



Innovativeness

at the beginning of XXI
century

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Egzemplifications

Editors

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*Author's own Gordon-based research as a possible context for
innovation in the Polish music education (A quasi-interdisciplinary
essay)*

Introduction

The aim of this text is to move towards a comprehensive reflection on the problems and contexts of my own research in the area of music education and to indicate areas most receptive to the application of empirical knowledge. This reflection over the contexts of studies of the Polish adaptation of the *Gordonian question of instrumental timbre preference* results from a critical analysis and inspiration significantly provoked by Professor Lech Witkowski's considerations. Very broadly, oscillating between philosophy and pedagogy, these inspirations not only demonstrated the nature of "cognitive (epistemological) fissures" but also (or rather first of all) triggered an urgent need for recognising them, undermining the earlier, carefully cultivated feeling of cognitive "bliss."

Constantly developing my own methodological awareness, it is in the idea of the "awakened individual"¹⁹⁵ that I see the need for recognising what is scientifically advisable – correct and my own¹⁹⁶, followed for instance by

¹⁹⁵ A reference to Buddhist philosophy and an openness to the category of CHANGE. Besides, this implication evokes unique climates of cognitive influence in line with the criteria: *experience-awakening-change*. L. Witkowski, *Między pedagogiką, filozofią i kulturą. Studia, eseje, szkice*, vol. III, Warszawa 2007, p. 47.

¹⁹⁶ L. Witkowski, *Między pedagogiką, filozofią i kulturą. Studia, eseje, szkice*, vol. III, Warszawa 2007, p. 47.

three criteria of expectations. Firstly, the sense of uncertainty related to the need to adequately discern the illusory manner of scientific cognition and to break free from erroneous and trite platitudes of formulated knowledge that need to be “undermined”. I refer here to the hazard posed by the mechanism of *ilusio*, or the illusoriness of constructs formulated in this way. Secondly, adopting the Popperian perspective, one may expect that the breaking free from, or “undermining”, of forms of permanent and obvious beliefs is to open up a new, different, hitherto unrecognised horizon of possibilities of scientific cognition. The “undermining” seen in this way will in fact trigger a new or previously unrecognised perception. Finally, the need for a third criterion of merging with the idea of “awakening” and change is also the perspective of transforming the principle that organises the quality of empirical reality. In light of this new, transformed perception one should discern possibilities for new perspectives of its practical application. Overcoming extreme and dangerous claims of a scholar, this new, transformed, praxeological level of the idea of “awakening” is in principle of prime importance for the constantly developing methodological awareness.

My own research on the determinants of instrumental education of students (instrumental timbre) and indicators of their achievements in learning to play instruments is mainly a result of years of inspirations by Edwin E. Gordon’s thought and (theoretical, empirical, methodological) output¹⁹⁷ (Gordon, 1984). Reflections oriented in this direction, a token

¹⁹⁷ E.E., Gordon, *Manual for the Instrument Timbre Preference Test*, GIA. Publication, Inc. 7404 So. Mason. Ave. Chicago. IL 50538, Chicago 1984.

of direct concern about Polish music education, have become an impetus for my own research¹⁹⁸, which are the intention of this reflection¹⁹⁹.

Research perspectives vs. heterogeneity of music education discourse

Contemporary music education is, according to A. Białkowski, in reality an area of multiple “*contention, contradictions and controversy*”²⁰⁰. However, these features have already become a permanent element of a process of identifying optimal solutions for contemporary music education. A search for the conceptual apparatus related to contemporary music education seems to be situated on the frontier of three currents of thinking about music pedagogy, frequently defined as a result of risky simplifications as: traditional (Z. Kodaly, S. Suzuki), progressive (E. Jaques-Dalcrose, E.E. Gordon, C. Orff, S.N. Coleman), and intermediate (J. Mursell, K. Swanwick)²⁰¹. The need for finding new, clear arguments that would convince present-day rationality of music teaching is connected to my mind also with the need to find in those frontiers an educational *equilibrium*, informed, as M. Bachtin would have it, by contradiction, contrasts or even simple diversity of conceptual definitions. Culture (including music) is

¹⁹⁸ P.A. Trzos, *Problematyka indywidualnych preferencji barwy instrumentalnej w świetle pedagogiki muzycznej Edwina E. Gordona* [in:] *Studia Pedagogiczno-Artystyczne*, M. Walczak (ed.), Poznań-Kalisz 2004, vol. IV, p. 351-358.

¹⁹⁹ The author conducted his studies with the application of the fundamental method of comparative analysis, with elements of experimental reasoning (also called a quasi-experiment). The analysis related to Gordon's approach and the accuracy of his conclusions in the area of music education in Poland. Results of research have been published on an ongoing basis. The text, in turn, is a free interpretation of the Author's research experience with the inclusion of an interdisciplinary approach and methodological aspects of his own educational research.

²⁰⁰ A. Białkowski, *Edukacja muzyczna w poszukiwaniu nowych zdefiniowań*, *Annales Universitatis Mariae – Skłodowska*, vol. I, Lublin 2003, p. 253-256.

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

informed by difference; it exists within the “frontier effect”²⁰². Following a certain adaptation arising from the need to recognise grounds for the existence of contentious areas in music education discourse and a certain *harmony of opposites*, one may expect that the state of “unanimity” might in reality obliterate the differences that inform this discourse. Still, irrespective of conceptual arguments, it is thanks to the “creations” of the Postmodern vision of educational discourse that we can say that, indeed, “*the world is constructed antagonistically and is an arena of a constant struggle for the domination of one discourse over another*”²⁰³.

Therefore, this can be responsible for the fact that the recently observed heterogeneity of educational discourse²⁰⁴, including that related to music education, makes the complementariness of the debating concepts of music education and the interpretation of frequently mutually exclusive demands and “challenges” continue to exert powerful influence on research areas and problems, praxeological models or the very form of theoretical debate on music education²⁰⁵. We could also deal with the discernment of the very “*coarseness of such discourse*”, followed by the explanation of what M. Foucault called the “*terms of contradiction*” of the considered and recurring problematic matter of *logos* itself.²⁰⁶

Possibly, this insufficiently “predatory” and at the same time “humble” Reading²⁰⁷ seems to generate questions of followers of concepts introduced

²⁰² L. Witkowski, *Edukacja wobec sporów o (po)nowoczesność*, vol. I, Warszawa 2007, p. 78-82.

²⁰³ B. Śliwerski, *Współczesne teorie i nurty wychowania*, Kraków 1998, p. 370.

²⁰⁴ R. Leppert, *Pedagogiczne peregrynacje. Studia i szkice o pedagogice ogólnej i kształceniu pedagogów*, Bydgoszcz 2002, p. 9.

²⁰⁵ A. Białkowski, *Edukacja muzyczna w poszukiwaniu nowych zdefiniowań*, op. cit., p. 254.

²⁰⁶ M. Foucault, *Archeologia wiedzy*, Warszawa 1977, p. 190-202.

²⁰⁷ L. Witkowski, *Edukacja wobec sporów o (po)nowoczesność*, op. cit., p. 44.

by Zoltan Kodaly, Emil Jacques Dalcroze and Karl Orff, who read and compare the intentions of Edwin Gordon's research. E.E. Gordon delineates the perspective of research methodology in music education and stresses those aspects of the child's musical development which, although subject to risky confrontations with other perceptions, reveal matters previously unrecognised, at least not holistically, and thus surprising, "silently present" matters which so frequently dominate this discourse.

Still, there are a great number of contentious issues within this discourse. Music education discourse does not envisage simple, unanimous and unambiguous solutions. The very nature of empirically generated knowledge is after all full of its unique experience and pursuits, or even errors whose *sophistication* might in G. Bachelard's perception constitute the property of newly constructed theories. Thus, of special importance for contemporary music education and its scientific dimension are the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the capital of the entire *Gordon's Theory of Music Learning*.

The above rationale indicates the most vibrant areas worthy of description, with the central category of audiation. *Audiation, as musical thinking, an all-inclusive term that makes references to linguistic analogies,*²⁰⁸ *may turn out to be the plane of theoretical justification and at the same time an area of "triggering" research issues that are significant for music education and yet are "silently present."*

²⁰⁸ Music teaching as an analogy to the teaching of language and speech is mainly the focus of E.E. Gordon's theory. Seeing, also after J. Sloboda or S. Suzuki, **research areas** in judging aspects of development of music phonology, syntax, and semantics in the child's language of music, determines the perspective of research on Gordonian contexts of preferences of instrumental timbre in music education.

Polish studies have focused on the evaluation of the instrumental timbre preference and musical skills as the chief achievement determinants of playing a musical instrument. Following E.E. Gordon's and R. Grunov's suggestions, it was possible to develop a clear and consistent schedule of related educational research methodology. My studies on the essence of the principal determinants of musical achievements called for an analysis of research issues which would "determine" or "redefine" all of those difficulties and concerns that may explore the causes and consequences of "*irretrievable educational loss*"²⁰⁹. Following E.E. Gordon, in my research I suggest the "fusion" of my studies with the consequences of the American public educational discourse (from the close of the 20th c.) demanding an "*education that would stress the basics*"²¹⁰. It is the basics of progressive music education, rooted in the child's natural potential, and the child-centred "discretion" of the educator that E.E. Gordon speaks about.

Of special import here is the problem of losing "self-assuredness" and certainty in determining the conditions of verifying Gordon's theory, which in light of E.E. Gordon's reflection does not seem fully predictable. Then we continue to pose questions about the choice of a hard or soft research method. However, among the premises of theoretical thinking we clearly sense the Gordonian determination for "liberation" from pressure, or even tendencies of methodological naturalism and general claims of a biological orientation of research procedures. Hence Dilthey's argument about a different status of a model of terms and theories in social and humanistic sciences translates into the fundamental choice recommended by E.E. Gordon of "soft" research

²⁰⁹ S. Shapiro, *O publicznym dyskursie edukacyjnym w USA (1970-1990)*, Transl. L. Witkowski [in:] *Nieobecne dyskursy. Studia kulturowe i edukacyjne*, Z. Kwieciński (ed.), Toruń 1993, part III, p. 39.

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

methods, informed by the uniqueness of a given case and the hermeneutic property of study. What strategy, then, should we adopt with respect to the quantitative study with E.E. Gordon's MAP or ITPT Tests? One could be swathed in "blissful ignorance" for a long time were it not for Reading that is a response to the effect of *surprise*, or even the result of the very "perception" of contradictory associations – a dilemma of solutions to the problem of the very choice of methods of the verified or falsified GTML areas.

Could I then reiterate G. Bachelard who defined modified aspects of Gordon's theory as a *set of sophisticated errors*, or could I follow L. Nowak and say that they are good *fine caricature*? All of these *questions* are in fact important and difficult, as the associations latent in them yet unrecognised so far generate problems that masterfully destroy certainty and subconsciously cultivated methodological "bliss."

Concluding observation

Results of various research often quoted by followers of E.E. Gordon's theory might prove insufficient for an adequate or full adaptation of this knowledge into contemporary music education in Poland. Hence the *a priori* references of my research to the foundations of E.E. Gordon's *Theory of Music Learning* stem more from an attempt at critical reflection and indication of the most difference-prone areas of research conducted in this direction, than from an intention to adopt a ready mode of theoretical, empirical, and methodological "arrangements". The very "acceptability" of Gordon's directives does not solve similar problems that are vital for the present-day music student and teacher.

Educational studies are vital for contemporary music education. Results of studies in this area of music education lead to a more profound analysis of the chief predictors of achievements when learning to play a wind instrument²¹¹. Analysis of these predictors concerns relations between musical ability (E.E. Gordon's MAP Test) and students' preferences (E.E. Gordon's ITPT Test) as a multifaceted construct²¹². The intention of this reflection might be to highlight the major questions, warnings and suggestions of a new, humanistic perception of the "subjectified" child, an individual who, as M. Foucault has it, is devoted to self-study and work on himself, with his body, soul, and behaviour (Ball, 1992: 196)²¹³. This intention would probably provoke the revelation of possibly troublesome educational defects and the demands of a reinterpretation of the foundations of music education of the child today, which would in fact prevent the empirically constructed knowledge from illusory obviousness or worse yet, from insufficiency. However, as much as this knowledge might prove illusory, obvious or, worse yet, dispensable – in effect the sense of uncertainty successively destroys the possible "bliss" of a less careful researcher.

Therefore we should continue to speak about the music education of the human being as that of a unique "*homo silente*"²¹⁴, respecting his silent intimacy and autonomous experience. By including the chief research questions into the perspective of critical pedagogy as a science, but –

²¹¹ P.A. Trzos, *Preferencje barwy dźwięku instrumentalnego i poziom zdolności muzycznych w nauce gry na instrumencie dętym. Badania edukacyjne nad adaptacją Teorii Uczenia się Muzyki E.E. Gordona*, Poznań-Kalisz-Konin 2009.

²¹² E. Zwolińska, *Naucz swoje dziecko audiować*, Bydgoszcz 2004, p. 31.

²¹³ J.S. Ball, *Zarządzanie jako technologia moralna. Analiza luddystyczna* [in:] *Foucault i edukacja. Dyscypliny i wiedza*, J. S. Ball (ed.), Kraków 1992, p. 196.

²¹⁴ I. Wojnar, *Humanistyczne intencje edukacji*, ŻAK, Warszawa 2000, p. 50.

following B. Suchodolski – as “another science on another man”²¹⁵, an answer referring to the value of such cognition would prove more interesting. The recognition of this aspect in contemporary studies of music pedagogy may prove a direction and possibly an effect of empirical activity.

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²¹⁵ I. Wojnar, *Pedagogika ogólna w świecie (wybrane problemy)* [in:] *Pedagogika ogólna. Tradycja-teraźniejszość – nowe wyzwania*, T. Hejnicka-Bezwińska (ed.), WSP, Bydgoszcz 1995, p. 97.

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