

POLISH RESEARCH ON EDWIN E. GORDON'S THEORY OF MUSIC LEARNING – SELECTED AREAS AND DIRECTIONS

Maciej KOŁODZIEJSKI*

*Faculty of Education Studies, Pultusk Academy of Humanities, Mickiewicza 36B,
06-100 Pultusk, Poland*

* Corresponding author e-mail address: kolomaciej@poczta.onet.pl

Abstract

The author presents the hitherto prevailing Polish research on the adaptation and application of Edwin E. Gordon's theory of music learning. The presented elaboration is characterised with a review of experimental research, verifying – correlative research and some important implementation of music learning theory into the educational practice in Poland. The author makes a critical selection of research results in the search of new impulses for school practice in the area of common music education. The presented research explorations relate to pre-school period, early-school period and school period in the frames of common music education.

Key words: Gordon's Theory of Music Learning, audiation, musical aptitudes, musical achievements, pedagogical and musical research

1 Introduction in the Context of the Assumptions of Music Learning Theory

Edwin E. Gordon's theory of music learning is characterised with, unusual as far as Polish conditions are concerned, an innovative approach to music education because it puts emphasis on the processes of learning within conditions of social and at the same time individual participation in culture and music education [1-6]. Its uniqueness in Polish educational system is present in at least a few semantic areas [see also: 7]:

- GTML (Gordon's Theory of Music Learning) explains the normative ways of music learning oriented at musical development of a human being and a complete comprehension of the processes happening in music (which means that it presents how children and teenagers learn music individually or with some help of other people.) It also constitutes a set of helpful suggestions in the process of music learning [8].
- It emphasises the individual development of a human being following the natural potential (of musical abilities), it invigorates the development and the person's activities as well as the creative expression being present in raising child's readiness to expand their music improvisation abilities (tonal, rhythm and harmony not excluding the pedagogical work according to one's own, personal educational concepts educed partly from the concepts by C. Orff, E. Jaques-Dalcroze, Z. Kodaly).
- It assumes the individualisation of musical development of a human being (especially the tonal and rhythm abilities and aptitudes and subsequently the readiness and abilities of musical improvisation).
- It presents and names the course of musical development treating it as a phenomenon fully recognisable and able to direct and shape, initially in the non-formal music education with the participation of the stimulation by parents and the nearest surroundings, later the formal education by pre-school educators and music teachers at school through 10-minute sequential music trainings.
- It verifies methodologically and empirically the thesis about the possibilities of raising musical potential of a human being with the help of intentionally undertaken educational treatments (musical training with the use of tonal and rhythm patterns) and self-educational ones (listening to music, patterns singing, and music games).
- It presents accurately the way in which a human being develops musically since the

beginning of postnatal period with favourable and/or unfavourable family surroundings (inculturation). Inculturation is a process of growing into a culture or an assimilation of cultural heritage. The process of inculturation (acculturation) happens thanks to making the cultural asset available to a child (here in this case musical, but also visual, artistic, spatial, linguistic and verbal, environmental and others) [8].

- It uses the term of audiation, which focuses the main concepts of music learning theory and the audiative purpose of the musical development. Audiation is treated in music learning theory as independent musical thought and action [9].
- The assumed heterogeneity of a class is a challenge for a music teacher and it relates both to an individual musical development of a child and the class interactions deciding on the social character of learning.
- It underlines the dialogue in the acculturation and subsequently a child's music education [10].
- It is characterised with measurement and objectivity of the results of teaching and learning,
- In the didactic process GTML is characterised with four units: (1) learning and teaching, (2) didactic and pedagogical interactions, (3) versatility [11], and (4) methodical and organisational flexibility [12].

2 The Polish Research on GTML – Selected Directions and Areas of Search

In my opinion, music learning theory exists in Poland in three basic areas:

1. *Formal and educational research.* Formal-research is understood by the author of this article as the completion of the scientists' tasks regarding the purpose of epistemology based on concreteness, clearness and reality. It also regards the realisation of research related to statutory activities of a research and educational unit.
2. *Educational-popularising research.*
3. *Educational and practical utilisation.*

In the *formal and educational research* area the following activities have been selected:

- Standardisation of selected tools to measure the musical preparatory audiation, especially the developing musical aptitudes - Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation test (IMMA) and the audiation, particularly the stabilized musical aptitudes - Musical Aptitude Profile test (MAP).
- Verification-correlative research (looking for the relations and dependences between the elements of musical ability in the frames of implementation of Gordon's tools to measure the musical aptitude and verification of these research tools as well as looking for the relations between musical aptitudes and musical abilities (vocal, perceptual or instrumental).
- Correlative research (looking for the relations of musical aptitude with other intellectual aptitudes, especially non-musical achievements but the educational ones).
- Diagnosing research (the use of the musical aptitude level tests or a scale to measure the musical achievements level in the context of musical audiation development).
- Survey research (of review type, of survey type, of probing type on musical preferences, on concepts and teachers' common theories, on knowledge of the measurement tools in Gordon's theory, on teachers' plans, on children's preferences and interests).
- Experimental research (or quasi-experimental or experimental samples) (the implementation of GTML or its elements into the educational practice, the measurements of dependant variable through the experimental stimulation with the use tonal and rhythm patterns, developing of vocal, instrumental, improvisational achievements in music in the context of music learning theory).
- Comparative research (the relations of music learning theory assumptions to the musical-

educational concepts of C. Orff, Z. Kodaly, E. Dalcroze, S. Suzuki, R. Laban) [13].

- Adaptation research (the adaptation of measure tools to the Polish condition, theory assumptions adaptations, checking the directions and possibilities of the theory).
- Theoretical-practical research fulfilling the criterion of inter subjective verifiability and communication (publication of scientific, didactic, methodical materials, publication of research results, sharing the experience, exposing the research results by organising and taking part in scientific conferences, scientific-methodical, teachers' seminars, students' diploma seminars).
- Projection research on the implementation of the music teachers' educational model in general preparatory education with the use of GTML assumptions.

In the *educational-popularising research* area the following have been noted:

- Educational activity (organising trainings, workshops, seminars, discussion meetings, methodical conferences, concerts). For example in Łódź, the concerts at Łódź Philharmonic or theatre-musical meetings and jazz concerts [14],
- Running nurseries and kindergartens developing children's musical aptitudes in the context of Edwin E. Gordon's music learning theory assumptions,
- Running GTML popularising actions in Poland in cooperation with the homeland and foreign centres,
- The attempts of teaching music to children at nursery age,
- Organising of international seminars with the participation of scientists and GTML practitioners from the USA, Italy, Germany and Portugal,
- Publishing of information folder on GTML,
- Publishing of practical materials developing children's audiation at the pre-school and early-school age,
- Cooperation with the homeland publishing houses,
- Educating some new adepts (music instructors and music teachers) of Gordon's theory in practical, external activities,
- Designing the actions of international range with the participation of members of associations and societies connecting GTML practitioners,
- Propagating of GTML in local media and nationwide,
- Searching for sponsors of GTML propagation actions,
- Participation in European projects and the attempts of GTML adaptation in pre-school conditions with connecting Gordon's concept with multi-sided education (H. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences).

In the *educational and practical utilisation* area it generally relates to:

- Using the elements of Edwin E. Gordon's theory of music learning in the educational practice at kindergartens, in early-school education and school education, mainly in the area of introduction of tonal and rhythm patterns as well as implementation of elements of music improvisations (rhythm and melody),
- The attempts of connecting the idea of music improvisation in accordance to Edwin E. Gordon into the vocal groups activities and school choirs as the element of after-classes and after-school education,
- Using the tools of musical aptitude measurement, especially IMMA and MAP tests to diagnose the developing musical aptitudes (diagnostic direction, evaluative but also during musical school admission) in group of pupils of general preparatory schools and musical schools,
- Using the sequential musical interaction in the education of children at kindergarten and

- primary school (application trend),
- Opening musical kindergartens oriented at realisation of music teaching to young children according to GTML assumptions (adaptation trend),
- Using GTML to teach music to children at the nursery age (informal music teaching trend).

3 The Postulates for the Future

Edwin E. Gordon's music learning theory seems to be remaining in the adaptation-application phase in the conditions of Polish formal and informal education. What still needs to be empirically verified is the long-term interactions of the use of Gordon's methodology on children's musical audiation development from the nursery age to the age at which a pupil finishes their junior high school. There also exists a need of standardisation research on the remaining tools to measure the musical aptitudes, the readiness to rhythm and harmony improvisation as well as the battery of Iowa Test of Music Literacy used to measure the audiation aptitudes after the complete sequential cycle of education in accordance to GTML assumptions. Furthermore, teachers have to be bettered, particularly the ones who have declared the future use of the GTML assumptions in their school and after-school practices, especially in the phase of developing musical aptitudes, thus in the process of children's early-school education. There is also a need to change the mentality of music pedagogues, university lecturers and music teachers for the sake of the change of the way of thinking about music education, from behavioural to constructional which will make the process of social learning possible.

4 Conclusions

A separate trend in the educational research in Poland deals with the possibility of joining the traditional and modern solutions in the music education and upbringing, including the application and partially the adaptation of the American theory by E. E. Gordon in Poland. The theoretical framework still brings the research news about the role of the audiation in the musical education. However, it is worth undertaking the effort of further research, particularly the one of longitudinal application and verification character, outlying the exploration vectors of E. E. Gordon's theory of music learning [15]. For example, music teacher can conduct scientific research, jointly with researchers (as an action research or research in action), in the following areas (fig. 1).

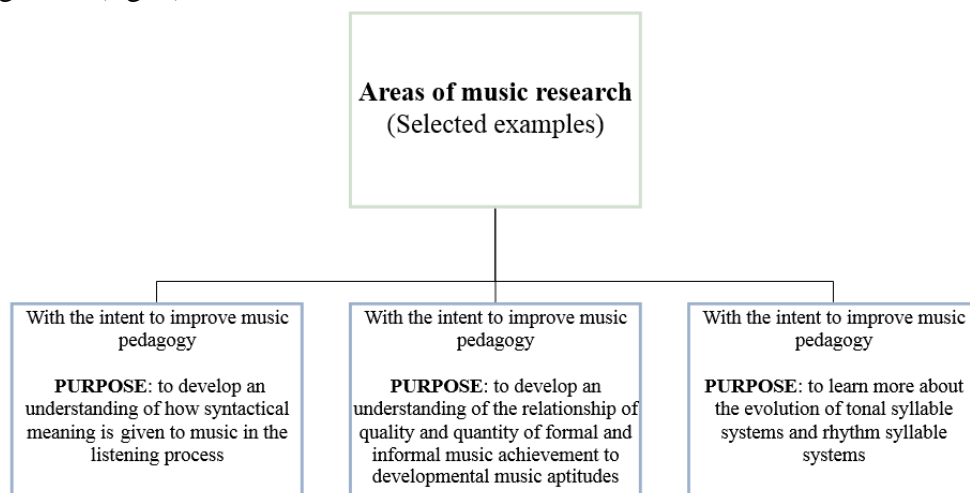


Fig. 1 Designs of music study (research) in educational process [quoted by 16]

We have to know, that objectivity research in music does not preclude sensitivity, nor does all objective research yield quantitative results. Although scientific research must be objective, objective research may or may not be scientific, because music is a humanistic discipline [17].

References

- [1] M. Kołodziejski: *Koncepcja Edwina E. Gordona w powszechnej edukacji muzycznej*. Wydanie drugie, poprawione. Płock: Wydawnictwo Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej, 2011.
- [2] M. Kołodziejski: *Application of Edwin E. Gordon's Concept in Common Music Education In The Spaces of Creation*. Scholar Research Journal, Vol. Nr. 9, Lithuania 2008, ss. 38-46.
- [3] M. Kołodziejski: *Stabilised musical aptitudes as measured in Polish pedagogy students using Advanced Measures of Music Audiation test by Edwin E. Gordon*, in *The Spaces of Creation*, Scholar Research Journal, Vol. 13, Lithuania 2010, s. 8-17.
- [4] M. Kołodziejski: *The Relationship between Stabilised Musical Aptitudes and Readiness for Harmonic and Rhythm Improvisation in Students with a Major in Music In Muzikas Zinatne Šodien: Pastavigais un Mainigais: zinatnisko rakstu krajums III*. Daugavpils: Daugavpils University, Akademiskais Apgads "Saule", 2011. - S. 205-220.
- [5] M. Kołodziejski: *Musical aptitudes vs. readiness of pupils and students for harmonic and rhythm improvisation based on Polish research* In *Problems in Music Pedagogy*, Daugavpils: Daugavpils University Press, 2010, Vol. 7 (2010), s. 47-65.
- [6] M. Kołodziejski: *Developing and stabilised musical aptitudes versus non-verbal production and readiness for improvisation in elementary school pupils demonstrating significant mathematical abilities* In *Journal of Educational Review*, New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2012, Vol. 5, Nr 2 (2012), s. 173-182.
- [7] B. Bonna & M. Kołodziejski & P. A. Trzos: *Musical-educational research of the adaptation of E. E. Gordon's theory of music learning in Poland* In *Review of Artistic Education*, Iasi: George Enescu University of Arts Nr 7-8 (2014), p. 7-19.
- [8] *Pedagogika*. Leksykon PWN ed. by B. Milerski and B. Śliwerski, Warszawa: PWN 2000, p. 85.
- [9] E. A. Zwolińska: *Audiacja. Studium teorii uczenia się muzyki Edwina E. Gordona*. [Audiation. A study of Edwin E. Gordon's theory of music learning] Bydgoszcz: Publishing House of UKW, 2011, p. 119-120.
- [10] A. Waluga, „Hudební dialog” u základů rozvoje zpěvu [“Musical dialogue” as the basis for the development of singing] In www.konference.osu.cz/khv/2010/file.php?fid=23 (of 20th March 2013).
- [11] M. Kołodziejski, *Muzyka i wielostronna edukacja dziecka*. [Music and versatile education of child] Częstochowa: WSL.
- [12] E. A. Zwolińska, *Kształcenie nauczycieli według teorii uczenia się muzyki Edwina E. Gordona*. [Educating teachers according to Edwin E. Gordon's theory of music learning] Bydgoszcz: UKW, 2012, p. 71-73.
- [13] E. E. Gordon, *Sekwencje uczenia się w muzyce. Umiejętności, zawartosc, motywy*. Wydawnictwo WSP: Bydgoszcz 1999.
- [14] *Mama w Lodzi: Najlepsi servis Lodskych mam*. Accessed [2013-11-20]. Available at: www.mamawlodzi.pl
- [15] B. Bonna & M. Kołodziejski & P. A. Trzos: *Musical-educational research of the adaptation of E. E. Gordon's theory of music learning in Poland* In *Review of Artistic Education*, Iasi: George Enescu University of Arts Nr 7-8 (2014), p. 7-19.
- [16] E. E. Gordon, *Designing objective research in music education. Fundamental considerations*. Chicago: GIA Publications Inc., 1986.
- [17] E. E. Gordon, *Designing objective research in music education. Fundamental considerations*. Chicago: GIA Publications Inc., 1986.