



This paper is taken from

*The Experience of Citizenship
Proceedings of the sixth Conference of the Children's
Identity and Citizenship in Europe Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2004

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 378 6

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Liduma, A. (2004) Musical pedagogical aids for the child's cultural and civic identity development, in Ross, A. (ed) The Experience of Citizenship. London: CiCe, pp 513 - 520

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This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- Cass Mitchell-Riddle, head of the CiCe Coordination Unit
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of the Department of Education and Culture of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

Musical pedagogical aids for the child's cultural and civic identity development

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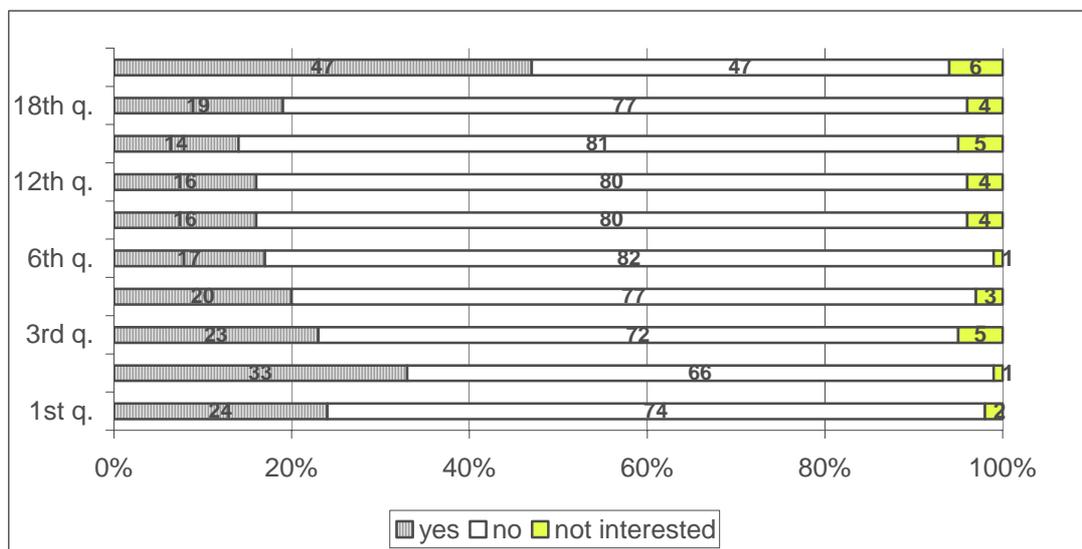
Urgency of the issue

Since 1992 music has not been an obligatory subject in Latvian schools for Forms 10-12. At high school children's self-confidence is being cultivated and their civic identity is enhanced. Young people, especially girls, do not receive a well-balanced harmonious upbringing. This means that the existence of the Latvian nation is threatened since it is the richness of youths' emotional world that predetermines their future emotional development.

The common phenomenon of the three Baltic States (the Folksong Festivals) was taken under UNESCO protection, but this was a belated attempt to keep the traditional polyphonic folk singing *a cappella* (without accompaniment) at the necessary level. People's consciousness has been driven against musical education at all levels for some time. It is therefore impossible to ensure a well-balanced musical training and musicality development now, since children's psyches have been turned against music in this way. There is no information available for parents about cultivating music, or its impact on children's emotional development.

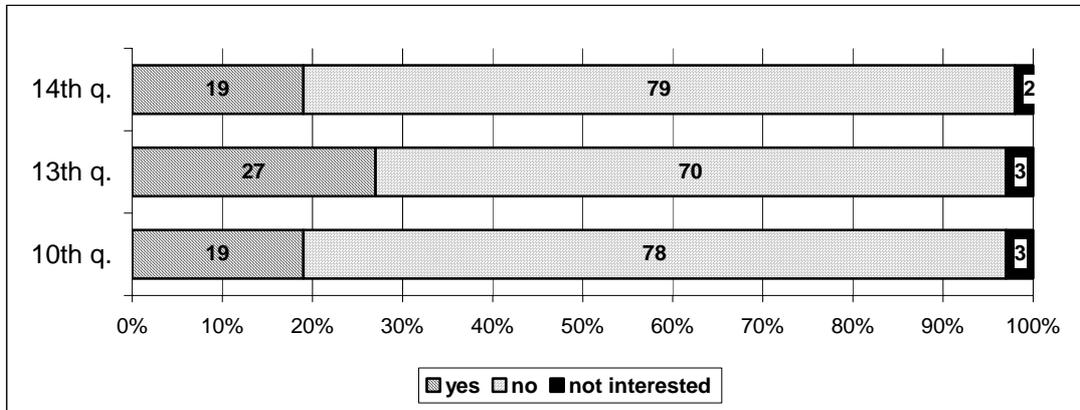
The findings of research into musicality and parents' and teachers' attitude to the role of musicality in the child's development at preschool, conducted in 1998, showed that of the 267 respondents (parents), 24% did not consider personal singing to be important; 74% did think it was, and 2% were not interested in the question. The responses showed that 66-82% - do not realise the question; 14-33% have a positive attitude to musicality and 1-6% - are not interested.

Figure 1: Parents' attitude to children's musicality



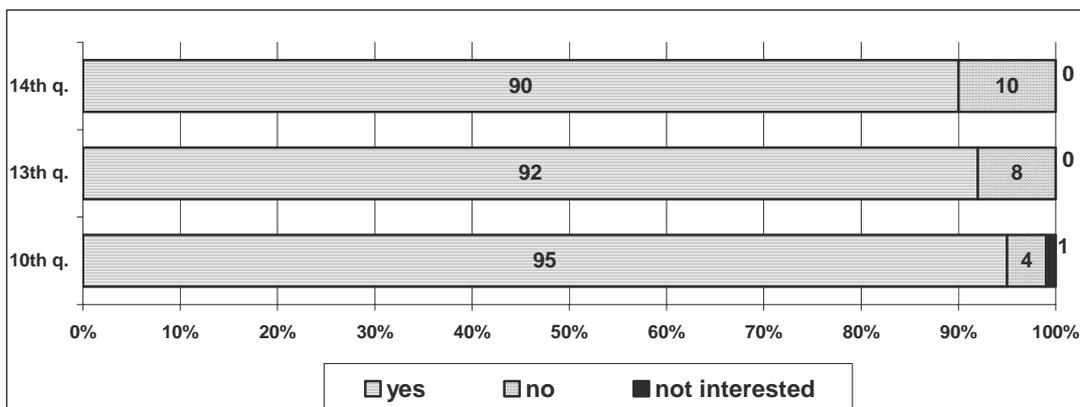
A third group of questions concerned the importance of the content of music education: 78% of parents did not know why folksongs are important, 70% were unaware of the fact that musical education cannot be replaced by other activities, and 70% were unaware that musicality differs from child to child.

Figure 2. Parents' assessment of the importance of musical contents



Of the teachers, 95% realised the significance of folksong, 4% did not, and 1% was not interested. On music education, 92% knew that there is no substitute, 8% did not: 90% knew that musical talent differs among children and 10% responded that they did not know.

Figure 3: Evaluation of significance of musical contents made by teachers



After comparing the results, we concluded that co-operation between teachers and parents was necessary to ensure the success and systematic development of musical talent in a child, while both groups interviewed needed access to information about musicality. Having compared the results of opinion polls on musicality with 144 respondents, conducted at the beginning and at the end of a formative experiment (1999-2001), and having talked to parents, we noted positive changes in parents' attitude towards the musical environment and towards child's musicality.

In discussions with parents positive changes in their attitude to the musical environment and its content, as well as to the musical talent of their children, were identified. The first question asked was 'Do the parents sing together with their child or to their child? At the beginning of the experiment 86 parents (60%) responded that they did, and 58 parents (40%) did not but at the end of the experiment 115 parents (80%) responded that they did and 29 parents (20%) that they did not.

Question Two was 'Does it mean anything to the parents that their child is musically gifted?' At the beginning of the experiment 96 parents (67%) responded that it did, 48 parents (33%) that it did not, while at the end of the experiment 115 parents (80%) responded that it did and 29 parents (20%) that it did not.

In answer to the third question 'Do you understand the contents of Latvian folksongs?', at the beginning of the experiment 70 parents (49%) responded that they understood the contents, 74 parents (51%) that they did not, while at the end of the experiment 79 parents (55%) responded that they understood the contents of the Latvian folksongs and 65 parents (45%) that they did not.

No changes were reported in answer to the fourth question 'What are the songs of children's composers you know and you sing to your child?', to which 67 parents (47%) responded that they knew and 77 parents (53%) stated that they did not know.

The fifth question: 'Is it necessary to have songs written by professional composers?' received a 100% (144 respondents) affirmative response at both the beginning and end of the experiment, which proves the fact that composers should write new songs for children of preschool age.

During the formative experiment an educational programme of singing lessons, meeting the preschool age requirements, was worked out. Children develop by purposeful activity. The specific type of musical work stimulates the spirit to work and promote the development of the child's musical talent. Positive emotions gained from work done with great interest provided experience, and musical experience obtained through positive emotions stimulated self-realisation in concerts, both individually and together with the parents. A common experience ensures cooperation among generations and promotes interaction with the teacher. The integrated acquisition of music facilitates balanced development of the children, which is displayed by activity and the positive attitude of the children in the integrated classes in music. The function of singing in civic identity upbringing is implemented in cooperation between the teacher, the child and the parents.

One cannot disagree with the philosopher Rubenis, who says that it is mythical symbolic life - ensuring collective memory, forming identity and unity - is of great significance for a people, encouraging them to withstand external force. However, a people deprived of uniting spiritual power - oral art, incantations, signs, ornaments, folksongs and the whole initial cultural tradition - no longer needs an outer force to reduce or eliminate the people's power - it is doomed to self-destruction (Rubenis, 1994).

The significance of this study for civic identity is undisputable, since a generation is being formed with ideals associated with a democratic society, whose supreme value is a humane personality. Its core is freedom, independence (autonomy) and responsibility as a goal of upbringing. The development is characterised with a harmonious and versatile personality. The development of a harmonious personality means a balanced development of intellect (mind), emotions (feelings) and willpower. A versatile personality means a balance of physical, psychological and social development. A harmonious and versatile personality ensures the agreement of individual and social needs, and activities and the satisfaction gained from them, together with self-realisation in both spheres of life, resulting in a person who is aware of her/his life goal and does not lose her/his priorities in terms of moral values. Upbringing is the cultivation of a harmonious and versatile personality, which was studied in Latvia by Karpova in psychology and Spona in pedagogy.

The pre-school years are decisive for the continuity of cultural identity and cultivation of civic identity. Much has been done over the last decade in Latvia to prepare professional pre-school teachers, to ensure quality care for children and to improve their preparedness for school. From 2004 all pre-school pedagogues must have higher pedagogical education (Bachelors of Pedagogy). Those teachers who already have a higher education qualification are obliged to master a pre-school training program. It is very important that three significant scientific studies in pre-school musical pedagogy have been conducted for the last decade in Latvia. These are *Latvian Folk Songs as a Tool for Developing the Musical Ear and the Voice of Pre-school Children* (Blazma Vikmane (1995), Linda Mackevica's *Purposeful Music Perception as a Tool in Child's Education* and Anna Liduma's *Pedagogical Aspect of Musicality Development in Children of Pre-school Age*, completed in 2004.

Blazma Vikmane issued a collection of songs suitable for preschool age and ensuring consecutive musical upbringing. Anna Liduma compiled two collections of songs which provide well-balanced musical contents for children of preschool age. One of these collections includes Latvian folksongs (classics), and the other songs by modern composers (light music). It is important to prove at preschool that both genres have common roots in folk music, but the value of their influence differs. Classic music is introverted: with its deep content expressed in symbols, it promotes the development of the child's inner world. Light music is extrovert and focused on a wider target audience. It involves the listeners in active cooperation. The contents of light music is not always deep, an obvious point since light music is multifunctional, sometimes serving as a musically entertaining background for various events. Civic identity upbringing makes use of both genres. Classic music cultivates the child's civic identity, and light music serves as a means of expression of the depth of civic identity. Musical pedagogy has theoretically grounded and empirically verified the contents of cultural and civic identity upbringing.

Civic identity upbringing is a purposeful process, citizenship the status, rights and duties of a citizen, especially of a particular country. Patriotism is love for one's fatherland; loyalty to one's native land and people; activity for the benefit of one's fatherland, homeland and people. A patriot is a person loving her/his fatherland, people and homeland and willing to act selflessly for the benefit of the same. Therefore, it is important for pedagogy to have a strategy of civic identity upbringing.

A strategy for civic identity upbringing

The strategy of civic identity upbringing in pedagogy is formed with three basic principles of education: agreement between words and acts, purposefulness, and focus on the positive in a person. Pursuant to the principles of the strategy of civic identity upbringing, it is important to ensure the contents of education organisation, method and forms of teaching appropriate for a given age.

In the process of civic identity upbringing, the following techniques should be used: children sing songs about themselves and the surrounding world - nature, animals, rivers, lakes, trees, leaves, a birch grove, etc. To the question 'Where does formation of the comprehension of one's homeland start?', the reply is 'It starts from childhood, in the process of a child's activities involving emotional experience'. Thanks to the emotional experience gained in the process of singing, civic consciousness and comprehension evolve.

The native tongue plays a very significant role in the process of civic identity formation. In the 1990s a song called *Native Tongue*, performed by the Livi Rock Group from Liepaja, became very popular. Why? Our language was under pressure and threat of extermination, and the song was a painful scream of emotional protest.

The contents of songs about the child's near environment help form a sense of patriotism and pride in one's homeland. Examples are the song *Prayer for one's fatherland* ('God, let our Fatherland, God, let our Fatherland live up to the flourishing times, live up to the flourishing times) and the anthem *God bless Latvia* ('our dear Fatherland, bless Latvia, oh bless it. Where daughters of Latvia are in blossom, where sons of Latvia are singing, let us dance happily in our Latvia').

The family has a tactical place in civic identity upbringing. Latvians are characterised by the Father's Home phenomenon - Latvians can leave their homeland only by force; we never leave it by free will. Many were deported to Siberia; many were later forced to leave for Germany. Despite that, Latvians living in any place in the world during the time of the Latvian Song Festivals and at private parties always sing songs about their homeland: 'Beautiful is my Fatherland, of all lands. Green are its fields, wide are its forests, blue is the seawater there'. Those songs express willingness to give up one's life for the Fatherland: 'I put my head on the block to protect my land. Better take my head than my Fatherland'.

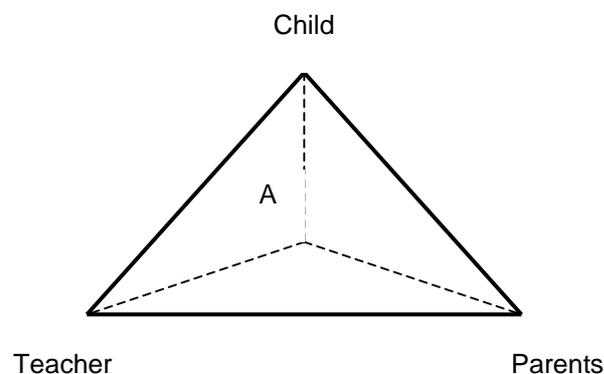
The formation of a child's self-consciousness and understanding of value starts in the family. The lyrics of the song 'I am a small partridge' are as follows: 'I am a small partridge, I can decorate, I am a small partridge, I can decorate'.

To ensure mastery of the contents, the organisation of mastering the contents must have appropriate forms.

Organisation of mastering the contents

Singing requires practical cooperation with adults, so that a child can absorb the values to form self-attitude. Civic identity upbringing through musicality development is possible only with equal cooperation between children teachers and parents, i.e. if the so-called 'pedagogical living triangle' is in action. [Spona, 2001, p 108-110].

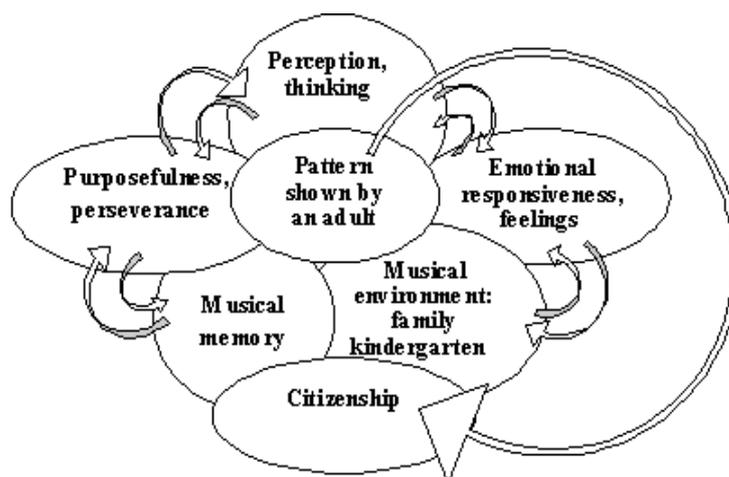
Figure 4: Living triangle



Only equal cooperation ensures success on the basis of imitation, which promotes development of any ability. It also refers to moulding industriousness in children in the process of continuity and succession of generations. Therefore, a mechanism has been worked out ensuring succession in civic motivation upbringing.

The impact of the pattern starts with perception. A child obtains an emotional experience from a perceived image. His experience is enhanced by the musical environment and, by persistent and meaningful co-operation, he imitates the pattern.

Considering role models as especially important in child's pre-school development, the Latvian pedagogical researcher Spona (1982) and the psychologist Craig (2000) from the USA stated that an adult must observe the child's readiness for activity, his/her activeness, attention, and feedback. If an activity is started at the moment of readiness, the child will master the activity easily, without extra effort or exercise, and with joy. At the highest degree of readiness, the child is willing to learn, gains satisfaction from learning and boisterously expresses its joy. The child's behaviour is an indicator of such readiness.

Figure 5: Inheritance in citizenship development process

Any development (especially motor development) needs activity. Children deprived of the opportunity of being active while mastering anything may be retarded in terms of development of motor (movement) skills. According to Spona (from 1982), when an objective is set clearly, the child is active and ready to work.

The efficiency of learning depends on the child's attention. It requires a situation involving the child. How can we keep a child's attention for longer time? Children of two to three years old learn better when guided. The teaching methods worked out in the 1970s in Latvia proved that three to five year olds could focus their attention better when they actively repeat an adult's movements. Children of six to seven can already understand oral instructions and fulfil familiar tasks with sufficient precision.

In music, it is hearing experience accumulated through a gradual and successive signing process and expressed in the form of hearing notions (inner hearing).

Cultivation of a sense of civic duty forms attitudes in the child in a wider sense; therefore a person cannot be viewed separately from himself, the family and the state. Attitudes are integral feature of a personality which express themselves in moral values. Civil motivation as a feature can be defined through attitudes. A sense of civic duty is an emotional attitude towards one's state, society, people, work and culture. These attitudes express themselves in human relationships between people and in their work aimed at enhancing the welfare of people. In a democratic society, the main criterion of civic motivation is personal welfare. If one has a positive attitude to one's state, it means he has civic motivation. A person's attitude to the norms of public conduct is a real way of expression of his attitude to the state. Attitude to work as a moral value in man's life is also an expression of civic motivation. Attitudes are formed in a microenvironment (the family), in mezzo environments (working team, school) and in macro environments (the state as a whole).

The efficiency of attitude-forming depends on the pedagogue's position in pedagogical communication. It is important to observe the following four stages: psychological preparation, practical preparation, activity implementation and evaluation of results, forming skills of self-appraisal in a child. At each of the stages, the teacher must take the position of direct leader, indirect leader, consultant or partner in cooperation. The choice of the pedagogue's position depends on the level of skills of communication between the child of preschool age and the pedagogue.

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