking. The course deepens the student's knowledge of music and musical concepts by means of making music. The student learns to observe the aural environment and look after his or her hearing.

2. A polyphonic Finland (MU2)

The objective of the course is that the student learns about Finnish music and reinforces his or her cultural identity. The student explores various music cultures within Finland and their subcultures, and learns to understand their underlying factors, development, and essential characteristics. In course implementation, the fact that Finnish music cultures are part of the European and global world of music is also taken into account.

Diverse working methods, in particular making and listening to music, are used in studying. When making music, attention is focused on developing the student's personal artistic expression as well as listening and interaction skills. Different genres of music ranging from popular and classical music to traditional music are selected for the musical repertoire.