

HOW DOES THE TEACHER MAKE A DIFFERENCE ?

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Background

This paper is part of a doctoral dissertation which deals with the socio-psychological factors of musical success. The findings show the relevant characteristics of individual instrumental teachers and their role in the students' musical success in the first years of musical education.

Aims

1. The description of teachers' attributes, which constitute instrumental teachers' sociodemographical, professional and personality profile, educational success and the nature of the student-teacher relationship.
2. Revealing a specific correlation pattern between teachers' attributes and different aspects of the students' musical success in instrumental performing.

Method

An empirical longitudinal study (1996-2001) was conducted in 5 specialized music schools in Belgrade. The sample included 105 teachers and 350 of their students, aged 6–12, playing different instruments. The teachers filled in a Questionnaire concerning relevant professional information in the last 6 years and NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The parents assessed the teachers' relationships with the students. The criteria of students' success include indicators of school achievement (instrumental mark, program mastering) and performance success (public performance, competitions).

Results

Cluster analysis distinguishes three groups of teachers according to their professional and educational attributes. The first group is highly successful in teaching, has a strong orientation towards it and is not active in performing (31%). The second group consists of teachers who are primarily performers (solo and orchestral players) and who have a high degree in music education (24%). They are basically oriented towards career streaming and do not make high achievements in the field of education. The third group of teachers do not distinguish themselves in any of the two areas (45%). The previous finding, that music instrumental teachers differ from the general population according to their personality dimensions, have been confirmed.

The results show conclusively that highly competent teachers are more relevant for the acquisition of performance skills on the part of exceptional students, whereas certain personal characteristics and cooperative teachers' behaviour are important for different levels of public performance achievements and for the program mastering (classroom setting).

Conclusions

The findings show that the most significant factors of exceptional students' performance success (competitions) are high teaching competence, their continuous advanced teacher training and certain aspects of personality. For a lower level of performance success (public performance) teachers' personality attributes (agreeableness, extraversion and conscientiousness), cooperation with a student and finally teaching competence is of primary significance.