

ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN MUSIC SCHOOL: WHERE DOES THE MEANING OF LEARNING HIDE?

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Abstract

This qualitative research discloses students' subjective lived experiences in Lithuanian music school; thus, creating assumptions for implementing meaningful learning in children's education. *Music schools* which dominate other non-formal education are not exempted because students' lived experiences show that learning is given meaning there even before the commencement of formal learning. When formal learning starts, the perception of meaningfulness of learning begins to change. The results demonstrate that usually opposite experiences of those things which are expected are gained after students start learning, and that continuous communication between students and teachers in music schools is an *antidote* against meaningless teaching and learning.

Keywords: *lived experience, meaning of learning, music education, music school, non-formal education of children, school students.*

Introduction

While substantiating the meaningfulness of learning, it is encouraged to reconsider the culture of education in a broader sense, its content and approaches based on the humanist paradigm, i.e. solving all problems while viewing the child at the centre, focusing on one's person, choices, will, self-expression, regarding one's interests, motivation, curiosity, etc. (Kouppanou, 2015; Snaza & Weaver, 2015; Stiegler, 2017). Reconsiderations of the education system essentially changed not only the formal education which is being implemented in comprehensive education schools but also non-formal education of children encompassing all extracurricular activities for them. Meaningful education starts focusing on assurance of not only personal liberation and self-expression by rendering necessary (usually *professional*) knowledge to individuals (Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for

the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, UNESCO, 2016; Lisbon European Council, 2000) but also by reacting to occurring *experiences*, i.e. reflecting occurring interactions in transition from engagement of a school student to other participants of education, environment, relevance of activities and satisfaction with performed activities. It does not mean that attention paid to a learner, as the one who brings the future, creating personal meanings of learning and not allowing schools remain within the rhythm of the past (which supposes the approach of this investigation), is diminished, substantially exploring what hides in the process of learning *between*, what hides in further to-be-manifest *interactions* in the process of learner's self-creation (Atmaca, 2018; Prensky, 2012). In terms of meaningfulness of learning, the analysis of learners' experience is an indisputably valuable source of knowledge exceeding the limits of new knowledge and understanding, existing assumptions, values and perspectives. Each consciously perceived or misperceived experience included in a qualitative research is valuable and helps deeper understanding of the object under investigation. As Dewey (1938) has it, living is the process of adjusting in the world through experience, a process in which an individual faces many new and dynamic situations and conditions. In the context of the *meaningfulness of learning*, experience means that a living creature (as a subject) influences his/her environment (as an object), and later suffers from consequences which allow us to recognize the meanings of learning being created by a learner. Experience is defined as the person's internal relation to the external world. The ability to talk to oneself and others on what was experienced by us provides favourable conditions for reacting and re-writing scenarios of daily life, enables forming narratives rendering meaning to our lives and the lives of others, reconsidering, generalising, noticing and becoming aware of what was experienced (Schratz & Walker, 1998).

When raising a question of the meaningfulness of learning in non-formal education of children, *music schools* that occupy a central sector in the common non-formal education system, i.e. involving one of the largest percentage of children and remaining among the most popular areas of non-formal education choices not only in Lithuania but also in Europe (De Alba & Díaz-Gómez, 2018; Mak, Kors, & Renshaw, 2007; Mok, 2011; Ruškus, Žvirdauskas, & Stanišauskienė, 2009), are not an exception. Today, the performance of music schools in the area of non-formal education of children specifically in Lithuania is legally acknowledged as an equal-value part of the system of education (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymas [The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania], 2011; Neformaliojo vaikų švietimo koncepcija [Conception of Non-formal Education of Children], 2012). Non-formal education of children in Lithuania is not an ancient area of education in comparison to the European experience, it is characteristic of the lack of science-based cognition and data, insufficiency of assurance of quality of education (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska, 2018), which raises an intrigue of the investigated context. If the term of non-formal education as used for the first time back in 1963 at the UNESCO conference in Paris is dedicated to the crisis of global education, (Dugarova, Starostina, Namsarayev, Dagbaeva, & Malanov, 2016), the latter term came into force in Lithuania only a decade ago, when the Conception of Non-formal Education of Children [Neformaliojo vaikų švietimo koncepcija] (2005) was approved. The conception was designed on the ground of the following documents: Resolution of the European Council (Council Resolution, 2003) and Lisbon Strategy (Lisbon European Council, 2000), attributing schools, studios, clubs etc. organising extra-curricular activities for children, including music schools which count more than fifty years in Lithuania, to the sector without special preparation. As a result, a specific *field of tension* is being formed in the music schools. It

proceeds in established stiff practice of Soviet pedagogy and sustainable society ideas that are becoming a norm, demands, expectations, changes in the habits of teaching and learning, meaningfulness of teaching and learning activities for the learner created by the contents of interactions in learning environment. These are created by the content of interplays existing in the educational environment. The formed situation supposes the problem of the following question: 1. What are the existing lived experiences of children in music school and what is the content of them, which creates preconditions for implementation of meaningful learning in non-formal education of children?

The aim of this research is to reveal the content and expression of the meaningfulness of learning through the analysis of students' lived experiences in institutions of non-formal education of children.

Materials and Methods

Substantiation of the qualitative research strategy. Seeking to reveal students' subjective lived experiences in non-formal education institutions, the investigation employed a qualitative research strategy which helped to reveal the meanings and interpretations of quantitatively complexly explored constructs, holistically treat the problem, focusing on unique human experience in the aspect of the phenomenon under analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Taylor, Bogdan, & De Vault, 2015).

Research sample. 16 individuals including school students still in school (12) and those who have already graduated (4) from music schools took part in the investigation. In the course of the investigation, individuals from 4 music schools, to be precise, 2 schools in Šiauliai city and 2 schools in Šiauliai district (in total there were 3 music schools in Šiauliai city and 5 music school centres in Šiauliai district) who played keyboard, wind, string and traditional folk instruments were surveyed. The sample was formed based on the principle of voluntary participation. The age of the surveyed informants varied from 9 to 28 years (the average age was 15.25). A snowball selection method was used to form the research sample (Rupšienė, 2007). The data were collected until they started showing repeats and a decrease in informative capacity became obvious, in other words, until data saturation substantiating a statement proving that the revealed features exist was achieved (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Data collection. A semi-structured interview was used to collect the research data, which allowed deeper exploration of the research participants' experiences, collection of abundant and comprehensive details of social life as well as data tracing unique nuances that enabled the researcher to comprehend the depth of meanings rendered about the object under investigation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Data analysis. Qualitative content analysis was employed for data analysis (Žydzūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017). The inductive logic-based traditional method of qualitative content analysis was chosen for the investigation, when the categories were derived from the data during their analysis, and single, separate cases illustrating the understanding and experience of the surveyed were merged together (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Research ethics. Individuals (parents, caregivers of the under-aged) who took part in the research were provided with all information about the research and its publishing that interested them in compliance with the qualitative research ethics linked to autonomy, wellbeing and rights of research participants. Before starting the survey, each participant of the research was informed about the research aim, written consent letters were received from everyone (written consents were collected from parents of the under-aged) to allow participation in the organised investigation.

Results

The analysis of the obtained qualitative research data revealed the learners' experiences giving sense to learning in music school: identification of an image of a music school and teachers' behaviour strategies in the process of learning, meanings given to the process of learning and factors conditioning the motivation for learning.

Music School and Its Image in the Context of Children's Lived Experiences

In the course of investigation, it was observed that the projection of a music school was identified and that it started to change when direct experience of learning occurred after learning started (see Table 1).

Table 1. Identification of the image of a music school

Category	Subcategory
Equating a music school to a comprehensive (regular) school	Music school as a <i>regular</i> school
	Experience of tension that appeared during learning
The school that does not meet students' learning-related expectations	Learning as a process that limits creative freedom
	Learning difficulties as an unexpected process
	Learning as (self-)preparation for assignments
	Music school that lacks communication
	Taught subjects and their characteristics as the unexpected to school students

Statements on the topic of identification of a music school revealed that children equated a music school to a regular mainstream school where lessons are held, attendance is registered, assignments are made compulsory, etc. A music school is identified as not meeting the expectations. The informants did not think to face any tension or difficulties when learning, evoked by the teaching and learning plan (*"I expected <...> it to be much easier, I even didn't think how I would have to learn, that I would have difficulty in passing some kind of exams like in the fifth form (M5)"*) and the curriculum (*"I imagined that it would be very interesting, we would perform various beautiful pieces of music and ... simply imagined that it would be better, and then it was more and more difficult and ... somehow not the way I imagined (M8)"*). Based on the statements of the respondents, it was discovered that, before starting learning, children dreamt of revealing themselves, creation and self-expression. Unfortunately, they did not manage to reveal the desired imagined things in music school where major attention was paid not to their individual needs but rather to purposeful preparation for assignments (*"On the contrary, it appeared that their intention was not for us to learn with pleasure but to prepare for several assignments by force <...> while learning you would not even have any pleasure (M4)"*). The analysis of the experiences in relation to expectations revealed few more aspects: an unfulfilled expectation of communication and unexpected subjects taught in music school. When choosing a music school, students expect to play a music instrument only; therefore, other subjects of the curriculum often come as a big surprise, like specificity of individual lessons was, too.

The Impact of Teachers' Behaviour on Students' Perception of the Meaning of Learning

The behaviour of teachers that was observed during the analysis significantly impacts the formation of students' perception, content and expression of the meaning of learning. There were three categories which characterised teachers' behaviour with students: teachers' behaviour that is focused on seeing a student as a subject; teachers' behaviour that is focused on seeing a student as an object and teachers who have the characteristic of inadequate behaviour in the aspect of students' lived experiences (see Table 2).

Table 2. Identification of teacher's behaviour within the process of non-formal education of children in the aspect of students' lived experiences

Category	Subcategory
Behaviour that is focused on a student as a subject	A teacher as an assistant and adviser
	Creation of a positive and safe relationship with a student
	Attentiveness to a student's needs
Behaviour that is focused on a student as an object	Renderer of knowledge
	Behaviour that avoids communication
	Behaviour that ignores a student's individual traits
	Behaviour of comparing students
Teacher's inadequate student-oriented behaviour	Raising of voice against a student
	A teacher who instantly gets angry
	Behaviour that expresses dissatisfaction with a student

The first category characterising teachers' behaviour is focused on seeing a student as a *subject* – a person, an individual who gets acquainted with the world and makes impact in it. In such cases, the manifestation of teachers' behaviour within existing “regular” framework and rhythm of school is described as that of an assistant and adviser covering not only support to a student's learning during a lesson but also crossing the limits of school by becoming a teacher who helps to gain the skills of learning in a broader sense, i.e. analysing arising difficulties during one's learning at home, reflecting on the causes and searching for solutions. Teachers' behaviour that is focused on seeing a student as a subject is characteristic of creation of positive and safe relationships with students. These relationships and their types are revealed not only through teachers' particular emotional and verbal features: tenderness, calm tone of voice etc., but also through the ability to create involving and secure ambience in the classroom (“*I would visit my speciality teacher; it was pleasant to stay with her; I even didn't want to leave that place (M6)*”; “*when the teacher is in the classroom, you feel safe (M13)*”). The first category of teachers is also characteristic of the ability to be attentive to students' individual needs, interests while acknowledging and consciously accepting the prevailing diversity of learners and not only talking on the content of learning, e.g. repertoire and its selection, but also about the meaning of teaching and learning music to a learner. This approach shows that pedagogues of non-formal education of children do not limit themselves and try to free themselves from the projection of the meaning of solely vocational training for further career, preparation for assignments and/or examinations, frame of a “regular” school. They also observe a broader purpose of non-formal education of children. However, we should notice that such an ability to be attentive to students' individual needs is treated as a specific *unique* trait of a teacher by those who do not attend a music school, which may raise an assumption that such a manifestation of teachers' behaviour, as described by the first category, exists; however, it is not a prevailing phenomenon in the educational practice.

The experience of learning which is characterised as causing tension, difficulties, limiting creative freedom and lacking communication can be explained by the second category of teachers' behaviour observed in the course of the analysis – behaviour that is focused on a student as an *object*, result-seeking. Students' experiences reveal that rendering of knowledge, execution of a curriculum and preparation of students for examinations are the most important things to some of the teachers (“*usually, teachers are those who require a prepared programme, examination (M16)*”), avoiding more sincere communication with students. The informants emphasised that such teachers' behaviour lacked “vitality” and including the divide between teacher and student makes the process of learning uninspiring (“*for example, it is no longer interesting for you because teachers don't even communicate with you (M4)*”), raising the questions of motivation and meaning of learning to learners within the framework of non-formal education of students. The analysis of the experiences of learning enables us to observe that pedagogues not only tended to keep a distance from students but also to compare them with each other, ignore and reject students' individual traits, including inborn abilities, to break them. All these cause frustration to learners facing a task which is difficult to cope with.

The third category identifies teachers' behaviour during the education process, as if continuing the second one. This category has been singled out as an independent one because of the diversity pointed out in the subcategories revealing teachers' inadequate behaviour with students; such as: 1) raising voice against a student (“*for example, when I didn't play some kind of note the teacher would start shouting, then I learnt to play very well, I needed to learn the same note, the teacher would shout until I succeeded (M8)*”), 2) immediately getting angry (“*when you arrive at a lesson after the one you haven't learnt, at once she is angry with you and you must avoid making mistakes, do everything accurately so that she would not get angry because of every small detail (M10)*”) and 3) obviously demonstrating personal dissatisfaction with a student (“*the speciality teacher somehow always would say: don't be afraid to make a mistake, but sometimes when I make mistakes the teacher will become very angry, and somehow these few moments have stuck in my mind (M6)*”). Manifestation of these categories of teachers' behaviour can be named in general as teachers' inability to manage themselves in a moment of emotional irritation and is treated as a variety of violence against a human (student) that manifests as a form of a discharge of the tension field. This may have a negative impact on perception of the meaningfulness of learning and negatively condition the motivation for learning.

Perception of the Process of Learning and Factors Conditioning the Motivation for Learning in Music School in the Context of the Experiences Lived by School Students

Perception of the process of learning is another important element that revealed itself in the context of analysed experiences lived by students in music school. During the research analysis, it was identified through the content of three categories (see Table 3).

Table 3. Perception of the process of learning in non-formal education of children in the aspect of students' experience

Category	Subcategory
Process that enhances personal traits	Learning to play an instrument as a process requiring personal endeavours
	Learning as a process that enhances self-confidence
	Learning as musical development
	Learning as being aware of one's own advantage
Process that limits personality development	Imprisoning learning
	Learning as repetition
	Learning as a duty
	Learning as satisfaction of a teacher's expectation
Process of learning that lacks sense	Learning as a process which is incomprehensible to a student
	Solfeggio as a lesson that lacks meaning to students
	Solfeggio as expression of personal torture and boredom
	Learning that lacks skills of learning

The informants stated that learning to play a music instrument required endless will that needs to be manifested through persistence, i.e. the ability to seek a set goal for a long time and resolutely, to cope with difficulties. Moreover, as the informants have it, their personal traits are enhanced by self-confidence which increases in the course of learning, music self-development, when not only musical characteristics are concerned but also musical literacy in a broader sense (“*you learn what is needed for music <...> For example, during a music lesson I can already explain everything (M15)*”), social skills (“*during a lesson sometimes we need to talk to teachers, you know, to talk in a language of music, therefore sometimes such knowledge is needed (M14)*”) to improve the sense of one's advantage over peers in the kindergarten or comprehensive school (“*I was very proud of myself that I attended a music school because I was exceptional in the kindergarten since I attended music lessons, meaning that you already have more knowledge than your friends (M10)*”).

Another meaning of learning in music school which was observed during the analysis of each child's experiences was identified as a process that limited the development of the child's personality. According to the survey, learning in music school is like imprisonment, and the purchase of an instrument ties them to learning (“*in the second year the accordion was bought, which, in other words, tied me to all seven years until the end at graduation (M11)*”). Another drawback is pointed out: learning proceeds following the principle of repetition because answering in one's words is forbidden, a text should be memorised. Learning that includes no elements to be interested in becomes an oppressive duty for the informants (“*Even though it's not interesting to you, you must go there anyway (M4)*”), rejecting individual social needs and/or meeting a teacher's expectations, which, in other words, pushes a student into a passive position, whereby one becomes only an executor in the process of education.

Based on the analysis of collected materials, another identification of the process of learning, i.e. learning that lacks the meaning, has been singled out. The analysis of experience reveals children's resentfulness, seeking for solace because they do not understand everything while learning and teachers seldom favour to give a detailed explanation or specify the said remarks concerning bad playing. It was observed that during learning, teachers often choose to interpret professional, i.e. music-related subjects without regarding the general requirements set for style of language: *clarity* (insufficient use of accurate music terms and the use of

international words which obscure the subject), *simplicity* (to express an idea as elementarily as possible, without specific terms, sophisticated phrases, too complex construction of sentences), *briefness* (without excursuses, excess of words in sentences), *vividness* (both lexical and grammatical means of expression are diverse). Linguistic determinism of a teacher's language causes negative experiences to a child; makes a negative impact on some processes of cognition during lessons (“*sometimes teachers use incomprehensible words which we don't even know or understand (M4)*”) and they do not allow students to seek higher level of cognition. The investigation revealed that solfeggio was the lesson that lacked the meaning of teaching and learning the most. The informants stated that they were not aware of practical application of this subject in their lives, except for those who maybe will choose the speciality of a music pedagogue; and teachers are not able to properly formulate the causality of this subject's meaning. It was observed that solfeggio lessons caused experiences of personal torture and boredom during lessons because of its monotony (“*a solfeggio lesson is monotonous; every lesson is purely the same (M5)*”). Moreover, when talking about their experiences of learning in music school, the informants confessed that they lacked skills of learning, i.e. conscious learning through perceiving, understanding the remarks said by a teacher, which should enhance the awareness and meaningfulness of learning.

The factors identified as what conditions students' motivation for learning in the experiences lived by the students in music school as a consequence of manifest interactions have been distributed into two categories (see Table 4).

Table 4. Factors that condition students' motivation for learning in non-formal education of children

Category	Subcategory
Positive factors that condition motivation for learning	Public performances as a factor enhancing motivation for learning
	Given <i>freedom</i> as a factor enhancing motivation for learning and professionalism
Negative factors that condition motivation for learning	Avoidance of pressure during learning as a factor constraining a wish to learn
	Repertoire as a factor constraining motivation for learning

The analysis of the obtained results reveals that public performances at school and outside it, when students have an opportunity to share and give sense to what they have learnt, positively impact the informants' motivation for learning; otherwise, education becomes meaningless to the learners. While sharing their experiences related to motivation for learning, children also emphasised contests which encouraged them to try their best and rehearse (“*contests are needed <...> to encourage school students to play more, better (M14)*”). Freedom experienced in the course of learning is another factor that determines a positive wish to learn and even to encourage students to seek professionalism (“*everything was because of freedom because we were never constrained by anything (M13)*”). A sense of freedom in non-formal education of children is equalled to rest and relaxation, when achievements become only a consequence of the process, and they are not treated as a purpose. In another case, using pressure while learning, strict constraint while preparing for public performances, e.g. contests, stifles one's wish to learn, even causes thoughts to quit learning in music school, cease everything. Such experiences are also caused by a burden of increasing learning load (“*maybe, at the beginning,*

everyone has that wish, during first days, but later on, when more learning load is added, they don't want to learn anymore (M1)“). A repertoire is one more factor stifling motivation for learning. The research participants stated that while playing an unpleasant repertoire they were feeling like learning by force, experienced torture during regular lessons waiting for them to end (“I tried to play better but in my thoughts I wished for the lesson to end sooner so that I can stop playing because if you don't like a piece of music, you can't master it, you won't even want to play it, like torture, you must forcibly do it (M3)”). It was observed that the failures experienced in the course of learning evoked some of the negative factors which conditioned students' motivation; therefore, it is necessary to be aware that when success is experienced in the learning process in music school, it would significantly contribute to the enhancement of the motivation for learning while creating meaningful learning.

Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of experiences lived by the students demonstrated that learning in music school starts to attain some form of relevance before the start of formal learning – in the period when only considerations for starting learning are considered. Scientists Kalatskaya, Selivanova, & Ilesanmi (2016) have it that the meaning of every student's learning is determined by his/her system of ideals, values which are taken from his/her own environment. Therefore, before starting learning in music school, a child creates a specific preconceived construct of the meaning of learning which helps him/her to make a conscious decision to start learning in music school, and this becomes the *fundamental* for one's further learning.

No doubt, it is natural that after starting formal learning in music school, immersing in the context, having direct interaction with a teacher, peers, environment, items etc., the perception of the meaning of learning may change. However, in order to successfully engage in the life of a music school, it is highly important to assess *each* child's preconceived construct of the meaning of learning. It is necessary to give enough time for a sincere interaction with a child seeking to not only formally ask “*what were the reasons for your coming to learn in a music school?*” or to superimpose one's understanding, but to attempt to understand and assess the students' expectations as they arise in relation to a music school, their direction, content in order to achieve reciprocal coherence between teachers and learners, to find common ground, to avoid multiple polysemy and to create a common process of meaningful teaching and learning (Utvær, 2014). The research reveals that children expect learning without tension, providing creative freedom, pleasure and not so formal like in a comprehensive school. However, they gained the opposite experience. The research participants stated that after they started learning in music school, they did not recognise any features characteristic to non-formal education; instead, they faced tension, learning difficulties and their creative freedom was restricted, learning was limited by preparation for assignments and examinations, sometimes there was even a lack of simple communication, and they were taught subjects and specificity which they did not expect. This means that proper interaction is needed to help each child's preconceived construct of the meaning of learning in music school and to properly present this characteristic to a music school still needs to receive sufficient attention. However, because this process is usually ignored, it causes great disappointment with a music school to the students and conditions them to the already created and operating system by causing experiences of meaningless learning which, in the course of time, may become a major reason for some students to drop out (Utvær, 2014). Therefore, it seems, a conversation missed three or four years ago becomes essentially important when talking about meaningful learning in

music school: it depends whether a student and a teacher will follow an individual and unique common road or whether they will not accept the concepts of meaningful learning thereby widening the communication gap between each other and making learning meaningless.

Communication between students and teachers in music school is an *antidote* to meaningless teaching and learning which should not be one-time but rather repeating, continuous, humane and personal, *interactive*, giving coordinates: what point are we at, common or have already parted? What has learning in music school done to a student and what has it done to a teacher? Every time we must remind ourselves that what is meaningful to a student may not always be meaningful to a teacher, and what is meaningful to a teacher is not always meaningful to a student. The research results show that communicational interaction between students and teachers in music school still exists. Teachers maintain positive and safe relationships with students while becoming helpers and advisers to them, especially those who are attentive and meet students' needs. According to Duoblienė (2018), exactly this emphasised category of teachers in music school is of key importance. It “destroys” outdated concepts and creates new ones. Thanks to personal initiatives, they find individual and advanced methods of activity when providing individual support to students. However, this interaction does not prevail. The students' experiences revealed the categories of teachers' behaviour which caused them anxiety, when pedagogues seek to remain within a safe, doing no harm and well-known to them framework of the classical paradigm by obeying the tradition to seek the result while rendering knowledge, superimposing discipline, rating, measuring, comparing and maintaining the power-based relationships with a student, levelling and not acknowledging their diversity, too. Teachers often experience the decay of teachers' authority along with the decay of the tradition with pain, believing that knowledge-based authority of them, usually almost the only advantage over a student, is undergoing elimination (Edwards & Usher, 2002). They support the practice which is based on binary thinking and on the order set in advance and are unable to set free and see what potentially and prospectively exists, are oriented only to separate the truth from a mistake and to mark them without raising any question of the meaning of the action and consequence to the becoming of a child. The research data obtained in such a way points out a deepening problem of a crisis of the *teachers' role* in the education process in music school (Duoblienė, 2018; Derrida, 2006; Freire, 2000), which often manifests through inadequate behaviour toward a student in music school (raised voice, shouting, screaming, demonstration of anger, dissatisfaction), too. Pulido, Seoane, & Díaz Aguado (2010) treat such teachers' behaviour directed toward students as psychological violence which is still being tolerated by several generations and institutions. Moreover, it adds up to the problem of drop out/expelling of children from the sector of non-formal education (music schools), causes threat to the quality and opportunities for children's learning (Parkes, Heslop, Johnson Ross, Westerveld, & Unterhalter, 2016). Therefore, aiming to create a process full of meaning in prospect, teachers should reject fears of repeating existing clichés but rather search for new junctions, solutions through *interactive communication* ceaselessly, without fear of risk-taking, mistake-making, acting under unanticipated conditions, maintaining the factors that have been discovered during the investigation, keeping up the motivation for learning by employing new means, i.e. to provide an opportunity to every child to make a public performance, to give greater freedom for independent self-expression, learning and assuming responsibility for one's learning. An exaggerated teachers' concern about students' outcomes, pressure and imposed learning content/repertoire as well as lack of relevance in the process of education observed in the course of the investigation create the meanings of learning that

lacks the meaning, restricts. As Kuurme & Carlsson (2012) have it, restriction of personality development, imprisonment, learning as a duty and satisfaction of teachers' expectations as well as a process sometimes even incomprehensible to students and lacking skills of learning, causing pain and boredom – are strong evidences to researchers, practitioners, education politicians alike. Every experience of learning (meaningful/not meaningful) gained in music school forms the personality that we must take care of.

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ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN MUSIC SCHOOL: WHERE DOES THE MEANING OF LEARNING HIDE?

Summary

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When raising a question of the meaningfulness of learning in non-formal education of children, *music schools* that occupy a central sector in the common non-formal education system, i.e. involving one of the largest percentage of children and remaining among the most popular areas of non-formal education choices not only in Lithuania but also in Europe, are not an exception. Non-formal education

of children in Lithuania is not an ancient area of education in comparison to the European experience, it is characteristic of the lack of science-based cognition and data, insufficiency of assurance of quality of education, which raises an intrigue of the investigated context. As a result, a specific *field of tension* is being formed in the music schools. It proceeds in established stiff practice of Soviet pedagogy and sustainable society ideas that are becoming a norm, demands, expectations, changes in the habits of teaching and learning, meaningfulness of teaching and learning activities for the learner created by the contents of interactions in learning environment. These are created by the content of interplays existing in the educational environment. The formed situation supposes the problem of the following question: 1. What are the existing lived experiences of children in music school and what is the content of them, which creates preconditions for implementation of meaningful learning in non-formal education of children? The aim of this research is to reveal the content and expression of the meaningfulness of learning through the analysis of students' lived experiences in institutions of non-formal education of children.

Seeking to reveal students' subjective lived experiences in non-formal education institutions, the investigation employed a qualitative research strategy which helped to reveal the meanings and interpretations of quantitatively complexly explored constructs, holistically treat the problem, focusing on unique human experience in the aspect of the phenomenon under analysis.

The analysis of experiences lived by the students demonstrated that learning in music school starts to attain some form of relevance before the start of formal learning – in the period when only considerations for starting learning are considered. Before starting learning in music school, a child creates a specific preconceived construct of the meaning of learning which helps him/her to make a conscious decision to start learning in music school, and this becomes the fundamental for one's further learning. The research reveals that children expect learning without tension, providing creative freedom, pleasure and not so formal like in a comprehensive school. However, they gained the opposite experience. This means that proper interaction is needed to help each child's preconceived construct of the meaning of learning in music school and to properly present this characteristic to a music school still needs to receive sufficient attention. Communication between students and teachers in music school is an *antidote* to meaningless teaching and learning which should not be one-time but rather repeating, continuous, humane and personal, *interactive*, giving coordinates. The research results show that communicational interaction between students and teachers in music school still exists. However, this interaction does not prevail. Therefore, aiming to create a process full of meaning in prospect, teachers should reject fears of repeating existing clichés but rather search for new junctions, solutions through *interactive communication* ceaselessly, without fear of risk-taking, mistake-making, acting under unanticipated conditions, maintaining the factors that have been discovered during the investigation, keeping up the motivation for learning by employing new means, i.e. to provide an opportunity to every child to make a public performance, to give greater freedom for independent self-expression, learning and assuming responsibility for one's learning.

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