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**Quality in Music Education**

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**Music School Evaluation Models in Europe**

***Introduction***

During this seminar, we have heard many substantial conferences. I feel lucky because I have learned many new things and I would like to thank all speakers for their valuable input. I am also very pleased that the Czech Association of Music and Art Schools took the initiative to organize a seminar on Quality and Evaluation in Music Education, an important topic which EMU gladly accepted. Thank you for your invitation and for hosting this seminar !

This is the last presentation of the seminar and my task is to shed light on evaluation concepts and practices in European music schools. We have already heard about the Czech evaluation system and understood the principles upon which it is based. In the European music school landscape a model like this, which is clearly defined and follows guidelines from the Ministry, is not the rule as you will see later on in my presentation. I’ll start by telling about my own experiences in the field of evaluation, after which I’ll describe the European music school landscape and the place of evaluation in this general context. Finally, I’ll present a few proven music and art school evaluation models in their own national contexts.

According to my general European experience, the word « evaluation » in music and art schools for children and young persons is rather a loaded concept. It raises mixed reactions and brings in mind images like « judge, measure, question, punish, suffer, be exposed », but also on the other hand «  listen, observe, exchange, review, support, value and develop ». These are the exact words I heard from teachers during a training course in Geneva, Switzerland, when a new evaluation concept was introduced into music schools. I understood that in our field the concept « evaluation » leaves no one indifferent. It recalls good and bad memories from one’s own learning pathway, it raises many questions and always invites to take a position. This reality is one more reason to raise the topic at European level, because music schools are no islands isolated from the general educational landscape. The Bologna Process and the launch of the European Higher Education Area in 2010 have given a previously unknown transparency to the higher music education sector, which has a growing impact on other educational levels as well. We have already had many examples of this phenomenon during the seminar. The fact that EMU now works in structured cooperation with major actors in higher music education at European level is one of the most outstanding developments of the latest few years– this is new in the European landscape and we can be really delighted about it. I am convinced that the evaluation frameworks coming from higher mjusic education and presented during this seminar are a great support for further thinking and development at the level of music schools in all European countries.

My own professional pathway as a musician and an educator has led me to teach on music school level and in higher music education. While teaching, I became successively head of department, vice-director and director of my institution, Conservatoire de Lausanne in the French-speaking Switzerland. In all these positions, I have myself been evaluated and I have evaluated others in my school and in other institutions: pupils, students, teachers and administrative and directorial staff members. I have taken training courses in evaluation, studied literature on the subject and accumulated years of experience at local, regional, national and international levels. All the same, in every new situation of evaluation I am facing a new challenge and hoping to do the right thing. There is no universal recipe to be successful in the evaluation exercice, but this is sure : one must be well acquainted with the traditions, rules, practices and procedures of the schools and the country where the evaluation takes place.

Indeed, evaluation concepts are deeply rooted in the values, pedagogical traditions and education systems which are in power. Consequently, in the field of music and arts education in specialized institutions like ours, many different models and practices exist and coexist. Wherever I look, these practices are currently in evolution and many questions are raised, like the following ones which I have often heard in real situations :

Who and what should be evaluated and how to do it in the best way? How should the evaluation concept itself be developed ? Is it sufficient to evaluate only the work and the performances of pupils ? How to evaluate teachers, directors, administration, logistics and infrastructure? Is it possible to evaluate the teaching content? Is it relevant in music schools to evaluate the management processes like in business companies, in order to have controlling tools or to be certified ? What about self-evaluation and peer reviews ? Do we listen to our users, pupils, parents and other partners, in terms of surveys and enquiries, for instance? How can we evaluate a school as a whole and its cultural influence in society in the short, mid- and long term ? And finally, the killer questions I have often heard : why do we need to evaluate at all ? Is it not enough just to have good teachers and satisfied pupils and parents ? It is not obligatory to attend our schools and if we were so bad nobody would come to us anyway ?

I have understood that there are many questions but only few given answers, In my opinion, this proves that evaluation is truly an important topic which concerns every person acting in or concerned by the mission and actions of a music school and regardless of his or her position in the institution.

**European panorama – Evaluation**

As of yet, there is no observatory in Europe providing global data on music schools. What we have is EMU, the European Music School Union, an non governmental organization founded in 1973. EMU has significant long-time experience and knowledge which allow a reliable European overview. My experience in the EMU since 2005 has been a priviledged observation post. I have been surprised to state that key subjects and concerns for the future, as well as major challenges and areas of work are more or less the same in all European countries. It seems that we are in the same boat.

EMU is the unique European network of national music school networks. EMU members are no single persons or institutions, but national umbrella associations of 26 countries whose task is to secure nationwide standards and develop infrastructures for their member schools. In this context, « music school » is a clearly defined institution with an integral part in the European educational system. Membership in the EMU entails conditions such as public responsibility and public funding, quality standards in teaching, a wide range of subjects and fully qualified teachers. Music schools give training and enable people to participate in music making on every level, from early childhood up to preparation for professional studies. They are mostly attended by children and youngsters but, as a rule, are also open to adults up to senior age. Many music schools cooperate closely with regular schools. Today EMU covers 25 countries and one national observer, The Faroe Islands, with 6'000 schools, 150'000 teachers, 3 million learners under 25 years and 1 million adult learners.

As one might expect, music school systems with their legal and financial structures, their pedagogical traditions, practices and teaching methods, are extremely diverse in Europe. Even if most music schools are positioned between formal and non formal learning, a few countries in Europe have clearly formal music schools where general education is also given in the same institution. On the other side, some countries favour schools with broad access and tailor made learning objectives without curricula, syllabi, exams or clearly defined learning outcomes. In federal states, like Switzerland, many different models coexist and function in the same country.

EMU functions as a platform of information, engages in advocacy and organizes capacity-building in management and pedagogy – like this one. We collect statistics, surveys, mappings and good practices. We promote exchanges and issue resolutions, manifestos and publications. EMU’s flagship is the European Youth Music Festival, a large-scale event organized under the patronage of EMU by one of its members every two to four years since 1985. Every five years, EMU issues statistics from its member countries.. The slides I’m going to show are from 2010, but there are no radical changes in the edition 2015 which will soon be published on the EMU website. **Slide1** The first table shows the number of schools in national associations, members of EMU. Entirely private and business-based schools are not included and in some countries such as Poland, Spain and Italy, all music schools are not associated in the national network. **Slide 2** This presentation is quite different, because it shows the population between 0 and 25 years attending to a music school. A very small country like Liechtenstein has only one school, but it is attended by 20% of the age group. **Slide 3** According to this picture you can see that about one fourth of the member countries do not have a music school law and consequently no national curriculum.

EMU statistics also deliver the following information : about 50% of the countries have no entrance examinations in music schools and 25% have neither intermediary exams nor school-leaving certificates. The reason for this probably lies in different ways of pedagogical thinking : on the one hand, the aim to reach as many children as possible and on the other hand to promote the upcoming generation of professionals. Whatever the case, we know that every European country provides education in specific institutions both in basic and in higher music education.

In light of these informations, the concept of evaluation becomes tricky. In absence of legislation, exams or certification, one can ask how it is possible to evaluate the operations and the services of schools and the performances of teachers and learners. Nevertheless, this evaluation takes place, because according to EMU statistics 85% of the countries claim to possess a quality management system. Our statistics do not reveal the evaluation modalities, but we know our members and have access to recent information which allows to give some answers. In most Eastern European countries, but also in France, Belgium and Luxembourg, it is the responsibility of the Ministry and its inspectors to monitor the schools and give guidelines to evaluation. On the other hand, there are many countries with no mandatory evaluation framework, such as Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. In this context, the management and the funding of the schools are the responsibility of regional and municipal authorities, who also determine - or do not determine – the evaluation practices. The schools can develop voluntary self-evaluation models, coupled with surveys and questionnaires. Pupils’ evaluation can take place in the form of discussions and exchange, and the teaching is based on explicit or implicit individual learning agreements. This freedom does nor exclude the existance of non-compulsory quality management systems and models – which might explain the positive answers from so many countries to the question in the EMU statistics.

**France**

I pursue my presentation with evaluation models used in France, Switzerland, Germany and Finland. Because there is no universal and tranferable recipe, let me call these reports case studies rather than best practices. I chose France as a point of departure because the first secular state school for music in the world was founded in Paris in 1795, six years after the French Revolution. Of course, I am referring to the famous *Conservatoire national supérieure de Paris*. It is true that institutions called *conservatorio* already existed in the 17th century in Italian cities such as Naples and Venice. However, they were orphanages where talented young people were educated in a profit-driven manner for the church, nobility and operas of their cities. This model did not survive, whereas the republican and secular heritage and the institutional model of Paris was progressively shared and followed by the whole Europe.

The mission entrusted by the French republic to the first Conservatoire was to educate young girls and boys, with the aim to provide musicians for scenic and orchestral performances, for the opera and national celebrations as well as for the army. Without being explicit, the notion of evaluation is contained in this mission. The girls and boys recruted in equal numbers in each French department were carefully selected for their talent, regardless of their origins or wealth. The quality of their education had to guarantee the accomplishment of the national and institutional missions. This republican model may seem elitist to us, but in course of the 19th century, along with the emergence of the bourgeoisie, conservatoires were founded in most major European cities. Most often, these institutions covered both general and professional training. The aim was to unite amateurs and future professionals under the same roof. However, true democratization of music education developed much later, in the wake of the huge social and cultural changes after the Second World War. Public opinion claimed access to culture and cultural education to most citizens, and not only to a priviledged minority. This movement, along with the economic reconstruction, gave the signal to the founding of music schools like we know them today. In most Western European countries, the 1960s and 1970s saw a real boom of music schools. To counterbalance the tradition, new schools with new names were founded in those cities who already had historical conservatoires, like in Switzerland : *Jugendmusikschule* *Zürich*, *Conservatoire populaire de Musique de Genève*, *Ecole Sociale de Musique de Lausanne*. These profiles and names have endured, although at present there are almost no pedagogical differencies between the histirical and the new schools.

It is actually surprising that the evaluation concepts inherited from the 19th century did not develop at all along with the speed of the growth of music schools. It is only during the last few decades that the traditional system of examinations has been questioned and there are countries where this questioning is only starting.

Today in France, music schools at basic and pre-professional level are still called conservatoires. They are specialized schools for music, dance and theater which are classified in three categories across the 101 French territories, including 8 territories overseas. The conservatoires are placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, whereas public schools (‘éducation nationale’) belong to the Ministry of Education. The mission of the conservatoires is defined in a document from 2001 called *« Charter of Art Education Specialized in Dance, Music and Theater »*. From this extensive document, let me give you the defining key concepts: mission of public service, pole of reference in art education for amateurs and future professionals (depending on the classification of the institution), place of educational innovation, partner of national education in artistic initiation, community center of cultural life.

The charter specifies that the schools deliver rich and diversified teachings, proposing, on a given territory, all the artistic expressions of today. An attention and constant place are both granted to the contemporary creation and to the emergent cultures, and to the artistic heritages, testifying at once of the history, the vitality and the renewal at every discipline. In their environment, the shools arouse and welcome the cultural partnerships necessary for the exercise of their missions and, so doing, contribute to social justice and equal opportunities.

This is a beautiful mission, but how to fulfill and evaluate it ? According to the Charter, the modalities to carry out these missions are described in projects of each establishment. This signifies that the institutions have a large liberty to design their own projects and develop their actions, networks and partnerships.

Concerning the evaluation, a national *‘Plan for Pedagogical Orientation in Music’* from 2008 gives new guidelines which largely open the horizon compared to the past. The plan stresses that both the study course and its evaluation must be of global character. Studies are organized in three cycles, with clearly defined learning outcomes and obligatory examinations between the cycles. After the second cycle, three different orientations can be chosen. In one of these options, the final examination of the second cycle is replaced by the validation of a personal study plan. In addition to exams, continuous evaluation must be carried out by the team of teachers (‘équipe pédagogique’) of every pupil. The modalities of evaluation are determined by the team itself, and they can be based on public performances, study modules validated or workshops attended. The pupil’s entire pathway is traced in a supporting document and monitored by the team on an ongoing basis.

In France, the classification and the pedagogical control of the institutions are clearly placed under the responsibility of the Ministry. On the other hand, both the *Charter* and the *Plan for pedagogical orientation* give a large pedagogical and artistic liberty to the schools and encourage them to be innovative. In the European context, I would call this an ideal situation, but the practical reality contains a lot of challenges, especially regarding the complex and many-layered hierarchy of French administration and the lack of management autonomy at school level. Many French colleagues complain that there is a world of difference between the wonderfully thought and formulated concepts and the opportunities to translate them into reality. Also, the hierarchical way of thinking inherited from the past prevents many valuable actors to take real advantage of the liberty they could actually enjoy.

**Switzerland and Germany**

From France I move now to Switzerland and Germany. Both countries are federations in which culture and education fall within the competence of self-governing federal states. Recognizing that there are 16 *Bundesländer* in Germany and 26 *cantons* in Switzerland, and as many educational systems, it is clear that the concept of evaluation presents itself very differently from the unitary state which is France. There are no charters or comprehensive pedagogical plans but only different recommendations and practises.

My home country Switzerland presents a particularly interesting case study, because the linguistic regions do not at all share the same philosophy of education. In French-and Italian- speaking Switzerland, curricula, syllabi, exams and evaluations are generally applied in music schools. On the other hand, the German-speaking and the largest part of the country clearly disapproves the existence of given study plans, ratings and evaluations in this context. In fact, Switzerland is a sort of mini-Europe where the most various pedagogical trends and practises evolve side-by-side. Surprisingly, and in my opinion unfortunately, there is not enough interest to be inspired by the neighbors’ ideas and practises – it’s every man for himself but it seems to work fine !

In this context, the Association of Swiss Music Schools (ASMS) took the initiative to tailor a quality management system for music schools which is called *« qu****arte ».*** Quite recently, a lighter version was developed, called *« qu****arte*** *open label ».* This system can be applied universally and regardless of the educational device. The model is inspired by business process management systems and organized in three levels. If the school works through all three levels, it obtains ISO 9001 certification.

As a reminder, ISO, short *International Organization for Standardisation*, has introduced since 1987 a series of international standards which allow to define and design management systems for organizations and companies across the whole world.

In order to give you a more concrete idea about *« qu****arte****»,* I’ll show you a recent powerpoint presentation made by the ASMS. When following the slides you also get an idea about the arguments needed to convince about the necessity of evaluation in an environment where this is not at all required. (**Slides 4 to** **20).**

*« Qu****arte****»* was strongly inspired by the German system called QSM (Qualitätssystem Musikschule). At the end of the 1990s, the German Association of Music Schools, which includes nearly 1'000 schools, accomplished pioneer work in Europe in developing the first quality management system in Europe explicitely designed for music schools.

In addition to analyzing the processes, QSM focuses on the users and partners of the schools and analyzes questionnaires and extensive statistical data. Like in Switzerland, the application of QMS is voluntary and it is used only by a limited number of schools. On the other hand, all German schools collect statistics for the national association, a precious tool for political advocacy.

By their nature, neither « *Qu****art****e »* nor QMS contain tools to evaluate the teaching content. What restrains schools from using them are the high costs involved and the never-ending work on processes, because labels must be renewed at regular intervals. Especially in big schools, directorial, technical and adminstrative teams do take advantage and find a motivation for this work, but I can tell from my own experience that it does not appeal to teachers at all. These systems certainly provide a strong positive proof to the authorities and money providers on the school’s status and its operational efficiency. This means a lot, but it is not sufficient to evaluate a school in its globality.

**Finland**

Finland, the country where I was born and raised, combines a national scheme of curricula and exams and a self-evaluation system for music and art education created in 2011. The cooperation between educators in different fields of art in Finland is a bottom-up process. Some 15 years ago, national associations in music, dance, theater, fine arts, handicraft and literature decided to unite their forces. Instead of merging, they created a new umbrella association of basic arts education, which initiated the design of a self-evaluation model baptized *« Virvatuli »,* meaning ‘will-of-the-wisp’. One can only guess why this name was chosen, but personally I find it totally intriguing ! **(Slide 21)**

*Virvatuli* was developed under the responsibility of two university researchers, together with a working group of more than thirty specialists in all fields of art represented in public and private music and art schools in Finland. The development of the model and the evaluation criteria are based on the principles applied in the curriculum of basic arts education and on definitions of high quality art education in international literature and research.The Ministries of Education and Culture supported and funded the project and its implementation into schools. The material is free of charge and consists of a guidebook in hard copy and a large online toolkit, both of which exist only in the two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Training courses and counseling are organized for schools who are interested in the *Virvatuli* model*,* the aim of which is not a label but the process itself, continuous and systematic self-evaluation of the activities a school engages in. The Finnish law for basic arts education requires the institutions to have their teaching and the impact of their operations evaluated, but it also requests self-evaluation. However, the responsibility for the evaluation process is left to the schools, which does not facilitate their task. *Virvatuli* was developed to fill this gap and to provide a practical and unifying tool, which indeed is largely used in Finnish schools. One of its forces is the flexibility and liberty to apply the model .The schools are free to use the entire, very extensive material, or parts of it, but *Virvatuli* can also serve as a source of inspiration for developing one’s own self-evaluation model. The feedback from the users is very positive, even enthusiastic. It seems that this model corresponds to the needs of the field and completes the examination system in an ideal way. Experience has shown that the model works at its best when used by 2 or 3 institutions in cooperation and with a flexible timetable.

**The quality criteria of *Virvatuli* are based on 4 VALUES :**

* **well-being created by art**
* **creativity as the driving force of the school**
* **sustainable development in a broad sense**
* **autonomy of art (art for itself and not only as a tool for social benefit).**

**Founded on these values, 6 operational PRINCIPLES guide all activities :**

**To create and/or promote :**

* conditions for students’ personal development and creativity
* students’ creative process and autonomy
* open and encouraging atmosphere
* joy of learning and positive relationship to arts
* sufficiant amount of challenges
* interactive skills

There are 5 evaluation areas or domains:

* students (meaning learners of all ages) : the impact of the school’s operation and teaching on the student
* teachers : teacher competence (self-evaluation, surveys and student feedback)
* learning environment : facilities, equipment and logistics, conditions for learning, relevance to current issues, organisation of teaching, curriculum planning
* management: strategic management, artistic and pedagogical management, personnel and financial management
* cooperation and partners: engagement and influence within the school, stakeholder cooperation, partnerships and international activities, internal and external communication

Each one of the five domains includes 5 to 6 quality criteria and relevant indicators for their evaluation. To assure sustainability, the schools are recommended to evaluate all five domains once every 5 years, whereas the central domains ‘students’ and ‘teachers’ should be evaluated every 2 to 3 years.

I shall now explain how the *Virvatuli* model works practically. The first step is the a steering group in the school. In small teaching units, the participation of everyone is recommended. In larger schools, the group should include representatives from the direction, teaching and administration staff as well as students and parents. For the start, the steering group chooses the evaluation domains and fixes the timeline. During this preparatory phase, observable reality must be provided, for instance diverse institutional documents, questionnaires, surveys and statistical data.

**Slide 22** The following scheme shows the entire self-evaluation process, which takes from 6 months to three years, depending on the size of the institution and the number of domains evaluated (Choice of evaluation areas by steering group / Collect of documents and data / Individual and written analysis of the criteria / Analysis in plenum / Evaluation of strong and weak points / Implementation of results).

A very interesting aspect of Virvatuli is the design of questionnaires, because it tells a lot about the philosophy behind the concept. All questionnaires are realized online, and data security is guaranteed by an anonymous national databank*.*.The large online toolkit contains 41 differenciated questionnaires to be used in 8 artistic fields : architecture, visual arts, handicraft, music, writing, circus arts, dance and theater. For each field, questionnaires are differenciated by age groups : 7 to 8 years, 9 to 12 years, from 13 onward and parents. Note that in Finland it is considered that a person aged 13 posesses an independant judgement. Being born and raised in Finland, I can confirm that this is relevant, but in my home country Switzerland this would not correspond to the general opinion.

The evaluation of the domain ‘students’ is interesting but also challenging, because most pupils in our schools are under legal age. The criteria « Joy of learning and positive relationship to arts » is analyzed by considering average rates of students’ presence and absence, the average number of study years, the number of exams and school-leaving certificates, the number of persons who interrupt their studies and those who pursue them beyond five or ten years. The criteria "Student’s creative process and autonomy" can be analyzed through participation rates to optional activities, ensembles and orchestras, projects and productions. Students’, teachers’ and parents’ questionnaires complete the data, as do annual reports and statistics on projects and performances.

The questionnaires for low age groups are designed with a lot of tact and well-thought instructions for use. The questionnaire intended to pupils aged 7 to 8 starts with the heading « Barometer of joy ». Children answer by choosing between three « smileys » whose mouths indicate either joy, indifference or sadness. Here are a few other questions : ‘What is your mood when arriving for your lesson / when leaving ? How do you enjoy your lessons?’ Under the heading « My Learning » children comment statements such as : ‘I’m happy about my work during the lessons, I stay focused, I don’t disturb others in a group lesson, I know how to practise at home, I have made progress during this year in….’(and the child ticks boxes with different items). The comments are given by smileys signifying « I agree, I don’t have an opinion, I disagree ». The heading « Teachers » includes the following statements : ‘My teacher pays attention to me during the lesson / encourages me / gives me enough feedback. » More globally, children comment the duration of their lessons, their study repertoire and exercices, the amount of public performances etc. The questionnaire also includes open questions such as : ‘Have you experienced something negative ? What would you like to change in order to improve the situation ? What are you good at ? To conclude the questionnaire, the child is invited to make a drawing related to his or her artistic activities.

For older age groups, the questions, statements and the ways to comment them obviously get longer and more elaborate. However, the same basic headings are maintained, including the barometer of joy. The basic canvas is the same in all fields of art, but some questions are different.

**Slide 24** Finally, I’ll show you the mode of assessment in the final plenum of the steering group. *Virvatuli* recommends to use a table of four cases, often employed in statistical analysis.

**Thank you for your attention !**