

Evaluation in Music Education in Greece

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Contextualisation

If assessment of a skill or competency is to be undertaken, the abstract and practical skills and knowledge needed have to be evaluated in a meaningful and curriculum appropriate way. The paper below proposes such a system of evaluation in the context of music education in Greece, drawing on Swanwick's views about the role of various aspects of music education and musical development.

Abstract: *This paper is about Evaluation in Music Education as it is practiced in Greece. First of all, views and examples of evaluation in music in the Greek context are presented, as well as comments about the content of music lessons in Greek secondary schools. Second, informed by Swanwick's views on the parameters of music education ('literature studies', 'skill acquisition', 'composition', 'audition' and 'performance') and his Theory of Musical Development, relating to the four layers of musical knowledge development ('materials', 'expression', 'form' and 'value', a model is proposed for evaluating the process of learning in music. This model combines Swanwick's four layers, with the three parameters considered most significant for the development of musical knowledge ('composition', 'audition' and 'performance'). The model is believed to be applicable not only in the Greek context, but also in other contexts, since it is based on a theory already successfully tested internationally in different environments.*

Introduction

Music is evaluated in a number of ways in Greece. These include *The Maria Callas Grand Prix* competitions, the examinations for music studies of the Institute of State Grants, open auditions for acceptance into an orchestra, reviews in newspapers and special magazines, as well as records of sales of music recordings. We have seen examples of evaluation in music education in Greece ever since 1871, the year in which 'The Conservatory of Athens' was founded. Currently, in music teaching and learning, examinations are usually of a high standard. It takes approximately fifteen years to gain a degree for proficiency in playing a musical instrument, and an even longer period to acquire a diploma as a soloist. During this time, students are required to show the following:

- The necessary dexterity to hold their own in any musical ensemble;
- A deep knowledge of musical theory;
- An acquaintance with the life and works of various composers, as well as the kind of music they compose relating to the period in which they live, such as pre-classical, classical, romantic, or modern; and
- Knowledge of the new technologies related to music.

Different views have been put forward in the literature about evaluation in music education in Greece. Papazaris (1991, p 241), for example, asserts that 'the sense of musical perception is not something which can be measured, weighed, shown or grasped with your hand' and

that ‘musical perception is woven like an abstract concept or like a spiritual state in the human mind’. He himself proposes certain ‘pointers’ for its measurement, like ‘steady keeping of time’, ‘execution with correct tonality’, and ‘correctness of voice’. The Pedagogical Institute of Athens stresses the need for authenticity, reliability, and objectivity in measurements and proposes the designation of ‘clear, measurable, and objective criteria on which the teacher can base his/her evaluation’ (1998, p 98). On the one hand, musical knowledge consists of traces of deeper experiences, and as such is certainly evaluated, while on the other hand, clear, measurable, and objective criteria for the evaluation of such knowledge cannot exist until there is basic agreement on the content of music education and the nature of musical knowledge. So before proceeding to my own proposal it is necessary to clarify these two points.

The Content of Music Education

In his book *A Basis for Music Education*, Keith Swanwick (1979), a researcher who embraces a love and recognition of all the trends and groups in music education internationally, affirms that the content of music education could be recorded in five basic fields (‘parameters’). These are presented below in Table 1.

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>Description</i>
I. C <i>Composition</i>	Formulating a musical idea, making a musical object.
II. (L) <i>Literature studies</i>	The literature of and the literature about music.
III. A <i>Audition</i>	Responsive listening as (though not necessarily in) an audience.
IV. (S) <i>Skill acquisition</i>	Aural, instrumental, notational.
V. P <i>Performance</i>	Communicating music as a ‘presence’.

Table 1. The parameters of music education (Swanwick, 1979, p 45).

Swanwick’s classification is very useful, not only because it has been tested at a level of educational policy which is independent of the current fashions in music or differences in music cultures, but also because it locates and incorporates the aims and objects of our evaluation. For example, many of the aims of music education, such as those laid down by the Pedagogical Institute of Athens (1998), could be incorporated in the field of literature studies (parameter II of Table 1). In fact, according to the Pedagogical Institute of Athens, music in public education aims, among other things, at the:

‘...engrafting of the humanities with such philosophical-ethical reflection and productive speculation as is necessary for the responsible citizen of the future and for the complete scientist’. (Pedagogical Institute of Athens, 1998, pp 5-6)

Simultaneously the students ‘experience values integrative for our national and cultural identity (language, art, religion, and tradition)’ and ‘recognise the cultural legacy of other peoples’. Other aims of music education, as laid down by the Pedagogical Institute of Athens, are incorporated in the field of skill acquisition (parameter IV of Table 1). For example:

Students at the Integrated Lykeio are more capable of finer aesthetic distinctions. Using basic knowledge of *musical notation, theory and morphology* they are able

to proceed to a fuller analysis of the structure of musical works and understanding of the social and cultural conditions in which they were conceived. They can also attain a fuller interpretative approach and evaluation of them. (Pedagogical Institute of Athens, 1998, p 4)

Apart from the proposal of the Pedagogical Institute of Athens and its distinguished educational policy, another aspect of organised musical teaching in Greece is the viewpoint of private conservatories and music schools. The least musically orientated of the state secondary schools (gymnasia and lykeia) could not for various reasons offer a convincing or generalised model of music education (most of the students study simultaneously at private conservatories in order to gain the required certificates). Although there are currently university departments of musicology at three universities in Greece, namely Athens, Corfu and Thessaloniki, the majority of these students study simultaneously in the private sector. Many of the private conservatories have moved towards co-operation with well-known music schools from abroad and provide grants for the more gifted musicians. In the private sector there is also intense activity in the field of music publications, in the organisation of competitions of international repute, and in the promotion of talented young musicians. There is also a series of other activities, including the organisation of masterclasses (Skalkottas, 1996; Hellenic Conservatory, 1997; National Conservatory, 1997; Nakas, 1998; and Conservatory of Athens, 1998).

If we ignore for one moment, the fact that all these developments follow the harsh law of supply and demand, we should recognise, with a certain degree of fairness, that the private sector has contributed much to the subject of evaluation in music education. The chief contribution of the private sector is not the evaluation committees appointed by the Culture Ministry whose objectivity is not very great, but the fact that the laws of the market have given a convincing answer to the question of 'what is to be evaluated' and 'what is worth evaluating'. In my opinion, if the government in its attempts to develop the teaching and evaluation of music ignores the fact that music involves chiefly *performance*, *audition* and *composition*, music education will become just one more subject and its evaluation just one more 'educational activity'. Performance, audition and composition, in this view, are the fields which should carry the most substantial weight of evaluation.

Swanwick's Theory of Musical Development

I have identified above, what in my view, are the three most important fields of evaluation in music education. As suggested in the introductory paragraphs of this article, the other point at which we should pause before proceeding to any evaluation in music education is the recognition of the peculiar nature of musical knowledge and the manner in which it is attained. If we recognise the different levels of the attainment of knowledge, it is easier to proceed towards evaluation.

Swanwick (1983; 1988; 1994; 1997), has given a practically tested theory of musical development in accordance with which, musical knowledge is developed in four layers: *materials*, *expression*, *form*, and *value* (see Table 1). According to Swanwick (1997), the first layer is of the knowledge and control of **materials**, that is the knowledge and control of:

- a) Sound-colours amongst musical instruments;
- b) Levels of intensity of sound;
- c) Duration and quality of sounds; and
- d) Technical dexterity in instruments or in the voice.

In the second layer we have knowledge and control in **expression** or sense of the atmosphere of the works, musicality, sense of the movement which the structure of musical phrases demands, etc. In the third layer we have control and knowledge of the **form** of musical works, or the interrelation between expressive forms, the ways in which musical phrases; are repeated, transferred to other tonalities, come into opposition, or are linked. Finally in the fourth layer we have the realisation of music as a bearer of cultural **values** or the acquisition of musical autonomy and independent critical thinking related to music. In these layers development takes place through activities in music education.

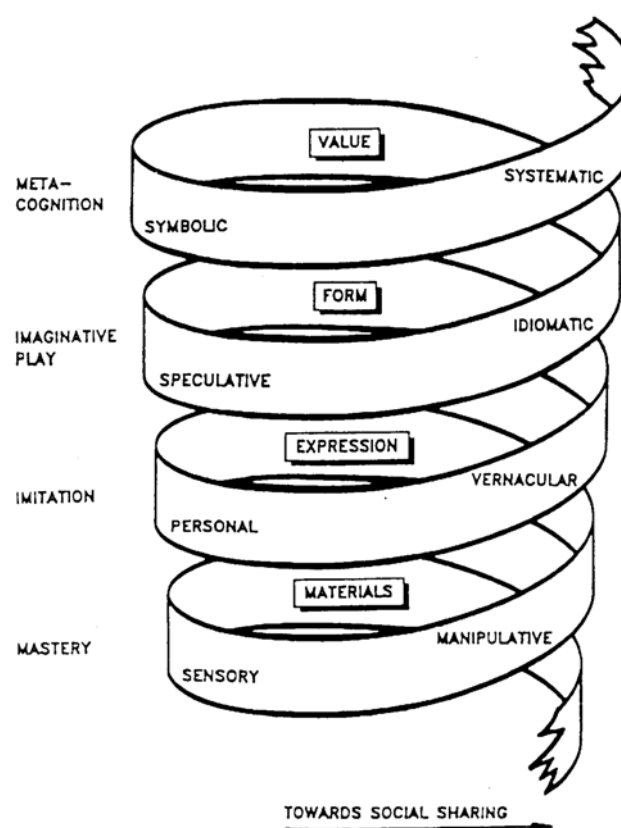


Figure 1. The spiral of musical development (source: Swanwick and Tillman, 1986)

Aspects of the proposed model

1. Evaluation of Knowledge about Music

According to the philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1966), one form of knowledge could be called 'declarative knowledge'. Examples of such knowledge in music would be the statements that 'Beethoven wrote nine symphonies', that 'rizitika are traditional songs of Crete', or that 'Jim Morrison is the singer in the group *The Doors*'. Declarative knowledge in music can also be acquired in non-musical ways. Knowledge of this type includes all that Swanwick refers to in the parameter of literature studies about music. Many contemporary scientific fields like Musicology, Ethnomusicology, History of Music and Sociology of Music are in essence literature studies. In the case of different 'underground' musical currents (like hip-hop and acid-jazz) the investigation is also conducted outside universities. Knowledge of such a kind can be evaluated with the known methods provided by the different theories of educational evaluation (see Scriven, 1994; and Russell and Willinsky, 1997) or the different psychometric theories (see Carmines and Zeller, 1979; Bennett and Ward, 1993; Linn, 1993; Madaus and Stufflebeam, 1995; and Goldstein and Lewis, 1996).

2. Evaluation of Musical Knowledge

A second type of knowledge, according to Ryle's distinction, is 'procedural knowledge' (Ryle, 1966). Knowledge at this level refers to what Swanwick (1994) incorporates in the parameter of skill acquisition. The researcher himself links this knowledge with musical 'materials' and incorporates it according to degrees of importance as follows: distinction of sounds, dexterity, and decoding of musical writing. 'Distinction of sounds' means the perception of sounds in relation to tone, duration, intensity and harmonics. In this layer of musical knowledge what is evaluated is ability to distinguish semitones from tones, the attainment of rhythm, ability in 'absolute' and 'relative' audition, as well as the ability to analyse sounds in relation to their structural and productive materials. 'Dexterity' relates to how well the students control their voices, their hand muscles, their lips or their lungs, as well as speed, lucidity and accuracy in musical execution. Finally the ability to 'decode musical writing' relates to students' ability in musical reading (often also in writing). In the case of the Western twelve-tone system, ability in musical reading in different 'keys' is involved, as is the knowledge of musical scales, as well as sol-fa, sight-reading, and dictation. Table 2 presents the points at which the students should be evaluated in the 'materials' layer in the three most important parameters of Table 1.

I. Performance	II. Composition	III. Audition
The degree to which students control their voices or musical instruments	The degree to which the students organise the music materials	The degree to which the students distinguish different musical instruments, as well as differences between sounds

Table 2. Proposed evaluation of three parameters related to music 'materials'

In addition to declarative and procedural knowledge Polanyi and Prosch (1975) have referred to 'experiential' knowledge. This refers to knowledge we obtain in our everyday contact with people and situations. Table 3 summarises the parameters in which students should be evaluated in relation to the layers of musical development and in three important fields of musical knowledge.

	Parameters		
	<i>I. Performance</i>	<i>II. Composition</i>	<i>III. Audition</i>
Layers			
<i>Expressive Character</i>	Students control adequately their voices or their musical instruments and in addition deal with the element of expressiveness	Students organise their music materials with expressiveness	Students distinguish different musical instruments, differences in sounds and distinguish characteristics of expressiveness
<i>Form</i>	Students control adequately their voices or musical instruments with the element of expressiveness and besides show elements of structure in musical ideas	Students organise their music materials with expressiveness and create structural relations between musical ideas	Students distinguish musical instruments, differences in sounds, distinguish characteristics of expressiveness and recognise structural relationships
<i>Value</i>	Students control adequately their voices or their musical instruments with the element of expressiveness, show the elements of structure in their musical ideas, and evaluate their execution	Students organise their music materials with expressiveness, create structural relations between musical ideas, and evaluate their musical compositions	Students distinguish different musical instruments, differences in sounds, distinguish characteristics of expressiveness, recognise structural relations and practise independent judgement

Table 3. Proposed evaluation of three layers in three parameters, yielding the twelve essential musical accomplishments.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this article, I presented examples and views about evaluation in music education. Next followed an account of the five fields (or ‘parameters’) in which we work when we teach music: ‘literature studies’, ‘skill acquisition’, ‘composition’, ‘audition’ and ‘performance’. Although all these fields are important, only in the last three do we gain a true knowledge of music. Consequently it is on these three aspects that evaluation should focus. Next, I presented Swanwick’s (1983) Theory of Musical Knowledge Development and linked its four layers with the three fields of musical learning referred to above. The result of this linkage is twelve distinct musical accomplishments. These are the twelve essential musical accomplishments I propose for evaluation in music education.

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