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Rhythmics – an Attempt to Systematise the Assumptions of the Concept, and Present the Path of Education of Rhythmicity Teachers in the Light of the Legal Basis

Rytmika – próba usystematyzowania założeń koncepcji i ukazania ścieżki kształcenia nauczycieli rytmiki w świetle podstaw prawnych

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Abstract

Aim. This study aims to present the assumptions regarding the implementation of rhythmics in the Polish education system, with particular emphasis on early childhood education and the training paths for teachers of so-called “rhythmics.”

Methods and materials. The study utilised the technique of analysing existing sources, including primarily scientific studies, periodical articles, legal frameworks, and curricula. The author also conducted an analysis based on her own experience, spanning over twenty years, working with children and educating early childhood teachers at universities.

Results. Music education in contemporary nurseries and preschools has been experiencing a significant crisis for many years, being constantly marginalised. The discrepancies between the training methods for music teachers and rhythmics (employed in artistic

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schools and general education in grades 4–8), and the assumptions of the Teacher Training by Standards for Early Childhood Education, are large. It is also significant that rhythmicity is sometimes conceptualised ambiguously in the literature, leading to difficulties in understanding its assumptions and implementing it in mainstream music education.

Conclusion. It is worth noting the reflections of Przychodzińska and the practice of Smoczyńska-Nachtman, as these educators argue that rhythmicity in Polish education has never been an adaptation of a single concept. It is also worth emphasising the need for comprehensive preparation of pedagogical students to address the challenges posed by children's music education. Furthermore, rhythm and music teachers should be allowed to take on permanent employment in nurseries and preschools.

Keywords: rhythmicity, the Polish concept of mainstream music education, early childhood music teacher, teacher education pathway, child education

Abstrakt

Cel. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest ukazanie założeń dotyczących realizacji rytmiki w warunkach polskiej oświaty ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem wczesnej edukacji oraz ścieżek przygotowania nauczycieli tzw. rytmiki.

Metody i materiały. W opracowaniu posłużono się techniką analizy treści źródeł zastanych, wśród których można wyróżnić przede wszystkim opracowania naukowe, artykuły z wydawnictw ciągłych, podstawy prawne i programy nauczania. Autorka dokonała także analizy w oparciu o własne, ponad dwudziestoletnie doświadczenie w pracy z dzieckiem oraz ponad dwudziestoletnią praktykę w obszarze kształcenia nauczycieli wczesnej edukacji na uczelniach wyższych.

Wyniki. Edukacja muzyczna we współczesnym żłobku i przedszkolu przeżywa od wielu lat znaczący kryzys, odsuwana jest ustawicznie na margines, a rozbieżności pomiędzy sposobami kształcenia nauczycieli muzyki i rytmiki zatrudnianych w szkolnictwie artystycznym i szkolnictwie powszechnym na etapie klas 4–8 względem założeń wynikających ze Standardów Kształcenia Nauczycieli na poziomie wczesnej edukacji, są drastyczne. Istotny jest także fakt, że w literaturze przedmiotu rytmika ujmowana bywa niejednoznacznie, co prowadzi do trudności w rozumieniu jej założeń i realizacji w powszechnej edukacji muzycznej.

Wnioski. Warto zwrócić uwagę na refleksje czynione przez Przychodzińską oraz praktykę Smoczyńskiej-Nachtman, bowiem edukatorki przekonują, że rytmika w polskiej oświacie nigdy nie występowała w postaci adaptacji jednej koncepcji. Warto ponadto postulować rzetelne przygotowanie studentów kształconych na studiach wyższych nauczycielskich do podejmowania wyzwań stawianych przez dziecięcą edukację muzyczną oraz umożliwienie nauczycielom rytmiki i zajęć umuzykalniających podjęcie stałego zatrudnienia w żłobkach i przedszkolach.

Słowa kluczowe: rytmika, polska koncepcja powszechnej edukacji muzycznej, nauczyciel wczesnej muzycznej edukacji dziecka, ścieżka kształcenia nauczycieli, edukacja dziecka

Introduction

This study aims to present the assumptions regarding the implementation of rhythmics in Polish education, with particular emphasis on early childhood education and the paths for preparing teachers to implement the assumptions of music appreciation classes in the Polish educational system and artistic education. The author discusses the assumptions of music appreciation classes in preschools, commonly known as “rhythmics,” in light of the Polish tradition of general music education, and highlights the teaching methods for rhythmics in primary and secondary music schools and universities. The author also presents dilemmas regarding the contemporary implementation of music appreciation classes in the context of the competencies of nursery and preschool teachers.

Rhythmics in Preschool – Theoretical Assumptions

The concept of music education stems from the theory of aesthetic education (Kołodziejski, 2012). The Polish concept of aesthetic education focuses primarily on cognitive and educational aspects, and the basic conceptual categories in this concept are: experiencing and understanding (processes, phenomena, facts) through awakening human sensitivity to art (Wojnar, 2000). Despite researchers’ recognition of the crucial importance of universal music education, a crisis in Polish education has been observed for decades. This crisis, as Ciesielski (2023) points out, concerns many of its dimensions: ideological (assumptions and concepts), systemic (the position and status of the subject of music in schools), personnel (the structure and quality of teacher education), aesthetic (the definition of music implicitly adopted in education), didactic (some methodological solutions, the state of textbooks), and axiological (the succumbing to relativistic tendencies).

In working with children, both those under three years of age and those in preschool and early school years, music is a widely recognised and valued educational and training tool, as no other art form has such a powerful psychophysical impact on humans as music (Nogaj, 2017). Music’s impact stems from the fact that sound stimuli activate not only the auditory cortex but also other brain structures responsible for, for example, memory, thinking, imagery, and kinaesthetic experiences (Nogaj, 2017).

In this discussion, it should be noted that the concept of rhythmics is ambiguous, because in Polish terminology, music-enhancing activities with preschool children (regardless of the methods they are based on) are referred to as rhythmics.

Przychodzińska (1986), describing the assumptions of Polish mainstream music education, notes that rhythmics is not a method based solely on the principles of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze. The researcher lists Polish educators who implement the concep-

tion of Jaques-Dalcroze's, the English method known as Tonic Sol-fa, and digital. Przychodzińska lists Tadeusz Joteyko, Piotr Maszyński, Flora Szczepanowska, and Karol Hławiczka (Przychodzińska, 1986). She notes, among other things, that separate concepts were developed by Stanisław Kazuro and Stefan Wysocki, whom the author refers to as the founders of the Polish school of musicality (Przychodzińska, 1986). The researcher argues that none of the concepts of 20th-century music education is implemented in a "pure" way, but there is an interpenetration of "systems" (Przychodzińska, 1986). She (1986) also reminds us that in the Polish tradition of music education, one can find native traditions as well as the influence of Carl Orff, Jaques-Dalcroze, and Zoltán Kodály (as well as Celestyn Freinet); however, this influence is visible in selected elements.

Contemporary authors, including Forecka-Waśko (2022), write ambiguously about rhythm, noting that Jaques-Dalcroze's rhythm method has a tradition of over a hundred years in Poland, which is difficult to agree with, because, as Sojka (2006) points out, rhythm, which Jaques-Dalcroze founded in Switzerland, came into being in the first half of the 20th century. Forecka-Waśko rightly points out that at the beginning of the 20th century, it was certainly a revolution in music teaching, but also in the approach to musical education for children. However, the author's statement that the emergence of rhythmic was associated with a departure from singing and listening to music as the dominant forms of young people's contact with music and the incorporation of movement into education is imprecise (Forecka-Waśko, 2022). As Przychodzińska (1988) explains, the importance of children's contact with artistic music was not always obvious, and children's listening to music during their education was recognised as a valuable form of activity only in the 1920s. This form of activity arose with the development of technology, initially including radio broadcasting and the recording industry (Przychodzińska, 1988). Przychodzińska, together with Lipska (1991), also provided the first reliable methodological analysis of the assumptions underlying children's listening to music within Polish public education. Another problem—the inadequacy of music classes in kindergarten to the assumptions of Jaques-Dalcroze—is seen in analyses of Przybylska-Zielińska (2016). The author claims that the Jaques-Dalcroze method is being "distorted" in preschools (Przybylska-Zielińska, 2016), but she fails to consider the recommendations for combining methods during music education for children, which the aforementioned Przychodzińska highlighted. The value of Przybylska-Zielińska's considerations lies in the thorough analysis of the problem and the proposal that all institutions where rhythmic appear should refer to it as rhythmic and other musical methods (Przybylska-Zielińska, 2016), as even within higher education institutions, rhythmic is combined with various methods of supporting musical development (Przybylska-Zielińska, 2016). As the discussion so far suggests, certain inconsistencies can be found in the literature on the process of children's music education.

It is worth explaining here that the concept of Polish universal music education, the legacy of which continues to this day, was developed in post-war Poland and consolidated in the 1970s. According to the so-called *Krakow Concept of Musical Education* by Zofia Burowska, Jerzy Kurcz, and Andrzej Wilk (Waligóra, 2015), the process of developing children's musicality is dominated by elements of Jaques-Dalcroze's and Orff's concepts (as well as the method of Batia Strauss, inspired by Orff's concept). Elements of Kodály's concept appear sporadically because it prioritises singing, which relies largely on reproduction, and uses movement with music to a relatively limited extent (unlike the concepts of the first educators mentioned). These elements are linked to the tradition developed by Polish educators mentioned by Przychodzińska (1986). In constructing the framework of the Krakow concept, its authors conducted a comparative analysis of the aforementioned systems, rigorously systematising the musical material (Waligóra, 2015), resulting in a model of musical and movement exercises in contemporary music education that remains relevant today (Semik, 2023). It should be noted that the methods of the authors specified so far in the study, despite their differences, are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they complement and correlate with each other (Semik, 2023)¹. The implementation of music education in kindergarten in the category of musical games combining various concepts is also visible in the work of Smoczyńska-Nachtman (1980, 1982, and 1992), who for many years was recognized as a propagator of Orff's concept, which did not prevent the teacher from implementing (in the years 1983–2000) the so-called *rhythmics* in the "Domowe Przedszkole" ["Home Kindergarten"] broadcast by the TVP station (Janczewska-Sołomko, 2008). The author skilfully combined elements of the indicated concepts with her own invention.

In the publication "Zabawy i ćwiczenia przy muzyce" ["Fun and exercises with music"], Smoczyńska-Nachtman (1980) notes that in developing children's musicality, she mixes elements of the Orff and Jaques-Dalcroze methods, as well as her own ideas based on many years of practice. The author states that drawing boundaries between the concepts of educators is impossible, as the elements of these two methods are intertwined and interpenetrating (Smoczyńska-Nachtman, 1980). The author also notes that the Jaques-Dalcroze method has undergone a major revolution in the decades since its inception and has found widespread application in various areas of music education. In professional education, it incorporates most strictly musical elements.

¹ It should be noted here that in the education of children up to the age of three, the concept of music education, according to Edwin Elias Gordon, is additionally present. Its assumptions refer to the audiation concept, perceived as the ability to hear and understand music without the physically present sound. However, there are still a few teachers of early music education, as well as music teachers trained at higher art schools, teaching based on Gordon's concept. Adult education on implementing Gordon's method at the higher-education level as part of teacher training programs in Poland was primarily conducted by Ewa Zwolińska at the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz.

In amateur and non-musical education, where there is no need to fill classes with purely theoretical problems, the most appropriate approach is to combine attractive rhythmic elements with movement games and various types of aural exercises (Smoczyńska-Nachtman, 1980). In her proposal, the author draws on rhythmic games and exercises in which rhythm is the main aspect, but in supporting the development of creative invention, she relies on Orff's assumptions (Smoczyńska-Nachtman, 1980).

Kataryńczuk-Mania (2009) also advocates integrating various elements and forms of activity during preschool music education. The author states that the Polish concept of music education provides children with a multitude and variety of forms of contact with music, which are referred to as forms of music education. Many forms of musical activity enable the presentation of every musical problem and the consolidation of many skills in a comprehensive, attractive way, stimulating the child's attention with various stimuli. Moreover, these forms facilitate the penetration of content and the shaping of norms of social behaviour (Kataryńczuk-Mania, 2009).

The above considerations show that music classes in kindergarten, commonly known as rhythemics, do not necessarily reflect the assumptions of Jaques-Dalcroze².

Methodology

The study was based on the technique of analysing existing sources, which primarily include scientific studies, periodical articles, legal frameworks, and curricula. The author also conducted an analysis based on her own experience (spanning over twenty years), working with children and educating early childhood teachers at universities.

The Educational Path of a Rhythemics Teacher in the Light of the Concepts of Polish Music Educators – Analysis of Legal Documents and Research Results

A rhythemics teacher, as part of the Jaques-Dalcroze method, is most often trained through studies at music academies or universities (*e.g.*, in addition to music academies and universities, rhythemics as a training path is offered at the University

² It's also worth mentioning that the Polish teacher education system after 1945 assumed that shaping preschool children's musicality wasn't the responsibility of a teacher with musical training, but rather of a teacher trained in preschool education. Therefore, artistic education, which was prominent in Poland until the 1980s in teacher training programs, was implemented very systematically and carefully, but did not involve strict training within the Jaques-Dalcroze method.

of Rzeszów at the Faculty of Music, and at the University of Silesia at the Faculty of Educational Arts and Sciences, as well as others). Rhythmics is also a training path in music schools in grades 7 and 8 of primary schools and at the secondary music school level. Rhythmics is also a mandatory subject in schools educating classical dancers. Kozłowska-Lewna (2020), among others, draws attention to this issue when writing about the methodological monoculture in musical ear training and critically reflects on this monoculture.

The education methods for rhythmics graduates in both primary and secondary art schools are specified in the *Rozporządzenie Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego* [Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage] (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2023, items 900, 1672, and 1718). This regulation clearly states that rhythmics is a compulsory subject in schools preparing for the profession of classical dancer, and in music schools. It may be the main course of study in primary music schools in grades 7 and 8, and may also be the main subject of study in secondary music schools.

If a primary music school student chooses rhythmics as their main subject, the course includes piano, piano improvisation, and rhythmics classes. The document notes that the basics of rhythmics require a room with space for movement exercises equipped with, among other things, equipment, a grand piano or upright piano, accessories for basic rhythm classes, a board, but also Orff instruments (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2023, items 900, 1672, and 1718). It can therefore be concluded that, within artistic education, rhythmics is not limited to a single method, but is integrated with elements of Orff's concept.

In the detailed curriculum for rhythmics in secondary music schools, authored by Powróśło, the educational objectives for the subject of piano improvisation include, among other things, acquiring knowledge of piano improvisation, developing piano improvisation skills, public presentation, and functioning in an artistic environment (Powróśło, 2023a). The curriculum also includes knowledge of piano improvisation (based on occupational health and safety principles). It also encompasses a familiarity with musical literature (from various periods), including piano literature. The program emphasises the use of various articulation techniques, dynamics, agogics, and the ability to achieve appropriate tone colour (Powróśło, 2023a). The curriculum also emphasises the use of types of piano textures. It is important to pay attention to the sound quality of improvisation, transposition, and *a vista* playing skills. Students must anticipate the future progression of music (Powróśło, 2023a). Students are also expected to recognise selected examples of piano literature, including miniatures representing diverse musical styles and different types of piano textures, and to transform pieces created in classical and neoclassical music, striving to reduce or enrich them in the rhythmic, melodic, and textural spheres (Powróśło, 2023a).

Students are also expected to create their own improvisations based on the principles of similarity, contrast, and transition related to the functional harmonics of major and minor and modern harmonics. They are also expected to create their own compositions in a specific style and with different musical expression; improvise in major and minor keys up to three key signatures.

They develop harmonic progressions using various cadences and dominants inserted into major and minor chords. They improvise selected harmonic phrases from popular and jazz music, and also improvise musical miniatures based on interval modelling techniques in periodic and aperiodic progressions (Powróśło, 2023a). As part of improvisation, students are also expected to apply the principles of periodic structure in musical pieces and compose selected national and popular dances (Powróśło, 2023a).

In the area of applying piano improvisation to rhythm classes, students are expected to create improvised accompaniments to children's and popular songs, compose or arrange songs with their own or foreign lyrics, and improvise: music for walking, running, and jumping in any style, music for rhythmic themes in various meters and at diverse tempos, and music for selected musical and movement tasks (Powróśło, 2023a).

During rhythmic exercises, students are expected to acquire knowledge of the rhythmic method, present the results of their education publicly, and function in an artistic environment (Powróśło, 2023b). The teaching content includes, among others, the main goals and assumptions of Jaques-Dalcroze's method (Powróśło, 2023b). Various groups of topics emerge within the rhythmic method exercises, including: metrorhythmic issues, solfège, musical expression, movement aesthetics, movement composition, and rhythmic methodologies (Powróśło, 2023b). Metrorhythmic issues concern the expression of rhythmic values and groups of rhythmic values of notes and rests in movement, the principles of grouping rhythmic values in bars and the application of knowledge in movement, the implementation of rhythmic themes in bars with a quarter-note and eighth-note pulse unit with timing, the execution of chains of realizations of rhythmic themes, the expression of metric and expressive accents in movement, the execution of polyrhythmic and polymetric themes, the implementation of quarter-note and eighth-note additions and sixteenth-note rhythmic themes, implementation of ostinato, use of upbeats in movement, implementation of syncopations in movement, identification and application of the principles of realizing rhythmic values and themes in double speed and double deceleration in movement (Powróśło, 2023b).

During rhythmic classes, students also learn to distinguish between regular and irregular divisions of rhythmic values and to implement both divisions simultaneously, to implement metrical transformations of bars with a constant triple time unit into bars with a duple time unit and *vice versa* in free and timed movement, to demonstrate a quick psychomotor reaction during metro-rhythmic and musical-movement exercises, to demonstrate rhythmic precision, and the ability to concentrate and divide

attention (Powróśło, 2023b). In the field of solfège, the student realises the direction and interval structure of the melodic line through movement. They also recognise and express intervals and triads in movement and react (with movement) to the harmonic progression (Powróśło, 2023b).

Musical expression developed during rhythmics classes includes movement, vocal and percussion improvisations, and identifying the elements of a musical work and expressing them through movement (Powróśło, 2023b). In the area of movement aesthetics, attention is paid to conscious and controlled movement, the application of technical and expressive skills in the movement realisation of metro-rhythmic issues, movement composition, and movement-spatial improvisation and interpretation, both individually and in groups (Powróśło, 2023b). In the area of movement composition, students develop, among other things, selected musical forms, create and implement movement interpretations of musical works in accordance with their form and character, and select means of expression in accordance with the nature of the presented piece (Powróśło, 2023b).

One of the subjects in which future rhythmic teachers are trained is movement technique. The course aims to provide knowledge in the areas of technique, freedom, and expression of movement (Powróśło, 2023c). It includes, among other things, knowledge related to human anatomy, basic general development exercises, and exercises that develop body agility and awareness (Powróśło, 2023c). Students also learn the characteristic features and distinctive styles of selected folk dances (Powróśło, 2023c).

In terms of freedom and expression of movement, students are required to maintain proper body posture in accordance with anatomical principles, consider the coordination and independence of individual body parts in their movements, and perform warm-up, strengthening, relaxation, and stretching exercises (Powróśło, 2023c). Additionally, attention is paid to body awareness and spatial movement direction, controlling the sense of tension and relaxation of individual muscles, conducting movement on various planes, and moving according to a specific spatial pattern, performing dance elements and routines with particular emphasis on Polish regional and national dances, presenting selected exercises and movement compositions while maintaining the aesthetics of movement, and performing various dance techniques (Powróśło, 2023c). Movement composition and improvisation, in turn, assume expressing articulation, dynamics, tempo, and the character of music through movement, selecting means of movement expression in accordance with the character of the music, composing integrated body and prop movement, and demonstrating creativity, musicality, and artistic sensitivity in movement (Powróśło, 2023c).

Analysing the scope of education in the above-mentioned subjects in the rhythmics program at secondary music schools, one can conclude that preparation for implement-

ing rhythmic exercises according to the principles of Jaques-Dalcroze (although, as already noted, also with components of Orff's concept and, as indicated above, with dance elements) requires many years of practice and many hours of work, in addition to extensive musical skills and motor skills.

The problem of preparing rhythmic exercises is similar during higher education. The program posted on the website of the I. J. Paderewski Academy of Music in Poznań (Akademia Muzyczna w Poznaniu, n.d.a) clearly outlines general and specialised music education, focusing on the understanding of Jaques-Dalcroze's concepts. In the program of studies at the bachelor's level, the future rhythmic teacher attends subjects such as: analysis of musical forms, choir/orchestra/rhythmics ensemble, general didactics, rhythmic didactics, voice production, piano, harmony, practical harmony, history of universal music, piano improvisation, integration of rhythmic and solfège in the Jaques-Dalcroze method, movement composition of musical pieces, counterpoint, ear training, music literature, teaching methodology of the subject of ear training and principles of music, teaching methodology of the subject of rhythmic in primary school, method of leading rhythmic dance groups, facial expressions and stage gestures, Jaques-Dalcroze method proseminar, rhythmic dance, Jaques-Dalcroze solfège, folk dance, movement technique, physical education – folk dance, rhythmic dance group (Akademia Muzyczna w Poznaniu, n.d.a).

The curriculum for the first-cycle rhythmic program at the Academy of Art in Szczecin (Akademia Sztuki w Szczecinie, n.d.) assumes that graduates of first-cycle rhythmic programs acquire a wide range of skills that qualify them for artistic and teaching work, and the flexible curriculum ensures comprehensive and professional preparation in conducting classes in rhythmic, movement composition, movement improvisation, and piano improvisation, musical ear training in primary music schools, as well as creating accompaniment for movement classes. By acquiring the substantive and methodological competences necessary to work in various social, educational, and upbringing environments in the field of musical art, graduates are prepared to: conduct music and movement classes in various age groups, conduct rhythmic classes in preschools, conduct music and movement classes in music schools, public and amateur music movements, conduct musical activities in cultural institutions and the media, and promote musical culture in society.

The curriculum includes core subjects such as rhythmic, piano improvisation, rhythmic ensemble, Jaques-Dalcroze's solfège, movement composition of musical pieces, core subjects including: choir or vocal ensemble, ear training, harmony, analysis of a musical work, as well as pedagogical subjects: voice production, pedagogy, psychology, basic teaching, methodology of basic rhythmic and ear training in music schools, and teaching practice. The studies are also enriched with optional classes.

It is worth noting that rhythmics studies are also offered as a second-cycle program. At the Academy of Music in Lublin, I. J. Paderewski Academy of Music in Poznań (Akademia Muzyczna w Poznaniu, n.d.b) include subjects such as: analysis and interpretation of 20th and 21st century music, music choreography, choir/orchestra/rhythmics ensembles, history of culture, piano improvisation, piano improvisation with elements of jazz and popular music, movement interpretation of a musical work compensation and correction, marketing and cultural animation, methodology of teaching movement technique in secondary education, methodology of teaching piano improvisation, methods of conducting rhythmics in secondary education, teaching internships, copyright and related rights, introduction to anatomy, introduction to rhythmic therapy, psychological foundations of therapeutic activities, rhythmics, rhythmics with elements of music-movement therapy, historical dance, contemporary dance, movement technique, physical education – modern dance, and electives.

The educational process in rhythmics (in a secondary music school and a music academy) is strongly focused on the Jaques-Dalcroze method, as well as on general musical skills and knowledge.

At the same time, it is worth referring to the standards for teacher education (including preschool and early school education), which in Poland were first defined in the *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu z dnia 23 września 2003 r.* [Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of September 23, 2003] (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2003). These standards applied to higher vocational education, master's studies, and postgraduate studies. In this Regulation we read, among other things, that a graduate of studies and postgraduate studies with a teaching specialization should be prepared for the comprehensive implementation of teaching, educational, and care-giving tasks of the school, and therefore should have preparation in the scope of: the chosen field (specialization) of studies, so as to competently convey the acquired knowledge and independently deepen and update it, as well as integrate the acquired knowledge with other fields; psychology and pedagogy, so as to perform educational and care functions, support the comprehensive development of students, individualize the teaching process, meeting the specific needs of students, organize social life at the class, school, and local level, cooperate with other teachers, parents, and the local community; subject teaching, so as to effectively conduct educational activities, arouse cognitive interests and support the intellectual development of students through the skilful selection of activating methods, teaching techniques, and teaching resources, as well as to examine and evaluate students' achievements and their own practice (Załącznik [Annex], 2003).

The regulation also noted that the set of these subjects is determined by the higher education institution, depending on its capabilities and students' interests (Załącznik [Annex], 2003), which allowed for a certain degree of freedom in creating study

plans and allowed for a relatively broad coverage of subjects within the area of artistic education and methodology. At that time, entrance examinations for higher education teacher training were still mandatory. These examinations usually consisted of a test of artistic aptitude with verification of correct articulation and phonation, a written paper, and an interview³.

However, this situation lasted only a decade, as in 2012, a new regulation on teacher education standards, signed by Minister Barbara Kudrycka, came into force (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2012). The annex to this Regulation includes general learning outcomes, specific learning outcomes, characteristics of the learning process and organisation. It provides the minimum number of hours of organised classes and internships, as well as the minimum number of ECTS points assigned to individual course modules. Individual subjects within specific modules are described in detail, the scope of content covered in these subjects is indicated, and the organisation of teaching internships is characterised. Compared to the first regulation on teacher education standards, the provisions in this document have been significantly refined. Neither the general nor the specific learning outcomes omit knowledge and skills related to music education. The music classes appeared only in the section "Didactics of a subject (type of class) at a given educational stage or stages." Here, it was stated: Children's perception and creation of music. Children's song, singing, and dancing (Załącznik [Annex], 2012).

The aforementioned document did not devote more than one section to music education, which, given the other very detailed guidelines, obviously limited the range of studies offered in this area.

The latest changes were introduced by Minister Przemysław Czarnek, who in 2019 signed a new regulation on teacher education standards. *Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 25 lipca 2019 r. w sprawie standardu kształcenia przygotowującego do wykonywania zawodu nauczyciela* [The Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of July 25, 2019, on the standard of education preparing for the teaching profession] (Załącznik [Annex], 2019), very precisely defines the method of organizing education, including general requirements, classes and groups of classes, the minimum number of hours of organized subjects and ECTS points, the method of implementing professional internships, the infrastructure necessary for conducting the educational process at universities, the profiles of instructors in teacher training programs, and the general and specific learning outcomes for students.

Music was included in the document twice – as part of the music subject in the module "Substantive preparation of teachers of kindergartens and grades I–III of primary school, as preparation for the integration of teaching content" (Załącznik [Annex],

³ Conclusions drawn by the author from her experience in teacher education.

2019) and the subject of methodology of music education included in the module “Methodology of individual types of education, taking into account the ways of integrating the knowledge and skills of children or students” (Załącznik [Annex], 2019).

It was determined that within the scope of music knowledge, the graduate knows and understands music terminology and its application in music education, sources of musical culture, their cultural and social conditions and importance for the development of a child or student, characteristic features of children’s creativity, its personal and environmental conditions; varieties, textures of musical works according to the way of performing the music (solo, chamber music, symphonic, choral, vocal-instrumental), basic issues in the field of musical forms, basic terms of musical notation; basic musical repertoire in preschool and early school education; selected contemporary concepts and models of music education in Poland and around the world (Załącznik [Annex], 2019).

In terms of skills, the graduate can design a musical message adapted to the circumstances; perform simple melodies on a selected instrument or with the voice (Załącznik [Annex], 2019), and in terms of social competences, the graduate is ready to convincingly work to promote the fine arts, inspire children or students to independent or joint musical activity, promote the idea of joint musical performance as an activity that creates culture and protects national heritage (Załącznik [Annex], 2019).

It was assumed that the music education methodology should produce the following student learning outcomes: In terms of knowledge, the graduate knows and understands the principles of designing rhythmic and musical games for children in kindergarten and grades I–III of primary school, the importance of children performing musical pieces in kindergarten and grades I–III of primary school, the principles of designing musical activities focused on deriving pleasure from the activities undertaken by children or students rather than on the result, ways of developing a child’s or student’s creative activity, methods and techniques of diagnosing a child’s or student’s musical abilities and monitoring their musical development (Załącznik [Annex], 2019).

In terms of skills, the graduate should encourage a child or student to participate in rhythmic and musical games, lead a child or student to perform a musical piece, encourage a child or student to take an interest in a musical work; diagnose the level of musical abilities of a child or student (Załącznik [Annex], 2019).

In terms of social competences, the graduate should be ready to work for the promotion of fine arts, activate children or students to practice music together (Załącznik [Annex], 2019).

The extensive document (pages 27–63) also outlines the process for assessing achieved learning outcomes, but it does not contain more music education. It is worth noting, however, that within the coursework outlined in the document, the Minister allocated 30 hours (in the five-year cycle of education) to the subject “music” and 45

hours to the subject “music education method” (also in the five-year cycle of education). The Ministry’s plan provides for 2,800 hours of teacher training, so the disproportion between the hours allocated to other subjects and music is significant.

While the learning outcomes dictated by the Ministry are relatively accurate, it should be noted that with only 75 hours of music education, graduates will not have the opportunity to learn musical notation, will not understand the basics of playing a teacher’s instrument, and certainly will not acquire the skills to recognise children’s musical resources. During a 30-hour music course, certain principles of music, selected elements of music theory, and history can only be outlined; during a 45-hour music education course, selected musical games can be presented, and musical repertoire can be emphasised. Certainly, such a limited number of hours cannot effectively support students’ musical development, which will, of course, impact the impact of their work in preschools and schools.

Labour Market Conditions and the Rhythmics Teacher in Nursery and Preschool – Discussion in the Light of Legal Assumptions

It’s worth noting in this study that the pervasive commercialisation of culture and the desire for profit by various entities are leading to a radical impoverishment of children’s musical education – anyone with the financial means can provide teaching tools. Children often sing songs that are not necessarily suited to their physical development (vocal abilities), and the songs are recorded in a manner that doesn’t evoke high art. The background music is recorded on “plastic” keyboards, the instrumentation is modest, and the means of artistic expression are unimportant. Songs taken from random YouTube channels, where anyone can post any production, mean that today’s children are exposed to songs of negligible artistic value. Music packages for children are not subject to peer review.

Children listen to music from recordings because teachers often cannot play or sing (Smółka & Symula, 2020). While they may enjoy the opportunity to sing along with the background music, the children usually sing the song in parallel – the background, the children sing it. The modern preschool teacher, who receives only 75 hours of higher education in music over the course of a five-year program, and is not verified for musical aptitude and competence during recruitment, not only doesn’t often play an instrument but also doesn’t sing at all, and during classes with children, they typically present recordings. Children don’t reflect on the flow of musical phrases, nor do they experience the value derived from perceiving the elements of a piece of music. They only learn the lyrics through repeated, inattentive listening. If a song is to be prepared

for a performance, the teacher focuses primarily on learning the lyrics, but completely fails to understand that the song also has a musical layer.

In a nursery, the situation is similar – taking into account that the carer of a child up to three years of age does not actually need to have pedagogical training, but only secondary education and a certificate of completed childcare course (Ustawa [Act], 2011), it is difficult to talk about the possibility of employing a qualified music or rhythmics teacher in the case in question. *Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 13 grudnia 2024 r. w sprawie standardów opieki sprawowanej nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3* [The Regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour, and Social Policy of December 13, 2024, regarding standards of care provided for children under the age of three] (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2024) does not mention music education in any of its provisions. Music education is also absent from all other documents prepared to provide care for children under the age of three.

It should also be noted that not every nursery or preschool has a piano, and a keyboard is often used during rhythm classes so that the teacher can take it to any classroom where they will be teaching. A piano is a relatively “stationary” instrument, making it difficult to move, whereas a keyboard can be moved from place to place. Furthermore, a piano requires proper care. To keep the instrument in good condition, it must be tuned, and tuning an instrument is often beyond the financial resources of preschools. Children’s facilities also lack dedicated rooms for music classes, which limits the space that could support musical education through appropriate use. As a result, the teacher carries the instrument in his hands, but does not always have the opportunity to position it effectively in the room. For music classes to be effective, the teacher should maintain eye contact with the children. The author’s extensive experience indicates that keyboards are often placed in locations with access to a power outlet, which is the sole criterion for instrument placement. Therefore, it is impossible to play on a well-tuned, professional piano, and it is often impossible to hang a mirror above the piano so that the teacher can observe the children during the lesson.

It also often happens that during rhythmic activities, the regular teachers leave the room, leaving the 25–27 children with the music teacher. With such a large group of children and the constant need to play an instrument, chaos reigns in the room⁴.

Rhythmics or music teachers, employed at some institutions due to their piano skills, act as “external” teachers. However, they usually work on a contract, provided that the institution’s director receives additional funding from the governing body. Local governments may allocate such funds, but are not obligated to do so, especially

⁴ Conclusions based on observations of rhythmic classes in Poznań kindergartens in the 2002–2025.

in light of the information from the Ministry of National Education that every preschool teacher should be qualified to teach rhythmic⁵.

Conclusion

Considering the assumptions of the rhythmic curriculum outlined above and comparing them with the ministerial guidelines for early childhood education teacher training, it seems paradoxical that, as we read on the Education Portal, among other things, that all teachers conducting classes based on the preschool curriculum must be qualified to hold a teaching position in a preschool. This also applies to classes such as rhythmic and gymnastics (Portal Oświatowy, n.d.). The provision explains that rhythmic classes are conducted as part of the preschool curriculum, which must be consistent with the core curriculum for preschool education, and rhythmic classes, which should be conducted in every age group, and gymnastics, with particular emphasis on exercises to prevent postural defects, are of particular importance for building school maturity (Portal Oświatowy, n.d.).

Ławrowska (2023) notes that the training of early childhood education teachers at universities does not include music and movement (rhythmic) classes. Until 2020, universities offered classes in music appreciation, music education methodology, music, or classes with various names. The nomenclature was clarified in 2019 due to the emergence of a new standard for teacher education (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2019). Within the classes preparing students to introduce children to musical culture, all musical skills of the student were developed in conjunction with methodological education, *e.g.*, the ability to play instruments, active listening to music, ear and voice training, familiarisation with the musical repertoire from preschool and primary music education, *etc.* (Ławrowska, 2023). Music and movement classes were conducted at different times depending on the interests, predispositions, and rhythmic and movement qualifications of the academic teacher (Ławrowska, 2023). Considering the limited number of hours of music education for students in the study programs, it is difficult to imagine their thorough preparation not only in the complex Jaques-Dalcroze method, but also in music in a broader sense. It's difficult to imagine a preschool teacher without additional musical training, someone who can improvise on the piano or read musical

⁵ It's worth noting that initiatives are emerging in Poland to further train teachers in the field of music (including rhythmic). For example, the University of Warsaw Business School in Dąbrowa Górnicza has introduced a degree program called "Rhythmic, logorhythmic, and dance in children's musical and movement education." However, to enrol in such programs, one must have pedagogical training or obtain pedagogical training through concurrent studies. This means that rhythmic is still not considered a teacher's or pedagogical training program (Akademia WSB, n.d.).

notation fluently (not to mention other competencies possessed by a rhythmics graduate). Therefore, preschools most often use phonographic recordings, online song portals, or teaching aids, completely ignoring children's contact with a live instrument. Considering the guidelines outlined above, rhythmics is reduced to musical games that have little in common with traditional Jaques-Dalcroze's rhythmics. However, it should also be noted that the assumptions discussed earlier do not assume the implementation of the "pure" rhythmics of the Swiss educator⁶.

Summary of Research Results

Despite the above-mentioned values, the position of universal music education in the Polish care and education system is unclear. Some decision-makers treat it as important, even crucial, in upbringing; others downplay it and reduce it to the role of supplementary activities or merely enhancing the teaching and learning process (Kisiel, 2018). Music education in contemporary nurseries and preschools has been experiencing a significant crisis for many years, being constantly marginalised, and the discrepancies between the training methods of music and rhythm teachers employed in artistic schools and general education in grades 4–8, compared to the assumptions arising from the Teacher Training Standards for Early Childhood Education, are drastic.

To this day, rhythm and music teachers in nurseries and preschools cannot count on employment contracts, and the lack of permanent employment opportunities also prevents them from professional advancement.

In the literature on musical activities in children's education, there are such inconsistencies. It should be clearly stated that there are significant differences between Jaques-Dalcroze's rhythmics and rhythmics understood as musical activity in early school education.

To sum up this research, it should be stated that rhythmics in the Polish concept of universal music education has never been an adaptation of one concept. Even in artistic education, it does not appear in its so-called pure form, although it is largely based on the assumptions of the Jaques-Dalcroze concept.

It is important to urge teachers to thoroughly prepare themselves to meet the challenges posed by children's music education.

⁶ The author's conclusion is supported by twenty years of experience in cooperation with child education institutions.

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