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“meNet Learning Outcomes” as a Tool for the Further Development of Music Teacher Training in Europe

This paper explains and discusses a document compiled in the context of the EU project “music education Network (meNet). The European Network for Communication and Knowledge Management of Music Education”, which has been funded by the SOCRATES programme¹. One of the products of the project is entitled “meNet Learning Outcomes in Music Teacher Training”, a document, which can be consulted on the project’s website.² It is intended to serve as a useful tool for the future development of music teacher training in all the countries of Europe.

This paper describes the process of developing this product with a view to highlighting the problems related to it, in particular:

- bearing in mind the almost inconceivable diversity of structures and content of teacher training in the various European countries with their vastly differing training institutions, the question of whether and to what extent it is useful to create and submit such a document;
- the nature of educational policy that formed the basis and context of this task;
- what decisions were taken regarding the wording, for example when describing learning outcomes with respect to musical-artistic competences as opposed to pedagogical skills; and when dealing with terms such as ‘learning outcomes’, ‘knowledge’, ‘skills’, ‘competence’ etc.;
- how it could be possible, in an entirely practical way, for this document to be genuinely useful for improving music teacher training in Europe in future; and
- how the document itself can be expanded to take future developments into account.

The development of this document with its specific structure and language was accompanied in several respects by research activities, two of which we wish to draw special attention to: one was the study, critical analysis and evaluation of numerous core documents, while the other was the examination and interpretation of data on the structure and content of music teacher training at a large number of training institutions in various European countries. This

¹ The former SOCRATES programme is called Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) since 2007.

² <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/Medien/meNetLearningOutcomes.pdf> [01.11.2009]

paper will only touch on these research activities since the essence of their results is incorporated into the explanations given of the context for the development of the “Learning Outcomes”.

Music education in Schools as the starting point

When dealing with music teacher training, a thorough examination of the real situation of music education in schools is necessary. It is, after all, a question of those teachers who will be teaching countless children and adolescents at schools for many years to come. Music teacher training at universities or academies of music must take the real situation in schools into account, which is nationally or regionally distinct, and must adapt to it to a large extent. But teacher training must also go beyond that and show the way forward, because the music teacher training of the moment is always focused on the future; it will, of course, be constructively concerned with today but will at the same time anticipate future developments, not least in the knowledge that today’s music teacher training influences future developments in music education in schools.

An examination of the situation of music education in the different countries of Europe, such as was possible in the context of the meNet project, reveals a picture of fascinating diversity. It is virtually impossible to compare the different ways music is approached and taught at schools in, say, Slovenia, France and England, much less reduce them to a common denominator. The strong tradition of singing and choirs that plays such a vital role in music lessons in Estonian schools; the lessons taught in France that chiefly emphasise the history and theory of music; the importance of folk song and traditional dance in Slovenia; the references made in English music lessons as a matter of course to techniques of rock and pop music combined with practical, individual use of electric guitars and computer programs, for instance; the way music is incorporated into learning in other arts subjects, the way they typify art schools in Slovakia ... these are just some examples³ that illustrate the widely varying form and content of music lessons in schools and how different the prerequisites and interrelated circumstances are for music teacher training.

The irreconcilability of unity and diversity

³ More detailed explanations, including illustrative videos, of these and other examples of insights into the practice of music education in the countries of Europe can be found on the meNet website www.menet.info [01.11.2009] under “Examples of Practice in Context”.

The insights into the diversity of music education at schools in the countries of Europe we have just outlined reflect a phenomenon that is generally characteristic of Europe and its development. Nowhere else in the world is there such apparent irreconcilability: seeing the countries and regions of the continent on the one hand as related, as a kind of whole, but at the same time seeing how diverse, different and even contradictory they really are. It is easy to say, “Europe’s unity is in her diversity”. But seeing and experiencing it as a reality places anyone wishing to play an active formative role in a dilemma. On the one hand, one wishes to promote the idea of unity and fill it with life; it is precisely this that formed the basis of the wording of the “Learning Outcomes in Music Teacher Training”. At the same time however, the tendency to uniformity, which is an aspect of globalisation, appears to be precisely what one does not want in issues relating to education and the desire is aroused to demand the promotion and emphasis of regional or national distinctiveness, individuality and uniqueness.

The so-called Lisbon Strategy⁴, which is founded on the objective of making Europe “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010” has brought about countless initiatives focusing on unity and uniformity. As the term “knowledge-based” suggests, the field of education is of crucial importance here. Among many others, these include the work programme “Education and training 2020 – diverse systems, shared goals”⁵, which is viewed as the “key driver” of the Lisbon Strategy, the Bologna Process⁶ and the “The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)”⁷. An examination of the practical political work undertaken in these initiatives reveals that they themselves are characterised by the conflicting interests of standardisation and emphasising diversity.

At all levels there is a clear tendency towards standardisation: fixed duration of school attendance and degree courses, comparable course content, generally applicable education standards at several education levels that are as measurable and assessable as possible, centralisation of examinations etc. On the other hand, it is becoming more and more apparent that education, especially in cultural and artistic contexts, is taking place in a way that is

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm [01.11.2009] (“Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. Towards a green and innovative economy”). At the time of writing, the European Commission’s official websites for the issues discussed here are being changed. The shift in strategy is accompanied by a change in the terminology used. The naming of strategies after cities (Lisbon, Bologna) is being increasingly abandoned.

⁵ “Education and training 2020 – diverse systems, shared goals”, http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc36_en.htm [01.11.2009]

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc1290_en.htm [01.11.2009]

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/eqf/broch_en.pdf [01.11.2009]

individual and resists comparison. What it is that learners – children and adolescents at schools or students at university – are actually achieving and learning can only be appropriately discerned, appreciated and evaluated “on site” by the learners themselves.

The “meNet Learning Outcomes” grasp the nettle of this irreconcilability: they will be made available all over Europe with the intention of encouraging all those concerned with music teacher training to explore them, so that, in other words, the discussion of these “Learning Outcomes” leads to the further development of the content and methods of courses and curricula. At the same time their very wording is designed to preclude their use as “standards”, as standardised and mandatory directives that can be externally checked and measured. These “Learning Outcomes” can both intensify and improve Europe-wide, mutually applicable communication on the subject of music teacher training and are intended to encourage the finding of different solutions appropriate to the particular context of each educational institution.

The “Learning Outcomes” working group as a part of the meNet project

The opportunity to develop “Learning Outcomes in Music Teacher Training” in the context of the meNet project was a unique opportunity. Representatives of 27 partner institutions from 11 European countries, supported by 80 associated partners from 24 countries were actively involved in working on issues relating to music education in schools and music teacher training. The balance within the group between working in subgroups on the one hand, and networking in the project plenum on the other, was good. This meant that the “Learning Outcomes” working group in particular was able to benefit greatly from the contributions and feedback from the other groups. These other groups focused on music education in schools⁸, the practice of music teacher training⁹ at a wide variety of institutions in the countries of Europe, and lifelong learning¹⁰. Another group worked on the selection, presentation, illustration and evaluation of “Examples of Practice in Context”¹¹ in the areas of school and music teacher training. Finally, one group investigated the COMENIUS projects¹² carried out so far in the field of music education and made them available on the website.¹³

⁸ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&zusatz=&lang=en> [01.11.2009]

⁹ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=2&c=0&zusatz=&lang=en> [01.11.2009]

¹⁰ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=4&c=0&zusatz=&lang=en> [01.11.2009]

¹¹ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=5&c=0&zusatz=&lang=en> [01.11.2009]

¹² <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=6&c=0&zusatz=&lang=en> [01.11.2009]

¹³ The meNet subgroups and the results of their project work can be found here:

<http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=0&c=0&zusatz=&lang=en> [01.11.2009]

Participants contributed their expertise to the work of the different sub groups at different stages of the project according to relevance and needs of the task. They formed the backbone of the task of drawing up the “meNet Learning Outcomes” in slow and small steps that were accompanied by constant critical appraisal.

The diversity of music teacher training in the countries of Europe

As this work process began it seemed to be an almost insurmountable task. What became patently obvious were the extreme differences between the structures and content of music teacher training. The knowledge already found in the meNet project group and existing studies clearly showed that there was no common denominator for areas such as requisite musical-artistic competence, academic qualifications, didactic and pedagogical expertise, practical experience of school teaching during training etc. There are some institutions music teacher training takes place to a very high standard and in great depth in all these areas, whereas in others training for music teaching is extremely limited.

The results of “EFMET” provided important, basic preliminary data. EFMET, the European Forum for Music Education and Training¹⁴, was implemented in 2004 by the European Music Council (EMC)¹⁵ and the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC)¹⁶ as an EU project (Culture, 2000) incorporating every prominent European association and interest groups in the field of music and music education. The forum provided comprehensive information from 30 European countries regarding the types of institution at which teachers of music as a school subject are trained: at colleges of education or academies, teacher-training colleges, various faculties at general universities, academies of music or arts universities etc. Both types of fundamentally different teacher were studied, i.e. both “specialists” and “generalists”. EFMET was essentially concerned with the formal conditions and structures and the types of course and the qualifications obtained by graduates. The results of the EFMET project consequently served as a first general view; from this the necessity of exploring training practice in more depth emerged.

The meNet project partners, especially those in the subgroup for music teacher training, provided further data of this type. In addition, a small-scale examination within the “Learning Outcomes” group itself was carried out in Greece, Portugal, Spain, England, The Netherlands,

¹⁴ <http://www.emc-imc.org/?id=257> [01.11.2009]

¹⁵ <http://www.emc-imc.org/> [01.11.2009]

¹⁶ <http://www.aecinfo.org/> [01.11.2009]

Slovenia and Sweden as sample countries¹⁷. This brought the differences between the structures and content of music teacher training into still sharper relief, especially with regard to the following points:

- the entrance requirements for courses (entrance examinations) and consequently the definition of basic, requisite qualifications for training as a teacher of music – including “non-requirements” in the sense that no entrance examinations are necessary,
- the differences in status and, in some cases, also of principle, in the training of teachers for primary education on the one hand and secondary education on the other,
- the way fundamental and subject-related issues pertaining to general pedagogy, didactics and methods are approached,
- the role of instrumental playing, i.e. the question of what level of artistic proficiency – if any (!) – teachers of music as a school subject must have reached,
- the importance attached to subjects central to the teaching profession such as singing, playing music (solo, ensemble, choral), musical direction/conducting, listening to music, knowledge transfer, music theory, movement and dance etc.,
- the question of the extent to which the field of artistic qualification is separate from that of pedagogical qualifications; or the extent to which these levels are integrated with each other,
- the tendency to favour or neglect certain musical styles such as rock and pop music, national or international folk music, classical music, new music or avant-garde, jazz, world music etc.,
- the question of to what extent and how trainee teachers are prepared for the various roles they will have to play in the classroom, especially for the task of also using the pupils’ experience, which is usually gained outside the school environment and informally, the starting point of music lessons.
- the way practical experience of school teaching is integrated into the training course,

¹⁷ Hennessy, S. (in press), La formazione musicale degli insegnanti della scuola primaria. In (Ed.) Biasutti M., La formazione degli insegnanti di musica. Lecce: Pensa Multimedia (collana Frontiere della didattica nell'insegnamento secondario). Transl. The training in music of teachers for primary school in Biasutti, M. (Ed), Music Teacher Training

- the approach to fundamental questions of lifelong learning and the aspect of developing a personality as an artist, teacher, communicator, promoter etc. with regard to the requirements of school as a professional environment.

The clearer the enormous differences between one country and another, and between one training institution and another became, the clearer the need for identifying fundamental requisite knowledge, skills and competences became; and the need for all those responsible for music teacher training in Europe to explore and discuss with one another.

Core documents

If the investigation of the reality of music education in schools and music teacher training and their many contradictions formed one part of the basis for the formulation of the “Learning Outcomes” descriptors, the second preparatory level consisted of a critical study of fundamental documents on education and training in Europe in general, and on teacher training in particular. There were too many of these documents to discuss or even list them all here; what is important, however, is to show from where the key points of reference for the meNet descriptors came.

The strategy of the Lisbon Declaration to increase the quantity and improve the quality of educational opportunities in general was referred to above. In place of “knowledge” and “knowledge society”, the terms “creativity” and “innovation” have gained, and continue to gain, ground, and it is here that arts educators now have a higher profile and a greater role to play in achieving these goals. The growing importance of cultural education is reflected in the fact that “Cultural awareness and expression” is named as one of the eight key competences in the “Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning”¹⁸. These eight key competences play an important role in many strategic declarations on education programmes, briefly mentioned above, such as the basic programme “Education and Training” and the “The European Qualifications Framework For Lifelong Learning (EQF)”. The definition of the key competence “Cultural awareness and expression” begins with these key words: “Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts.”

¹⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF> [01.11.2009]

Entering this context it appears essential to adopt a clear position with regard to music teacher training, too. When, in 2007, a large-scale process of consultation on the development of “Schools for the 21st Century”¹⁹ was launched by the European Commission, it was taken for granted that the meNet project group would adopt a very firm position with regard to this.²⁰ The drawing up of this statement was an important step towards determining and formulating the “meNet Learning Outcomes in Music Teacher Training”.

Similarly, with respect to this context, the “1st and 2nd Cycle Studies in Higher Education Professional Music Training: Distinctive Characteristics, Modes of Learning and Learning Outcomes”²¹ drawn up by the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) have also been of great significance. This document, along with other relevant papers from groups associated with the AEC (Bologna Working Group²², Polifonia Dublin Descriptors²³), provided powerful stimuli for the task.

As a consequence of the strategy relating to the “Education and Training” programme as well as to the so-called “Bologna Process”²⁴ great efforts have been and are being made to redesign courses of every conceivable kind, including courses for teacher training, and ensure their Europe-wide accessibility and transparency so they can be fitted into the process of making “higher education systems in Europe converge”. According to “The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)” two guidelines of fundamental importance initially apply to this:

1. Focus on output

In order to be able to make any meaningful statement about training or degree courses, the focus should only be on the content of courses (curricula etc.) in the second instance; in the first instance it should be on the potential results of such courses (“learning outcomes”). In this case we also talk about a paradigm “shift from a focus on input to a focus on output”. With regard to music teacher training it is therefore necessary to put into words what a person starting to teach music at school “now” should know and be capable of.

2. Universally binding terminology

¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/school21/index_en.html [01.11.2009]

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/education/school21/results/music_en.pdf [01.11.2009]

²¹ <http://www.aecinfo.org/Zoeken.aspx?q=learning+outcomes> [01.11.2009]

²² <http://www.aecinfo.org/Zoeken.aspx?q=Bologna+Working+Group> [01.11.2009]

²³ <http://www.aecinfo.org/Zoeken.aspx?q=Polifonia+Dublin+Descriptors> [01.11.2009]

²⁴ The Bologna process: make higher education systems in Europe converge:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/c11088_en.htm [01.11.2009]

There should be a certain terminology that is regarded as universally binding. The four most important of these with respect to the “Learning Outcomes” are quoted here in full from the EQF:²⁵

The definition of “Learning Outcomes” is the following:

“learning outcomes” means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

The definition of “Knowledge” is the following:

“knowledge” means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.

The definition of “Skills” is the following:

“skills” means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

The definition of “Competence” is the following:

“competence” means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

In these definitions, the way the concepts of knowledge, skill and competence are assigned to the “learning outcomes” or are subordinated to them. It is a fact that in the debate on the future development of courses of study, various terms are often used imprecisely and mixed up with each other, as when for example education standards / standards or competences / education competences are used as generic terms instead of “learning outcomes”. In these instances there are issues and tensions between questions, of standardisation, measurability, the means of checking and control that are necessary concomitants of the concept of a “standard”; and the more open term “learning outcomes”. When choosing the wording of the meNet descriptors a deliberate decision was made to talk about “learning outcomes” in accordance with the EQF and to make “knowledge, skills and competence” subordinate concepts of them. At the same time it is stressed that the learning outcomes are made outwardly visible and identifiable by the learners but in a form that invites critical dialogue,

²⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/eqf/broch_en.pdf [01.11.2009]

exploration and possible further development – and not in a form that fixes standards that can be clearly measured, checked and assessed by external agents.

By way of example the first of the meNet descriptors (A 1) is quoted:

At the completion of their studies, beginning teachers are able to express their personal values regarding music, musical practices and music education which can inspire and shape their professional development.²⁶

The teachers of the future should not simply “have” their own “personal ideals”, they should also be able to “express” them in order to make them outwardly recognisable and available for exchange. This clearly shows the quality of the results the learners have obtained from their training; but these results cannot be measured exactly in the way that fixed standards can be.

To present the meNet descriptors in keeping with the essential idea behind the EQF as “learning outcomes” and not as fixed standards – and thereby not placing them at the disposal of external measurement but presenting them for discussion that takes the topic further – was one of the fundamental decisions in this work process.

Decisions

Bearing in mind the extreme diversity of the situation of music teacher training in the countries of Europe and taking the numerous available core documents on education policy and the development of tertiary education in Europe into account, other practical decisions had to be taken with regard to the way the “meNet Learning Outcomes” were worded. Merely adopting and adapting existing “learning outcomes” from other subjects and courses did not seem appropriate for the specific subject matter covered by music teacher training. The objective was to present a document that would offer a genuinely constructive and discerning contribution to the discussion on the future development of music teacher training in Europe and stimulate it in a productive way. In the following paragraphs the levels relevant for the decisions taken on the wording of the “meNet Learning Outcomes” are named and briefly explained.

Specialists rather than generalists

The “meNet Learning Outcomes” concern courses that prepare students for the profession of teacher of music as a school subject. In most European countries there are specialised music lessons at secondary I level, and in many at secondary II level as well, albeit with a widely

²⁶ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/Medien/meNetLearningOutcomes.pdf>, p. 15 [01.11.2009]

varying number of hours. The lessons are taught by teachers who have undergone training specifically for this (and often also for a second) subject. In a few countries, though not many, there are specialised music lessons at primary level and a corresponding specialist teacher training course. The “meNet Learning Outcomes” unquestionably apply to such training courses as well.

In most countries music education at primary level is subsumed under the complexity of teaching all subjects. Accordingly, “generalists”, i.e. teachers of all subjects, are trained so that they are in a position to teach elements of every subject or area of learning; they are not specialists in any particular subject, and consequently not in music. Their training nevertheless includes elements of music education; in the near future it will be necessary to elaborate “meNet learning outcomes for the training in music of generalists”; this process has already begun.

All education levels

It is already clear from what has just been said that the “meNet Learning Outcomes” do not differentiate between the training of specialist teachers at primary, secondary I or secondary II level. Although in many cases these training courses take place at vastly differing institutions and vary enormously in terms of structure and content, the “meNet Learning Outcomes” should be a reference document for all of them.

All school types

Should teachers at a “normal” rural primary school have different knowledge, skills and competences from their counterparts at a secondary school in a major city that specialises in high-level music education? The “meNet Learning Outcomes” are worded in such a way that they pay no attention to such differences. They cite fundamental aspects of the professional aptitude of specialist music teacher in such a way that every student in confronted by them at the end of his or her course, irrespective of the type of school he or she then goes on to teach at.

All music teacher training institutions

The “meNet Learning Outcomes” make statements about the kind of musical, pedagogical and general knowledge, skills and competences of a person who is starting to work as a specialist music teacher “now”. The type of institution that person attended to acquire these skills is not the issue here.

The faculties of education at general universities and academies of music (conservatoires de musique etc.) are among the institutions at which most music teachers are trained; considerably more of them graduate from the former than from the highest-level educational institutions for music. There are great differences between the structures and content of these two types of institution with regard to music teacher training. For example, it can be assumed that at academies of music more importance is generally attached to the aspect of artistic practice, in this case vocal and instrumental performance, and that at the faculties of education at universities the pedagogical and didactic aspects are given more weight. But the “meNet Learning Outcomes” deliberately ignores these differences. Instead they refer to the fundamental aspects of the professional aptitude of future specialist music teachers in the same way for all institutions.

Linking the “musical” with the “pedagogical/didactic”

The musical qualification should relate explicitly to the profession of teacher, while the pedagogical training should constantly ensure that the specific importance of music as a subject is kept in view. In practice, courses often keep these two areas strictly separate. In Section A, which deals with musical aspects and aspects relating to subject didactics, the “meNet Learning Outcomes” attempt to name the levels without separating them, citing them instead as far as possible in terms of their interrelation. For example, Point A 2 of the descriptors reads as follows:

At the completion of their studies, beginning teachers are able to communicate music through performing confidently, fluently and expressively according to the musical style and with awareness of different learning contexts.²⁷

In this sentence, the musical level – “performing confidently, fluently and expressively” – is linked directly to the pedagogical – “with awareness of different learning contexts”.

Linking knowledge, skills and competences

At the level of definitions of terms, and also in the more precise, more detailed description, the “European Qualification Framework (EQF)” names, one after the other, how s knowledge, skills and competence show themselves to be learning outcomes. The way these are worded implies that the three can be learned and perceived in isolation from each other. Most documents on “learning outcomes” from a wide variety of subjects and courses adhere to this method of breaking down learning outcomes in this way.

²⁷ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/Medien/meNetLearningOutcomes.pdf>, p. 15 [01.11.2009]

The philosophy pursued by the “meNet Learning Outcomes” is different. It proposes that this differentiation and separation are neither useful in theory nor in practice. In every case they try to describe these on the basis of their inter connectedness. The wording of Descriptor A 10 expresses this very clearly:

At the completion of their studies, beginning teachers know about ways to engage with music through different modes of listening and can motivate learners to explore and develop these.²⁸

Three sections: musical-subject didactical, general-pedagogical, fundamental

It was decided to separate the descriptors into three sections: section A (“Musical and pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills”), section B (“General pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills”) and section C (“Generic knowledge, understanding and skills”).

This decision is not without its difficulties, on the one hand since it conflicts to some degree with the principle of always integrating the “musical” and the “pedagogical/didactic” and on the other, since the learning outcomes for sections B and C should really be thought of and expressed in interdisciplinary terms.

The process of elaborating learning outcomes for the training of teachers for every school subject is still in progress. It is extremely heterogeneous, and has not yet yielded many fruits. How this process evolves and how it may lead to the elaboration of general-pedagogical and fundamental learning outcomes across all subjects remains to be seen. For the time being the splitting of the “meNet Learning Outcomes” into these three sections appears to be necessary and helpful.

Degree of abstraction

All the decisions that have been taken – across all school grades, types of school and training institutions, inter linking of the “musical” and the “pedagogical/didactic” and of knowledge, skills and competences – have resulted in the wording of the descriptors being highly abstract. To counter the danger of drifting too far into generalisations and terms too global or vague, great importance was attached to giving labels to aspects of the profession of music teacher in schools that were as specific and succinct as possible. To this end, means of expression were found that always suggest a discussion on quality and value that is of immediate relevance to that aspect.

²⁸ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/Medien/meNetLearningOutcomes.pdf>, p. 15 [01.11.2009]

This can be explained by using an example. The wording cited above that runs, “are able to communicate music through performing confidently, fluently and expressively according to the musical style” is an abstraction of playing on this instrument or that one at a certain level of technical ability or virtuosity, but it is also an abstraction of particular styles of music such as folk music, classical, rock music etc. Despite this, the debate we can expect to emerge will be specific and immediately relevant. If at the end of his or her training a graduate displays skills in accordance with the wording cited above, a dispute among experts will necessarily ensue about the quality and standard of these skills.

Wherever the meNet descriptors are applied in a practical way in particular situations at particular institutions they will stimulate – despite or precisely due to the highly abstract nature of their wording – a discussion that has a very specific bearing on each particular case.

A clear standpoint

The preceding explanations and arguments, and especially the examples cited, have already made it clear by implication that the “meNet Learning Outcomes” were not conceived to adopt the middle ground with respect to ideals in the context of the profession of music teacher. On the contrary, they adopt a clear position with regard to many aspects of fundamental importance – thereby naturally distancing themselves from other positions. The most important aspects as reflected in the “meNet Learning Outcomes” are outlined briefly below:

Music: The “meNet Learning Outcomes” assume that in principle all “musics”, i.e. all styles of music and all methods of playing music, can have a valuable role in music education. In contrast to the actual situation of everyday school lessons, in which domestic folk music, pop or rock music or classical music may dominate, music education should embrace the full diversity of music as it currently manifests itself in society. It should be possible to include and treat with open-mindedness and respect potentially every style of music and every method of playing music, past and present, and make them all the subject of active aesthetic exploration and experience. Sufficient room should be given to active music-making, also of an experimental nature, with the aim of nurturing individual artistic articulateness and of achieving deeper understanding of music through the activity. The inclusion of as many forms of new technology as possible in this type of music education is taken as read.

Learners' competence: when it comes to their own (musical) education, children and adolescents can be regarded as the best experts and as those ultimately responsible for it. School lessons must therefore give them the room they need to show and develop their expertise. Everything they have already learned about music, or in relation to music, in both formal and informal contexts can benefit the classroom activity and consequently be of value to the other learners. One of the principal tasks of teachers is afford sufficient room for the development of the competence and expertise of the learners.

Professionalism in the practice of teaching: In school music lessons, teachers must take on a wide variety of roles: they impart new information to the learners, confront them with views and values, they are present as musicians and experts in music and act as leaders of music-making processes, they supervise communication processes, they are the facilitators, mediators and sources of assistance for the learners' learning processes etc. Their professionalism consists to a large degree in their ability to manage all these different roles skilfully. In terms of their own growth, they make use of a reflexive approach to strengthen themselves during the course of their professional development: they take a critical look at their own performance and behaviour towards the learners and exploit this skill to promote their own ongoing development in accordance with the tenets of lifelong learning.

With respect to the aspects outlined here and the overall standpoint adopted by the authors, the “meNet Learning Outcomes” can advance the discussion on suitable structures and content for music teacher training. This discussion will be held in the individual countries of Europe and at the various teacher-training institutions and be characterised by a larger or smaller number of contradictions. And as a result of this discussion each country, region and institution it will find different solutions to the question of course content and structure which will be useful in that particular context.

The Process of the Development of the “meNet Learning Outcomes” in the Past and the Future

A lot has already been said in this paper about the process that led to the drawing up of the “meNet Learning Outcomes”: about starting with the situation of music education in schools, and of teacher training in training institutions; about the study of the core documents on “Education and Training in Europe”; and about finding appropriate terminology and necessary and practicable decisions regarding the wording of the descriptors. The work was

done in a team that on the one hand was linked in the closest possible way to the entire meNet project group – and, in addition to that, was more loosely connected to the large circle of associated partners of the meNet project – meant that widely differing experiences, views, assessment and standpoints generated tremendous vitality. As a result a strong foundation for arguments and a firm foothold in the reality of music teacher training and its continuing review were guaranteed.

What was unusual about this process was the fact that from the very beginning, and at every stage, the discussions and wordings of the descriptors were bilingual, with equal value placed on the two languages used, German and English; suggestions made by the other language groups (Swedish, Slovakian, Slovene, Greek, Spanish, Dutch) were also taken into account once they had been put forward in either German or English. Working in both German and English simultaneously may have required a great deal of effort, but it was highly productive. Attempts to translate suggested wordings from one of the two languages into the other usually resulted in changes in the language the idea was originally formulated in. Consequently, the complexity of thinking in the languages of Europe was encapsulated to a relatively large extent.

Beyond the scope of the meNet project group itself the feedback loops that emerged from the presentations and discussions at international conferences and congresses were very important. These included Bergen (Norway: BIMUC²⁹), Bologna (Italy: ISME³⁰), Kraków (Poland: ArGeSüd³¹), Bolu (Turkey: EAS³²) and Exeter (England: RIME³³). Every one of these feedback loops led to additional reorganisations and redrafting of the descriptors.

At the conclusion of the meNet project (09/2009) measures were agreed upon that would ensure the long-term existence and viability of its products, including the “meNet Learning Outcomes”. The European Association for Music in Schools (EAS)³⁴ in particular has taken on a great deal of the responsibility for this. With the assistance of the EAS National Coordinators in virtually every European country steps will be taken to ensure that the

²⁹ BIMUC: Bergen Interactive Music Conference, 2008, <http://bimuc.dreamhosters.com> [01.11.2009]

³⁰ ISME: International Society for Music Education, World Conference 2008 in Bologna, Italy, <http://www.isme.org/de/isme-world-conferences/past-world-conferences-6.html> [01.11.2009]

³¹ ArGeSüd: 30th Meeting of the Working Group Music Pedagogy for the Countries of Central and Southern Europe, Kraków, August 2008

³² EAS: Preparatory meeting for the 18th congress of the European Association for Music in Schools at the Abant İzzet B. University, January 2009, <http://www.eas-music.net/index.php?id=6&content=1728> [01.11.2009]

³³ RIME (Research in Music Education) Conference, April 2009, <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/pages.php?id=218> [01.11.2009]

³⁴ www.eas-music.net [01.11.2009]

“meNet Learning Outcomes” are translated into each country's national language and that the revisions of curricula at the training institutions for music teachers take them into account. The tool “meNet Learning Outcomes” will improve communication on the further development of music teacher training in Europe at international conferences. The feedback from such conferences will be seen as an inducement to continue developing the “meNet Learning Outcomes”; this will be regarded as a permanent work in progress.