

## Chapter XIV

# STUDENT TEACHERS' MUSIC COMPETENCES ACQUIRED IN INITIAL CLASS TEACHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** The paper studies student teachers' competences needed for teaching music in lower grades of primary school (ages 7–11), acquired and developed in initial [undergraduate] class teacher education at faculties of education in Serbia. An appropriate approach to teaching young learners and achieving high standards in teaching music depends on class teachers' professional competencies to organise classroom activities in music lessons and to foster the development of children's music potential.

In the system of class teacher education, music culture belongs to an area of specific knowledge and skills. In initial [college/undergraduate] class teacher education, student teachers attend a large number of general education courses and pedagogical-psychological courses, while their music competencies are developed in music courses – Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, a basic course in teaching music, and the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture. The paper aims to study senior student teachers' beliefs about and attitudes towards their professional competencies in music. The sample consisted of student teachers attending academic year four at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina and the Faculty of Education in Uzice. The study objectives involved a quantitative analysis of student teachers' beliefs about and attitudes to acquiring music competencies in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course and in the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture, and their beliefs about and attitudes towards practical training for teaching music culture. The results of the study show that the participants hold positive beliefs about getting appropriate training to teach music culture. The study results can serve as a basis for modernising and improving certain segments of student teacher training for teaching the school subject Music Culture.

**Keywords:** *Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, Methodology of Teaching Music Culture, music culture, competences, student teachers.*

## Introduction

The main problem of modern higher education of pedagogical orientation is the education of a complete and versatile personality of a teacher with

innovative ways of thinking, with an open-minded perception of the world and artistic culture. In solving the problem of how to improve the quality of education, great importance is attributed to systematic training of educated, highly-qualified and competent experts. In this respect, special importance is attributed to the problem of strengthening the continuity between all components of the educational system in which the aim of education should be multilayered: in social life – to socialize an individual, in the area of general education – key competences, in the professional area – professional competence. Thus, a competent approach has become the most relevant and appreciated in the contemporary pedagogical knowledge (Белюсова [Belousova], 2012). Introduction of such approach into the domain of higher education enables improvement of the educational system and reaching a new level of quality.

Contemporary approaches and requirements for the professional education of class teachers teaching Music Culture in primary schools emphasize the problem of how to identify integrated indicators for the development of future experts in musical education at Faculties of Education. An important and necessary requirement of modern reality is the professional competence resulting from students' readiness to work as teachers. Competence can and should be considered as a criterion of the quality of teachers' pedagogical work in a pedagogical activity, communication, personal development, while competency is an individual indicator of the quality of proficiency (Барышникова [Baryshnikova], 2012).

Music education at Faculties of Education should comprise different music competencies at multiple levels (Савельева [Savelyeva], 2012: 10). The aims of the music pedagogical process are its predictable results: in the most general sense, it is necessary to prepare specialists for general education school, those who are able to perform a completely functional music pedagogical activity (Полякова [Polyakova], 2009: 241). A teacher needs to have music and methodological competencies to the extent necessary to understand logics of the music profession. Professional competence of a teacher, as information integration (a complex of various fields of knowledge), creates a potential for producing a modern, responsible and versatile teacher, who is aware of the importance musical education has for the child's intellectual, mental, moral, and aesthetic development.

The paper studies student teachers' competencies acquired and developed in initial class teacher education at Faculties of Education. An appropriate approach to teaching young learners and achieving high standards in teaching music depends on class teachers' professional competencies to organise classroom activities in music lessons and to foster the development of children's music potential.

## Music competencies

The first person to provide primary school children with music education systematically and professionally is the teacher. Very young learners express themselves through music by singing, playing an instrument, and movement, while active participation in music creation and performance leads to a creative and cheerful learning environment which can encourage more active and more meaningful engagement of children in curricular, extra-curricular, and other types of music activities. A professional and creative approach to teaching music enables a teacher to build foundations for students' further music education, which is his/her main responsibility.

Teaching Music Culture to very young learners in primary schools is conducted by teachers trained at the Faculty of Education. They have the most responsible role through all stages of the teaching process. Knowing that teaching music largely depends on teachers' competence, they need to have appropriate competences and scientific and professional knowledge. Baryshnikova (2012) believes that music competence of a teacher is a unity of the main components, and at the same time it is characterized by specific competencies, getting a variety of integrative and secondary new components, contributing thereby to raising the level of professionalism of music teachers. When defining teachers' competencies, we should consider all special features of their work which is complex and comprises the necessity of continual professional development.

The Taxonomy of teachers' competencies presented in Standards for Teacher Competence and Their Professional Development (Standardi kompetencija za profesiju nastavnika i njihovog profesionalnog obrazovanja 2011) defines competencies as a teacher's set of necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, which is defined in relation to learning aims and outcomes. From the perspective of professional education, professional competencies can be defined as the ability to perform complex working roles, functions and responsibilities based on specific professional knowledge and skills, attitudes and values according to a defined standard or expectation (Despotović 2010: 136). Kozyreva (Козырева 2008) points out that professional competence of a music teacher is a characteristic of a teacher, while his/her primary quality is the practical readiness to deliver a music and pedagogical activity professionally, based on integration of pedagogical and special abilities, acquired knowledge, developed skills and abilities.

Teaching music in primary education comprises the areas presented in the Teaching and Learning Plan in the first cycle of primary education (Plan nastave i učenja za prvi ciklus osnovnog obrazovanja i vaspitanja 2017), such as singing, playing an instrument, listening to music, and musical games. Accordingly, a primary school teacher should be trained to perform the above said activities, and to be able to sing and play a musical instrument. According

to the defined competencies for teaching music in primary schools and determined minimum music competencies of student teachers, a framework for musical education at the Faculty of Education has been created (*Knjiga predmeta – osnovne akademske studije Učitelj*, Jagodina/Užice, n.d.; [*Book of Courses – undergraduate academic studies Teacher*, Jagodina/Užice, n.d.]; BCJA; [BCUE]). Kane (2005) states that the music education curriculum has to be founded on practical music knowledge and skills which are acquired through teaching methods used in teaching music.

The main source of student teachers' musical and methodical competencies is their musical education at Faculties of Education. The acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes to music, will influence children's development and learning, as well as the way their attitude to music art is formed.

### **Musical education of student teachers at Faculties of Education**

Teaching music at Faculties of Education is conducted with the aim of providing students with music competencies in order to ensure high standards of children's musical education from the beginning of general education. This is why it is important to identify the aspects of teaching music which have a positive influence on the development of music competences, in order to use their efficiency to achieve the best possible outcomes of student teachers' professional education.

Faculties of Education educate student teachers to teach Music Culture from academic year one in the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, a basic course in teaching music. The aim of this course is to introduce students to the basics of music theory and skills required for successful teaching the school subject Music Culture in lower grades of primary school (BCJA: 17; BCUE: 8). Teachers' music competencies include playing a harmonic instrument which is used to accompany class singing, as well as training a student teacher to sing. In order to be able to teach singing, teachers need to be able to sing themselves, but in reality there are often teachers who are unable to reproduce vocally a children's song. Therefore, playing an instrument is important as it can support a teacher's singing. Singing training is, according to Šulentic-Begić, Begić and Škojo, "a relatively simple task, because students with at least an average amount of musical ability can be trained to sing in the appropriate way by simply teaching them songs appropriate for children, without any specific effort and special teaching methods that would be a problem for the students" (Šulentic-Begić, Begić, Škojo 2017: 206). However, we have to be aware of the fact that students come to University with different music abilities, thus teaching methods need to be adapted to the abilities of most students, which leads to the usage of various teaching methods, with outcomes varying from one generation to another.

Further music education is based on building methodical competencies in the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture, with the aim "to enable students, from the aspect of theory, to teach Music Culture" (BCJA: 64). Student teachers should implement learning subjects according to the age-related possibilities and abilities of young learners. They should answer the questions related to convenience of certain learning subjects, i.e. what are the subjects of the learning content, and which means, methods, procedures and organized forms are used to implement them (BCUE: 48).

The ultimate goal of student teachers' education at Faculties of Education is to provide them with practical training for their professional career, when students try to understand and apply their theoretical knowledge. For student teachers, this period of education is the most important for acquiring professional competencies, as their practical training is conducted in realistic conditions and the environment where they will work one day, i.e. primary schools. During the working week, students attend classes of a certain school subject under the mentorship of a professor or teaching assistant. As for practical training for teaching Music Culture, each student should create, plan, organize and deliver independently two lessons, if possible in two different classes, in order to be able to feel and comprehend the differences in methodical approaches, communication and special requirements implied by working with students of different ages, as well as differences in curricular contents related to Music Culture. Students also attend the classes delivered by their colleagues and keep a *diary* of practical lessons where they note down basic methodical information on each class they observed, methodical particularities they noticed during classes, and give their critical opinion on the observed class.

Practical Training is a very important and necessary component of student teachers' education. The extent to which this practical method of gaining experience will have an influence on their future job and professional development depends a lot on students' motivation, interests, and personal engagement; on the other hand, the quality of such experience and to which extent it will contribute to further development of their professional skills depends on the actual process of organization and students' practical training (Grkić 2012: 209).

The main downside of students' musical education is the fact that there is a gap, one or two terms long, between the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course and the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture, resulting in discontinuity in work and reduced efficiency in musical education. The other downside is the insufficient number of classes and academic terms for studying music courses. Such organization of music courses can influence the quality of student teachers' education. Da Vries (2011) established that the amount of time spent on music courses during studies determines whether a teacher will teach music during primary education. This problem is not related to

Faculties of Educations in Serbia only. The participants of research on music competencies conducted by Šulentić-Begić et al. (2017) in Croatia, methodology teachers from seven Faculties of Education, came to the conclusion that more classes should be dedicated to music courses, with particular emphasis on an increased number of practical classes, and reduced number of music theory classes. Considering that there are not enough classes as part of music courses at teacher education studies, music must be taught *from practice to theory*, or in other words, when there is not enough time, music must be taught from music and the appropriate teaching methods should be acquired simultaneously (Šulentić-Begić et al. 2017: 207).

The purpose of this paper was to examine student teachers' beliefs about and attitudes towards the quality of education, i.e. acquiring music competences and practical ability to teach Music Culture at primary schools, since in our country research into students' beliefs about their musical education at Faculties of Education has never been conducted. This is how we could understand in a more comprehensive way the advantages as well as disadvantages that the above-mentioned teaching method used in initial [undergraduate] education definitely contains, and perceive objectively particular segments which need to be improved or changed.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Goals and Tasks*

For the above said reasons, we conducted research at the beginning of the second term of the academic year 2018/19. The basic goal of our research was to examine the beliefs and attitudes of student teachers attending academic year four of the study programme: Teachers at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina and Faculty of Education in Uzice to acquiring professional competencies for teaching music during their studies. Besides this, the goal was to collect empirical data which used as a basis for improving the quality of the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course and the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture and practical training to teach music, i.e. data on the ways and aspects in which, according to students' beliefs, teaching of these courses should be improved.

In compliance with the research goal, the following tasks were set:

- To examine students' beliefs about competencies acquired in the Vocal and Instrumental Course;
- To examine students' beliefs about competencies acquired in the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture;
- To examine students' attitudes to their practical competencies to teach Music Culture;

- To examine students' beliefs about the learning content of the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course which needs to be improved;
- To examine students' beliefs about the learning content of the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture which needs to be improved;
- To examine students' beliefs whether the number of classes of Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture and practical training need to be increased.

### *Research Hypothesis*

The basic hypothesis is: students hold positive beliefs about and attitudes to their training to teach Music Culture, but there are a lot of details which should be dealt with and accomplished in a different and more versatile way.

The auxiliary hypotheses which were the starting point of our research are as follows:

1. we assume that more than half of students (50%) hold positive beliefs about competencies acquired in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course;
2. we assume that more than half of students (50%) hold positive beliefs about competencies acquired in the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture;
3. we assume that more than half of students (50%) hold positive beliefs about their practical competence to teach Music Culture;
4. we assume that more than half of students (50%) believe that in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course singing should be improved;
5. we assume that more than half of students (50%) believe that the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture should be improved in the aspects related to intensive song analysis according to musical notation;
6. we assume that more than half of students (50%) believe that the number of classes of the Vocal and Instrumental Music course, and Methodology of Teaching Music Culture and practical training course should be increased.

### *Research variables*

As an independent research variable we defined the place where research participants study (Jagodina and Uzice).

Dependent variables represent students' beliefs about and attitudes to competences acquired at the Faculty in the area of music culture and practical competence to teach Music Culture.

### *Research Methods and Instruments*

For the research purposes we used a descriptive-analytical method, survey, and scaling techniques. The instrument which was specially designed for the research purposes consisted of a Likert-type 5-point scale, ranking and single selection questions. It was conceived to enable the collection of empirical data necessary to improve the quality of teaching, with students answering the questions and thus expressing their beliefs about and attitudes to acquiring competencies in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture and practical training for teaching Music Culture in primary schools. Their attitudes were classified in segments important for students' professional education in music. Students answered the questions by circling one of the answers given in the 5-point scale – strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). The survey was anonymous, whereby objectivity was ensured.

Statistics procedures belonging to the field of descriptive statistics which were used, are the following: frequencies, percentage, measures of average (arithmetic mean and median) and their measures of variability (standard deviation, quartiles, variation quotient). For testing the null hypothesis we used the Mann–Whitney Test and the Chi-Square Test. Survey results were statistically processed using the SPSS software package.

### *Research Sample*

The research included 92 full-time student teachers attending academic year four of the study programme: Teacher at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina (42) and the Faculty of Education in Užice (50). This generation of students had enrolled in the Faculty in the academic year 2015/16. The research sample was planned, since the students attending year four had already completed the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course and the course Methodology of Teaching Music and attended practical training, i.e. attended or delivered practical lessons in Music Culture.

Considering the fact that teaching music at Faculties of Education was organized to provide students with the best possible and the most efficient professional training, we assumed that it was important for students to do a self-evaluation of their practical training and express their beliefs about their professional competencies. On the other hand, we wanted to compare the attitudes of student teachers from two different Faculties of Education.



## Research Results

The first part of the Opinion Scale which we used in the research to analyze students' opinions is related to competencies acquired in the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course as a basic course in teaching music. We examined the influence of the above mentioned course on their understanding of how to apply the knowledge they acquired at the Faculty, on improving students' competences in the field of music theory and their practical skills (singing, playing an instrument, performance of rhythmic exercises) which they will find useful when teaching. The results are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1: Student teachers' beliefs about competencies acquired in the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course*

Vocal and Instrumental Music Course has helped me:	M	$\sigma$	Percentiles		
			25	<i>Md</i>	75
to become familiar with the basics of music theory	4.20	.92	4.00	4.00	5.00
to learn basic concepts in music	4.43	.77	4.00	5.00	5.00
to learn how to play an instrument with both hands	4.09	1.04	4.00	4.00	5.00
to be able to write a rhythmic exercise independently	4.13	.95	4.00	4.00	5.00
to be able to perform a rhythmic exercise independently	4.16	.89	4.00	4.00	5.00
to perform a song <i>parlato</i>	3.87	1.03	3.00	4.00	5.00
to play a children's song properly	4.24	.87	4.00	4.00	5.00
to sing a children's song properly	4.03	1.05	4.00	4.00	5.00
to analyze a children's song independently	4.05	1.01	4.00	4.00	5.00

On the basis of the students' answers presented in Table 1, we can notice that a large number of participants agree with the statement that Vocal and Instrumental Music Course helped them to acquire competencies in the basics of music theory and practical skills. Students most positive attitudes refer to the knowledge of elementary music theory, which is the foundation for further learning music, while they are less certain when it comes to performing songs *parlato*. Knowing that performing *parlato* is very demanding and complex and implies a technique of rhythmic reading of a musical notation while beating the bars, so it needs more attention. *Parlato* is developed through comparative

procedures – practising the letter notation and working on the rhythm. Clearly, students have to practise on their own as well, at home, but with the help of continual work, performing *parlato* might be improved.

On the whole, students hold positive beliefs about competencies acquired in the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, which is shown by the median values ( $Md = 4$ ), thus confirming our primary auxiliary hypothesis.

However, we compared beliefs of student teachers' from both Faculties about competences acquired in the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course and came to a conclusion that the null hypothesis was proved in all cases except for one – when it comes to writing a rhythmic exercise independently (Table 2).

Table 2: Mann-Whitney Test results

Vocal and Instrumental Music Course helped me:	Mann-Whitney $U$	Wilcoxon $W$	$Z$	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
to be able to write a rhythmic exercises independently	730.000	2005.000	-2.681	.007

Research results show that student teachers from the Faculty of Education in Užice are less certain when it comes to writing a rhythmic exercise independently (Table 3).

Table 3: Measures of average according to the faculty in reference to the participant's place of studying

Vocal and Instrumental Music Course helped me to be able to write a rhythmic exercises independently				
Place of studying	$M$	$N$	$\sigma$	$Md$
Faculty of Education, Užice	3.88	50	1.02	4.00
Faculty of Education, Jagodina	4.42	42	.76	5.00
Total	4.13	92	.95	4.00

The rhythm-related problem can be connected with the previous problem (*parlato* performance of a song). If the rhythm is successfully dealt with, reading the musical notation will be spontaneous and easy to perform. Working on the rhythm has to be gradual and adapted to student's individual abilities. First, it needs to be correlated with the speech rhythm and movements, followed by practicing even pulsation, then grouping into wholes which leads to metric configuration, and then to various divisions of rhythmical units which create figures of various types. In this way, various rhythmic patterns are acquired and can be written down by students on their own.

The second part of the opinion scale was used for analyzing students' beliefs about competences acquired in the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture, i.e. if they can make the appropriate choice of teaching methods depending on the nature of curricular content, if they can choose successfully the most efficient forms of teaching, if they know how to use the Internet in order to find pictures, information, and musical notation examples they need, what their beliefs about their ability to use and choose the appropriate literature for preparation and delivery of Music Culture classes are, and how much the course Methodology of Teaching Music influenced their interest in choosing the job of a teacher as a vocation. Collected data relating to the above mentioned segments of students' methodical training can be best perceived from Table 4.

*Table 4: Students' beliefs about competencies acquired in the course Methodology of Teaching Music*

The Course Methodology of Music culture:	<i>M</i>	<i>σ</i>	Percentiles		
			25	<i>Md</i>	75
is very important for our professional training	4.22	.95	4.00	4.00	5.00
helped me to choose appropriate teaching methods depending on the nature of learning content	4.18	.90	4.00	4.00	5.00
helped me to choose and combine successfully forms of teaching	4.04	.88	4.00	4.00	5.00
helped me to use and choose appropriate pedagogical and professional literature	3.91	.92	3.00	4.00	5.00
helped me to obtain information, pictures, musical notations etc. from the Internet	3.82	1.14	3.00	4.00	5.00
Increased my interest in working as a teacher	4.05	.93	4.00	4.00	5.00

As for the choice and combination of teaching methods and forms, the importance that the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture has for the professional training and increasing interest in working as a teacher, student teachers are quite certain. Most students said that they agree, which is supported by the median value (*Md* = 4), thus proving our second auxiliary hypothesis.

However, students showed least certainty when it came to the choice of professional and pedagogical literature for lesson planning, as well as their ability to collect necessary pictures, information, and notation examples using the Internet. We assume that these types of students' answers can be explained by the lack of contemporary (music) literature, and because the literature which is in use at the moment is old and only a few copies or none can be found in our libraries. Furthermore, song collections are also old and most of them are not used in modern teaching. Notation records of children's songs used in

teaching Music Culture are very rarely found on the Internet, and students do not have such music abilities to write down by themselves the notation text of a song based on listening only, thus they are forced to ask their professors for help when preparing a music lesson.

We compared beliefs of student teachers from both Faculties about acquiring competencies in the course of Methodology of Teaching Music Culture and testing of the null hypothesis shows insignificant statistical differences.

The third part of the survey was designed with the intention to perceive students' attitudes to their training to prepare a music lesson plan in primary schools, and according to their practical training to deliver a music lesson. Because of the fact that survey participants attend or deliver practical music lessons, we wanted to find out what their attitude to their abilities to plan and prepare music lessons is. The research data we obtained is presented in Table 5.

*Table 5: Student teachers' attitudes to practical training to teach Music Culture*

	<i>M</i>	$\sigma$	Percentiles		
			25	<i>Md</i>	75
I understand how to apply the knowledge acquired at faculty	4.11	.89	4.00	4.00	5.00
I can make independently a yearly plan for teaching Music Culture	3.44	1.20	3.00	4.00	4.00
I can make independently a monthly plan for teaching Music Culture	3.53	1.08	3.00	4.00	4.00
I can successfully divide the learning content into logical units	3.94	.94	3.00	4.00	5.00
I can independently create the methodical concept of a music lesson	4.21	.97	4.00	4.00	5.00
I can successfully apply the acquired knowledge when specifying goals and tasks	4.21	.91	4.00	4.00	5.00
I can independently choose and make some teaching materials	4.26	.83	4.00	4.00	5.00
I can successfully deal with methodical procedures and methods for motivating children	4.26	.91	4.00	4.00	5.00
I can independently prepare a lesson plan for Music Culture	4.30	.94	4.00	5.00	5.00
I can independently prepare and deliver a Music Culture lesson	4.43	.84	4.00	5.00	5.00
I understand the importance of writing daily lesson plans for direct educational work	4.00	.98	4.00	4.00	5.00
my competence has been significantly improved	4.21	.99	4.00	4.00	5.00
my assessment of the practical experience gained in classes is positive	4.44	.97	4.00	5.00	5.00

Students had positive attitudes about their ability to independently create a methodical concept of a lesson, make a lesson plan, use various methodical procedures, teaching materials and deliver a music lesson. Such attitude was not a surprise to us, since students often come up with methodical concept of lessons, attend various lessons every day, or make lesson plans for their practical lectures. Median value ( $Md = 4$ ) suggest that students' attitudes to practical training to teach Music Culture is mainly positive, thus confirming our third auxiliary hypothesis.

On the other hand, as for students' ability to make a yearly and monthly plan, and to divide the monthly plan into logical units, students are mostly hesitant. The research shows that student teachers from the Faculty of Education in Jagodina are not confident enough about lesson planning in teaching Music (Table 6.).

*Table 6: Measures of average according to Faculties in reference to the participant's place of studying*

	Faculty of Education, Užice				Faculty of Education, Jagodina			
	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	$\sigma$	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	$\sigma$	<i>Md</i>
I can make independently a yearly plan for teaching Music Culture	3.98	50	1.12	4.00	2.81	42	.99	3.00
I can make independently a monthly plan for teaching Music Culture	4.00	50	1.01	4.00	2.98	42	.90	3.00
I can successfully divide the learnign content into logical units	4.12	50	1.02	4.00	3.74	42	.80	4.00

The reason for this could be the fact that students are provided with mainly theoretical knowledge of global and monthly plans. Taking into account a rather small number of classes of Methodology of Teaching Music Culture and practical training, and a lot of learning content which needs to be implemented, leads us to the conclusion that students' knowledge of how to plan teaching remains only at theoretical level, without practical training on how to make these teaching plans.

Within the research framework on students' beliefs about and attitudes towards competencies acquired during studies in the field of Music Culture, we were interested in analyzing students beliefs about the need to change the share of certain contents, i.e. which contents from Vocal and Instrumental

Music Course and the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture should be improved, in order to improve knowledge and skills, as well as competences.

As for the need to intensify the learning content in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, students gave priority to playing an instrument, music theory, and singing, respectively (Table 7).

*Table 7: Students' beliefs about contents of Vocal and Instrumental Music Course which should be improved*

	<i>M</i>	$\sigma$	V	Percentiles		
				25	<i>Md</i>	75
Playing an instrument	1.85	.82	44,32	1.00	2.00	3.00
Singing	2.15	.81	40,97	1.00	2.00	3.00
Music theory	2.00	.81	40,50	1.00	2.00	3.00

We assumed that majority of participants would choose singing as the learning content which should be improved. Singing is indeed a dominant music activity which was given most space in teaching Music Culture, thus presuming that the development of children's music potential depends on teachers' knowledge and skills, as well as their attitude towards singing and adopting the habit of singing. It was proven in practice that many students lack self-confidence or are afraid to sing in front of their colleagues or children, giving the excuses such as *I don't have a nice voice* or *I can't sing*. On the other hand, we were terrified by the fact that a large percentage of students enrolled in the Faculty has a voice range between a quarta and quinta (people aged 19 or 20). However, research showed different results. The majority of students believed that they needed to be more engaged in classes where they learn to play an instrument, although most of the time in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course is dedicated to this activity, by which the fourth special hypothesis has not been proved. This belief is based on the fact that a very large groups of students attend practical classes. In comparison to music schools, teaching to play an instrument at Faculties of Education is not individual and a professor does not have much time to dedicate to each student. A student is instructed how to continue on his own. On the other hand, it seems to us that being able to play an instrument well is a valid students' alternative to not being able to sing well.

Results of the research into students' beliefs about the learning content which should be improved in the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture are presented in Table 8.

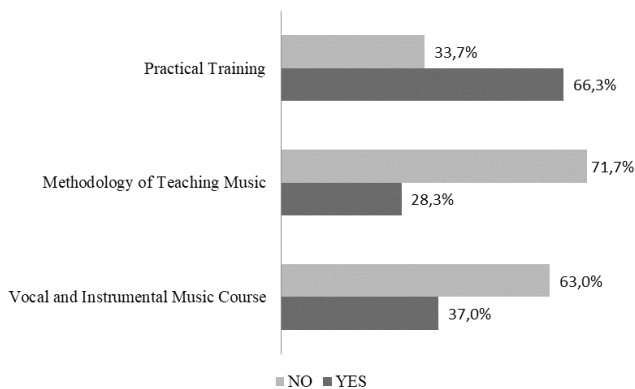
*Table 8: Students' beliefs about contents in the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture which should be improved*

	<i>M</i>	$\sigma$	<i>V</i>	Percentiles		
				25	<i>Md</i>	75
song analysis based on hearing	2.73	1.19	43,58	2.00	3.00	4.00
song analysis based on musical notation	2.29	1.25	54,58	1.00	2.00	4.00
listening to music	2.60	.98	37,69	2.00	3.00	3.00
children's creative work	2.38	.99	41,59	2.00	2.00	3.00

Most students chose to analyse a song according to the musical notation. Analysis of a song according to the musical notation is one of the most difficult tasks in teaching Music Culture because successful completion of this task requires combining theoretical and practical knowledge. The fact that a successful analysis of a song according to the musical notation depends on students' music abilities, theoretical and practical literacy, this subject matter is closely connected to the Vocal and Instrumental Music Course. Our assumption matches students's beliefs, thus confirming our fifth auxiliary hypothesis.

Considering values of a standard deviation, the relation between a standard deviation and arithmetic mean which can be expressed through the variation quotient (*V*), presented in Tables 7 i 8, we come to a conclusion that participants hold heterogeneous beliefs about course contents which need to be improved. Although research results give advantage to particular contents, participants classified the contents given differently, since their needs to intensify particular learning content are different, which leads us to a conclusion that it is necessary to take different needs of students into account.

We examined students' beliefs about the need to increase the number of classes in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course, the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture and practical training. Research results are presented in Figure 1.



*Figure 1. Students beliefs about the increased number of classes*

Most students (66.3%) said that an increased number of classes should be introduced in practical training. Such students' beliefs were absolutely expected, knowing that at the most they deliver independently two lessons of Music Culture during the academic year four. All study programmes have the same goal, and that is to acquire necessary knowledge and professional competences, but the lack of practical work is an impediment to the practical application of knowledge and skills acquired at the Faculty. Thus it is necessary to pay special attention to students' practical training in the natural conditions and authentic environment which is going to be their workplace in the future – i.e. primary schools.

## Conclusion

The starting point of this research is grounded in the attitude that a competent teacher can teach Music Culture in a primary school, while teachers' competence is grounded in proper education acquired during undergraduate academic studies. In order to discover the beliefs and attitudes of students at Faculties of Education in Jagodina and Uzice, to competences for teaching Music Culture which are acquired in initial [undergraduate] class teacher education, we found data which can be interpreted as positive, but nevertheless needs to be dealt with special attention.

Generally, students hold positive beliefs about competencies acquired in Vocal and Instrumental Music Course and the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture, except for the rhythm-based areas, i.e. when they have to write independently a rhythmical exercise and do a *parlato* exercise. We need to pay more attention to these areas or use different teaching methods in order to improve skills.

Students' beliefs about all segments of practical training to teach Music Culture are mainly positive. Students feel insecure about lesson planning (preparation of yearly and monthly plans). Knowing that well prepared lesson plans increase efficiency of teaching and lead to better results, additional attention should be paid to lesson planning.

Students are satisfied with the number of classes dedicated to music courses (Vocal and Instrumental Music Course and the course Methodology of Teaching Music Culture), but emphasized the need to increase the number of practical training classes.

Research results are very encouraging, but the question is how objective or realistic students can be when evaluating their practical abilities. On the other hand, if students are satisfied with the music knowledge acquired at the Faculty, what happens when they start their professional career, and why do not they apply the acquired knowledge when teaching music?



Although we can be satisfied with the obtained research results, we have to be aware of the fact that the school subject Music Culture is neglected in primary schools, with a possible cause lying in teachers having insufficient music education. Unlike other courses at undergraduate academic studies, music courses are specific and require special skills (singing, playing an instrument, music literacy). Students of mixed abilities enroll in Faculties of Education, without any previous music experience. A modern school sets very high training standards for teachers who should possess necessary performing and teaching skills, who are able to accomplish all artistic and educational tasks professionally. In order to discover the creative potential of an individual when preparing experts of this profile, the educational process needs to be continually improved and adjusted to contemporary requirements (Нургаянова [Nurgaianova] 2010).

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