LET THE MUSIC SPEAK IN JOYFUL MUSIC LESSONS

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Abstract Many elementary school teachers enjoy the state of students' immersion in musical activities. However, researchers claim that a state of complete student engagement is difficult to achieve owing to their lack of experience in playing and creating with musical parameters. The aim of the illustrative case study was to explore future teachers' awareness of music making. The aim was to find out how they included it in their preparations, how they described it in self-reflections, and how they evaluated it in peer descriptions. The analysis of the data revealed that future teachers planned the implementation of musical content carefully but were less aware of the factors that contribute to the achievement of group flow. The future teachers emphasised a lack of non-verbal communication skills in musical language, and a well-conducted lesson, where everyone was equally involved in achieving a common goal. Additionally, the teacher could perceive students' ideas, and the group could be focused – all of which are elements of group flow. The study enables the planning of teacher education in a way to provide children with quality acquisition of musical experiences.

Keywords:
group flow in music making, music language, music teaching, preparations for music teaching, teacher-pupil connection

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1 Introduction

A joyful music lesson – utopia or reality? Does the answer lie hidden in the intangible creative moments of communication between students, teacher and music? In search of an explanation, one should acknowledge that creative activities are considered a central component of goal attainment in music education. Many teachers strive to enable their students to become good music (re)creators within their capabilities. Yet this area seems to be the least visible in practice, despite the fact that the Slovenian Curriculum for primary school (2011) includes objectives, such as:

Exploring timbres and using them to express acoustic ideas, creative movement demonstrating sound-related experiences and musical ideas, exploring the sounds of musical instruments and describing the differences, imitating things, animals, languages and events in the local and wider environment as well in nature, reproducing songs, lyrics and instrumental accompaniments, creating one's own accompaniments and sound images, creatively expressing musical and non-musical experiences and images in fine arts, non-verbal communication and movement, listening to music and expressing experiences and perceptions of musical elements with movement, dance, visual arts or verbally, etc. (p. 7).

All the starting points of the Slovenian Curriculum for primary school are underpinned by a process-oriented approach to music teaching. This approach follows the recognition that the learning process also determines the development of future teachers itself, which thus becomes a goal with intrinsic value and goes beyond predetermined goals (Sicherl Kafol & Zalar, 2011). The realization of a music lesson can thus lead to unexpected situations, the effects of which are as important to the learning process as the planned objectives. These situations are an expression of the relationships between all those involved in the learning process and show a specific group dynamic. It is here that teachers realize that students must have a "strong musical self-concept" if they are to attain and develop intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement in musical activities (Lamont, 2011, p. 377). But what about teachers' musical self-concept, and especially that of future teachers? Moore (2012) recognizes that previous formal or informal musical training and associated musical background can strongly influence people's learning (and teaching) experiences and that socio-cultural background can limit or enhance sensitivity to the teaching process. With this awareness and recognition of their own limitations, teachers find it easier to overcome them and treat students in the

classroom not only as a "class" but also as a group that includes students and themselves. They seek to exceed the "healthy music-making team" (ibid, p. 65) and to achieve as often as possible "a high level of intrinsic motivation." (ibid).

Outside the school environment, the above-mentioned intrinsic motivation, along with personal satisfaction and psychological well-being, represents "flow experience" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990), which is "considered to be some of most enjoyable, rewarding, and engaging experience of all and typically involves automatic and effortless action coupled with intense focus." (ibid, p. 23). When multiple people are simultaneously involved in a "flow experience", they are either connected in a "team" where members hold each other accountable, or in a "group" that does not explicitly require this. As co-workers, team members are entirely dependent on each other's contributions – common purpose is a central aspect of defining a team, whereas a group may consist of largely independent actors working in parallel (Katzenbach & Smith, 1992).

From what has been said, it is clear that depending on the process-oriented specifics of teaching, class communities of students and teachers can be classified as "groups". Sawyer (2003) asserts that group flow is not just a collection of individual flows, but a collective phenomenon. Its pre-existing structures are elements related to a ritualized performance as a whole, outlining the performance known to all group members or the predefined roles for each group member. Group flow is assumed to involve parallel actions between group members, which means that group members must simultaneously focus on each other's activities and respond to them with their senses – hearing each other, seeing each other, etc. – in order to keep the interactive synchronicity flowing.

To achieve the peak experience in a group, Sawyer (2007; 2015) introduces the following ten conditions: the group goal, close listening, complete concentration, being in control, blending egos, equal participation, familiarity, communication, moving it forward, and the potential for failure. To learn how to prepare future teachers for teaching with an awareness of the presence of "group flow" we must situate the occurrence of these conditions in the classroom community of students and teachers.

2 Research

2.1 Aims of the Study

The aim of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the elements of "group flow" that can/should occur during the first experience of teaching music. To this end, the study was conducted at the Faculty of Education, where the authors observed how future elementary school teachers plan and deliver music lessons and how aware they are of the conditions for "group flow" in the classroom.

2.2 Research Questions

Based on the goal of the study, each of the posed questions related to four levels of research: the participants' first-person experience of the first music teaching process (L1), the participants' peer evaluation of the teaching process (L2), the detailed lesson preparation (L3), and the final level, which offered future teachers' views on the implementation of "group flow" elements in the classroom (L4).

The research questions were as follows:

1. How do future teachers experience their involvement in the classroom community in their first music lessons? (RQ 1 – L1)
2. Are there any elements that point to the importance of "group flow" among the elements that future teachers consider important for the successful implementation of the learning process in a music lesson? (RQ 2 – L1, L2)
3. In preparing for music lessons, do future teachers (consciously) plan for those elements of "group flow" that later in the analysis become the key factors of a successfully delivered lesson? (RQ 3 – L3, L4)

2.3 Method

Given that the research topic was studied from a broader perspective, two analyses were conducted: a phenomenological case study (Kordeš et al., 2015) to answer the first research question (RQ 1 – L1) and an illustrative case study (Hayes et al., 2015; Jackson, 1991) that led us to a better understanding of the first research question and provided answers to the second and third research questions (RQ 2 – L1, L2 and RQ 3 – L3, L4). This scientific methodology made it possible to address the

target audience (future teachers) and bridge the gap between theory and practice by finding a common language to discuss the topic.

Thus, the authors focused on the holistic interpretation of possible elements of "group flow" among the elements of music teaching that students find important for a successful music learning process and went into detail about how/if they plan these elements in advance.

2.4 Participants and Data Gathering

Because the aim was to gain the deepest possible insight into the topic, the authors included future teachers from three consecutive years of study, all of whom were teaching music for the first time and all of whom had also observed at least five performances by their classmates. All 241 participants were aged between 22 and 23, were in their final year of undergraduate studies, and will work as first to fifth grade teachers in elementary schools after obtaining their master's degrees.

The participants were divided into three groups according to their respective years of study, with 80 students in the first group, 82 in the second and 79 in the third.

Table 1: The structure of the participating future teachers

	Students (n)
1st group	80
2nd group	82
3rd group	79
Together	241

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After each student made their own lesson preparation, each of them carried out a 45-minute music lesson with 1st to 5th grade children and participated in a group discussion that followed, therein the students analysed the respective lesson along with those of at least five other classmates. Within one week after the respective lessons, each student also produced a written self-reflection of their own lesson and wrote evaluations of five other selected lessons, given by their classmates, according to a specific protocol that included an evaluation of professional and didactic implementation, as well as open-ended questions about their general impression of the performance.

This procedure provided the opportunity to include multiple sources of information in the study. During data collection, the authors first reviewed all self-reflections (241) but selected only those that contained descriptions of successful implementations in the classroom for analysis. As it turned out, only 68 students (28.21%) were completely satisfied with the way they conducted the lessons.

For each of these self-reflections, the authors searched for and analysed the respective peer reviews, of which, given the observation system used, there were five times as many (340), but only 200 of them contained data relevant to the current field of study. All detailed lesson preparations were also included in the data (68). Finally, 31 teacher's notes were analysed. These were made for selected lessons and were highlighted during the group discussion with students after the lessons.

Table 2: Data collected for the study

	Written self-reflection on music teaching (n)	Relevant written self-reflection included in the study (SRP) (n) (f %)		Relevant peer evaluation of music lessons (PEP) (n)	Detailed music lesson preparation for relevant lesson (LPP) (n)	Teacher's notes for relevant music lessons (TP) (n)
1st group	80	19	23.75 %	65	19	10
2nd group	82	23	28.75 %	60	23	9
3rd group	79	26	32.91 %	75	26	12
together	241	68	28.21 %	200	68	31

Legend: SRP – Self-Reflection Protocol, PEP – Peer Evaluation Protocol, LPP – Lesson Preparation Protocol, TP – Teacher's Protocol.

Based on these sources, four protocols that contain data for each level of research were created:

- "Self-Reflection Protocol" ("SRP", encryption units in the protocol are marked as SRP-I/1, SRP-II/5, SRP-III/69, etc.) contained data for the first level (phenomenological) of research from the relevant written self-reflections.
- "Peer Evaluation Protocol" ("PEP", encryption units in the protocol are marked as PEP-I/1, PEP-II/5, etc.) covered data derived from peer evaluation notes on the second level of research.
- "Lesson Preparation Protocol" ("LPP", encryption units in the protocol are marked as LPP-I/4, LPP-II/5, etc.) contained data for the third level of

research obtained from the review of lesson preparations, drawn up in advance.

– "Teacher's Protocol" ("TP", encryption units in the protocol are marked as TP-I/1, TP-II/5, etc.) covered data on the final, fourth level of research obtained from the teachers' notes and provided an additional view of the research area, ensuring the necessary validity of the study.

2.5 Definition of Categories

The data collected in all four protocols were analysed using a qualitative method of scientific research. The authors followed the steps of phenomenological research (Kordeš et al., 2015) and illustrative case study process (Gerring, 2017; Hayes et al., 2015), formed coding units (Yin, 2009), and used open and axial coding to determine the categories, whose paradigmatic model was related to the area under study. 21 categories were formed, of which ten were linked to professional and didactic implementation in lessons and eleven related to the representation of "group flow" between the teacher and children from 1st to 5th grade (six to eleven years old) during music lessons. In a further process of analysis, the authors combined four of the originally defined categories into one (*The use of the voice, Attitude towards silence, Perception of individual sounds and group sounds, Perception of the singing contents and instrumental music contents*), since their data overlapped to such an extent that separation into more specific areas was no longer possible. Some category titles also contained codes relating to a specific theme, as well as their antipodes – all with the intention of providing insight into the problem from as many perspectives as possible.

2.5.1 Phenomenological Case Study

In the phenomenological case study, material related to the first level (L1) of the entire study were analysed, answering the research question regarding the experience of their involvement during their first music lesson.

The "Individual Flow" vs. "Group Flow" Relationship. In the "*individual flow" vs. "group flow*" category, data were included showing how the individual future teacher's flow merged with the "group flow" experience in the classroom community. The author also included data showing the reverse path from experiencing "group flow" back to the future teacher.

Thus, the self-reflection protocol yielded records that suggest that the energy expended to overcome initial nervousness and uncomfortable feelings is positively valued and critical to the successful delivery of music lessons. More than effort, future teachers described induction efforts as a process that is inevitable and at the same time quickly overcome: *"… then I forgot it was a performance"* (SRP-I / 6), *"I never thought I would enjoy teaching music as much as I did during the performance"* (SRP-III / 50), *"I think we found a common language and we felt each other"* (SRP-III / 52). Data from the "Teacher's Protocol" (TP) also confirm the above findings: *"She performed the introductory motivational activities remarkably well" (TP-II/17)* and provide insight into the students' feedback about the future teacher experience: *"I had a very positive experience of the lesson. I think the students also played a big role in the overall experience"* (SRP-I / 17), *"I felt very good and accepted by the students. The students are very nice and like to help"* (SRP-III / 50).

A particular sense of time flying by is evident in the following statements: *"I do not even know when or how the hour passed"* (SRP-II / 37), *"... all of a sudden we were at the last activity, it was great"* (SRP-III / 42). On the other hand, some future teachers reported difficulty during the lesson and a lack of shared experiences: *"I lack energy and dynamism in performing"* (SRP-I / 9) and *"I do not see any problems in the (un)success of individual activities, but rather in the feeling and frustration"* (SRP-I / 14).

In teaching, the data show the special "status" of the teacher; on the one hand, they are involved in the class community and the "group flow" experience, on the other hand they (at the same time) secretly control the course of the lesson: *"It is very good that she changed the game depending on the situation – this means for me that the teacher can try to play with the students, but on the other hand he always acts as a supervisor as well"* (SRP-I / 14).

How deficiencies in certain areas of expertise can be compensated by a carefully devised and consolidated teaching strategy is shown in the following notes*: "Intonation is not reliable. But she masters the piano playing perfectly and helps herself by constantly observing the students in spite of her playing. She has beautiful facial expressions"* (TP - II / 24) and *"I realized that a teacher can attract students even if she does not have an ear for singing"* (SRP-II / 24).

Emotional Commitment. The *Emotional Commitment* category explains how strongly future teachers experience their first lesson in music teaching: *"I experienced the music lesson as a kind of whirlwind of emotions"* (SRP-III / 58).

All participants reported feeling some tension at the beginning of the lesson, calling it '*fear'* SRP-III / 41, 48, 52, 51), '*trembling'* (SRP-I / 3. 6. 15, II / 25.32, III / 68), *'stress'* (SRP-I / 2, 7, 8, 9, II / 21,26, 37, III / 44, 55, 62, 67), and successfully overcoming the initial discomfort: *"I made a conscious decision that this would not throw me off track and started the lesson"* (SRP-I / 9), *"I overcame that initial fear and exceeded my expectations"* (SRP-I / 12). Often external factors were responsible for the uneasy initial feeling, over which future teachers had no control: *"Due to the absence of the teacher, I did not have the agreed musical instruments and other necessities ready"* (SRP-III / 59). However, through a reflective process of introspection, the future teachers achieved a certain degree of self-confidence and experienced this as a personal transformation. Descriptions of the final parts of the lessons are therefore as positive as possible and contain words, such as *fun, enjoyment, relaxation, pleasant atmosphere, positive experience, victory, etc.* (SRP-I / 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, 16, 17, II / 22, 23, 24, 27, 31, 33, 39, 40, III / 45, 46, 48, 60, 61). The author can confirm that the experience of teaching music changes after succeeding in (co-)experiencing the musical language with students: *"At the end of the lesson I was overwhelmed with feelings of satisfaction, happiness, personal victory"* (SRP-II / 38). The best way to describe this process of transition is to say: *"If I could sum up the experience of this lesson in one word, I would call it a storm, precisely because the atmosphere was tense at the beginning, but at the end the feeling was very pleasant, like when the sun shines after a storm*" (SRP-I / 17).

Teaching Music as an Artistic Experience. In the material in the "*Teaching music as an artistic experience"* category, it is stated that future teachers (also) led the lessons as a time of special artistic experiences through which they wanted to encourage students' active participation by stimulating curiosity and finding different ways of solving musical tasks: *"... achieving, through all the activities carried out, a single goal, namely, the artistic experience of teaching music lessons*" (SRP-I/4). They were aware that they influenced students through personal involvement: *"I think it is important that we as teachers provide a lively, joyful interpretation and attitude towards music, because then students will participate in music lessons more gladly"* (SRP-II/64), *"The way it (music) is presented by the teacher is the way it is accepted by the students"* (SRP-II/44).

They also knew how to incorporate the aesthetic dimension of music teaching into their deep experience: *"I found music lessons relaxed, calm and creative at the same time, because not only the students learned a lot, but I also left the classroom with a new positive experience"* (SRP-II/31), *"I got to know myself much better"* (SRP-I/12).

Desire to Teach Music vs. Fear of Making Mistakes. The records gathered in the "*Desire to Teach Music Arts vs. Fear of Making Mistakes*" category report on the participants' great desire to teach music, but at the same time a fear of doing so. The following quotes confirm this statement: *"I am surprised and proud to have completed a performance that to me was one of the most challenging school performances this year"* (SRP-III / 41), *"One of my most valuable personal learnings from this lesson was the awareness that I can prepare a quality lesson and that I can do more than I had previously imagined"* (SRP-III/54). Once again, working together and experiencing "group flow" proved helpful in overcoming embarrassment before teaching. Thus, the influence between the future teacher and the students was two-way: *"I am glad I had the opportunity to work with a class like this ... it inspired me and gave me the confidence to teach music that I lacked before this experience"* (SRP-I / 10). Despite being aware that dialogue is an important part of communication, many students reported on the importance of performing with self-confidence (SRP-I / 1, 2, 3, 6, 14, 17, II / 34, III / 53, 59) and how being well prepared for lessons contributes to it: *"Music lessons are not so demanding if you just start properly and prepare well and go into the lessons positively and with good energy"* (SRP-I / 14), *"Now I understand how important preparation is"* (SRP-II / 24) and *"Because I was aware of this, I prepared carefully for the lessons and practised a lot at home and prepared well. At the performance I noticed that it paid off because after a few minutes the insecurity was completely gone"* (SRP-III / 47).

A confident performance is strongly emphasized again in connection with flexible adaptation to the learning process. The insights regarding practical implementation are expressed in the following statements: "*..., so I adapted the lesson slightly"* (SRP-I / 10), *"So I realized that I needed to be prepared for unpredictable situations in the further course of the lesson and at the same time trust in my abilities and the activities I prepared"* (SRP-I / 18, SRP-II / 31). However, the occasional humorous situation occurs on the part of the observer when they realize that potential mistakes do not affect the experience of "group flow" or that the participants do not even notice them: "*She made a mistake several times, they played on nuts and not on hazelnuts"* (PEP - II / 101) and "*The students became so absorbed in musical communication and followed so well that speech errors were not noticed at all*" (TP - II / 101).

2.5.2 Illustrative Case Study

The illustrative case study, as the second part of the study, analysed the material obtained for the second (L2), third (L3) and fourth (L4) research levels, confirming and at the same time extending the insight into the explored themes of the phenomenological study at the first (L1) research level. Four categories were identified in the material.

Music as a Game. In the "*Music as a Game"* category, data were collected from 136 (of 200) relevant peer evaluations of music lessons that emerged as key indicators of the realization of group flow conditions. These included descriptions of moments in the lessons for which it was clear from the materials that all participants were engaged in common music making with clearly expressed expectations on the one hand, and a sense of confidence that enabled students to feel comfortable and creative on the other. There was some initial effort involved, but once the collaboration had begun, it provided valuable feedback and began to be intrinsically rewarding. The data relate solely to the introductory motivational activities: *"Nice, calm, relaxing introductory motivational activity*" (PEP -III / 172), *"Creative and interesting start to the lesson"* (PEP -III / 187), *"I am surprised how wonderfully the improvisation worked in the introductory motivation"* (PEP -III / 198), and to the final activities: *"Great end to the lesson – the musical game was a success"* (PEP -I / 3). In the materials, play is never described as a central activity of the lesson.

Perception of the Class Community as a "Group". The records that report a high level of student engagement in music language and a high level of interest in their actions by the cooperating teacher are all grouped under the category of "*Perception of the Class Community as a 'Group.*'" It highlights the consistent attitude of the future teacher whose posture, facial expressions, and other forms of non-verbal behaviour confirm their empathy for the functioning of the class as a whole: "*He is also kind and has a happy expression on his face, he is obviously enjoying himself"* (PEP-II/70 and 92 other similar reports). In the analysis, the author found that mentions of kindness, warmth, and a reassuring demeanour were always associated with the experienced interpretation of music contents. Therefore, one can conclude that professionalism is a prerequisite for creating conditions for the development of group flow: *"... Music house, everybody was at home there. Literally (physically) and figuratively"* (PEP -I / 37).

The Influence of Additional (Non-) Formal Education. This category contains a selection of the most important descriptions from the materials, showing how much knowledge from other artistic fields students brought to the music class was welcome and how much it helped them fit into the group flow. The ability to play an instrument, even modestly, was also desirable. Reports, such as *"My hands were shaking, but I was just kind of along for the ride"* (SRP-III/59) and *"She was visibly nervous, but she played so heartily"* (SRP-III/59) and *"the kids applauded"* (PEP-III/189), show how students spontaneously valued a genuine personal relationship more than a technically flawless musical performance. In the peer evaluation material, the author also found praise for the piano, guitar, and accordion playing. As regards to other artistic areas, acting stood out: *"Super facial expressions and singing in the roles of the mayor and the sparrows"* (PEP-I/4), *"Excellent dramatization" (ibid.) "Innovative delivery of a lesson with good pantomime"* (PEP-III/150).

Musical Parameters. The "*Musical Parameters*" category includes all reports related to the use of voice in music lessons, attitudes towards silence, perception of individual/group sounds, and perception of the vocal/instrumental music contents. The material is extensive but overlaps to such an extent that it is not possible to separate it into more specific areas. For example, the note *"she used calmness of the voice as a conscious choice"* (PEP -III / 189) was given a double meaning. On the one hand, this statement characterized the future teacher's self-presentation, influenced by the students' intense experiential listening to instrumental content, which she did not want to interrupt with speech, and at the same time it praised her extraordinary attention to sonority: *"In this way, she leaves the 'speech' to the music and grabs the students' attention in a great way. At the same time, she guides them and leaves them free"* (TP -III/58).

The codes included in the category also indicate the real benefit of an appropriate attitude towards silence. One future teacher allowed her students a lot of freedom to develop and coordinate their own musical ideas: *"... with the movement of her hands and without words, she took the student's sound idea and passed it on to the other student in the same way. The latter carried out the melody without error. I was very surprised; I had never seen or heard such a performance before"* (PEP -II/133). With the absence of speech (and its possible substitution with, for example, movement or facial expression), silence enabled students to learn through active participation. They responded emotionally: *"The students looked at her with their eyes wide open and no one moved"* (PEP -II / 139), but they also successfully acquired new knowledge: *"The students wanted to repeat over and over, I heard them singing a new song during the break."* (ibid.). Teaching with little language

and with more non-verbal stimuli is even described as 'risky' in the material: *"The kids kept playing ... And without instructions – risky, but great!"* (PEP -I / 144).

3 Discussion

Finally, the paradigmatic model of the relationships between categories in the selective coding of the collected material was identified. The authors established the connections between the main findings and the concept of "group flow" – the process led to the formulation of the final discussion in a form of grounded theory, which offered answers to all research questions.

In making music together with students, future teachers experience a change in their personal view of the teacher-student connection during their first music lesson.

All participating future teachers followed the Slovenian Curriculum for primary school and planned lessons using a process-oriented approach with all its recommendations. Self-reflection on their performance showed that not only the students, but also the teachers themselves made progress in this way. An important insight into this progress is the understanding of "group flow". Drawing on the psychology of music, it argues that collaborative group work is a powerful social activity (Hargreaves & North, 1997; MacDonald et al., 2006; Miell & MacDonald, 2000) with a particular state of mind, and as such represents the highest level of psychological and physical ability for participants (Sawyer, 2015). Shared activities – especially in the creative field of music – become pleasurable, although, as Csikszentmihaly (1975) says, they initially require a great deal of effort – a complete "*whirlwind of emotions"* (SRP-III/58). Once this is successfully overcome, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding (ibid.): "*I have come to know myself much better"* (SRP-I/12). This task requires great concentration and few cues come to mind during the (teaching) process (Csikszentmihaly, 1990). It is only through the analysis of the teaching method that the conditions for achieving progress are expressed; this is mainly reflected in the awareness that it is worth expending a large amount of energy just to make future teachers feel it (Sawyer, 2015). Thus, when they focus their attention to music making in interaction with students, rather than worrying about their "status" as a teacher, they achieve a paradoxical result – they no longer feel like a separate individual as a teacher, but they become stronger and more confident as a member of a group.

In addition, the study confirmed that the perception of time during teaching also overlapped with the conditions for the realisation of "group flow". Nakamura and Csikszentmihaly (2009) state that after experiencing "group flow", we do not know where the time has gone, *"I do not even know when or how the lesson has passed"* (SRP-II / 37). In this sentence, the word "*when"* confirms that "time seems to stand still" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihaly, 2002, p. 95), but even more significant is the word "*how"*. Indeed, one would expect the teacher to be in control of what is happening in the lesson, but here it seems as if the lesson progresses on its own. The teacher is completely immersed in group music making. Forgetting their position as teacher, they experience being part of a group. Sawyer (2007) explains that this phenomenon (through aesthetic experience) expands the boundaries of the experience of one's being and opens up the possibility of seeing oneself from other perspectives. In an educational context, aesthetic experience is completely direct (and synonymous with creation), and its interpretation allows this intense inner experience to be expressed to others (Kroflič, 2007). According to the data analysis, the confidence needed to express oneself in the context of the classroom stems from the personal transformation of the future teachers' world, which enables them to "act properly – musically, socially, communally – with constant concern for the protection and promotion of human creativity" (Elliott & Silverman, 2014, p. 44).

Well-prepared and thought-out music lessons combined with impeccable professionalism in the classroom community allow for the achievement of several elements of "group flow".

A significant finding within this study is also the fact that the more precisely the lessons are planned, the more they can prove to be "*child-friendly"* (PEP-I/17), "*calm"* (PEP-II/102, "*successful, collaborative"* (PEP-II/141), "*full of musical improvisation"* (PEP-III/180). Future teachers plan certain conditions for "group flow" in advance without being aware of it – especially when it comes to the "external task environment" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihaly, 2009). This includes "challenges matched to skill level, clear proximal goal(s), and clear, immediate feedback" (van den Hout et al., 2018, p. 392). In addition to the above, "group flow" can also indicate situations that future teachers do not plan for but simply happen because of their full personal engagement. They create an environment for students where there is "no fear of failure, full focus, and intrinsic motivation" (ibid.). Future teachers sense they can handle situations because they feel confident to respond to any kind of event, and their thoughts, energies, and attentions are focused on the

task at hand. Possible distractions are eliminated from awareness – the teacher can achieve this with much practice (Lutz et al., 2008). It shows that the exercise in eliminating external influences begins immediately upon first entering the class: "*I did not have all the musical instruments agreed upon ...*" (SRP-III / 59) and "*I made a conscious decision that this would not make me panic ...*" (SRP-I / 12).

Based on the progression of lessons characterized by the behaviours described above, and in accordance with the theories of achieving a "flow" state (Csikszentmihaly, 1975, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihaly, 2002, 2009; van den Hout et al., 2018), one can claim that "group flow" in music lessons in the school environment occurs in shorter periods of time, during which participants enter, leave, or stay for more or less time. During this time, they lose "reflexive self-consciousness" (van den Hout et al., 2018, p. 393) – their concern for themselves temporarily disappears, and they experience a "distorted experience of the passage of time" (ibid.).

In most lessons, the future teachers and students included in the study began to make music together at the beginning of or during the last few activities. During these moments, the manner of communication between them played a great role, as the children believed the non-verbal messages and perceived them as more authentic (Noller, 1984). "*The students looked at her with their eyes wide open ...*" (PEP-II / 139) refers to the events in which the future teacher used a calm voice and expressive body language and communication skills she acquired outside of her studies by participating in children's theatre. Park (2013) describes these two qualities as essential for contact with (especially younger) children. Appelman (2000) further confirms the importance of coherence between expressions and dyadic interactions, as speech intonation, rate of speech, and all related non-verbal elements that promote synchronization and comprehension of others' feelings. Facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, instrumental behaviours of individuals in a group, all positive and negative emotions can be transferred from one person to another and are "contagious" (Hatfield et al., 1993, p. 96; Culbertson et al., 2015; Hart & Di Blasi, 2015).

The analysis has explained several interactive communication processes in which it was possible to observe how the mood of the future teacher affected many factors of teaching and, of course, vice versa: "... *(the class) inspired me and gave me the confidence to teach music that I lacked before this experience"* (SRP-I/10). In this way, "emotional

internal infections" (Bakker, 2004, p. 28) begin to work, determining the quality of teaching and indirectly affecting student and teacher satisfaction.

It is believed that children at the beginning of primary school have great interest in music activities carried out as symbolic play, which is characterized by the representation of others from the real or imaginary world (Marentič Požarnik, 2018). The vast majority of data in the study confirms this. And if the definition of communication (Communication, 2021) is: "a process in which information, ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc. are exchanged between individuals through a shared system of symbols, sounds, signs, or behaviors," then they merge the teacher's lesson preparations with concrete plans of making music together with the children and their mutual emotional influence into a concrete entity (Bakker, 2004), leading to a creative process of knowledge formation.

In preparing for music lessons, students rarely plan consciously for the elements of group flow, even though they identify them in lesson analyses as being crucial for the successful integration of all participants in collaborative music making.

In the study, preparation for music lessons did not fare well on the prerequisites for "group flow". The results indicate that there are no mentions of its deliberate planning except for a few passing remarks, such as "*I pay attention to non-verbal communication"* (LPP-II/39 and two others). Unlike goals, methods, and activities that future teachers plan and can consciously pursue in the course of teaching, the conditions for achieving "group flow" or participating in "group flow" are something that they only become aware of after a thorough analysis, specifically when they are able to give a "proper name" to descriptions, such as "…*it was great"* (SRP-II/29) and place their feelings outside the frame of stress of giving their first music lesson. The success of teaching in terms of collaborative musical creation and performance often comes as a complete surprise. Complete concentration – "... *then I forgot it was a performance..."* (SRP-I/6) – means bringing order to the state of mind by incorporating future teachers' and students' actions into the group's "flow experience" (Sawyer, 2006, 2007). It is understandable that we often cannot achieve this state of mind in the school setting because we are limited by time and space. Moreover, the investment of mental energy requires full concentration, not to mention the skills without which it is impossible to think of achieving "group flow".

During the study, it was found that during the lessons, moments of "group flow" emerged when the basic conditions for this were met and complemented by feelings of healthy competition among the children. In all cases, the latter proved to be a means of perfecting the abilities of the children who experienced it as fun. Armstrong (2008) refers to these learning situations as goal-oriented activities that are sequential and constrained by rules, while at the same time containing a tremendous amount of cooperation and attention among all participants. In this study, the author was more interested in when/if a leap into "group flow" occurred under the above-mentioned circumstances. It was found that "group flow" occurred more frequently in younger children, when the shared music making moved from the concrete to pure music. The result is surprising, because in some respects it goes beyond the phase of concrete operations, which these children, according to Piaget and Inhelder (2018), are still in as regards their cognitive development. One can assume that it is an (unconscious) acceptance – to the point of "emotional contagion" (Bakker, 2004) – of the teacher's manner of teaching, their speech, professional skills (in notion of singing, interpretation, musical language, etc.), frame of mind, attitude towards the students, and mood. Of greater importance than children's musical products is the fact that the children involved in the "group flow" approach "pure music", the expression of which, as Stravinsky (1947, p. 47) argues, has never been its inherent quality. Its purpose is to express the expression of feelings that live far from reality in (vocal) visions of individuals (ibid); with good guidance, a group of children easily "moves" into this world of sounds and returns from there to the school environment.

According to the findings, lesson preparation for music lessons fails to consider that participants in highly interdependent groups report more enjoyment of flow than individuals (Walker, 2010, p. 4). Although "group flow seems to come naturally" (Sawyer, 2006, p. 158) when working with children, we need to be aware and consider that the social context of "group flow" may be a qualitatively different phenomenon than individual flow – and therefore we need the best possible music lesson preparation.

4 Conclusion

The detailed analysis of the plans for the first music lessons and the detailed description of the future teachers' experiences during their implementation gives us an excellent holistic insight into the interpersonal relationships formed between the

participants through musical language and by making music together. It is important to note that "group flow" as the culmination of participation in a shared musical activity occurs completely unplanned and yet it can be facilitated or enhanced by increasing a group's musical competences, improving interaction and social relationships. Future teachers, who are open to a variety of experiences, eager to continue learning, and have a strong commitment to others, including young children, demonstrate that optimal experiences in "group flow" do not come from inactive, relaxing times – even though their lessons seem to be "*quiet, nice, friendly"* (PEP-II / 37, 39). The data also point to the personality traits of good teachers, which should begin with acceptance of oneself – the teacher should be who they are. In (non-verbal) communication, they should not show any discrepancy between experience and expression, they should trust students unconditionally, they should create an atmosphere of safety and empathic acceptance – or, as the one of the future teacher writes: "*I realized that it is always worth trying something new in life"* (SRP-II / 35).

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