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Opportunities for Talent Development in Children with General Intellectual Giftedness

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**OPPORTUNITIES FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN
WITH GENERAL INTELLECTUAL GIFTEDNESS**

Key words: *talent, musicality, intellectually gifted child, pupil with general intellectual giftedness, education*

Introduction***Purpose of the Research***

Research probe in music education of intellectually gifted children points out to the potency of music education of pupils with general intellectual giftedness. In the comparison with children from comprehensive elementary school the probe shows the new possibilities for the education of intellectually gifted children.

Design and Organisation of the Research

Theoretical background to the research contains overview study to the problem of children's musicality and the analysis of the concept *pupil with general intellectual giftedness* (or cognitively gifted pupil). The goal of practical research is to investigate the difference between the musical abilities of pupils at music art schools where pupils study *the field of music*, then the musical abilities of pupils at special school for intellectually gifted children, and finally at comprehensive elementary school. The methods used in the research are: observation, knowledge test and test of musical skills, analysis and synthesis.

1 Talent and Heredity

Some professionals understand by the concept talent a phenomenon with which every human being is born. The question of the impact of heredity on mental characteristics of a human being has been the object of disputes between the two groups of scientists, so called nativists and empiricists. The nativists developed the idea of significant idealistic philosopher of the 18th century, Immanuel Kant of hereditary idea and they were persuaded of hereditary and biologic interdependence of psychics.

The empiricists tried to persuade the others that mental characteristics were formed under the influence of the environment in which the person lives and they developed the ideas of English philosopher of the 17th century John Locke. According to Locke a child is coming to this world with a soul similar to clean board, which will be during his life covered with experiences from his or her life. Subjectivity of both views was tried to be connected with the personalist William Lewis Stern, by his theory of convergence. According to him both factors were important in the creation of mind¹. Contemporary era has overtaken the concept. "Inherited and acquired characteristics cannot be mechanically counted. Both factors have a mutual impact on each other during the development, and their share on particular components of talent, differs in particular age groups and cases"².

1.1 Division and Classification of Talent

Some authors claim that an individual can have more talents, particularly one talent that consists of more attributes. More specifically, special kind of talent can be composed of more attributes according to the properties/qualities less or more developed to perform a certain kind of artistic or scientific activity. If the conditions are similarly developed to perform more activities, then it is possible to talk about general talent³.

Talent comprises various fields of abilities, thus it can be divided in several categories, for example *intellectual* (the category includes intellectual ability significantly higher than average), *academic* (the abilities specific for academic field, in children it is a gift to certain school subject), *creative* (above average abilities in the field of creativity), *leadership qualities* (above average qualities in the management of events and people), *artistic* (above average qualities in the field of performing and visual arts), *sporting talent* (above average qualities in the field of sports and games).

Intellectual, academic and creative talents is possible to verify by means of psychometric tools, such as intelligence tests, tests of creativity and so on. The leadership talent cannot be identified easily, because it depends on the current environmental conditions and abilities of an individual. Artistic or sporting talent can be identified by means of specialists in the particular field or by means of anthropometric measurements⁴.

American experts DeHaan and Havighurst⁵ divided talents into the following categories: *intellectual abilities*, *creative thinking*, *scientific abilities*, *leadership in the society*, *mechanical abilities*, *talent in arts*.

Intellectual abilities are most of all related to the academic success and they include verbal, spatial and memory abilities. Creative thinking lies in the ability to distinguish the problem, in the flexibility of thought and in the ability to create ideas and products. In scientific abilities it is chiefly the ability to use numbers, algebraic symbols with the use of scientific methods. Leadership qualities represent in the society the ability to help certain group reach determined goals and improve interper-

¹ V. Dočkal, et. al., *Psychológia nadania*, Bratislava 1987, p. 31.

² Ibidem.

³ V. Dočkal, *Talent nie je dar*, Bratislava 1986.

⁴ J. Jurášková, *Základy pedagogiky nadaných*, Pezinok 2003.

⁵ V. Fořtík, J. Fořtíková, *Nadané dítě a rozvoj jeho schopností*. Praha 2007.

sonal relationships. Mechanical abilities lie in spatial intelligence and in the ability to perceive details, differences and similarities. The talent in arts is very important to writers, poets, musicians, dancers and actors⁶.

1.2 Pupils with General Intellectual Giftedness

According to the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (The School Act) intellectually gifted pupil is defined in the § 2, letters j and q as a child, respectively a talented pupil with special educational needs. The condition is that a pupil's special educational needs are diagnosed by institute of upbringing counselling and prevention (§ 2, letter j). According to §103, paragraph 1, the education of talented pupils is realised at schools with the focus on the development of intellectual giftedness of pupils, general intellectual giftedness/ability, artistic ability/giftedness, and/or sporting giftedness. Intellectually gifted child is defined as the child with high level of intellectual abilities, with the intellectual potency that exceeds the IQ of 135, measured by standard psychological tests. The intellectual potency can be specified since early childhood, according to the tests of memory, perception, and learning. It is possible to devote professional attention to the intellectually gifted children that has impact on further development of the child.

On the level of ISCED 2⁷ intellectually gifted pupils can acquire (by means of modified educational methods that are convenient to special educational needs) the deeper knowledge and abilities, better understanding of facts within various contexts, work with information including their search, combining, using and creation of the new knowledge. The principles set by National Educational Programme for the pupils with general intellectual giftedness, are thus identical with the ones that are found in ISCED 2⁸ in the Slovak Republic. The difference is in taking into account of special educational needs of gifted pupils to whom the teachers should adjust forms and methods of pedagogical work. Educational methods have to conform to the cognitive level of pupils. They have to agree with the fact that the intellectual giftedness of pupils is not the same, thus the assignments and tasks should differ for smaller, medium and upper-level of their giftedness⁹.

1.2.1 Care of Intellectually Gifted Children in Slovakia

The problem of intellectually gifted children is not dealt with in the Slovak Republic, despite the fact that after 1945 there exist schools for artistically gifted children. Later on the attention started to be devoted to the children with sporting talent. In the beginning of the 1960th, as the reaction to the worldwide trend, the profes-

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ www.statpedu.sk/sk/Statny-vzdelavaci-program/VP-pre-ziakov-so-vseobecny-intelektovym-nadanim-alej [accessed on: 2/5/2013].

⁸ www.statpedu.sk/sk/Statny-vzdelavaci-program/VP-pre-ziakov-so-vseobecny-intelektovym-nadanim-alej [accessed on: 2/5/2013].

⁹ www.minedu.sk [accessed on: 14/5/2014].

sionals started to think of social need to support the development of talented and gifted pupils in schools. In the Slovak Republic there started to be established special elective classes for mathematically, sporting, language gifted children. There were organised contests for them, existed classes with extended teaching of foreign languages, mathematics, sciences, sports, and the special care was devoted to intellectually gifted children.

In 1991 when the Society for gifted children was established, there was also originated the Project of experimental verification of alternative care, that was aimed at gifted children in elementary schools. The project was established from the initiative of parents of parents of gifted children. In January 1998 there was opened the School for intellectually gifted children in Bratislava, later in Nitra, Košice, Rimavská sobota, Ružomberok, Prešov, Topolčany, Šaľa, Poprad, Trenčín and Košice. In 1999 there was established the 8-year Grammar School at the School for intellectually gifted children that supplemented the specialised form of education in our school system¹⁰.

2 The Musical Giftedness

„Each artistically gifted individual forms a special emotionally-evaluating relationship towards the objects of surrounding world that can be the object of artistic portrayal. This special emotionally-evaluating relationship becomes the inner content of artistic work and performance. The content aforementioned should be formed and expressed by adequate form. The formulation/expression is very important part of the arts. Only the perfect unity between contents and form causes the positive effect of the work of art”¹¹.

Particular characteristics of musical arts are musical interests and abilities. There exist varied opinions on musicality in the past. The research of musicality was done by the German psychologist Carl Stumpf in his work *Tonpsychologie*, who as the first one defined the basic criteria of musicality and musical abilities. Other philosopher who develops the concept of the term is German surgeon Theodor Billroth in his work *Wer ist musikalisch*, where he marks the musicality as the ability to remember and reproduce the melody by voice and the sense for rhythm. For personalities such as C. Stumpf, T. Bilorth, Géza Révész and Carl Seashore, the most important task during the development of musicality belongs to hereditary factors, without the significant impact of environment on it. G. Révész states that the one with the ability to evaluate work of art and to explain the essence of the work of music is musical one. On the other hand, for the other personalities, such as A. Bentley, Helga de la Motte Habera and P. R. Farnsworth, the key task to musicality belongs to the impact of education and environment¹².

The concept *musicality* includes in itself the complex of anatomical-physiological qualities of a man that are the result of hereditary dispositions and the im-

¹⁰ J. Laznibatová, *Nadané dieťa – jeho vývin, vzdelávanie a podporovanie*, Bratislava 2001.

¹¹ V. Dočkal, *Talent nie je dar...*, p. 100.

¹² B. Balcárová, *Alfa hudobnej didaktiky*, Prešov 2004.

pect of environment, and the individual can express himself or herself in musical activities. Finally the important quality within this process is self-motivation and self-realisation of an individual.

2.1 Diagnostics of Musicality

The measurement of musicality was in the past realised by means of standardised tests of musicality, such as the following:

Table 1

Brief outline – tests of musicality

Authors and Tests	Preconditions to the research of musicality	Instructions
Standardised test by C. E. Seashore (1919) <i>Measures of Musical Talents</i>	Precondition that musicality of a man is expressed by exact hearing and discrimination of elementary features of tones, such as pitch, strength, length, colour, rhythmic feeling and music related memory.	Contemporary version of the tests is recorded on audio CD – the fulfilment of all the tasks takes approx. 1 hour. Measuring the differences in the tonal length, strength, colour etc.
Standardised test by J. Kwalwasser and P. W. Dykem	Tests, despite the research of the pupil ability to recognise the changes of tonal colours, movement of the melody, and also a melodic taste.	To determine, on the 10 examples of a pair of melodies, which phrase out of two is better. The introduction to the movement is not changing, however the “postscript” can modulate.
	There is also very interesting way of the research of melodic and rhythmical imagination.	From the scores of melodies and rhythmic motives played, there is need to find out, whether the reproduction is the same as notational written record.
Standardised test by R. M. Drake 1954	The test focuses on the one musical ability – music –related memory.	During the investigation of melody and rhythm related memory, there are used the tasks, where various variants of melody and rhythm are compared to the original version, that is designated for the examined pupil to remember. The test comprises 54 items with high reliability and validity.
Standardised test by H. D. Wing 1948 <i>Standardised Tests of Musical Intelligence</i>	The measurement of pitch and music related memory perception. The measurement of individual’s musicality from wider aspect does not restrict itself only to identification of the main auditory features, but also to detect acoustic input in the aesthetic reaction and emotion.	Every short piece of melody is played twice, however during its repetition, there is changed the rhythm, harmony, dynamics, phrasing and the task of examined pupil is to determine which out of changed melodies is better.

Standardised test by E. Gordon 1965	Comprises of 3 parts. It examines: 1. tonal imagination (melody and harmony), 2. rhythmical imagination (tempo and rhythm), 3. musical sensibility oriented on phrasing, balance and styl- ishness.	30 couples of melodious examples investigate the phrasing, tectonic balance and stylish interpretation. The task of examiner is to determine dominant music-expressional means to distinguish polyphonic composition from homophonic, to identify its form, musical genre and set it in particular style.
Non-standardised test by G. Révész	Musicality is defined as the complex body of partial abilities such as: sensitivity to musical pitch, harmonious feeling, creative phantasy, and reproductive abilities.	The test is unique because except of acoustic-musical abilities it examines also the quality of reproductive abilities, singing abilities (the most important part) and the ability to play the distinguished tones. The investigation of musical-creative abilities to finish the melody by singing or playing the instrument.
Standardised test by A. Bentley 1966 <i>Measures of Musical Abilities</i>	The assumption that the phrase or figure is the most essential form of music. The accurate memorisation of tonal pitch and length is necessary to understand the melody and accords. It focuses mainly on investigation of melodious and rhythmical memory.	The advantage of the test is its shortness that is why it is convenient to small children. It uses the pairs of melodious passages. The second example of each pair has either the same tones or one of them is changed. Pupil's task is to find out and write changes. The research of the rhythmic sense is analogical.
Test by L. G. Holmström	Complex investigation of musicality – elementary musical abilities and knowledge in connection with comprehensive intelligence, while it is influenced by outer conditions.	Group test. Except of musical abilities it maps the interests of children and the impact of environment on individual.
Gdańsk system of the investigation of musical abilities by J. Horbulewicz and Z. Janczewski	The system focuses on the research of musical abilities in the 3 fields that are interrelated: 1. observation of a child in musical and non-musical activities, 2. investigation of musical environment of a child, 3. testing of musical abilities – sense of rhythm, tempo, movement and changes of a melody, skills to end the melody and the analysis of chords.	1. A child is observed during musical games that are supposed to prepare him or her to pass the tests from the aspect of musical memory, sense of rhythm and motor abilities. 2. To test the impact of environment on musical development of a child by anamnestic questionnaire. The aim of the test is to distinguish the obstacles that occur during musical development of children from non-musical environment. 3. The testing is individual.
The test of musical abilities – the Department of Music Education, Faculty of Education, Charles university in Prague	Investigates: musical-auditory abilities, composition of music, singing-reproductive abilities.	The test is designated for 10 year old children and it comprises of 3 fields of tests.

The data was collected and compiled by the authoress

2.2 Musical Abilities of Pupils with General Intellectual Giftedness – Research Probe

To investigate the musicality of elementary school children at schools for intellectually gifted children, we chose, by *random selection*, the three research samples from elementary schools in the town of Prešov, the Slovak Republic:

- a) Elementary school Šmeralova – with classes for intellectually gifted children,
- b) Music Art School of M. Moyzes – with musical department, musically gifted children (appointed at the recruitment based on the diagnostics of musical abilities),
- c) Elementary school Májové námestie – ordinary children.

The children who attend schools of music were excluded from the research sample and in the sample of children who attended music art schools, and there were also children from various elementary schools, because we wanted to avoid duplicity.

In the school year of 2012/2013 Bc. Zuzana Mikolašíková, conducted the qualitative-quantitative research probe, under the supervision of PaedDr. Jana Hudáková, PhD. The probe was realised in three types of schools: elementary, music art school and special school for intellectually gifted children. The research results were summarised in Mikolašíková's diploma thesis entitled *Comparison of Musical Abilities in Intellectually Gifted and Exceptionally Gifted Children*. The research sample consisted of 41 pupils aged from 12 to 13 years from the aforementioned elementary schools, out of which 17 were girls and 24 boys.

The research aim was to investigate the difference in music abilities in pupils of schools of music, special schools for intellectually gifted children and in pupils of comprehensive elementary schools. There were used the following research methods: observation, knowledge test and musical auditory test, analysis and synthesis.

From the work written by Mikolašíková¹³ we enclose the most significant research results of the research probe.

After the study of standardised tests of musicality the authoress elaborated the methodology that comprised of 5 musical activities. By means of the activities she observed the differences in knowledge and musical abilities of pupils:

- a) **Psychomotor Abilities of Pupils:** The Application of pupil imagination and creativity during music listening during the composition *Aquarium (Saint-Saëns)*, while they demonstrated the music by the movement of their bodies. They were motivated by role-didactic game, by the induction of the image of a fish swimming in a big aquarium.
- b) **Abilities connected with Music Intellect:** The activity consisted of 11 various questions: closed with possibilities, open (filling the right answer), alternative (determine the right and wrong claims). Their intellectual work of pupils consisted of the work with concepts, connections between them, determination of order, puzzles etc. The questions investigated the knowledge of pupils about music composers, particular periods, music forms and instruments.
- c) Investigation of **Socio-affective features of a pupil:**

¹³ Z. Mikolašíková, *Komparácia hudobných schopností u detí s mimoriadnym nadaním a hudobným nadaním*, Diplomová práca, Prešov 2013.

- I. Auditory perception abilities of pupils are determined by means of the composition *Spring* (A. Vivaldi): the assessment of pupil fluency (as much musical instruments as possible), the ability to distinguish and musical memory (based on 3 musical sentences written in the staff, find and record the number of the composition heard), listening to 2 melodies and pupils should determine whether the second melody is played in lower or higher pitch.
- II. Harmonious feeling of pupils – examined in 2 tasks:
 - Record the number of the heard tones in notation, based on a short segment played by the piano, while pupils should choose one (correct) option out of three possibilities.
 - Music memory: listen to three melodies twice. Both melodies are a) the same, b) in the second melody there is a changed tone. The task is to determine the concord or contrast of the examples.
 - Rhythm memory: pupils listen to rhythmic segments twice and their task is to find out and determine whether the rhythm of the two illustrations is the same or different (The test was adapted according to the Test of musical abilities – made by Milan Holas).
- d) ***Aesthetic Perception of Music and Musical Imagination***: During the listening to the composition *Conquest of Paradise* by Vangelis pupils' task is by means of drawings to express their feelings and imaginations.
- e) Investigate ***Creativity of Pupils***: To create original design of musical instrument, name it and think of describe its application.

The aim of the probe is to examine the difference in psychomotor abilities connected with music intellect, auditory perception, harmonious feeling, music memory, rhythm memory, aesthetic perception of music and music imagination and creativity of pupils, while the research sample consists of pupils from three types of elementary schools.

2.3 The Results of Research Probe Oriented on the Pupils with General Intellectual Giftedness

a) Psychomotor Abilities of Pupils

Based on the observation of pupils we conclude that the best psychomotor abilities showed the pupils from comprehensive elementary school (ZŠ Májové náměstie). They responded flexibly and spontaneously to music. Pupils with general intellectual giftedness promptly reacted to music by movement, and in the comparison with the pupils from comprehensive elementary school, their body movements were more rigid. And the pupils that attended the school of music did not show any psychomotor abilities.

b) Abilities of Musically Gifted Pupils

The knowledge test consisted of 11 questions with maximum of 50 points. The results of music knowledge were quite various. The comparison of testing results is seen in the Figure 1.

The numerical order of the successfulness of the 3 schools was quite steady. The 1st were pupils from the music art schools, 2nd pupils from comprehensive schools and 3rd pupils intellectually gifted. All the pupils showed a great interest in the work with concepts, and puzzles. Probably there is seen the way of how to further develop cognitive side of musicality.

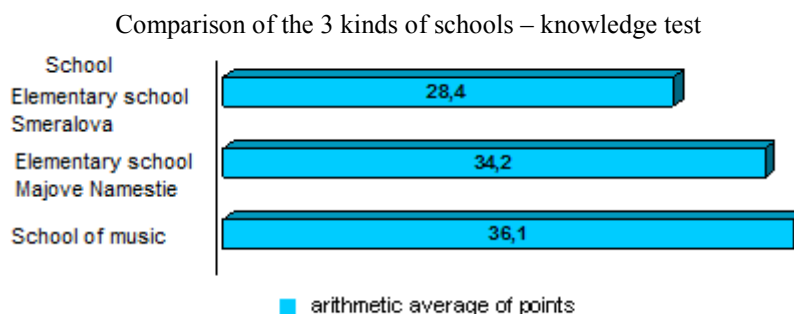


Fig. 1. Knowledge test of elementary school pupils (Z. Mikolašíková, *Komparácia hudobných schopností...*)

c) Auditory-Perception Abilities of Pupils

Auditory perception ability was tested by 8 questions with maximum of 24 points. In the figure 2 we can see the comparison of the 3 schools in the test:

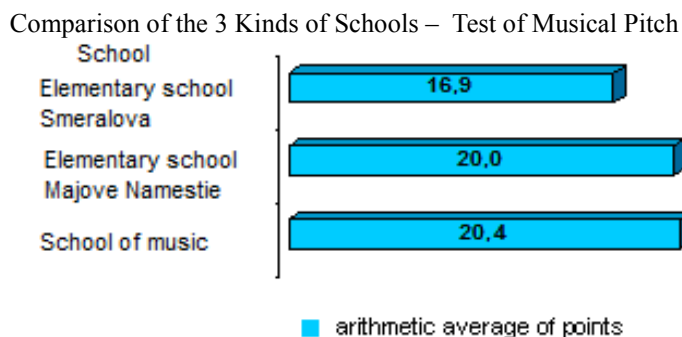


Fig. 2. Test of musical pitch of elementary school pupils (Z. Mikolašíková, *Komparácia hudobných schopností...*)

The numerical order of the successfulness of the 3 schools in auditory-perception abilities was quite steady. The 1st were pupils from the music art school, 2nd pupils from ZŠ Májové námestie and 3rd pupils from ZŠ Šmeralova.

3 The Aesthetic Perception of Music and Music Imagination of Pupils

Based on music listening, the pupils drew their projections in the papers. Some drawings were quite identical, the others were quite different.

The majority of themes was created by the pupils with general intellectual giftedness (the war, a boat trip, war in the sea, the sea, commix, nature, winter, portrait and China). The prevailing themes in all three schools were: a ship, the sea, the war, nature and army. Everyone's drawing was original and exceptional.

4 Creativity of pupils

The most creative pupils were musically gifted ones from the music art schools of M. Moyzes. Each musical instrument was extraordinary and original. Many pupils used their phantasy to make the best possible instruments. The most original ones were: Vetrník (The Wind Blower), Bubon (Drum) a Zlatý dážď (Golden Rain), the instrument was made according to "rain stick".

5 Recommendations, Conclusions and Questions

The research probe realised with all three groups is "only" the probe into a contemporary problem that tries to "open" the questions of the new ways of work with pupils who are intellectually gifted. The practice shows that these pupils are quite activated in the spheres where they show high quality of talent, mostly in scientific school subjects, language and sporting subjects. If we talk of "talent" in a complex way, we should not forget the musical giftedness a lack of is seen during specific development of pupils in the classes for intellectually gifted children. The probe indicates that teachers can start to develop musicality via psychomotor reactions of pupils to music, via cognitive convergent and divergent tasks, by means of puzzles and problem solving exercises, by means of the development of auditory-analytical abilities, and finally by means of problem exercises and training.

In the conclusion we would like to sum up that the research sample from our group, pupils musically gifted, have at their disposal higher quality of musical abilities, knowledge, auditory-perception abilities (that reflect the work of teacher and his/her command of the school subject), and these pupils demonstrated that quality also in creativity. The musical abilities of pupils from special and elementary schools could be improved if the subject Music Education received higher status between another school subjects.

Pedagogues who work with intellectually gifted children should get access to special methodologies, tools, working sheets, educational CD-ROMs, musical programmes and so on, which would evoke/stimulate in children fantasy and interest in the subject Music Education. One possibility for special schools is a contest of musical projects, which would help to improve the quality of musical abilities of pupils, their knowledge and emotional edification and the development of aesthetical-artistic taste. Finally, therapeutic effect of some artistic music works would have the positive impact on the behaviour of pupils and their subjective experience. According to the research conducted by Králová¹⁴ there was proven the impact of half-year

¹⁴ E. Králová, *Music as Means to Support Academic Performance and Behaviour of Preadolescents*, „Ars inter Culturas” 2014, no. 3, pp. 117-179.

music intervention on the improvement of academic results and behaviour of pupils from experimental group. The target research group consisted of forty-four Slovak fifth graders from one middle school, and in her study the pupils from experimental group demonstrated significantly better scores in the relation to academic performance of control group in two subjects where music activities were utilised, English Language Lessons and Arts and Crafts Lessons. However, its potency was not proven more significant in the main subjects, Mathematics and Slovak Language. Here lays the possibility for the music teachers to improve classroom musical climate. The abilities represent special qualities of our psyche and they are the precondition for particular activity. Their level depends not only on giftedness itself, but it is also conditioned by the age of a person, his or her social and cultural-historic impact of environment in which he or she lives¹⁵. “Alternative methods, various projects, brainstorming, workshops and musical workshops, film, auditory technology, bring the possibility to expand expressional potency of the arts and strengthen the ability to express ones emotions, communicate with artistic tools and with peers, work in teams”¹⁶.

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¹⁵ M. Holas, *Hudební pedagogika*, Praha 2004.

¹⁶ S. Kopčáková, *Recepcia hudby u vysokoškolákov a jej projekcia do iných druhov umenia v procese pedagogickej interpretácie hudby*, [in:] *Kultúra – Umenie – Vzdelávanie. Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie 2009*, Banská Bystrica 2009.

Summary

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN WITH GENERAL INTELLECTUAL GIFTEDNESS

The aim of the study was to verify the problem of intellectually gifted children, terminologically referred to as pupils with general intellectual giftedness. The other partial aim was to point to the lacking musical development of one kind of talent in the pupils. Finally we focused on indication of the new possibilities of how to develop the intellectually gifted pupils in the sense of the musicality with cognitive, psychomotor, and also relaxing effect.

The research sample consisted of the pupils from three kinds of schools, aged from 12 to 13 years. We observed the pupils with musical talent (schools of music), pupils who were intellectually gifted (special schools) and pupils from comprehensive classes (without classification of giftedness). In the last group there were excluded the pupils who attended comprehensive elementary school and also music of art.

Methods: Based on existing tests of musicality the overview of which we constructed for this study, we elaborated the test of musicality and realised research probe. The evaluation was realised by means of qualitative analysis, observation and questionnaire.

Results: The study summarises briefly the knowledge of the intellectually gifted pupils and it shows the possibilities of their education by means of music with the respect to harmonious balance between intellectual and emotional intelligence of the pupils.

Key words: *talent, musicality, intellectually gifted child, pupil with general intellectual giftedness, education*