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## Quality of Music Education in Croatian Music Schools: Students' Attitudes

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to investigate how higher secondary music school students experience teaching, programs, and educational processes in music schools, which are the shortcomings and what are the suggestions for improving the system. The results show high satisfaction with attending music school related to the purpose of future professional orientation. Students see improvements in choosing more modern teaching topics, greater connection with practice, more time for student creativity, and work on improving teachers' pedagogical skills. The results of this research could be used to accelerate the introduction of curriculum teaching and the National Curriculum for Art Education as a relevant document in music schools in the Republic of Croatia. Also, regardless of the inertia of the educational system, teachers can plan their teaching according to these results that will reconcile their ideas, methodological and didactic laws, and student expectations to contribute to greater motivation of their students.

**Keywords:** *Music education, music schools, music school students, teachers.*

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### Introduction

Professional music education in the European education systems dates back to the Middle Ages. It had developed in parallel with general education and had taken over all the basic determinants of such a system, e.g., the curriculum, educational standards, and student evaluation (Matoš, 2018). In the distant past, music education was reserved only for the privileged and wealthier members of society, while today in all European countries the emphasis is placed on the availability of music education to the whole community. According to The European Agenda for Music launched by the European Music Council (EMC) (2018), music education should be available to all, regardless of their physical ability, gender, age, social, cultural, or geographical origin. The European Music Union (EMU), an organization of national music societies in Europe, has an advisory role at the Council of Europe. It is a non-governmental and non-profit association that brings together music societies from 24 European countries, and according to a 2010 report, six thousand European music schools are members of the association. According to the same report, it can be concluded that music education in most European countries is organized under the national education system and includes four levels of education: preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary (Maffli & Eicker, 2010).

In higher secondary music schools in the Republic of Croatia, students can choose to attend a general higher secondary school and music program or a higher secondary music school program in which some general education subjects are included to a lesser extent. By enrolling at a music school, students can gain competencies for the following occupations: instrumentalist musician, musician singer; a musician of theoretical direction; builder and restorer of musical instruments (Ministry of Education and Science & Croatian Association of Music and Dance Pedagogies [MZO & HDGPP], 2008). Music subjects can be divided into music theory and performance subjects. Forms of work are mostly group classes, except for teaching instruments or singing, which are in form of private lessons. Lessons usually take 45 minutes or 60 minutes for group classes (choir or orchestra).

Music schools in Croatia are not formally connected with music academies that provide music education at a professional level, so the preparation and guidance of students towards academies mostly depend on the teacher of the instrument or the major subject. The orientation of students towards professional music education and enrolment at music academies is determined by monitoring students' progress at school exams and competitions. All students follow the same curriculum, but students who show greater interest and progress get an additional attention, most often on a

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voluntary basis by individual teachers (Brđanović, 2015). The formal disconnect between music schools and higher education is identical in other European countries. According to the Polifonia pre-college working group report (2007), quality higher education depends on quality pre-college education. Therefore, establishing collaboration across the entire vertical of music education can have a strong impact on the expansion and effectiveness of the learning environment.

Educational programs in music education in Croatia require modernization and better connectivity in the entire educational vertical. These changes are necessary and require the involvement of all stakeholders in music education. The opinion of students about the existing programs and the satisfaction of attending music school is certainly a valuable contribution to the preparation of these changes.

In this research, we sought to explore how satisfied current and former high school music students are with the organization of teaching, subjects and content, teachers and their own success, and what improvements in these areas are expected in the future. The opinions and attitudes of students that we have obtained in this research, as well as the research conducted among other stakeholders in the system, could serve to provide a more objective view of the current state of music education in the Republic of Croatia. The collected data could help develop better quality curricula and national standards in music education.

### Methodology

#### Research Design

The research sample was convenient. The participants were students who attended or are currently attending secondary music schools in northern Croatia. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants via mail groups that we received from the administrations of music schools.

#### Research Aim and Research Questions

For the purposes of this paper, we conducted a study that aimed at determining the opinions of current and former students of Croatian music schools on music teaching in higher secondary music schools. The research was also supposed to answer the following questions:

1. How satisfied are the students with their music school education, teaching and teachers who teach certain music subjects?
2. How satisfied are the students with their learning, practising and performing music?
3. What improvements regarding music teaching in music schools do students expect in the future?

#### Research Participants

The study includes current and former students of five Croatian secondary music schools. These are music schools from Osijek, Varaždin, Požega, Vinkovci and Zagreb. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, of which 112 were returned and included in the study (response rate: 74.67%). The gender structure of the corresponding sample of surveyed students consisted of 74 female students (66.07%) and 38 male students (33.93%). Just over a third of the students (36.84%) belonged in the 'under 17' age group. Two-fifths of students (42.11%) were from the '18-20' age group and one-fifth of students (19.30%) belonged to the age group of '21 and above'. On average, students were 18.58 years old. Most students (52.70%) were attending or had attended the instrumental department. One third of the students were students of the theoretical department (33.93%), and one eighth (13.39%) were students of the solo singing department (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Students by City and Department of Music Schools

City	Instrumental department		Theoretical department		Solo singing department		Total
	Current students	Former students	Current students	Former students	Current students	Former students	
Osijek	10	11	7	6	2	0	36
Varaždin	15	1	5	3	5	0	29
Požega	12	1	5	4	4	0	26
Vinkovci	2	0	3	4	2	1	12
Zagreb	3	4	0	1	0	1	9
Total	42	17	20	18	13	2	112

We used a convenience sampling (Cohen et al., 2000). Although the sample fit does not represent any group other than itself, we could draw some conclusions from the research.

All scientific research conducted at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek must be in accordance with the Code of Ethics of Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (2011). That means that the voluntary participation of all respondents is guaranteed based on informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondent data. Parents and guardians gave written consent for the participation of underage students in the research.

### Materials and Procedure

We used a survey procedure during the research. The questionnaire was developed for the purposes of this research by the authors of this paper. The survey was anonymous. The first part of the questionnaire (5 questions) included questions about the socio-demographic characteristics of the research participants. The second part was comprised of questions regarding students' satisfaction with studying at a music school, satisfaction with certain music subjects and teachers who teach certain subjects, time the students spend on independent learning and rehearsing for music subjects, the possibilities of improving music lessons at music schools, and assessing one's own performance at individual music subjects. This section contained 43 closed-form questions and 17 open questions.

To collect data on students' satisfaction with teaching and teachers who teach individual music subjects, and the success at individual music subjects, assessment and evaluation procedures and scales were used. The students expressed their satisfaction with certain subjects and teachers with the help of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *strongly satisfied*. Similarly, students assessed their performance at individual subjects (*insufficient* (1), *sufficient* (2), *good* (3), *very good* (4), *excellent* (5)). In a preliminary study, conducted for verification and validation of the questionnaire, 20 students participated. We used quantitative and qualitative analysis for data processing and analysis. Moreover, certain procedures of inferential statistics were used. The normality of the distribution of individual variables was tested by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and it was determined that the distribution was not normal. Therefore, data analysis was continued by non-parametric methods. We used the Kruskal-Wallis test (H) in order to determine the differences between the three independent groups within one measurement (to compare the responses concerning the departments attended by students in the music school). SPSS Statistics V26 program at the .05 level was used for statistical processing of data with statistical significance. The data received from open-ended questions were processed by classical content analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008) with an induction process (Creswell, 1994). This process repeatedly involves the reading of receiving data for getting sufficient knowledge of researched material. All the data are coded in two-level codes, categorized, and grouped according to the correlation between the theories and research data.

## Results

### Student Satisfaction with Music School Education

We asked the students to state why they decided to enrol at a music school and how satisfied they were with attending a music school. Students who attended the instrumental department most often stated that they had decided to study at a music school because they liked music (40.68%), because they liked to play a certain musical instrument (13.56%), and because they wanted to play music professionally (11.86%). Slightly less than half of students in the theoretical department (47.37%) stated that they had enrolled at a music school because they loved music, and a fifth of students (21.05%) stated that they wanted to play music professionally in the future.

Most students were very satisfied or completely satisfied with their music school education (80.36%,) (Table 2). We were interested in whether the answers of students from different music departments differed for this question. Therefore, we had divided the students into three groups: students attending the instrumental department, the theoretical department, and students attending the solo singing department. We compared their responses on satisfaction with enrolling at a music school (Table 4). The results showed that the students of the solo singing department had expressed the greatest satisfaction (93.33%). Students of the theoretical department were slightly less satisfied (81.58%), while students of the instrumental department had shown the least satisfaction (76.25%).

Table 2. Students' Statements on Satisfaction with Enrolling at a Music School Concerning the Department They Had Attended at Music School – Absolute and Relative Frequencies (N = 112)

Student responses on satisfaction with enrolling at a music school	Very dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Satisfied		Very satisfied		Strongly satisfied	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Students attending the instrumental department	1	1.69	2	3.39	11	18.64	30	50.85	15	25.42
Students attending the theoretical department	0	0	2	5.26	5	13.16	17	44.74	14	36.84
Students attending the solo singing department	0	0	0	0	1	6.67	8	53.33	6	40.00
<b>Total</b>	1	0.9	4	3.6	17	15.2	55	49.1	35	31.3

To find out if there was a statistically significant difference in students' responses to satisfaction with music school education with respect to the department they were attending at their music school, we had conducted the Kruskal-Wallis H-test. Testing had not indicated a statistically significant difference in student responses ( $H = 2,898$ ,  $p = .235$ ) (Table 3).

*Table 3. Students' Statements on Satisfaction with Enrolling at a Music School Concerning the Department They Had Attended at Music School – Average Values, Dispersion of Results, Kruskal-Wallis H Test*

Student responses on satisfaction with enrolling at a music school	N	M	SD	H	p
Students attending the instrumental department	59	3.95	.86	2.898	.235
Students attending the theoretical department	38	4.13	.84		
Students attending the solo singing department	15	4.33	.62		

Note. *M* = average values; *SD* = standard deviation; *H* = Kruskal-Wallis H-test

#### *Student Satisfaction with Certain Music Subjects in Music School*

We also asked the students to answer how satisfied they were with the certain music subjects. Students provided answers to those theoretical subjects they had attended at music school. As solfeggio, harmony and music history are taught to first-grade students, we had received answers from all students for these subjects. For the other four subjects (polyphony, musical forms, conducting, reading and playing scores), which had not been attended by all students, the total number of responses was slightly lower. The results had showed that most students were very satisfied or strongly satisfied with all theoretical subjects. The greatest satisfaction of students was with the solfeggio (68.75 %), while students were least satisfied with the music history (58.93 %) and musical forms (57.32 %) (Table 4).

Table 2 shows the answers about students' satisfaction with certain forms of choirs and orchestras. The students were very satisfied with choir (81.25 %). This was followed by chamber music, for which two-thirds of students had stated that they had been very satisfied or strongly satisfied (73.22 %). Students were less satisfied with the work of school orchestras, for which one fifth of students had expressed their partial or complete dissatisfaction (64.29 %; 21.43 %).

The students had then expressed their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with instrument. The results had showed that students were very satisfied with this teaching (89.29 %). This result was higher than the result for theoretical subjects, choir, and chamber music.

*Table 4. Students' Statements of Satisfaction with Certain Music Subjects They Attended at Music School*

Subject		N	1+2 %	3 %	4+5 %	M	SD
Theoretical subjects	Solfeggio	112	6.25	25	68.75	4.01	1.00
	Harmony	112	10.71	20.54	68.75	3.89	1.08
	Polyphony	82	17.07	19.51	63.42	3.82	1.23
	Music history	112	18.75	22.32	58.93	3.65	1.24
	Musical forms	82	21.95	20.73	57.32	3.59	1.21
	Conducting	56	8.93	32.14	58.93	3.89	1.14
	Reading and playing scores	52	13.46	21.15	65.39	3.81	1.27
Group classes	Choir	96	1.04	17.71	81.25	4.44	.82
	Orchestra (string, wind, tambura, accordion, symphony, guitar)	42	21.43	14.28	64.29	3.83	1.31
	Chamber music	56	10.71	16.07	73.22	4.18	1.21
Individual instrument playing	Instrument	112	1.78	8.93	89.29	4.55	.80

We were interested in whether the answers of students from different music departments to this question differed. The data show that students of solo singing were the most satisfied with instrument teaching ( $M = 4.80$ ). The students of the instrumental department were also very satisfied ( $M = 4.59$ ), while the students of the theoretical department ( $M = 4.39$ ) expressed the least satisfaction (although still quite high). The Kruskal-Wallis H-test showed that these differences in student responses were not statistically significant ( $H = 2,305$ ,  $p = .316$ ) (Table 5).

*Table 5. Students' Statements on Satisfaction with Instrumental Music Subjects They Attended at Music School Concerning the Department They Attended – Average Values, Dispersion of Results, Kruskal-Wallis H Test*

Student responses on satisfaction with instrument teaching at music school	N	M	SD	H	p
Students attending the instrumental department	59	4.59	.77	2.305	.316
Students attending the theoretical department	38	4.39	.95		
Students attending the solo singing department	15	4.80	.41		

*Students' Satisfaction with the Work of Teachers Who Teach Various Music Subjects at Music Schools*

This was followed by questions about students' satisfaction with the work of teachers who teach certain music subjects at music schools (Table 6). When it comes to theoretical music subjects, students express greatest satisfaction with the work of teachers who teach solfeggio (70.54 %), reading and playing scores (73.08 %), and harmony (67.86 %).

*Table 6. Students' Statements of Satisfaction with the Work of Teachers Who Teach Music Subjects They Attend at the Music School*

Subject	N	1+2 (%)	3 (%)	4+5 (%)	M	SD
Solfeggio	112	8.93	20.53	70.54	4.14	1.11
Harmony	112	10.71	21.43	67.86	4.03	1.22
Polyphony	82	18.29	18.29	63.42	3.87	1.33
History of music	112	16.07	26.79	57.14	3.69	1.26
Musical forms	82	15.85	23.17	60.98	3.77	1.20
Conducting	56	10.72	23.21	66.07	3.98	1.20
Reading and playing scores	52	9.61	17.31	73.08	4.08	1.17
Choir	96	1.04	13.54	85.42	4.57	.76
Orchestra (string, wind, tambura, accordion, symphony, guitar)	42	19.04	16.67	64.29	3.88	1.29
Chamber music	56	12.50	10.71	76.79	4.18	1.25
Instrument	112	4.47	7.14	88.39	4.54	.85

Furthermore, they are least satisfied with the work of teachers who teach musical forms (60.98 %) and music history (57.14 %).

When it comes to teaching group music making, students express the greatest satisfaction with the work of teachers who lead choir (85.42 %), and are the least satisfied with the teachers who lead orchestras (64.29 %). When it comes to instrument teachers, we can say that students are satisfied with the instrument teachers (88.39 %) as well as with the teaching of instruments.

*Students' Answers About Mastering and Rehearsing the Content of Individual Music Subjects Within and Outside Regular Classes*

We asked the students to answer how much time on average they spent per week in learning and practising teaching content from individual music subjects. The data showed that students set aside an average of four hours per week to learn theoretical music subjects.

Out of a total of 112 students, 31 students (27.68%) stated that they had used some help in mastering the content from theoretical music subjects. The highest percentage of students who used additional help was among students of solo singing department (60%), while the lowest percentage was among students of the instrumental department (20.34%). Students explained that they had received additional help through instructions or the help of friends. They most often pointed out that they had needed help with learning solfeggio and harmony.

When it comes to theoretical music subjects, students stated that they were the most successful in learning harmony (36.61%) and solfeggio (33.93%). Students had most difficulty in learning harmony (23.21%) and solfeggio (20.54%). Difficulties with learning harmony were mostly singled out by students of solo singing (33.33%), and in the smallest percentage by students of the instrumental department (20.34%).

*Opinions of Students on the Possibilities of Improving Music Teaching at Music Schools*

Finally, we asked the students to state how, in their opinion, the teaching of theoretical music subjects, group music making, and instruments at music schools could be improved. For theoretical music subjects, most students (52.68%) did not make any suggestions for improving the teaching. Other students (47.32%) gave different answers. Some students pointed out the problem of the attitude of individual teachers towards students and believed that the pedagogical approach of teachers should have been better. In addition, students suggested: "More practical work and expression of creativity because we do not have the possibility to apply what we have learned anywhere. Also, to introduce more modern topics in teaching." Some other said: "More individualized approach, to eliminate dictation of information from 100-year-old books that students must write down, to include different media, more practical (quality) work."

Most students (65.18%) did not state in their answers that something should be changed in the teaching of group music making. Students who stated that those classes could be improved (34.82%) pointed out that teachers should insist more on the regular attendance of students at choir classes, introducing a more demanding program for orchestra, and organizing more performances and more trips with ensembles.

Out of a total of 112 students, 90 (80.36%) did not state that something needed to change in instrument teaching, while 22 of them give certain suggestions. Some students suggested more hours per week for instrument teaching, more motivation to work with teachers, a better relationship between instrument teachers and students, less emphasis on competitive spirit among students, and a more diverse and modern curriculum. Some of them said: "Playing a variety of compositions from Baroque to contemporary music. Mostly the same composers are played and even compositions, better quality professors, more public appearances, less emphasis on competitive spirit between classes (and professors)." And another said: "The approach of some teachers was counter-productive for me. To provide feedback or explanation, some professors have constantly compared my work with my colleagues' instead with my own progress."

### Discussion

Music education, as well as the music itself, should be sensitive to changes in the educational system and society in general. However, we are witnessing the sluggishness of the music education system and the changes that are entering this system too slowly. Students involved in high school music education are halfway to their profession and can spot the gaps and shortcomings of the education of which they are stakeholders. Respondents were first asked about their satisfaction with attending a music school which they showed a high satisfaction with. These findings confirm the earlier results obtained by previous research in the Republic of Croatia (Brđanović, 2019). In response to the question of why they had decided to study at a music high school, respondents most often cited their love for music and the possibility of further professional music career, which are also the reasons that can be found in previous research on the subject (Baker, 2009).

Respondents showed a high level of satisfaction in teaching solfeggio as a theoretical subject. Solfeggio is a wide subject which in Croatian music education includes theoretical knowledge and skills needed to master musical literacy. We can say that the factual material is equally represented as the practice of skills, which makes this subject and the teaching itself more diverse and interesting. Respondents showed the greatest satisfaction with choir teaching as a group classes. That results are in connected with study of Hylton (1981) whose results show the positive experiences of attending a school choir described across four areas. Psychological reasons are related to personal satisfaction and development. Communicative reasons indicate musical-performing needs. Integration explains the need for community and community collaboration. Artistic expression is related to musical knowledge and skills and spiritual significance that is manifested through the transmission of experiences and emotions both between the singer and between the singer and the audience. Clift and Hancox (2001) in their study had shown multiple benefits of choral singing: overall well-being, respiratory well-being, social, spiritual and emotional well-being, and positive effects on the heart and immune system. However, we can conclude that in the case of adolescence, the most recognisable benefits students receive by attending choir classes are social and emotional well-being.

The fact that orchestra classes obtained the weakest results can be connected with more far-reaching problems related to teaching that subject, i.e., the fact that orchestras in Croatian music schools are most often led by instrument teachers who had not been trained to conduct group teaching, which largely differentiates from private lessons. Conducting an orchestra composed of a group of adolescents does not only involve music, but much more pedagogical knowledge (Hart, 2019), which was confirmed by research Miksza et al., (2010) conducted among 414 middle and high school band directors, where respondents pointed out that personal and pedagogical skills are more important than music skills for successful teaching.

The best results, comparing all subjects, were obtained regarding instrumental/vocal classes. It is possible that the high satisfaction of students, in this case, was related to the fact that the teaching of the instrument is conducted as individual teaching. This form of work gives the teacher the opportunity to approach individual students in accordance with their prior knowledge, abilities, and motivation.

The survey of satisfaction with the work of teachers of certain subjects gave the expected results. Furthermore, these results can be related to those gathered for the satisfaction with teaching of individual subjects, since the students showed the greatest satisfaction with the choir teachers and instrumental/vocal rehearsals.

Instrumental/vocal group classes probably satisfies basic psychological needs such as competence, connection, and autonomy (Evans, 2015), which consequently encourages students' satisfaction with both the teaching and the teacher. According to several studies, private lessons are about developing a special pedagogical relationship with students that such teaching encourages, and which is extremely important for students and their motivation (Creech & Gaunt, 2012; McPherson & McCormick, 2000; Sichivitsa, 2007). According to earlier research by Šimunović (2012) conducted among music school students, the most desirable music pedagogues were those who knew how to motivate, were professional and close to students, communicative, non-violent, and supportive. These are all possible reasons why in this research students were most satisfied with private lessons.

The results of this research showed that students spent the most time learning the 'main subjects' in their course. Additional help in the form of peer support or instruction was sought mainly for theoretical subjects.

In the part of the research related to the improvement of higher secondary music school teaching, the students suggested several possibilities and solutions. Regarding the teaching of theoretical subjects, the students suggested the introduction of more modern topics, greater connection with practice, higher expectations, and more time and/or space for student creativity. This is in line with the Brđanović (2019) survey conducted among high school music students who also stated a greater need for practical music content and a better connection between theory and practice. According to North and Hargreaves (1999), music was strongly associated with adolescents' sense of belonging and social role, so in this sensitive period of music school students, it was important to involve them in curriculum planning and encourage their creativity. Button (2010) stated that involving students and their experience in planning and conducting music teaching was crucial for student understanding and creative expression.

Respondents also believe that some teachers of theoretical subjects did not invest enough in improving their pedagogical skills. Working on the personality, expertise, and skills of classroom management is key to successful teaching and student achievement (Davidson et al., 1998), and that is also what the respondents had intuitively concluded and presented as a shortcoming. According to Bond and Russell (2021) teachers need to plan their teaching outside of the teaching they have experienced as students to better suit the needs of students.

The changes related to the group music teaching of the choir and orchestra, proposed by the students, were mainly related to the modernisation of the music program, student participation in the selection of the music program, and a larger number of performances and trips.

In the student-teacher relationship of the choir/orchestra, they suggested insisting on the regularity of attending classes and the working atmosphere by the teacher. A larger number of respondents (80.36%) expressed satisfaction with the instrumental/vocal tuition and did not state the need for change. However, other respondents mostly mentioned shortcomings that could be overcome by introducing more hours for teaching the instrument, a more modern music program, work on a more positive teacher-student relationship, and less encouragement of a competitive mood. There is more research within the education system that proves that teachers who provide sufficient support and are open to student autonomy encourage greater student satisfaction, greater inclusion, and better learning outcomes (Ratelle & Duchesne, 2014; Reeve & Lee, 2014). Research on student motivation and involvement in the teaching process has shown that the experience of psychological needs being satisfied is associated with increased motivation and involvement in activities (Niemic & Ryan, 2009), both cognitively and affectively (Reeve, 2012). We assume that the problem with instrumental/vocal lessons largely lies in the extensive and demanding curriculum that teachers set before students to prepare them for exams and competitions (Reeve, 2009), which makes it very difficult to maintain motivation to continue music education (Evans et al., 2012). Hendricks (2010) suggests using different learning activities to arouse students' interest and present learning as a challenge. According to Rogerson (2021), the goal of learning music should not only be to acquire skills for technique, to practice playing skills, but also to get acquainted with the aesthetic value of music. Yoo and Kang (2021) suggest that all music educators might consider how to apply 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their teaching. Classes should be planned in a way not only to adapt to the requirements and expectations of teachers, but also to reconcile teachers' ideas and students' expectations, since that is an important motivating factor. The results of this research are a good indicator of new trends in music education that are driving new generations of students which growing up in rapid social and technological change. Adapting to time and society will determine the future of music education, music teacher educators and their work.

### Conclusion

Due to its complexity and size, the educational system is slow and difficult to change. In such a system, music education is often on the margins and relies on its own strengths and capabilities. Today's music school students are aware of the necessary changes and are looking forward to them. Their proposals for improving the music education system concern the modernisation of existing curricula, students' involvement in curricula-planning activities, providing time and/or space for student creativity, raising pedagogical competencies of teachers and understanding and listening to students' needs. The positive results are related to the high satisfaction with the involvement of students in the music education system, which they have chosen as their future professional orientation. This means that students recognize the value of art education but expect it to become more up-to-date and aligned with their requirements. The results of this research can be valuable to all stakeholders in the music education system, from teachers themselves, music school leaders and educational policymakers.

### Recommendations

This study emphasises students' attitudes about what constitutes quality music education. We believe that it is equally important to include all education stakeholders in curriculum planning and that students will be ready to welcome and willingly accept changes to which they have contributed. Changes that, according to the results of this study, should be key for planning a curriculum that is in line with modern teaching methods and strategies, greater connection with practice, greater space for student creativity, encouraging student cooperation in curriculum planning, and constant training of teachers in the field of pedagogical skills. Therefore, this research is essential both for the authors of the key documents of music education and for the teachers, who can plan their pedagogical and artistic work according to these

results in order to achieve better motivation and achievements among students. This research highlights students' views on what constitutes quality music education. We believe that it is equally important to include all education stakeholders in curriculum planning and that students will readily welcome and gladly accept changes to which they have contributed. Changes that, according to the results of this research, should be key for planning a curriculum aligned with modern teaching methods and strategies, greater connection with practice, greater space for student creativity, encouraging student cooperation in curriculum planning, and constant training of teachers in the field of pedagogical skills. Therefore, this research is necessary both for the authors of key documents on music education and for teachers who can plan their pedagogical and artistic work according to these results in order to better motivate and achieve students.

In future researchers, it would be useful to connect research on the development of the curriculum of music schools in Croatia, which were carried out in the entire vertical of education. It would be particularly useful to conduct research on the same topic among all stakeholders of the music education system in order to obtain an objective and broad view.

### Limitations

A limitation of this study was the representativeness of the sample. A larger number of participants, which would include participants from all parts of the country, would give a broader picture and to make the sample more representative.

### Ethics Statements

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

### Authorship Contribution Statement

Svalina: Conceptualization, design, statistical analysis, writing. Šimunović: Writing, data interpretation, editing/reviewing.

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