

HOW DOES THE TEACHER MAKE A DIFFERENCE ?

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ABSTRACT

Background. This paper is a 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 realms (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.

1. BACKGROUND

This paper is a part of a doctoral dissertation which deals with the socio-psychological factors of musical success. It is also a part of a research project conducted by the Institute of Psychology (The Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade). 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. A wide range of teachers' attributes have been included in order to determine the effect of different professional, personal and emotional factors on the selected aspects of the students' accomplishments. The students' success is analysed by taking into account their different achievements which take place in an individual classroom setting, in a formal exam and in extracurricular performance activities which differ in magnitude and importance.

2. 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.

3. 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 teachers' attributes cover:

- Sociodemographical data (gender, working experience)
- Professional characteristics (educational degree in music studies, advanced teacher training, orchestra player, solo player)
- Educational success (teaching competence, jury member, master class lecturer)

- Personality dimensions (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness)
- Indicators of relationship with a student (cooperation, motivational and emotional aspects).

Objective data about the students' accomplishments have been gathered over a period 1 to 5 years. Their progress was also assessed by their teachers. The criteria of students' success include indicators of school achievement and performance success:

- Program mastering (quantitative and qualitative program accomplishments)
- Instrumental mark in a performance exam
- Public performance at different levels (4 types)
- Competitions: the frequency of participation and the awards at different levels of competition (6 types)

4. RESULTS

The teacher sample consists mainly of women (72%), the teachers' working experience ranging from 10 to 40 years. Their professional characteristics show a very enthusiastic, active and highly achievement-motivated group of people: 25% have an MA degree in music, which is a very high percentage compared to the general population, 26% of them had some kind of professional experience abroad, 44% attended advanced teacher training courses, 37% are active solo players and 53% are active orchestra players. The findings show that the teachers are highly active in the preparation of their students for extracurricular performance. Namely, 82% of the teachers have students who have participated, at some level, in musical competitions, from local to international ones. Instrumental music teachers differ significantly in their personality dimensions compared to the general population. They have significantly higher scores on openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Comparisons made on a personality level analysis also reveal interesting data.

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 realms (45%). These three groups show no difference in terms of their personal traits, which is understandable considering that our sample includes musicians who work in school and who are not exceptional performers.

When we analyse the teacher-student relationship, two factors are extracted. On the first factor, the prevailing aspects of the teachers' behaviour are motivational and emotional (giving encouragement, sparking interest and motivation, being warm

and friendly in their approach), and the other factor mainly refers to cooperative teachers' behaviour (cooperation with the student, giving praise, being funny). The second factor is significantly correlated with agreeableness. It is interesting that certain personality dimensions and professional orientation have to do with the relationship with the student. The teachers who have higher scores on conscientiousness have a better cooperation with their students, the more competent teachers praise their students more often, and the teachers who are oriented towards career streaming motivate students less.

In order to understand and explain the specific correlation pattern of teachers' attributes and different levels of students' performance, we have used a set of Canonical analyses considering professional, educational, personal and relational characteristics, on the one hand and four criteria for measuring students' success on the other.

The results show that the teaching competence and professional characteristics, such as an advanced teacher training degree, the fact that the teacher is not an active orchestra player, all prove to be of great significance for the students' success, especially in competitions and in public performances. In terms of teachers' personality dimensions, the findings show that agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness are particularly important for public performances, competitions and program mastering. The teacher-student relationship, especially if there is a high level of cooperation with the student, is relevant for program mastering (classroom setting) and for public performance.

The results show conclusively that high teaching competence is the most relevant characteristic 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 (which mainly take place in school) and for the mastering of quantitative and qualitative aspects of instrumental program (classroom setting).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Professional characteristics show a very enthusiastic, active and highly achievement-motivated group of people. The findings show that the teachers are also highly active in the preparation of their students for extracurricular performance in school or in competitions. Instrumental music teachers make a heterogeneous group concerning their professional orientation, which affects their students' success. Some earlier dilemmas have been resolved and it is clear now that music teachers who are dedicated to educational work differ significantly from teachers who are at the same time active solo and/or orchestral players. The previous finding, that music instrumental teachers differ from the general population according to their personality dimensions, has been confirmed.

The findings show that the most significant factors of exceptional students' performance success (competitions) are high teaching competence, continuous advanced teacher training and certain aspects of personality which include orientation towards other people, activity, orderliness, dutifulness and emotional sensitivity. For a lower level of performance success (public performance)

teachers' personality attributes (agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness), cooperation with a student and, finally, teaching competence are of primary significance.

For school achievement (program mastering) the most relevant factors are cooperative teachers' behaviour such as cooperation with students, increasing motivation, being funny, giving praise, being friendly, and also personal characteristics: agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness. Professional characteristics and teaching competence are not relevant for this level of students' accomplishments.

In conclusion, we can say that teachers do make a difference in students' progress and that certain professional and personal attributes of the teacher are directly related to different quantitative and qualitative levels of students' achievements in the early stages of music education.

6. REFERENCES

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