

# **PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING FOR SPECIAL ARTISTIC SCHOOLS IN POLAND**

Malgorzata Sierszenska–Leraczyk, Ph.D.

Academy of Music, Poznan, Poland

## **ABSTRACT:**

The author is both a trained psychologist and a musician. She is a lecturer at the Music Academy of Poznan and has worked in specialist music schools in Poznan as a teacher and a psychologist for 25 years. Since April 2008, she has been a leader of a project which aims to establish a network of psychological counselling initiatives in all types of art schools (music, arts, ballet) in Poland.

The paper presented during the 10th Asia-Pacific Conference of Giftedness includes information about Polish art schools and the teaching system of musically gifted children. It also records the history of specialist psychological counselling in music schools in Poland as well as a theoretical counselling model which is presently being introduced into professional practice.

Vocational artistic education at university level in Poland is provided by schools of higher education, called academies of music (n=8), fine arts (n=7), and theatre (n=3). They prepare students for jobs such as musicians, artists, actors, film directors and teachers of artistic subjects. Fine art and theatre academies accept candidates who have not previously

attended similar schools. On the other hand, most music academies (instrumental, conducting and composing, theory of music) require candidates to have particular skills that can only be acquired in first and second degree music schools.

This paper deals with the special character of artistic education in Poland, in particular with respect to music in primary and secondary levels considered from the perspective of psychological counselling.

### **Artistic schools in Poland**

At present, there are 450 artistic primary and secondary schools in Poland, with about 77,000 students and 14,000 teachers.

*Ballet schools* (n=5), which provide full professional dancing qualifications, are attended by students from the age of 11 to 19. These are schools whereby academic and artistic education is combined. Their graduates can continue their education at university level in the dance department of Music Academy in Warsaw to widen their theoretical knowledge in the area of dance.

Education in *fine art schools* (n=63) lasts four years. These are secondary level art schools for students aged 16–20 who receive both artistic and academic education.

*Music schools* need to be described separately due to their complex structure, length of education and curriculum.

## **Music Schools in Poland**

The different types of music schools are defined by the decree of the Minister of Culture on 29 December 2004.

State music schools either combine academic instruction with music or provide only music education. The different types of schools are as follows:

- First degree comprehensive music schools with a six-year curriculum providing pupils with elementary music as well as general education at the primary school level.
- Second degree comprehensive music schools with a six-year curriculum, preparing students to work as musicians as well as providing them with general education at middle and secondary school levels leading to examinations for the secondary school final certificate.
- First degree music schools with a six- or four-year curriculum, depending on the pupils' age, where elementary musical education is provided.
- Second degree music schools with a six- or four-year curriculum, depending on specialization, which prepare them for the job of a musician.

In practice the schools often exist as:

- Combined music schools which are combinations of different types and degrees of music schools.
- Combined schools which are first and second degree level schools.
- Combined schools which include comprehensive music schools of first and second degree.
- Combined artistic schools which comprise music schools and other artistic schools.

Apart from the above mentioned distinction, state music schools can be divided into two groups, i.e. those managed by the Ministry of Culture (215 schools with 48,500 students), and the others by local authorities (54 schools with 18,000 students). The body responsible for the supervision of both groups of schools is the Warsaw-based Artistic Education Centre.

In addition, there are over 140 non-state music schools (private or public). The number of pupils who attend them is not known. Although some follow the curriculum of parallel state schools, most of them aim at teaching music and musical appreciation in a simple way, similar to those offered by the Yamaha schools.

### **Specific features of vocational music education**

Specific features of vocational music education are influenced by a number of different factors and conditions. At the core of the subject matter, **music** is taught as an art form. Proper teaching of would-be musicians means introducing them into the realm of artistic-musical values and mastering the technique of playing. The scope of the curriculum also encompasses understanding of the language of music, its semantics and syntax, learning and internalising musical notation, developing aesthetic-emotional sensitivity to music, and comprehension of musical works. The process requires a wide context which includes a combination of music subjects, philosophy, aesthetics, history and theory of music (Konaszkiwicz, 2002). Unlike other teaching contexts, this kind of education inevitably involves cognitive-perceptive, sensor-motor and emotional-experience spheres.

As a consequence of one-to-one tuition, the teacher has a peculiar influence on the pupil, not to be encountered elsewhere. Notwithstanding the latest teaching theories and pedagogical

role models, the **master – pupil relationship** is still the best possible approach in music education (Konaszkiwicz, 2002; Manturzevska, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1995). This model of individual guidance can be traced to Antiquity and biblical texts.

Distinctiveness of music education is also conditioned by the specialist **music school system** which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Poland (Jankowski, 2002). Music schools are institutions of unique atmosphere which provide broad music education, instructions on playing an instrument as well as knowledge of music and humanities.

Finally, the time needed to obtain qualifications is similar to any other discipline. It usually involves more than a dozen years of intensive work, practice and consultations in a very close master – pupil relationship. To receive full qualifications, one needs intensive training of many years' standing under the guidance of a competent educator. This is why such education must begin early in life, in childhood, before the age of ten. Needless to say, unlike in any other vocational education, social-emotional support of the child's first environment, the family environment, is indispensable (M. Sierszenska-Leraczyk, 2008). Master – pupil relationship

In Polish state music schools, one-to-one tuition dominates. The pupil's progress in the process of education and his future career as a musician greatly depend on the strength of the relationship, the teacher's personality and competence. The role of the tutor was noted by L. Sosniak (1985) when analysing the development of musically gifted pupils, and M. Manturzevska (1990) who took into account contemporary Polish musicians.

A special pupil – teacher relationship is worth noticing. M. Manturzevska (1990) described it as a “master – disciple” relationship. Research results of Polish musicians and biographies

reveal that such relationship is frequently a determinant of exquisite achievements in performing music and artistic development of the pupil.

The master–teacher often develops such a close and versatile relationship with the student that he is concerned with the student’s whole life. Not only does he guide performing skills but also influences his choice of books, leads discussions and spends his free time with the pupil, or assists in making important personal decisions. Additionally, the teacher introduces the student into the professional environment, the realms of musical values and conventions, supports in stage debuts, oversees repertoire and participation in concerts. The relationship sometimes lasts many years after graduation. Research shows that the absence of such a relationship with deep emotional bonding, not to mention the lack of “masters”, is unfavourable for the process, duration and quality of a musician’s stage career.

### **Psychological counselling for artistic schools in Poland**

Specific problems that pupils from all artistic schools in Poland encounter are not being sufficiently understood by psychologists–counsellors for pupils of the so-called “general” schools. That is why attempts have been made to make amends to the situation.

So far, some specialist psychological counselling has been made available solely to students of music schools. Initiated by Prof. Maria Manturzevska, the cooperation between psychologists and music teachers first started in 1956 with counselling for music schools in four cities (Warsaw, Poznan, Gdansk, Krakow) .A counselling office in Warsaw Music Academy came into being in 1972, and in Poznan Music Academy in 1991. All of them operated under the auspices of the Psychology Department of Warsaw Music Academy. They adjusted specialist psychological diagnosis methods for the Polish population, such as ability

and achievements tests, personality tests, questionnaires, and research on music education concepts. Nowadays, only a small number of pupils from music schools have access to full specialist assistance.

### **Psychological counselling model for artistic schools in Poland**

- Aim: Specialist psychological assistance for pupils, parents, and teachers from artistic schools, including artistically gifted children from other schools.
- In April 2008, a programme council was established on the basis of Artistic Education Centre and expert psychologists with experience of working in artistic schools and competence at art and music.
- In September 2008, specialist counselling offices will start operating in Warsaw, Poznan and Bydgoszcz and covering all artistic schools in Poland.
- A specialist office is planned to be opened in every region. There are 14 regions which are supervised by an inspector from the Artistic Education Centre.
- Regional psychological offices for artistic schools are designed for pupils, parents, and teachers as well as school psychologists. At present, few schools employ psychologists.
- Main theoretical concepts: Psychological counselling is connected with wider theoretical and research-based issues, derived from expertise in various branches of psychology, such as general, developmental, clinical, social, cognitive and vocational psychology. It is also interlinked with sociology, pedagogy and medicine. It takes into account the impact of global economic and cultural changes, which constantly require the theory and practice to be further improved and updated. Psychological counselling in artistic schools cannot be separated from thorough knowledge of the

psychology of music, psychology of art, development of musical and artistic skills, including characteristic features of particular artistic professions. All in all, theoretical concepts are interdisciplinary in nature and incorporate elements of axiology and ethics.

## References:

Jankowki W., (2002): *Polskie szkolnictwo muzyczne*, Warszawa.

Konaszkiwicz Z., (2002): *Szkice z pedagogiki muzycznej*, Warszawa.

Manturzevska M., (1986): *Musical Talent In the Light of Biographical Research*,  
“Musicalische Begabung Finden und Fordern”, Regensburg.

Manturzevska M. (1990): *A Biographical Study of the Life – Span Development of Professional Musicians*, symposia: “Musical Excellence in Childhood”, Manchester.

Manturzevska M., (1994): Das Elterliche Umwelt Herausragender Musiker [in:]  
“Musikpaedagogische Forschungsberichte”, 11-22.

Manturzevska M., (1995): *Studia nad biografiami muzyków jako metoda wykrywania nowych zależności i czynników w dziedzinie badań nad talentami, ich genezą i rozwojem*, [In:] J.

Leonski, T. Rzepa (eds) *Zastosowania metody biograficznej w psychologii i socjologii*,  
Szczecin.

Sierszenska-Leraczyk M., (2008): *Środowisko rodzinne a ciągłość i jakość edukacji muzycznej*, praca doktorska - maszynopis, Warszawa.

Sinick D., (1979): *Joys of Counseling*, Muncie-Indiana.

Sośniak L., (1985): *Learning to Be a Concert Pianist*, [In:] B. S. Bloom (ed) *Developing Talent in Young People*, New York.