

## MUSIC WORKSHOP - DIVERSITY AND SPECIFICITY IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*In a society that is constantly changing, education, one of the most important factors in the development of the human being, must take on new forms. Thus, more than ever, it is necessary to interconnect the forms of education in order to achieve positive results across all areas. With regard to music education, strong and impactful influences are beginning to emerge from the sphere of non-formal activities. In this study, we will present a way of organizing non-formal extracurricular musical activities, found under the name of music workshop, which proves to be effective for the education of students enrolled in the primary school.*

### Keywords:

*Music workshop; Non-formal education; Primary school students; Musical bells.*

### INTRODUCTION

The activities included in the field of education are, on one hand, organized, with well-established pedagogical purposes, and, on the other hand, spontaneous, strongly influenced by the environments with which the human being comes into contact (Cristea, 2016). Given this characteristic, we can identify education in three situations: formal, non-formal and informal. Besides the principle of organization, for the clear differentiation of the three types of education, it is necessary to refer to the criterion of planning, based on which we will identify institutionalized and planned activities of formal (school) and non-formal (extracurricular) type, but also non-institutionalized and unplanned activities, aimed at informal education (Cristea, 2017).

Between formal, non-formal and informal education, even if each of them acts in a particular way, a complementarity relationship is established. The idea of separating the three forms of education would negatively influence the content of the activities specific to each of them and, further, the development of the personality of

the human being (Rata et al., 2014). Thus, specialists point out the need to open learning to all three forms, as they are considered as “bridges between school and the labor market” (Nicu, 2013, p. 68).

In this study, we will turn our attention to non-formal education that represents “[...] the ensemble of non-school educational influences (extra-para-periscolar activities), structured and organized in a still institutionalized framework, but located outside the educational system. (Jinga & Istrate, 2008, p. 176). To clarify what non-formal education is, we will list some of its features:

- the educational activity is organized and systematic (Deekor, 2019);
- the curriculum is established together with the participants (Costea, Cerkez & Sarivan, 2009);
- the character of this type of education is optional (Nicu, 2013);
- the activity can take place both outside the formal school program of the class and outside the school, in pedagogical organizations (institutions) (Cristea, 2017);
- the activities are coordinated by specialists (Moldovan & Bocos-Bințișan, 2015), but they are asked, in particular, to be flexible and to adapt easily to the needs of the participant in this form of education (Nicu, 2013);
- whereas opting for such activities must normally be a personal decision, it is the result of intrinsic motivation (Tisza et al., 2020);
- the didactic evaluation is unformalized (Blândul, 2015);
- does not end with obtaining an official diploma (Widodo & Nusantara, 2018).

## **NON-FORMAL MUSIC EDUCATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

According to Law no. 1/2011, in Romania, non-formal learning is carried out both in institutions and organizations provided for formal learning, and in: “child care and protection centers, student palaces and clubs, at work, cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, cultural centers, libraries, documentation centers, cinemas, cultural houses, as well as professional, cultural associations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations” (*National Education Law no. 1/2011* ). With regard to music education in the non-formal context, to some extent, it could be adapted to suit any of the institutions and organizations listed in that legislation.

Starting from one of the characteristics of non-formal education, we distinguish two categories of musical activities, as follows: extradidactic or extracurricular and extrascolar. The difference between the two lies in the venue; the first category is held in school, but outside the formal school program of the class and is not mentioned in the school documents, and the second is held outside the school, in different organizations and institutions. Extradidactic or extracurricular musical activities can be recognized in various forms: artistic ensembles, talent contests, workshops,

celebrations, recitals, concerts or meetings with musicians. As far as extrascolar musical activities are concerned, they can be of the following types: music camps, movie or show views, educational concerts, private music schools, children's clubs or palaces etc.

Regardless of the space in which non-formal musical activities take place, they require organizing and holding attractive means. The individual who deals with the systematization and carrying out of musical activities in the non-formal context must be a specialized person, oriented toward the requirements of the participants whose involvement is optional. The assessment of non-formal musical activities is not strict nor does it aim to score students, and the certification can be carried out in order to mark the participation, without being officially recognized.

### **MUSIC WORKSHOP – AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE MUSICAL EDUCATION IN THE NON-FORMAL FRAMEWORK**

We want to focus our attention on an activity that can be done in the context of non-formal education, both at the extradidactic/extracurricular level and also at the extrascolar level, found under the name of music workshop. This activity represents an opportunity to show the creativity of the teacher, the participating students and, in some cases, the parents of the children. Held in collaboration with school institutions, music workshops can take place in different circumstances, for example during the *Școala altfel* program. Outside of school, music workshops can be conducted in private music schools and other content-appropriate locations, for example in libraries or bookstores.

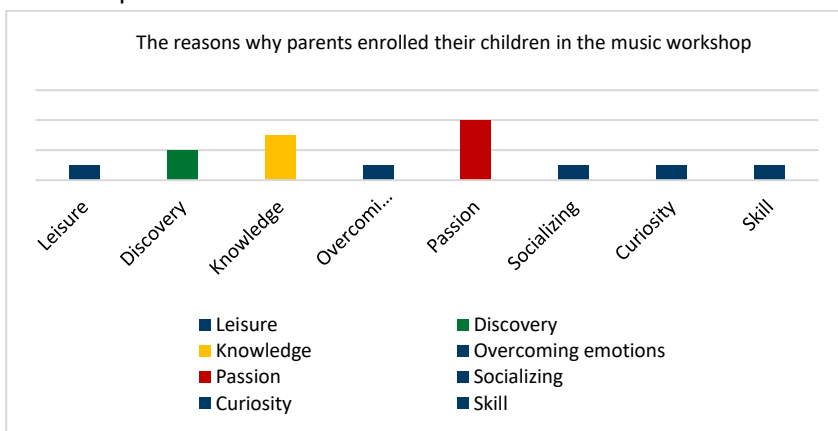
Among the music workshops that I created and developed, we mention:

- *Bells Club* music workshop;
- Creative music workshop;
- *Sărbătoare în Cântătoare* Christmas theme music workshop;
- *Armonie în familie* music workshop;

The music workshop aims to complement the specific activities of musical education that children perform in both formal and informal contexts. The benefits of participating in this type of activity are related to: pleasant and efficient organization of leisure time, discovery and encouragement of talents, development of skills, formation of positive personality traits etc.

Following the creation of a series of creative music workshops, which took place outside the school, I asked the parents to complete a satisfaction questionnaire, and one of the questions included referred to the reasons for the child's participation in the activity. Here are some of the parents' answers: "to carry out an extra activity and to satisfy their need for curiosity and to develop their skills," "to discover if we like music", "to know musical instruments and to learn songs", "to discover her voice and to

overcome her emotions (at home i never heard her sing)”, “to know this art”, “because music attracts him”, “out of curiosity, to know and socialize”, “our little one is singing all day at home, we thought he would like to try a music workshop,” “because she likes music and is energetic,” “because we noticed that he has an inclination to music.” Drawing up a chart of the above answers, it indicates that most parents have decided to enroll their child in a music workshop due to their child’s passion for music, but also to know and discover the musical field. They also believed that this activity could help children overcome their emotions, socialize, spend their free time in a creative way, and help them to improve their lives.



Graphic representation 1. **Centralization of parents’ answers to the question “What made you bring your child to the music workshop?”**

Given that all parents who followed the questionnaire expressed their desire to be contacted about the organization of new series of music workshops, we believe that this type of activity satisfies the needs of the community.

**BELLS CLUB – AN EXAMPLE OF A MUSIC WORKSHOP ADDRESSED TO PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Next, we want to make a brief presentation of one of the music workshops held. *Bells Club*, a non-formal extracurricular activity, carried out within the *Școala altfel* program, addressed students enrolled in primary school and was designed so that it could take place in the classrooms, within a time frame of fifty minutes.

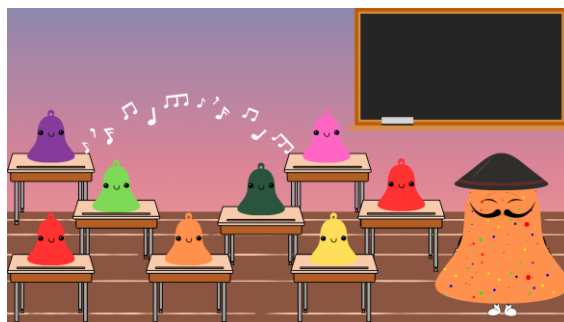


Picture 1. **Poster for the *Bells Club* workshop**

As the name shows, the activities of the workshop involved playing chromatic musical bells and were planned for three moments:

1. The story of the bells;
2. Rhythmico-melodic exercises with musical bells;
3. The use of musical bells with the purpose of accompanying songs.

For the first moment of our activity, we wrote the story of the *School of Musical bells and* created images suggestive of it, through the Canva platform. As far as the story is concerned, it captures the return of the Great Bell to Cloporiada, his native village, with the desire to open a school for the bells that lived in those lands. Since we started from the idea of creating an interactive story, which also requires the direct involvement of students, one of the fragments of the story surprised the arrival of bells at school. When each bell appeared in the story, in the classroom, the teacher would display a musical bell, and the students would analyze the color and sound it produced, pronounce the name, and then intonate, in various rhythmic variations, the sound specific to it.

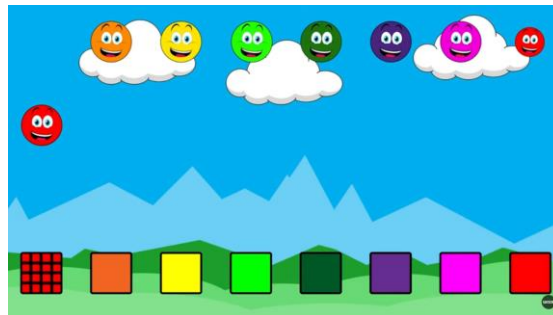


Picture 2. **Artwork from the *School of Musical bells* story**

At the second moment of the workshop, the teacher presented the students with the rules for the use of musical bells, after which each of the participants randomly received a bell. In order to accommodate them with the colors and the way they produce the sounds, a rhythmico-melodic exercise was performed. It was performed using an exercise video from YouTube uploaded by *In Unison Music Lessons*, a channel that includes music education material. The video captured images of balls and squares whose colors corresponded to those of musical bells. In the workshop, when the ball, for example the red one, fell on the square of the same color, the student holding the red bell had to press the button, producing the note *do*. The exercise had two rounds: in the first, only one ball fell, so the sound of a single bell was heard, and in the second round, two balls at the same time, the two sounds being consonant.



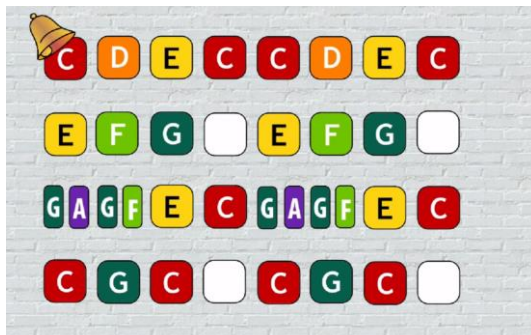
Picture 3. **The musical bells used during the workshop**



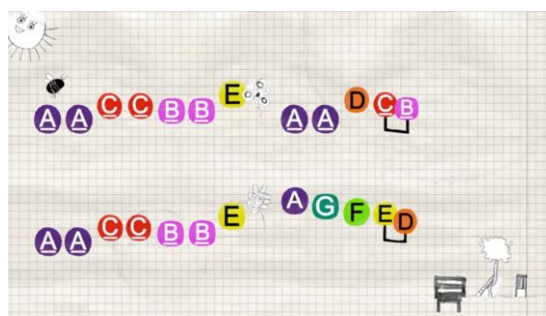
Picture 4. **Artwork from the rhythmico-melodic exercise meant for the students accomodation with the musical bells**

For the third moment, the activity for the preparatory, first and second grade was performed differently than for the third and fourth grade. In the workshop held for the pupils of the smaller grades, the learning of the romanian version of the song *Frère Jacques* was done by ear. Then, with the help of a video on the *Muziek in School* channel, the melodic line was played with musical bells. As the level of third and fourth grade students allowed us, the selected song was more difficult from a rhythmico-melodic point of view, with them performing the song *Paris*, from the *Musication* channel. At each class, the songs were played several times with the help of bells, but in different ways: changing the tempo (from slow to fast); turning off the sound of the

video so that only the sounds produced by the bells are heard; alternating two cards of different colors (red card means that all students play when their turn comes, and blue card indicates a break) etc.



Picture 5. **Artwork from the video material of the song *Frère Jacques*, for the use of musical bells by the students of preparatory, first and second grade**



Picture 6. **Artwork from the video material of the song *Paris*, for the use of musical bells by the students of third and fourth grade**

Following the *Bells Club* workshop, we identified the benefits of a musical activity in which the sounds were combined with stories and images. First of all, the atmosphere created was pleasant and relaxing, thus contributing to the well-being of the students. From here, their involvement, both individually and in the group, was significant. Each participant realized the role he had, because if one of the bells was not heard, the melody was incomplete or if one of the bells of the same kind was not pressed correctly, the sound was weaker. By contributing to the success of the activity, the students realized how important they are; this was observed in some participants through the change of posture, from that of the student who avoided eye contact and had a bent body position, with that of the student expressing self-confidence. At the same time, I noticed how the students collaborated with each other both at the group level and at the collective level, so that, those who had the bell of the same color

wanted their sound to be clear, and, on the other hand, they motivated each other, not to lose any sound, so that the song is played entirely with the musical bells.

We have found that the *Bells Club* workshop influences and helps coordinate movements, acts on the development of dexterity and distributive attention, because throughout the activity, the student follows the visual and auditory material and plays it by pressing the bell button by hand.

The musical workshop, an activity that addresses all students, regardless of their level of training, is designed to contribute to the formation of skills. In each of the three moments of the activity, students were asked to analyze and identify sounds, durations and elements of musical form, activities that support cognitive development. As I said in the previous lines, I noticed that this type of activity contributes to the development of the attitudinal capacities, thus stimulating the self-confidence of the students. *Bells Club* was a workshop that required students to collaborate permanently with colleagues, with the aim of developing the necessary networking skills for life. Last but not least, by playing the musical bells and eye-hand coordination being involved, the musical activity aimed at developing psychomotor abilities. Therefore, we believe that the activity has been carried out successfully and has numerous benefits, which is why it deserves to be capitalized in other contexts.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The above findings, as well as careful study of the reactions of those who participated in similar activities, entitle us to say that the musical workshop can be a variant of making music education for primary school students, but also for other ages, having a strong echo over those carried out in the formal framework. The success of this type of activity will be ensured, in particular, by adapting the content to the needs of the students. At the same time, the person who organizes and supports the workshops needs to know and apply the characteristics of non-formal education, some of them being much different from those of formal education. Contributing to the development of personality, the music workshop can be a suitable context in which participants discover or refine their musical skills.

In addition to the positive results that can be obtained from the activities specific to non-formal education, organizing them with greater frequency is required as a necessity. The arguments supporting this statement are related to the number of requests from those who participated or learned from other students about what happened during the workshops, but also the characteristics of the new generations, whose needs can no longer be satisfied only by formal education.



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