

# CONNECTION BETWEEN MUSIC LESSONS AND INVOLVEMENT WITH MUSIC AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL

**Marit Moistlik**

Tallinn University, Estonia  
E-mail: moistlik@gmail.com

## Abstract

*The article deals with the relationship between experience and memories gained in music lessons of general education school and current music activity and attitude towards music and analyses the effect of that experience on musical behaviour in further life. The focus is on music teacher's role in that process. The sample of the qualitative study consisted of 20 university students, ten of whom were actively involved with music (singing in the university choir) and ten were not. A phenomenographic approach was used to analyse the interviews. As the result of the analysis, four profiles were developed – two of the profiles characterising those involved with music and two those not involved with music. The profiles are viewed in the article in the context of the experience of music lessons at school. Gaining awareness of those profiles may help music teachers to understand different behaviours of pupils and their relationship with music as a subject, and create diverse learning situations for representatives of different profiles.*

**Key words:** *informal learning, involvement with music, music education of general education school, participation in music, phenomenography.*

## Introduction

Artistic creative involvement can be especially important in teenage years – music often forms a part of teenagers' identity filling their daily life (Ruud, 1995) and constitutes a means of self-help (Lehtonen & Shaughnessy, 2002). Estonian studies (Rüütel & Pill, 2008) have revealed that three-quarters of the pupils interviewed mainly or often relieve their stress by means of music (listening to music, music making, singing). However, after leaving school the respective proportion is only two-thirds. What causes such difference? When the objective of education is to systematically develop each child's thinking and capabilities, it is clear that music occupies a unique and necessary role in it, because music provides a means for gaining insights into one's inner world. Music allows us to know, discover, understand, share and express our feelings, aesthetic beauty, thoughts, structure time and space, self-knowledge, self and group identity and wholeness (Hodges, 2005). Musical performance involves four psychic functions: (1) thinking, needed to translate notation into music; (2) feeling, needed to give expression to the music; (3) perception, the awareness of the musician of his or her body while playing an instrument or singing; and (4) intuition, in order to get to the core of the composer's inspiration (Priestley, 1975). Music and musical performance enable a person to find his or her „own voice” (both literally and figuratively); accept and be accepted, be united in different ways and be connected with companions (Stige, Ansell, Elefant & Pavlicevic, under publication, due in 2010). All that should be offered by music lessons.

Estonian music education is characterised by an emphasis on singing. A pilot study by the author (Mõistlik, 2007; Mõistlik, 2008) mapped the subdivision of activities carried out by music teachers during music lessons in basic school as follows: the majority of the lesson time was spent on singing (39%), followed by theoretical part (33%). The rest of the time was used for music making and other activities (13% and 15 % respectively). The traditional approach to music education is not necessarily sufficient for all pupils. That has been expressively illustrated by Green's (2008) study on informal learning in the context of music lessons. Green has described informal learning in music through three characteristics: (1) the music learned has to be chosen by the learners themselves, i.e. music that they already know (as compared to formal educational settings, in which the main idea is to deal with music that is not familiar to pupils, i.e. to introduce learners to new music, which is usually selected by the teacher); (2) the acquisition of skills involves the method of copying recordings by ear (as compared to the development of musical literacy, which is considered important in formal music education); (3) informal learning takes place alone as well as alongside friends, through self-directed learning, peer-directed learning and group learning, not like the pupil–teacher relationship in formal education.

According to Small (1999), music is not as much a work of music as musicking i.e. music making: „Musicking means participation”. And one can participate by listening, performing, rehearsing, composing, dancing. As a means for assessing participation, Stige, a Norwegian music therapist, has proposed a model of participation in music, which contains five strategies: (1) non-participation; (2) silent participation; (3) conventional participation; (4) adventurous participation; and (5) unusual/weird participation (Stige et al., 2009). A study carried out in Estonia (Selke, 2007) dealt with important activities in music lessons, which were asked to be ranked by music teachers, as well as by general public over the Internet. Music teachers considered most important conducting choirs and ensembles, whereas Internet respondents ranked musical entertainment as first.

As a music teacher, the author has considered the following questions while standing in front of a class or reflecting on teaching music in general: (1) What is important for pupils in a music lesson?; (2) What will pupils remember from their music lessons after they have left school?; and (3) What is the role of the music teacher in that?

The objective of the current research was to analyse the experience and memories gained in music lessons of general education school in relation with the current musical activity of the person and his or her attitude towards music; how music lessons have influenced musical behaviour of a person after graduating from general education school; what is the role of the music teacher in that process.

#### **Research questions:**

- How are the experience of music lessons and later involvement with music related?
- How is the impact of the personality of the music teacher on pupils' later involvement with music assessed?

#### **Methodology of Research**

##### *Sample*

The sample consisted of young adults (university students) who were not directly involved with school any more, but had recently graduated from general education school and hence likely to remember their music lessons well. Altogether 20 (ten male and ten female) students between ages 19 to 28 participated in the study. Five of them were singing in the university female choir and five in the university male choir. The rest, 10 respondents, were the same gender as their course mates who were singing in the university choirs, who were not actively involved with music at the moment (i.e. according to people who recommended them, they were not singing or playing instruments in any collective). The sample size was constructed in order to allow data

saturation (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006) as well gender equality among participants. In the current study continuous participation in the activity of a vocal or instrumental group is viewed as „active involvement with music”.

### *Study design*

For data collection semi-structured interview was applied, which was administered to all students participating in the study by the author of the article. The interview plan consisted of nine open and two scaled questions. The questions fell into subtopics as follows: (a) the most vivid memory from the music lessons (when the memory was negative, at the end of the interview a question was asked, whether the student remembered something positive as well, and vice versa); (b) the activities used in the music lessons, what activities could have been used more frequently and what the respondent would have wanted to learn that was not taught in the music lessons; (c) what was the teacher’s role in creating a relationship between the respondent and music; (d) what was the purpose of the music lessons at school and what it could have been; (e) the importance of music while attending school and at present (assessment on a 10-point scale where 10 was *very important*). It was presumed that in the process of recalling school music lessons information important and meaningful for the respondents would emerge. The study proceeded from the point of view that people may forget much of their earlier life but they will always remember the most vivid happenings (Tulving, 2002).

### *Procedures*

In order to find respondents, an e-mail connection was established with the elders of university female and male choirs. The e-mail briefly introduced the objective of the research and asked their permission to visit a choir rehearsal when convenient for them in order to find five volunteers from each choir (altogether ten) who would share their memories from their school music lessons in the form of an interview. The course mates recommended by the choir members were contacted by e-mail or phone. The interviews took place on the university premises with the duration varying between 16 to 48 minutes.

An interview is usually defined as a purposeful conversation and is the most widely spread method of data collection in qualitative research (Berg, 2001). Initially the interview plan consisted of eleven questions, after the first interviews the number of basic questions dropped to ten.

During the interviews Gillham’s (2000) four interview stages were followed. In the *introductory phase*, the researcher introduced themselves as well as the research project and gave information about the approximate time the interview would take. That was followed by the *opening development of the interview*, during which some informal questions were asked. Thereafter the *central core of the interview* took place in keeping with the interview plan. The formulation and sequence of the questions depended on the situation of the moment and interaction, but the interview always began with the suggestion: „Would you, please, describe your most vivid memory from school music lessons”, to help the interviewee step back in time. The interview concluded with the question, „Is there something my questions have omitted but you would like to talk about in connection with school music lessons or music in your life in general?” The interview was *brought to a close* by drawing conclusions from the interview, writing down the age of the interviewee, asking for the permission to contact if a need should arise and thanking for participating in the interview by handing over a small souvenir.

### *Methods of analysis*

All interviews were digitally recoded and thereafter transcribed. The data retrieved from the interviews was approached phenomenographically (Marton, 1981). First topics were identified (Gay et al., 2006). Six topic categories emerged. In those categories the responses of the

interviewees involved with music and those not involved with music were analysed separately and gender wise. The analysis revealed four categories describing the phenomenon studied, which in relation to each other formed a horizontal structure (Uljens, 1990).

## Results of Research

While presenting results, firstly six topic categories, then two profiles and four sub-profiles are outlined.

### *Topic categories*

Six topic categories emerged in the interviews: (1) the most vivid memory from music lessons; (2) an emotion from music lessons; (3) the purpose of music lessons; (4) personality of the music teacher; (5) the importance of music; (6) involvement/ lack of involvement with music at present.

#### *(1) The most vivid memory from music lessons*

There were memories from each stage of school. Two categories became distinct: memories deriving from music; memories deriving from the atmosphere of the lesson.

Memories deriving from music could be divided in two:

• *I* – memories:

“At that moment at secondary school when I was listening to that “Solveig’s song” from “Peer Gynt”, the world seemed to have stopped” (F10, 24 years of age).

• *we* – memories:

“We were singing a runic song in form 12 – a powerful, uniting activity” (F2, 20).

Memories deriving from the atmosphere of the lesson:

Interviewees remembered circumstances related to the teacher, learning and their feelings in the lessons.

“In form 1 or 2 the teacher asked me to go to the blackboard, saying, “You are learning to play the piano and also solfeggio – why don’t you come and show us how a note is drawn!” and I went and drew a note and was hugely satisfied” (M1, 26).

“In primary school the teacher put on music and told us, “now you are in the Space” and we all really had to be there” (F7, 19).

“There was that trainee who demonstrated a Carl Orff’s innovative way of teaching music, which was dance-like: we stood up, clapped our hands and in spite of the movement being minimal, it was really funny” (F8, 22).

“I don’t know if you know that “A banana from here and banana from there” thing? ... Well, that was a very funny exercise, so that ... she [teacher] imitated the movements with her whole body, well, you see, she, well, she did those exercises. And it simply looked hilarious” (F4, 21).

“Those lessons just went by, since I’m not musically gifted, hence I don’t have any vivid memories” (M7, 22).

#### *(2) An emotion from music lessons*

The emotions received from music lessons were mainly described with positive words:

(very) fine, I liked it, cheerful, merry, bright, enjoyable, pleasant, cool, soothing and relaxing.

It was considered important that music lessons differed from the lessons of other subjects, such as mathematics or physics and felt relaxing, soothing and enjoyable:

“A positive connection with music, fine, soothing, a casual lesson after maths or physics” (F7, 19).

“You didn’t have to think much, like in maths or physics – or even if you did, it was enjoyable” (M1, 26).

“As compared to maths, it was cosier, no test papers or much homework” (M7, 22).

There was also negativity, which was not as much related to the dislike of music as to the content of the lessons. For example, there were opposite feelings towards singing:

“Very bad feelings ... actually, I objected singing most of all, especially when I had to do it somewhere in front of the class – if there had been other activities in those lessons, my feelings would probably be very different” (M8, 21).

“Singing lessons were cheerful and enjoyable, it was cool that we could take time out – otherwise it [the music lesson] was rather boring” (M7, 22).

### *(3) The purpose of music lessons*

- A need to more widely introduce the world of music, to expand horizons:

“To make everybody understand music to some extent, to bring people distant music closer to it, so that they can discover music” (F10, 24).

- Opening up opportunities to participate in music:

“To bring music closer to children to prevent them from thinking that, “I’m not able to sing, I don’t carry a tune, music is not for me”” (F1, 24).

- To strengthen the feeling of togetherness through joint activities:

“The purpose – joint activity. One of the few lessons where the whole class does something together” (M8, 21).

- To provide pupils with cultural experience. To ensure that music lessons contain mainly music and not so much factual knowledge, which is very common in other subjects:

“Each music lesson is cultural experience, not a history lesson. No single facts, titles of works of music, composers and dates” (M5, 20).

### *(4) Personality of the music teacher*

Among positive features of a music teacher the following were underlined: favourable attitude towards pupils, warmth, joy, positive disposition, but also discipline, although it should not be expressed as strictness:

“Favourable attitude and encouragement are enthralling. To be free, not as stern as other lessons” (F1, 24).

“A great and warm personality – not dry, so that children would like to return to the lessons, since music is such a pleasant thing one should want to engage in with joy” (F6, 24).

### *(5) The importance of music at present and while attending school*

The respondents were asked to assess the question on a 10-point scale, where 10 was *very important* and 1 *unimportant*. Assessments ranged from two points to ten. The assessments by students currently actively involved with music differed from those by students currently not involved with music.

The importance of music at present was high among students singing in a university choir

(between 6 and 10 points) and also while attending school (between 4 to 9 points). There was also an upward trend represented:

“At basic school 6, upper secondary school 9 and at present 10 points. I wouldn’t imagine my life without music any more” (F3, 20).

The assessments of the importance of music at present by students not actively involved with music were between 3 and 9 points. The importance while attending school was rated with 2 to 8 points. Both an increase and decrease in the importance could be observed:

“At school 7 to 8 points, at present 3 to 4” (M7, 22).

“At present 9 points. Very important, although I don’t play any instruments and cannot sing very well. Music is playing all the time, it creates a good mood. At school 5 points: I liked it, but it wasn’t so important” (F6, 24).

*(6) Why I am involved / not involved with music at present*

• Continuity.

The students currently actively involved with music joined university choirs right after they had been admitted to the university, since that represented a value in itself they did not want to do without:

“I had the firm idea of joining the choir right when I was admitted to the university” (F5, 23).

“I had been singing in choirs for years and I didn’t want to give it up when I came to the university” (M2, 23).

• The experience of beauty.

An opportunity to experience something aesthetically beautiful while being a part of that process.

“It gives you something, brings sunshine in your day. ... Beauty, harmony that one can’t find anywhere else” (F3, 20).

“An opportunity to feel something beautiful – it’s like meditation, like, I’m singing and getting all other thoughts out of my mind” (M5, 20).

• Academic benefit.

Male interviewees underlined the academic benefit - an opportunity to receive credit points for singing, which (at least at the moment of joining the choir) had been a great motivator for them. As time progressed, the importance of that factor faded.

“I came to the university and I needed credit points. My course mate was already singing in the choir and so I joined, too, and it was infectious, although at basic school attending choir rehearsals was compulsory” (M4, 24).

As advantages of singing in a choir, the following circumstances were listed: good company, a meeting point, joy of music making, stress relief, entertainment, success experience, but also a habit of singing in a choir, which began at general education school.

• Lack of time.

Those who did not continue their involvement with music right after having been admitted to the university had not found time for it during the studies any more:

“I’ve been thinking about the university choir, but it is the matter of an initiative and I’ve become lazy, don’t bother any more – not that I didn’t like singing any more” (F8, 22).

“Coming to the university, the change of environment, the area of specialisation – those took my

attention and time. Although in my school days I was actively involved, now it's fizzled out" (F10, 24).

"I've been thinking of playing the guitar or something else fairly easy, but haven't come to grips with it. There are things with higher priority at the moment" (M10, 20).

- Listening to music.

The interviews revealed a transition from active involvement with music to listening to music, which may have been even more important for the respondents than the activities at music lessons:

"In my schooldays I didn't listen to as much music as now. The importance of music – listening to it, attending concerts – is continuously increasing and obviously so also in the future" (F6, 24).

"I don't play any instruments, don't sing, but listen to music" (M8, 21).

- Irrelevance.

Not being involved with music may be related to the fact that a person has not perceived that as an important need of his or her daily life:

"Music isn't so important that I'd definitely need it in my life very day – I suppose I'd get used to not hearing it on daily basis" (F9, 21).

"Sometimes I whistle to myself, but otherwise I don't see any need to express myself through music" (M7, 22).

### *Profiles*

Among topic categories two sub-profiles for those involved with music and two for those not involved with music emerged. The profile of the people involved with music may be called "Music as a lifestyle". It can be divided into: (a) involvement with music since childhood; and (b) involvement with music after leaving school. The profile of people not involved with music also fell in two: (a) unmotivated; and (b) distant from music.

In the profile of those involved with music the involvement with music has been a lifestyle since childhood or after leaving school.

#### *(a) Involvement with music since childhood*

The representatives of that sub-profile have been continuously involved with music and their involvement with music is open to listeners. They have been supported by their family who has also been involved with music:

"My mother plays a zither in a folk music group and my grandpa is the leader of that group. That's mother's father then. He plays the accordion very well. We have all instruments at home. Course, we don't have a real piano or drums, but a synthesizer and then wind instruments and I think grandpa has the greatest influence. Well, he's a seasoned player - he's been playing for some fifty years or so and is still playing and actually doing that music business. That is like... he's like a model or so" (M2, 23).

This category is also characterised by having attended music school or received private tuition on playing an instrument:

"Five years old or so –, then I went to X music school to learn to play the piano. And in connection with that piano, when I went to the first grade at school, I had such music knowledge that I knew more than anybody else in my class. I already knew what 'potato' [note] goes where and how to draw it" (M1, 26).

Active participation in the school choir/ ensemble has played an important role:

“There [at basic school] I already started singing in the choir. And from then on all sorts of singing competitions followed, you know. Exactly like with this, isn’t it. So it happened, I don’t know. Like for ever, from the second grade on, I’ve been singing in a choir” (F5, 23).

The importance of music in their life was continuously assessed very highly:

“Very important! As I put it earlier, it’s like the principal source of work, so it’s really very important” (M1, 26).

“I would give it a hundred points! Yes, “very important”. All the things I appreciate – they all are very important things in my life” (M3, 21).

*(b) Involvement with music after leaving school*

Due to their teacher’s critical attitude in the music lessons the representatives of this sub-profile did not find that they were musical or that it would be appropriate for them to open themselves through music. It had been only after leaving the school that they had got involved with music independently and on their own:

“Maybe other people don’t really care if somebody tells them, “You’d rather never ever try to sing at all”. ... But, indeed, such things are the most negative, if you are told something like that... If you indeed, like, tell a ninth grader into his face such a thing. Or an eighth grader, who will really take the attitude, that “why am I trying at all”, if you’re told “you’d rather try not to sing”, look at others singing instead. This, you know, robs you of any wish to, really” (M9, 27).

At the same time, the memory of the negative attitude of the music teacher may weaken over the time and the person will find courage to resume his or her attempts to express him or herself through music:

“I’m trying to teach myself to play the guitar. But as for singing, I don’t even try. (Laughter) It’s all in the past. Anyway, the only thing there is, is what I’m doing with the guitar. But I feel I could know more. ... It seems to offer something else in addition to that everyday thing – it’s like change. Change and you feel you’ve achieved something. The need to achieve, to be something! Those are the two. Indeed. I don’t rehearse to give a concert somewhere, to start a band or something – no! Simply to give something to myself” (M9, 27).

Those not involved with music were divided as follows:

*(a) Unmotivated*

In this sub-profile an important motivating role of music teacher(s) of general education school emerged. Because of the music teacher(s) pupils had discovered their musicality and developed a wish to actively participate in music (e.g. as singers in a choir):

“I don’t have an especially good voice though; nevertheless I was always picked to sing in all sorts of ensembles and other places. That is, then I had to first sing alone, but to my mind I was singing more like a crow, meaning, my singing voice wasn’t any good. But I was always, like, encouraged to sing and do things. ... And she [the teacher] was always encouraging. That is, it’s thanks to her to a great deal that I did all those performances, and the choir, and those ensembles” (F10, 24).

“And I got into the swing again. That was injected namely by that teacher. She had earlier also injected it into others” (M6, 26).

They are not actively involved with music at the university any more. As the reasons, the interviewees gave the changed priorities due to the lack of time, and also the wish to take a break after an active music life at school:

“I’ve been thinking about joining the university choir, but it’s the matter of an initiative and I’ve become lazy, don’t bother any more. That’s why. Not that I didn’t like singing any more. But sometimes it’s so that if you’ve been doing it [singing in a choir] for a long-long time, it’s good to take a little break” (F8, 22).

“X has coaxed me to that university choir couple of times, but I haven’t made it there yet” (M6, 26).

“The thing is that the area of specialisation I majored in was most important for me and that was followed by everything related to it, all those activities. I think many people have it like that, being actively involved in it [music] at school and later it peters out” (F10, 24).

An important factor is the lack of involvement with music and the absence of the habit of expressing themselves through music of the family members at home (as compared to the profile “Involvement with music since childhood”):

“Because I think that my family has been very distant from music, I’m the first one in the whole family to sing at all. In this respect it [music lesson] fulfilled its purpose, since it brought me closer to music” (F10, 24).

#### *(b) Being distant from music*

This sub-profile unites those for whom music has not become important at school or at university. One of the factors why music has not reached their life may be the scarceness of involvement with music at home:

“As a child I didn’t hear much music and then I didn’t know anything about that pop music at all, not that I’d know much more now” (M8, 21).

An interviewee did not make contact with music as a subject at school and that caused reluctance:

“But as I wasn’t especially musical and didn’t like singing... I didn’t feel it was for me after all and I preferred not to go to those singing lessons. Well, it was like an alien element for me and I didn’t feel natural. It made me feel estranged. I didn’t go there with any sort of good, pleasant feeling” (M8, 21).

“Well, for me music gets lost among other subjects, for it to be like music or so. Well, at some point there was that something interesting happened, a single piece of music or something. But at the same time it was totally monotone with other subjects at secondary school, too. [Was] somewhere between sciences and history, but didn’t stand out, really” (M7, 22).

Although music has not become very important while attending the university, there may still exist a desire of self-expression through playing an instrument in the future:

“But I know that if only I knew how to play the piano, I’d buy myself a piano and play it every evening, definitely would play, if I had a piano. The piano is probably the greatest ideal I have. Playing the piano” (M8, 21).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The research under discussion aimed to find answers to the questions, how university students assess the experience gained from school music lessons and their memories in connection with their current musical activity and attitude towards music and how that has affected their musical behaviour after graduating from general education school. Relying on the research, it is possible to establish that there exists a link between music-loving environment at home, active

participation in music during school years (e.g. being a member of the school choir or ensemble or attending music school) and later involvement with music in adult life (sub-profile „Involvement with music since childhood”). As a result of the comparison with the sub-profile „Unmotivated”, it may be concluded that the activity and favourable attitude (in some cases also encouragement) of the music teacher opens the way to the world of music for many, which, however, remains too delicate in a new environment (university) to continue with (e.g. as a member of the university choir or another music group).

The four sub-profiles described do not form a hierarchy, but are open; allowing a representative of the „Unmotivated” profile to transfer to the „Involvement with music since childhood” profile in case there emerges a powerful motivator. The transition from one profile to another may take place either at general education school or university. Therefore, as a parent or teacher, it is important to understand and support the pupil/student (child) according to their needs and abilities and seek available alternative ways to arouse interest in music.

The comparison of the most vivid memories from school music lessons with Hodges’ (2005) model revealed many parallels with five out of ten postulates listed by him. Among the vivid memories experienced in music lessons, personally experienced moments can be compared to Hodges’ self-knowledge, where the role of music is life-changing and learning experience provides powerful insights into the private inner world of an individual. Such very personal vivid experience is also related to self-identity, where self-determination is achieved by means of diverse musical activities and experience. The experience of group unity is comparable to Hodges’ group-identity, where music helps to strengthen the connection of the participants who share common ideas, beliefs and customs.

Recognition from the teacher and humorous environment were also remembered and appreciated, which can be related to the feelings naturally related to music. The vivid memory may also have faded, when it was perceived that „Music is not for me”. This leads to the conclusion that the wholeness of the pupil had not been entirely involved in the lesson, since music creates a means for the interaction of body and mind. This gives rise to the question, whether the traditional approach in music education permits to rely on informal teaching likely to involve pupils for whom for some reason or other music lessons are boring and negative (Green, 2008). The remaining five postulates were mentioned outside the most vivid memories. For example, aesthetic beauty was given as one reason for being involved with choral singing.

The purpose of music lessons was viewed as opening up the world of music, introducing it in order to generate interest. It was especially highly appreciated by people with non-musical family background. Respondents, who had attended music school simultaneously with general education school, did not pay as much attention to that, since they had received their in-depth knowledge and affirmation of their musicality outside of school music lessons. Parallels can be drawn with a study carried out in Estonia (Selke, 2007), where the participants of an Internet survey ranked the activities of music lessons as follows (the first five): musical entertainment, teaching of notation, enrichment of emotional world, enrichment of national identity and conducting choirs and ensembles. Music teachers participating in the same study ordered their responses in the following way: conducting choirs and ensembles, teaching of notation, relaxation/getting to know oneself through music, enrichment of emotional world and carrying out musical activity.

The current study revealed that singing is a very frequent component in music lessons (although it seems to be less so in the upper secondary school) and an appreciated activity among the interviewees who sing in university choirs. However, singing may also be a very disagreeable activity, over-exploitation of which in music lessons can lead to a negative musical self-image. This raises the necessity to vary the content of music lessons to allow as many pupils as possible to discover music and themselves in a positive way. The author is aware (relying on the interviews) of the need to vary even within the same activity (in the given case singing) to break the routine and preconceptions pupils have developed about their capability or their liking of that activity.

The importance of music was higher for the students singing in university choirs than for those not involved with music. It was interesting however, that there occurred the tendency

where the assessment of the importance of music while attending school was not at all related to music as such but it had been made important by the music teacher (occurred in sub-profiles „Involvement with music after leaving school” and „Unmotivated”). The importance created by the music teacher occurred in both positive (favourable attitude, encouraging, involving in the choir or other collective) and negative key (attaching too much importance to the subject, e.g. at a science-biased school; marking without differentiation).

Marking has always been problematic in skill-based subjects (music is classified as such at school) and that was also reflected by the interviews. In Estonian music pedagogy the yardstick has traditionally been singing, carrying a tune (Selke, 2007), which, because of being too specific, is not necessarily suitable and also adequate means for measuring musicality (Green, 2008). At this point the author would like to draw a possible parallel with Stige’s model of five strategies of participation in music (Stige et al., under publication, due in 2010), since those may include a potential for music teachers to understand different patterns of musical behaviour in their lessons. There does not seem to be any clear development in the strategies, because a) each strategy has its strengths and limitations, b) fieldwork shows that participants move back and forth between different strategies depending on what is suitable for the current situation (or suitable from their point of view).

In the sub-profile „Being distant from music” pupils’ earlier distance from music due to the family background was significant. Given its limitations, school is not able to bring music closer and make it more familiar to pupils, because the interviewees repeatedly mentioned the importance of the feeling in music lessons that music is for each and every person (including both its content and form) and nobody should feel excluded from that. They felt as alien elements in the lessons that were not meant for them. A study carried out in the United Kingdom (Green, 2008) has also revealed that traditional music education does not provide all pupils with an opportunity to discover their musicality. At this point it is possible to draw parallels with Stige’s *silent participation*, where the participant seemingly does not participate, but is staying in the same place as others (in the given case the classroom) and observing. It may seem to the teacher that the pupil does not participate in the lesson, but, according to Stige, non-participation can only happen when the participant, i.e. the pupil, leaves the room. Music has an effect on a person in any case, since the world of sound is so powerful, that due to our autonomic nervous system we respond to music involuntarily (Decker-Voigt, 2006).

In the sub-profile „Involvement with music since childhood” the role of the music teacher was not so significant, since musical knowledge and experience was also gained from the family and music school. However, it was noted that the teacher’s wish to maximally involve pupils in music and kindle them is very important.

In the sub-profile „Unmotivated” the motivating role of the music teacher emerges, since students in that sub-profile had been choir or ensemble singers in their school days. It can be claimed, that their teachers „discovered” and „opened” their musicality (Stige’s *adventurous participation*). It is contrary to the other sub-profile „Involvement with music after leaving school”, where importance was attached to the way of grading musicality in Estonian music education, which relies on singing (Selke, 2007) (According to Stige’s theory, *conventional participation*). The representatives of that profile admitted that they had not been taught how to keep a tune (i.e. how to become musical in the formal sense), but the level of their abilities was marked. At the university the situation changed and they dared to attempt to rediscover music through playing an instrument.

The current article deals with a qualitative study with a small sample, which does not allow us to generalise the experience of school music lessons and its connection with further involvement with music to the whole target group. At the same time, the analysis of the results reveal important connections, which foster or hinder the development of the involvement with music and experience, which is considered important in music lessons of general education school even years after leaving the school. As „active participation in music” in the current study the continuous participation in vocal or instrumental groups was viewed. The results of the study

indicate that rephrasing of that definition should be considered, since music involvement in adulthood may manifest itself in other forms of expression (e.g. playing a musical instrument for one's own pleasure and to oneself), which is not open to the public to the extent the participation in a choir or ensemble is. Therefore, an improved definition would allow an approach to the connection of the involvement with music in adulthood with school music lessons from a wider perspective.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all participants in the study for sharing their thoughts and memories, and to my supervisor Eha Rüütel.

### References

- Bachman, T. & Maruste, R. (2008). *Psühholoogia alused*. [Basics of Psychology]. Tallinn: Ilo.
- Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Scientists*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn&Bacon.
- Decker-Voigt, H.-H. (2006). *Muusikaga ellu. Muusika raseduse ajal ja varases nooruses*. [Enter Into the Life with Music. Music during the Pregnancy and Early Childhood.] Tallinn: Eres Estonia Edition.
- Gay, L., R.; Mills, G., E. & Airasian, P. (2006). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*. (8<sup>th</sup> ed.) Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *The Research Interview*. Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Green, L. (2008). *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*. UK; Ashgate.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A. & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18: 59-82.
- Hodges, D., A. (2005). Why Study Music? *International Journal of Music Education*, Vol 23(2); 111-115.
- Lehtonen, K. & Shaughnessy, M. F. (2002). An interview with Kimmo Lehtonen: Music therapy with adolescents. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 4(1): 13–20.
- Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography – describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, 10. 177–200.
- Möistlik, M. (2007). *Muusikaterapia elementide rakendamise võimalikkusest üldhariduskooli 6. klassi muusikaõpetuses*. [Feasibility of Elements of Music Therapy in a General Education School's 6th Grade Music Teaching Praxis] (Master's thesis) Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikool.
- Möistlik, M. (2008). Teraapiline muusikatund üldhariduskooli 6. klassis. [Therapeutic Music Lesson in a General Education School's 6th Grade] *Haridus*, 5–6, 42–45.
- Priestley, M. (1975). *Music Therapy in Action*. Constable London.
- Ruud, E. (1995). Music in the media: The soundtrack behind the construction of identity. *Young*, 3, no 2, 34–45.
- Ruud, E. (2000). 'New Musicology', Music Education and Music Therapy [online]. *Paper at the 13th Nordic Congress of Musicology, Århus, Denmark*. Retrieved May 07, 2009, from www.njmt.no
- Rüütel, E. & Pill, E. (2008). *Õpilase elu-olu 1998–2007. Kõsitluse KOOLITUGI kokkuvõte*. [Students' life and milieu. Summary of the survey SCHOOL'S SUPPORT] Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikool, Tallinna Haridusamet.
- Selke, T. (2007). *Suundumusi eesti üldhariduskoolimuusikakasvatuses 20. sajandi II poole ja 21. sajandi alguses*. [Music Education in Estonian Comprehensive School: Trends in the 2nd Half of the 20th Century, at the Beginning of the 21st Century] (Doctoral dissertation, Tallinna Ülikool) Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikooli Kirjastus.

Small, C. (1999). Musicking — the meanings of performing and listening. A lecture. *Music Education Research*, Volume 1, 9–22.

Stige, B.; Ansdell, G.; Elefant, C. & Pavlicevic, M. (under publication, due in January 2010). *Where Music Helps. Community Music Therapy in Action and Reflection*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Tulving, E. (2002). *Mälu [Memory]*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

Uljens, M. (1990). *Phenomenography – a qualitative approach in educational research*. Paper presented at „Seminar on qualitative research methods in education“. Faculty of Education, University of Oulu, 11.-13.10.

*Advised by Eha Rüütel, Tallinn University, Estonia*