

IMPORTANCE, STRUCTURE AND OUTCOMES OF THE MUSIC PROGRAM IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL: THE EXPERIENCE OF CROATIA, MONTENEGRO, AND SERBIA

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Abstract. In an effort to look into the importance and structure of the program through a simultaneous analysis of the achievement outcomes for the Music course in three countries – Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia, the authors have performed a detailed analysis of a number of documents covering the topic in these countries. A comparative analysis of the contents of these documents has provided us with the opportunity to assess the speed at which the educational systems in the three countries are being reformed, the differences in the approach to individual areas, but also the need to provide joint theoretical efforts whose goal would be to foster what is the common denominator for us all – a promoted process of teaching music which would provide a simultaneous development of students' artistic identity.

Keywords: *Music education, Outcomes, Achievements, Standards, Primary school.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia have undergone a number of public education system reforms in the last fifteen years. The most recent of these have pertained to fundamental solutions in primary and secondary education, in an attempt to get closer to the standards of contemporary schooling. Unlike in Croatia, which passed a foundational document entitled [The National Curriculum Framework \(2011\)](#), from which all other documents emerge, in Montenegro and Serbia separate documents have been made for all levels of the educational system, yet without a unified document to provide a common framework. The reform of such a far-reaching scope has

included a detailed monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, which has in turn made the process open for constant amendments and improvements. According to the results of recognized international tests, primarily the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the research conducted by the Bureau for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education, in comparison with Croatia, Serbia is still significantly falling behind. In an attempt to resolve the potential problems as quickly as possible, Serbia has passed a number of legal acts and initiatives defining the desired direction in the educational system reform. The central related document is the National Program for the Integration of the Republic of Serbia into the European Union, which defines new approaches to the assessment of student achievement, including the corresponding standards, but also requires that education should be accommodated to new standards in terms of competences.

The curriculum encompasses all domains of education, one of which is education in art. That way, music and music teaching become part of the curriculum. [The educational goals from the Croatian National Curriculum Framework \(2011\)](#) pertaining to the domain of art are oriented towards: education of students in line with the general values of culture and civilization, promotion of their overall development as human beings in accordance with their personal abilities and affinities, ensuring the grounds for students to acquire fundamental professional competences, preservation of historical and cultural heritage, in its both material and spiritual forms. The Montenegrin system of education does not list general goals for the domain of Art, yet one of the first documents passed in Montenegro already in the beginning of the reform process states that art and its fields

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must be approached in an interdisciplinary manner in the curricula, so that art should not be studied from a single, self-sufficient angle ([Basic Recommendations for the Restructuring of Syllabi and Curricula, 2002](#)). In the Serbian educational system there is no classification into educational fields, which means there are no available documents which define the goals of education in the domain of art.

The teaching of Music in Croatia is characterized by an open model, in which the compulsory part is to listen to music and become familiar with it, while the elective part is selected by the teacher in accordance with students' affinities. Contrary to this, in the Montenegrin and Serbian educational system all parts are equally represented. The programs in the Montenegrin educational system are open, which means there is a possibility that teachers, together with students and the local community, freely conceive of and organize 15% to 20% of the total number of yearly classes. This suggests that the curricula are partly open. Work methods, as well as contents that are listed as proposals in the program, are freely chosen by the teacher, which acknowledges the teacher's competences but also opens the way for his or her more creative and motivated work with students. In Serbia, the program of the course in Music requires from teachers to use various methods, while keeping in mind the musical sensibility and creativity of their students, with the goal to organize the teaching process in the way in which all domains will be equally covered. This is closer to the model used in teaching Music in Montenegro.

In Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia music is taught through reception and perception, by listening to music and by actively performing music. Likewise, it is stressed that music has not only artistic, but also cultural importance. Teaching music aids in students' affective, psycho-motoric, cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and psychosocial development, where particular emphasis is put on the development of musical abilities, knowledge and skills.

Differences are reflected in the duration of the primary school. The compulsory general primary education in Croatia takes eight years, and it is organized in three cycles. The first cycle consists of the first four grades in the primary school, the second cycle pertains to grades five and six, while the third cycle encompasses grades seven and eight in the primary school. In Serbia, just like in Croatia, primary schooling takes eight years, however it consists of two cycles: the first cycle of

primary education, encompassing grades one to four (classroom teaching) and the second cycle, including grades five to eight (subject teaching). In Montenegro, the primary school takes nine years, and it is divided into three three-year cycles.

2. THE FIELD OF ART IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Educational areas are made up of several courses grouped together into a single thematic whole. These are: the language and communication area, mathematics area, science area, technical and informatics area, social sciences and humanities area, art area, and physical and health area. In the National Curriculum Framework, each area is separately described, where the goals of the area and expected student achievements are defined. As mentioned, music has been given a separate place within the area of art. In addition to Musical Art, the area of art also includes: Visual Arts and Design, Film and Media Culture and Art, Dramatic Culture and Art, and Art of Movement and Dance.

The segment of the curriculum dedicated to the area of art begins with a general description. According to the [National Curriculum Framework \(2011, 208\)](#), the purpose of the art area is to "improve students' understanding of art and their active response to art by participation, for understanding various forms of art and also themselves and the world through works of art and the media, and also for expressing their feelings, experiences, ideas and attitudes through art activities and creative work."

The educational goals of the area ([NCF, 2011](#)) are listed in fifteen points. They define what students shall adopt, develop, become familiar with, notice, etc. After these goals, expected student achievement is listed, by the education cycle. General student achievement is first given, followed by separate achievement goals by the area. The general part is entitled "*Active Observation and Understanding of the World of Art and Participation in Art Education and Artistic Creation*". In each cycle, this part is further classified into four wholes ([NCF, 2011, 212-213](#)):

1. *Observing and experiencing artistic creation and activities and their aesthetic values (perception and reception);*

2. *Participation in artistic creation and activities (creation or production and performance or reproduction);*

3. *Communication, socialization and collaboration through art, design and the media;*

4. *Understanding and appreciating artistic creation and activities.*

Student achievement in the area of Music is classified into five wholes. These wholes mostly represent the adjusted wholes from the general section, with an additional one which does not occur in any form in previous text (number 2). The following wholes are listed (Ibid., 212-213):

1. *Observing, experiencing and accepting musical art and musical creation (perception and reception);*

2. *Acquiring the knowledge of the elements of musical art and creation;*

3. *Participation in musical activities and self-expression through musical art and creation;*

4. *Communication, socialization and collaboration through musical experience and expression;*

5. *Understanding and appreciating musical art and creation.*

2.1. The area of music in the first, second, and third primary school cycle in Croatia

The subject of interest has comprised the first three cycles, which are analogous to the eight-year primary education, grade one through eight. We present our structural analysis through the educational achievement of individual cycles, viewed against the five wholes. We have compared the educational achievements in the three cycles and analyzed if they change and, if yes, to what extent. The first cycle represented our starting point. We have provided the complete list of outcomes of the first cycle (Ibid., 212-213).

Observing, Experiencing and Accepting Musical Art and Musical Creation (perception and reception)

In the first cycle (grades one through four in the primary school), this whole contains five outcomes.

1. *Observe, notice and appreciate artistic beauty and value in their natural surroundings and in musical work, and gradually*

expand the scope of their perception and experience;

2. *Express their feelings, experiences and attitudes in a syncretic and comprehensive manner by using diverse art forms and creative processes;*

3. *Practice concentration and memory while listening to music;*

4. *Describe one's own experience of the musical work;*

5. *Acquire the basic prerequisites and criteria for developing a positive attitude to musical art.*

In the second cycle (primary school grades 5 and 6), the first whole includes four outcomes. Two of them have been slightly expanded as compared with the first cycle, one has been reduced, and two have been left out. The new outcome in the second cycle reads: *Listen to works of art, explore and compare various themes and motifs in art music.* This outcome is also found in the third cycle, however in an abridged form: *Explore ideas and concepts of musical art.*

In the third cycle, only three outcomes have been taken over and rephrased from the previous cycles. The new outcomes appearing in the third cycle (grades seven and eight) are: *Describe and assess multiple roles of music and its influence on everyday life of the individual and in the community at large. Demonstrate self-respect and self-confidence and express the authenticity of experience.*

The analysis of the first whole leads us to the conclusion that the outcomes are fully aligned with the title and content of the whole. However, inconsequence and lack of clear connections between individual outcomes is quite visible. If we view the three educational cycles as an interrelated structure in which the cycles are built over one another, they should be structurally developmental and progressive.

Acquiring the Knowledge of the Elements of Musical Art and Creation

In the first cycle, this whole contains five outcomes, where students shall:

1. *Differentiate between basic elements of musical expression (loud-soft, fast-slow, low-high, vocal-instrumental);*

2. *Recognize repeating and contrasting themes in music;*

3. *Recognize and reproduce simple metrical and rhythmic patterns;*

4. *Familiarize themselves with the musical language and script by singing and playing*

music;

5. *Become familiar with musical instruments in terms of their timbre and appearance.*

In the second cycle, four outcomes have been reformulated, and one has been left out. Two new ones have been added: *Recognize and name various types of music (traditional, popular, classical) and Develop intonational abilities by singing.* In the third cycle, slightly altered formulations are found of just one outcome from the first cycle and one outcome from the second. Three outcomes are new: *Conceive and express new ideas in musical art by using individual achievements; Develop interpretive competences by playing music actively; Compare, differentiate, and identify the same or different stylistic periods, their prominent representatives and the most significant works and express their experience of these works.*

We think it illogical that some of the more concrete outcomes given in the first and second cycles have not been listed in the third cycle, as well, since they are needed in this cycle, too, of course with expanded requirements. Namely, the first outcome in the first cycle, pertaining to the differentiation between the basic elements of the musical expression, would need to be reformulated and included in the third cycle. In the third cycle, i.e. in grades seven and eight, in line with the requirements from the curriculum, students should become familiar with new musical genres, forms and instruments. In that context, one should change the level and requirements of the outcomes viewed against the students' age and abilities, such as, for instance, the recognition of and differentiation between various specific elements in vocal, instrumental, or vocal-instrumental music (e.g. instrumental homophony – polyphony, choir homophony - polyphony, aria-recitative, etc.). The second outcome, related to the recognition of musical wholes that repeat or contrast one another, is the main means by which works of art music are to be familiarized with, and should therefore not be left out. Rather, the level of this recognition should be elevated to that of differentiation, comparison, description, or even creation.

Participation in Musical Activities and Self-Expression through Musical Art and Creation

In the first cycle, this whole contains six outcomes, where students shall:

1. *Express themselves creatively*

(vocally, aurally, motorically, visually, and digitally);

2. *Express their ideas, feelings, and experiences through musical activity;*

3. *Perform simple musical tasks, individually or in a group;*

4. *Become familiar with the basics of musical literacy;*

5. *Show the pleasure and express the joy of participating in musical activities and creation;*

6. *Increase self-esteem and practice self-control through musical activities.*

In the second cycle, a few of these outcomes repeat in a slightly different form. New expected outcomes here are: *Apply the knowledge about the elements of musical art by integrating technical and practical skills; Recognize, compare and try out various techniques and procedures when studying musical pieces or while composing and performing them.* The outcomes are not presented in a clear way. Thus, the beginning of the first outcome would make sense as a separate outcome – apply the knowledge about the elements of musical art – however, it remains unclear what is meant by the integration of technical and practical skills: musical performance in the form of singing or playing? Does it perhaps refer to the singing or playing technique in the integration of technical and practical skills? Can we talk about any technical skill without practical application? The second outcome is more clearly defined, yet it contains superfluous elements and is not concrete. We think the following part is superfluous *when studying musical pieces* because this entire whole is dedicated to participation in musical activities and expression through music. Therefore, every outcome should provide a step in this direction, so that in this part only *while composing and performing them* could be sufficient.

In the third cycle, some outcomes repeat from the first cycle, some from the second one, while some have been reformulated. There are no new outcomes, but the outcomes from the second cycle appear again. The first outcome has been defined with a single minimal change – *technical skills* have been left out, and *knowledge* has been added instead. The second outcome has been slightly rephrased. The word *compare* has been replaced by *use*, while *procedures* have been replaced by *methods*.

Communication, Socialization and Collaboration through Musical Experience and Expression

In the first cycle, this whole contains three outcomes.

1. *Work together with others, especially students with special needs and developmental disabilities;*

2. *Learn how to share responsibility and practice perseverance in musical activities;*

3. *Practice loyalty, unity, joint life and tolerance through musical activities.*

The three outcomes that we have mentioned are defined from a point of view external to music. Yet this entire whole is conceived in such a way, and therefore the decision is justified.

In the second cycle, only two outcomes from the first cycle are reiterated. Yet, four new outcomes are given: *Recognize various roles of music and assess their importance and impact (sic!) in everyday life and in the life of the community at large; Express and develop a specific idea by means of multimedia and ICT; Communicate and share artistic impression and experience with others; Become familiar and learn to respect our own tradition and culture, explore it and compare it with the traditions and cultures of other nations.* The first two outcomes listed above are clear in their intention and belong to the scope of the topic of the entire whole. The first outcome pertains to the recognition of the value of music in students' life. The second one has the purpose of helping students express themselves, among other ways, by using modern technologies. The third outcome is very simple, but also necessary in this whole especially since artistic reception and communication has already been given enough room in the first whole. Even though the entire area deals with music, the fourth outcome should still specify that the statement pertains to *musical* tradition and culture.

As stated above, in the third cycle, the first outcome has been reformulated. The third cycle thus repeats the outcome from the first one, yet with a slight addition that has not been inserted into the second cycle. In terms of the new outcomes from the second cycle, in the third cycle only the third outcome, which we have mentioned above, repeats, yet in an extended form, where the following is added: *and explore the connection between the creation (production) of musical works and their impact on the world we live in.* There are also two new outcomes in the third cycle: *Explore*

the diversity of musical expression from historical, geographical, and economic perspectives using the knowledge and skills acquired in other educational areas; Through participation in the creative process of experiencing musical works and in performing and creating musical works, understand the role of perseverance in success, both in musical art and in other arts and other fields of human activity.

In the first outcome, it is partly clear what it means by musical expression from historical and geographical perspectives, yet how can this be viewed from an economic perspective? The second outcome is nonmusical. However, we may take into account the fact that the discussion here has been taken over from the overall achievements of education and, as such, it may not have been worded differently.

Understanding and Appreciating Musical Art and Creation

In the first cycle, this whole contains four outcomes, where students shall:

1. *Describe their experience of musical works and compare it to that of other students;*

2. *Recognize and appreciate artistically beautiful and valuable musical expression;*

3. *Exercise self-criticism with respect to their own musical creation, in making and performing music alike;*

4. *Hone assertiveness and constructive criticism in evaluating their own work and that of others.*

In some form, outcomes from the first cycle appear in the second cycle, as well. However, in the second cycle one more outcome is found: *Improve their own musical expression and respect the specificities of the individual development of others.* In the third cycle, this outcome repeats in the same form, while the third outcome has been left out.

3. ANALYSIS OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES FOR THE COURSE MUSIC IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MONTENEGRO

The course in *Music* belongs to the area of Art, which is one of seven fundamental areas of knowledge, grouped by related courses (languages – native and foreign, mathematics, science, technology, social science and humanities, physical and health culture, art). When this program was being made in the process of educational reform, the tendency

was not to classify fundamental knowledge into separate disciplines, but rather to present them in curricula and program as interrelated parts of a whole ([Basic Recommendations for the Restructuring of Program and Curricula, 2002, 25](#)). Interconnected horizontally and vertically, the program in the domain of art should develop a fine distinction among the specific fields of art as a combination of knowledge and skills, which should not be studied in a narrow, discipline-specific manner, but should rather be viewed in an interdisciplinary fashion, as well ([Ibid., 35](#)). To ensure closer links, it is allowed that specific courses be interlinked with other courses, in either art or other disciplines.

The importance of music teaching in primary education is also stressed in the overall goals of the program. The authors accentuate that students should build a positive attitude to music, develop their interest in music, and also desire and capacity to take part in various forms of musical activities. It is added that through this course extramusical abilities could develop as well, such as communicativity and desire to participate in team work. Participation in creating music should develop creativity, motivation, diligence, and self-esteem. One of the goals is also to develop a habit in students to actively listen to music, experience it and slowly become able to recognize its basic characteristics. Musical creativity aligned with students' individual capacities and age looks like a provisory defined goal, since the artistic value of what students create in class as a product of improvisation and creative games is questionable (i.e. thinking up a melody based on a given text, completing a melody, conceiving of rhythmic accompaniment, etc.). Delimitation of fundamental musical concepts, development of the general musical capacity, and encouragement for discovering pieces from the musical literature may be stressed as the most important overall goals of teaching music in the primary school. Among the extramusical general goals, one can single out raising awareness of the most valuable achievements which determine the cultural identity of certain nations and communities, and raising awareness of the achievements defining the cultural identity of Montenegro.

In the general remarks, music is described as a constant human need, so that, as a course in schools, it plays an important role in fostering creativity, artistic abilities, skills, and knowledge. It opens for students "a new world of higher cultural needs, makes them

aware of higher artistic values, and develops their critical thinking and aesthetic sensibility" ([Course program – Music, 2013, 4](#)).

3.1. Developmental achievements and knowledge standards – program outcomes by cycle

Nine years of primary education in Montenegro are classified into three equal cycles. In course programs, knowledge standards, i.e. outcomes, are given. Contrary to Croatia, where the outcomes are classified into categories (wholes), in the Montenegrin program they are defined as a sublimation of developmental achievements. These developmental achievements are systematized in three areas: *abilities, skills, and knowledge based on information*.

The First Cycle

Along with preschool, the first three years of primary education are aimed at fostering elementary musical capacities, whose proper and gradual development should support the development of musical thinking in later grades. Skills pertain to the development of singing, speaking and instrumental motorics, and to the expression of sound features by movement, through didactic games ([Ibid., 19](#)). In the first cycle, the knowledge encompasses elementary musical concepts and orientation in the pictorial representations of the melody.

Knowledge standards or program outcomes for the first cycle:

- *Individually or in the group, students can sing 8 folk and art songs in accordance with their individual capabilities and with various types of performance (monophonic, with or without instrumental accompaniment);*
- *They know 5 counting rhymes with musical accompaniment (using the body or Orff's instruments as the sound source);*
- *They can perform 3 musical games (didactic games, games with singing, games with instrumental accompaniment, small musical dramatizations);*
- *They can recognize 9 musical pieces they have heard;*
- *They differentiate between tones, sounds, and silence;*
- *They can recognize and name instruments by timbre (children's, folk, classical);*
- *They can recognize the timbre of voices*

(child, female, male);

- They can recognize who is performing the piece: a voice, an instrument, a soloist, a group (chamber music) or a collective (choir, orchestra);

- They distinguish between the concepts: loud – soft, fast – slow

- They can name and understand the concepts: choir – choir master; musical piece – composer; conductor; counting rhyme; musical fairy-tale; musical events.

- They can perform one short piece on a folk instrument and they can perform the rhythmical accompaniment for 2 songs on Orff's instruments.

At the end of the first cycle, the outcomes are based on musical perception and reception. Differentiating between timbres at this age develops concentration and aural perception abilities. Performing folk and art songs starts from the trichord in grade one (re, mi, fa) to pentachord in class three. The gradual extension of pitch range has the goal to result in as intonationally clean singing as possible. However, songs with a narrow pitch range often turn out to be insufficiently interesting, where one tone may repeat many times, which makes it difficult to preserve intonation, especially in the primary school, where musical abilities of individuals are uneven. Finding one's way in pictorial representations of a melody and understanding symbols represent procedures in the teaching methodology in which students make connections between the aural and the visual, perceiving melodic movement and durations of notes presented through the varying lengths of symbols. This is at the same time a preparation for elementary musical literacy in grade four. This methodology has been taken over from Slovenian textbooks. In the reform process, intensive cooperation was established with Slovene experts. The *Slovenian Model* was also important for introducing the nine-year primary school in Montenegro.

Since students acquire songs by ear, one can ask whether first-cycle teachers should insist on a subsequent analysis of drawings, so that students could understand their meaning, or follow the movement of symbols during the performance of the song they have learned? Performing a melody on a folk instrument (the text does not specify which one) looks like an unrealistic outcome. The knowledge based on information (concepts) that students are supposed to acquire has been realistically set and stems from the experience of listening, performing, and perceiving music. Importance

ascribed to musical games and pronouncing counting rhymes followed by rhythmic accompaniment, also supports the development of motoric and verbal skills.

The Second Cycle

In the second three-year period, the development of *abilities* coincides with the period in which the sense of harmony is also being developed. This is fostered through the use of two-voice singing in the Montenegrin folk song, and also through perpetual canon or ostinato accompaniment. In this period, the ability to understand tonal relations, duration and pitch also grows, which helps further musical development. Students become trained to use basic notation, and their analytical reception of musical contents helps them better perform, listen to, concentrate on and memorize music. Students are slowly instructed into aesthetic forms (*Ibid.*, 34).

Psychomotor *skills* needed for vocal and instrumental performance are further developed, such as movement in reaction to music. With a well-selected program for performance and didactic procedures, performance skills are perfected, and changes accommodated; with boys, voice mutation occurs, and the teacher explains how these students should participate in the process, i.e. sing.

Based on the musical experience which students have previously acquired, the teacher presents the required *knowledge* which provides elementary orientation during performance, listening, or creative activities. In the second three-year period, students use notation, become familiar with concepts from music theory, diversify instrument timbres, understand that musical works have a specific form, learn of various musical types and genres. It is important that the teacher should not prioritize theorizing and verbal expression (*Ibid.*, 35).

At the end of the second cycle, the knowledge standards – program outcomes define that students should:

- Be capable of performing 8 folk and art songs (in the range of one octave);

- Perform songs in a group or individually – in one or two voices;

- Play at least 2 short pieces (or accompaniments) using Orff's instruments;

- Make a difference between vocal, instrumental, and vocal-instrumental music;

- Recognize singing voices (child, female, male), groups and choirs;

- Recognize soloists on various

instruments;

- *Recognize timbres of individual instruments and groups of instruments;*
- *Understand basic orientation in a notation (pitches, durations, bar signature);*
- *Differentiate between and understand the meaning of scales, major – minor (solely by the sound);*
- *Know that music is organized in formal constituents and forms having their names;*
- *Recognize certain musical styles and genres;*
- *Recognize a repertoire of 10 musical pieces – by national and international authors;*
- *Know the difference between musical creation and interpretation.*

By analyzing the contents of this program, we notice that learning the songs based on the notation, with the corresponding beat provided by tapping, cannot be viewed as basic orientation in the notation. One of the outcomes reads that major and minor scales should become familiar “solely by the sound”, while the operative goals list that students should understand the following concepts: degree, step, half-step, which implies that a theoretical explanation of the structure of the major and minor scale must be given. In grade four, elementary musical literacy is also acquired through the use of model songs, whose purpose is to introduce the pitches. We hold the opinion that, in the primary school, learning a song based on the notation would make some sense if this procedure were applied only after the song has been acquired by ear, so that students could become conscious of the melodic structure, thus gradually increasing their knowledge of the notation. Possibly, conducting simple meters with one hand should be replaced by tapping the basic counting units. The number of art and folk songs has remained the same as in the previous cycle. Perception of musical works, differentiation between instrument timbres, and recognition of elementary features of musical forms become gradually related to the outcomes of the first cycle.

The Third Cycle

In the developmental outcomes, the third cycle (grades seven, eight, and nine) is defined as a period in which musical abilities encompass the “recognition of regular relations among the musical pitches, durations, or harmonies. In the third cycle, teachers should bring student musicality to a higher level so

that students can express themselves vocally, instrumentally, and vocally-instrumentally. The third cycle coincides with the period and characteristics of the child’s maturation, and in this period the child develops his or her musical memory, critical attitude, and aesthetic sensibility” (Ibid., 51). Developing skills means that, in line with the development of the psychomotor system, the accent is put on the improvement of vocal and instrumental performance (singing polyphonic songs and playing Orff’s melodic instruments – xylophone, metalophone, block flute, etc.), or on the simultaneous singing and playing of an instrument. The third cycle envisages that the activities and experience be systematized based on the data on the resources of musical performance, musical forms, contents, types and genres of music. A historical overview of the development of art music is given through various stylistic periods studied during all three years. In the end of this cycle, the student is to have attained the following knowledge, as stressed in the statements below:

- *Students gain direct musical experience through vocal, instrumental, and vocal-instrumental performance of musical works;*
- *They are given systematized data which serve as principal orientation in their musical activity;*
- *They become familiar with the historical importance of musical achievements and developments;*
- *They are familiar with the creation of musical values important for music in Montenegro.*

At the end of the third cycle, knowledge standards / program outcomes define that students should:

- *Be able to perform 8 folk and art songs which have the form of an aesthetic expression;*
- *Be able to perform 2 shorter instrumental pieces (from art and popular music);*
- *Be able to name historical stylistic periods related to music (from the beginnings to the present day);*
- *Know about the musical culture of Montenegro;*
- *Recognize 10 to 15 pieces of national and international composers, as well as contemporary performers;*
- *Know various types and genres of music.*

In the outcomes so defined, one can clearly see that musicological contents have

been stressed, where the main developmental achievement is students' ability to perceive the music of different historical periods. Reception of a musical piece and increased knowledge of music based on analytical listening should be gradually developed in all three grades. In this period, it is important to ensure correlation with other courses since art music should now be viewed in the context of broader currents in culture and society (the fine arts, literature, history). The outcome according to which students should be able to perform two shorter instrumental pieces from art or popular music is not clear. More realistically, it could be expected that students could use an instrument from the Orff Schulwerk so as to perform a theme from a particular instrumental piece. The outcome stating that students should "know various types and genres of music" should be aimed at the reception of musical works (perception, recognition).

4. SERBIA – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS FOR THE COURSE MUSIC

In the last couple of years, several EU-backed initiatives have been given to promote the system of education in Serbia. In addition to the [Act on the Foundations of the System of Education of 2009](#), [Education Development Strategy in Serbia by 2020](#), [Educational Standards for Completing Compulsory Education of 2009](#), a Regulation Book on General Achievement Standards – Educational Standards for Completing Compulsory Education has also been adopted. All these documents pertain to the reform of the educational system and promotion of its quality. In addition to the establishment of the quality control system, monitoring, and evaluation, the [Act on the Foundations of the System of Education \(2009\)](#) also defines and manages the *Educational Standards*. The definition and organization of these standards aims at empowering the teachers to implement the teaching process, but also at harmonizing the requirements related to the competences of students. *Serbian Education Standards* for completing compulsory education have been formulated within the framework defined by the current curricula and programs, where they start from the goals of education defined as binding requirements. In turn, these requirements represent the knowledge and skills at the end of a given education cycle.

Unfortunately, national standards and achievements for the first cycle of primary education (grades one to four) for the course in Music have not yet been made and adopted, so one cannot fully compare these with the Croatian and Montenegrin standards in the first cycle. Instead, in Serbia, these cycles have been defined only for the end of compulsory schooling (the final four grades of primary, general education).

By gaining an insight into the document *Educational Standards for Completing Compulsory Education for the Course in Music*, we have an opportunity to appreciate its conception and structure, and, for the purposes of this paper, analyze this document, and in such a way compare achievement standards in Serbia with those in Croatia and Montenegro.

In primary schools of general education in Serbia, music teaching has the goal of enabling the student to become acquainted with all vital dimensions of music through personal experience, where the student should be given the prerequisites to fully appreciate and experience the musical piece and participate in a musical event in the way and to the degree which he or she will choose him or herself in the future ([Ministry of Education, Council for Evaluating the Quality of Education, 2010](#)). What separates teaching music from other courses in the general curriculum is that music is experienced directly during the teaching process. The Serbian document claims that, for a student to master the cognitive and aesthetic aspects of the musical experience, the program should cover four interrelated areas, without which proper familiarization with music is not possible. The knowledge of music (e.g. that of musical elements, instruments, genres, folklore) has no purpose unless the student can relate this knowledge to sound or a musical example, and thus understand what he or she is listening to. This is why four areas – knowledge and understanding, music listening, musical performance, and musical creativity – have been articulated through the guidelines defining program requirements, from the lowest, over medium, to the highest forms of student achievement (elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels). In the standards, levels of achievement have been defined in the following way:

– The elementary level implies elementary knowledge of a problem, mastery of basic conceptions and skills.

– The intermediate level implies critical thinking within the existing knowledge and logical sequencing of elements within a

particular context.

– The advanced level implies the ability for critical thinking followed by devising creative solutions related to the problem and argumentative justification of one's own judgment.

Most students (between 80% and 85%) are expected to attain the achievement from the elementary level. In the context of music education, this would mean that they should have elementary knowledge of music. Advanced achievement pertains to a higher quality of knowledge and it is expected that considerably fewer students (between 20% and 25%) will attain it. Intermediate level achievement will be typical of students with average music education (about 50% of students), who will have a potential to develop their knowledge towards the advanced level (Ibid., 7).

Standards based on levels of achievement for all four areas are defined in the following way:

In the area "Knowledge and Understanding",

At the elementary level, the student is able to:

- Recognize the basic elements of musical literacy;
- Describe the basic characteristics of: musical instruments and ensembles; historical – stylistic periods: musical genres and folk musical tradition.

At the intermediate level, the student can analyze the connection between:

- Musical elements and characteristics of musical instruments with musical expression (i.e. a fast tempo with a lively character);
- The structure and dramatic composition of a musical genre (for instance, an opera finale with events in the drama);
- The form of folk music with the specific context of folk life.

At the advanced level, the student:

- Knows the functions of elements of musical literacy and of ensembles in given musical works;
- Understands the historical and social circumstances behind the emergence of a genre or forms of musical folklore;
- Justifies his or her judgment in a critical and argumentative way;
- Can creatively combine elements of expression in an aesthetic context (making a connection between a particular musical procedure and a desired effect).

In the area "Music Listening":

At the elementary level, the student is able to listen to musical examples in such a

way so as to name:

- The elements of musical expression;
- The musical ensemble;
- Musical genres;
- Serbian musical folklore.

At the intermediate level, the student is able to:

- Describe and analyze the features of a sound example through the interplay of perceived musical elements (i.e. a choppy tune as a result of a specific rhythm, tempo, agogics, dynamics, intervallic structure);
- Recognize the structure of a particular genre.

At the advanced level, the student is able to analyze the heard example and discover the connection between its perceived features and:

- The structural and dramatic dimension of the musical example;
- Its historical context (in terms of genre and style);
- The context of the origins and use of various forms of musical folklore.

In the area "Music Performance",

At the elementary level, the student is able to:

- Sing simple children's, folk or popular musical pieces;
- Perform simple children's, folk or popular pieces on at least one instrument.

At the advanced level, the student is able to:

- Perform pieces from a diversified musical repertoire by singing or playing as a soloist in school ensembles.

In the area "Musical Creativity",

At the elementary level, the student is able to:

- Make musical instruments using objects from the world around him or her;
- Conceive of smaller musical wholes based on pre-given models;
- Perform rhythmic or rhythmic-melodic accompaniment on constructed musical instruments;
- Participate in the selection of music for the given genre and historical context.

At the advanced level, the student is able to:

- Conceive of arrangements for accompaniment on Orff's Schulwerk and other pre-given musical instruments;
- Improvise on or compose smaller musical wholes (rhythmic and melodic) in various genres and styles;
- Conceive of the music for a school

play, event, or performance (Ibid., 8).

The Serbian document stresses that the elementary level entails minimal, the intermediate level – average, and the advanced level – above average achievement. Unfortunately, this is not sufficiently explained in the standards. It is most important to stress that in some areas individual levels are not given, which of course means that they have not been properly covered. This is especially seen in the illogical move to leave out average student achievement (the intermediate level) in the areas of *Musical Performance and Musical Creativity*, followed by the presence of above-average student achievement (the advanced level), which certainly cannot be considered more important than the average one. In spite of the clearly expressed desire of the authors of standards for the course in Music that these standards should provide guidelines for teachers, we still have no data on how these standards have shown in practice, i.e. in the teaching process. This kind of check would show if there is perhaps a need to revise or complete the standards (by adding the outcomes that have been left out). In defining the outcomes of each of the four areas listed above, twenty eight standards have been used, in which the authors call upon the key components of studying: basic knowledge, creative capacities, and critical thinking. By analyzing the outcomes defined in the *Educational Standards*, all categories have been encompassed, pertaining to memory, understanding, application, analysis, valuation, and creation. Regardless of the fact that the outcomes in the domain of musical creativity (an area that is often overlooked) at the advanced level are very ambitious, since it is expected that, upon the completed primary education, the student should be able to *Conceive of arrangements for accompaniment on Orff's Schulwerk, ... conceive of music for a play, performance*, they can still be very supportive for the work of teachers. At the same time, in the standards covering creative activities, we notice common formulations describing competences, followed by verbs expressing measurable knowledge and skills (e.g. students understand, students know, students are able to...), which provides a broader context for this area in the Serbian document.

5. CONCLUSION

If we compare the wholes in which student achievement in music and art in the three cycles of compulsory education in Croatia is

defined, we can conclude that this approach to teaching music is rather general. The outcomes in the Curriculum have been organized in five areas. The areas are related to music in a variety of ways, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, where the approach is sometimes immanent and sometimes nonmusical. Therefore, the names of the wholes described above, within which outcomes are given, sometimes show a greater and sometimes a smaller connection with music as an autonomous area.

In the wholes and outcomes stressing music reception and perception, familiarization with the elements of music, and participation in musical activities, it can be seen that musical activity takes the most important position. Through singing, playing, listening and analysis of musical pieces, the student participates in the teaching process and learns about music, develops his or her skills, creates new (musical) patterns, which all fosters his or her musical development. In this way, the world of music is compliant with the student's world. However, within the wholes we have also found some outcomes which depart from the goal of teaching music, from its tasks, but also from (realistic) student achievement, since in their nonmusical connotation they do not influence the development of the student's artistic identity, not even indirectly.

Since even before the Curriculum the Croatian system of education had been partly reformed (Catalogue of Knowledge and Skills, Croatian National Educational Standard), in this period teaching music had gone through significant changes. The change of conception certainly meant advancement for the theory and practice of music education. The open didactical system provided teachers with an opportunity to select contents, methods, forms and conditions of work with students, which offered a new input for the program goals to be achieved. Since music teaching reform was at its peak between 2002. and 2006., all things stated reflected on and became constituent part of the [Plan and Program \(2006\)](#). The Curriculum Framework was adopted only in 2010, and, at least when music is concerned, it introduced only slight changes, which partly even contradict the established guidelines and fundamentals of contemporary teaching of music.

In Montenegro, knowledge standards/program outcomes at the end of the cycle define basic expectations that have not been separately systematized. Rather, they stem from the previously presented developmental achievements. The knowledge standards still need to be categorized more clearly by the

level, as has been done in Serbia. Although the latest revision of the curriculum (2013) strove for a reduction of requirements and removal of superfluous material, further evaluations should be conducted on the basis of practical results. Then, these good grounds could be used to introduce more realistic and useful amendments to the program. The question of financial resources is also posed – do all music classrooms in Montenegro have the material resources needed for the program to be implemented? How much are teachers supported to carry out all activities defined in the syllabus, and can they be realistically implemented given the number of weekly classes provided? A comparison with curricula and programs from other countries in the region, sharing experience and using the examples of good practice, can contribute to devising more appropriate documents, which would serve as a grounds for and support to a quality teaching process, within realistically defined constraints.

The biggest positive effect of Educational Standards in Serbia may be seen in the fact that they now contain parameters for measuring competences, and also that their evaluation is now possible. The major drawback in this document, on the other hand, would be the lack of a stronger link between this course and skills attained by the students in the process of their education for the new age, for using modern technologies, and also the lack of stronger links with other teaching areas. If the standards are to be applicable, and if they are to ensure that the quality of education in Serbia should be promoted, they need to be harmonized with modern educational trends, with the current teaching and learning model and teacher education, so that their implementation could provide the grounds not only for promoting the current program, but also for a better learning process and more active student participation in this process.

Based on the analysis of the syllabus, curriculum and standards in Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, one still finds it necessary that the outcomes for forming (new) program and educational standards be redefined. In addition to all things stated above, it is also necessary that all stakeholders in the process of education, in particular teachers, be responsible in the process of improving the quality of the educational system. It is precisely in the combination of examples of good practice, clearly based on the professional imperatives of music education, and theoretical research and harmonization based on scientific criteria,

that we can all contribute to the success of reforms and introduce a new syllabus, or entire curriculum, tailored to the student.

Conflict of interests

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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