

17. THE LEVEL OF MUSICAL COMPETENCY TRAINING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FULL-TIME AND DISTANCE STUDENTS

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Abstract: *Estimating the level of competency training at the end of a university programme aims, in the competency-based learning, at a certification of the training's outcomes. This research wishes to evaluate the degree of specific competency training for a Bachelor programme in music organized by the Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music from Cluj-Napoca in different forms of learning, namely full-time and distance learning. By means of a questionnaire which measures the appreciation of students on a scale from 1 to 5 we interviewed 60 students who measured their own professional training based on the competencies approved on a national level for music as major subject. We analyzed descriptors characteristic of certain development levels of the key competencies for three specific content areas: the theoretical, methodological, and artistic areas. The main findings of the research, following a comparative analysis of the implementation of programme-specific competencies, reveal superior outcomes in the case of distance students in the development of competencies belonging to the field of performance, the practical activity carried out during the learning process, at their place of work and through participation in artistic productions, thus motivating the students' interest in acquiring and improving certain specific skills and abilities. The theoretical knowledge and consolidation of the musical language represent the priorities of the full-time students and, by means of a statistical comparison, we highlighted different answers for the results of the questionnaire meant for the assimilation of competencies for each of the descriptors analyzed in this study.*

Key words — *competencies, descriptor, music education, assessment, artistic area*

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, Europe has implemented the competency-based learning system, which aims to develop the abilities of the youth in ways that will subsequently help them to perform well in their professions. This system is devised so as to facilitate mobility and transparency in the European space, so that the member states of the European Union have developed standards or qualifications frameworks influenced by three models that dominate this space: the British, the French or the German model. (Winterton, J., 2009). Romania has adopted the European recommendations regarding the new qualifications frameworks in higher education and has joined the EQF (European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning), in which the competency-based system is

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implemented in the entire educational system (G. O. 918/2013). Designing a curriculum in the context of competencies pursues the acquisition of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, while the outcomes of their assimilation will enable a flexible and rapid adaptation of the graduates to the competitive environment of the labour market. According to European educational standards, Romania classifies the professional competencies acquired after graduating a Bachelor programme in music into general, specific, and transversal professional competencies, (POSDRU/2/1.2/S/2; ID: 1622, Parker, 2010). In the field of arts, the competencies are meant to improve the professional flexibility of students, in order to facilitate their insertion on the labour market (Leesa, Gavin, 2011). They aim at the theoretical knowledge of music, the acquisition of tools for musical analysis and creation, the accomplishment of expressive and creative performances, with aesthetic value. (Nedelcut, Pop, Chiorean, 2018).

2. Methodology

The Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music from Cluj-Napoca organizes the Bachelor programme in Music both as full-time and distance learning. The teaching staff in charge of the programme monitor the level of the graduates' accomplishment of the programmes' goals. The chart of competencies applied in the Romanian musical system is approved on a national level and measures the assimilation degree of the field-specific abilities according to three standards: theoretical, methodological, and artistic. In order to evaluate the level of competency acquisition as described in the national framework, we applied a questionnaire to 60 full-time and distance students, which included questions regarding the level descriptors (5 for each particular competency). In the statistic evaluations we worked with two sample groups of 30 subjects each (a sample group of full-time students and one of distance students). Our main concern was the efficiency of the long distance educational system according to requirements specific to this form of education. (Alsabawy, Cater-Steel, Soar, 2016). The data was processed with the SPSS environment, using descriptive statistics (calculation of averages and frequencies). We viewed such an evaluation as necessary, as the competency-based training provides a sustainable development for graduates (Cebrián, Junyent, 2015) and offers a perspective of the performance attainable in the e-learning system (Zhang, Lou, Zhang, 2019). The pre-established field of competencies in the area of arts pursues:

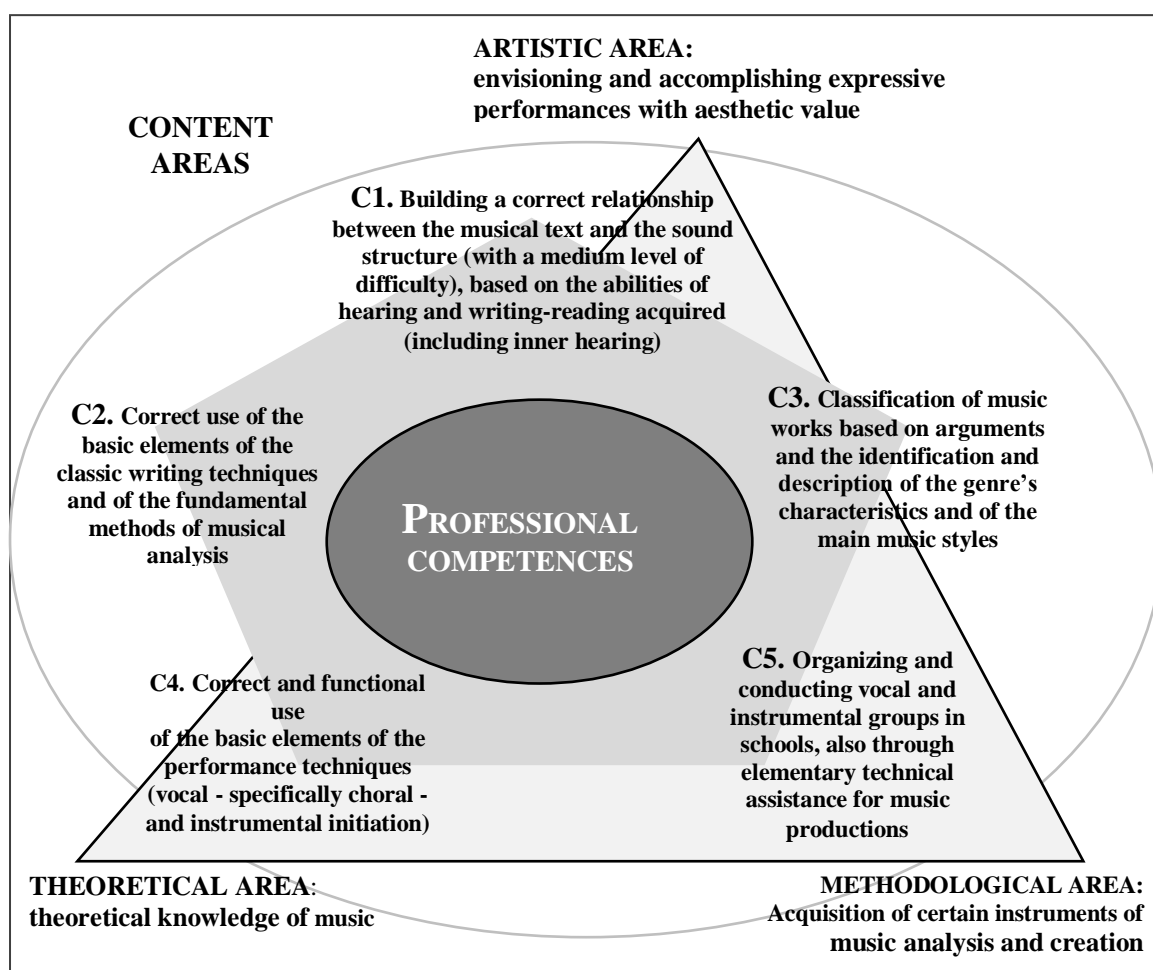


Fig. 1. Professional competency groups related to content areas

3. Results

In order to evaluate the level of the future graduates' professional competencies acquisition, we researched the subjects' profile and highlighted data about:

A. The domicile of the students who attend the same major subject in the two types of education: full time and distance learning, where the data sampled revealed that 53.3% of the distance students come from other cities than the full-time students, where the percentage is only 16.7%; 26.7% come from abroad in the distance learning system, and only 3.3% of the Romanian students living abroad attend the university in the full-time system. In the case of students who come from the city where the university that provides education is located, the percentage is favourable in the case of full-time education, where it represents 80%, whereas long distance education figures amount to a mere 20%. We should mention that no student from the researched sample comes from the rural area.

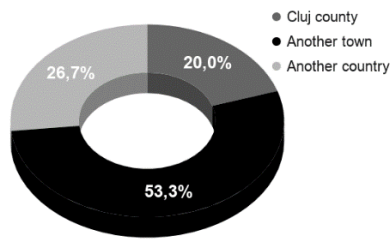


Fig. 2. Domicile of students in the distance learning programme

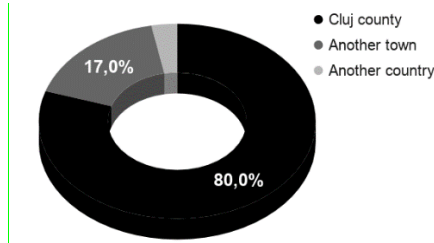


Fig. 3. Domicile of students in the full-time programme

B. Another parameter related to the students' background is the level of musical education prior to the enrolment in the Bachelor programme. One field of the questionnaire required the candidates to state the type and level of their education. The majority of the full-time students graduated music or art schools: 43.3% music high schools and 43.3% art schools with a maximal duration of study of 8 years and only 13.3% of them attended private schools. In the case of the distance students the situation is different: the majority is held by those who graduated schools of art – 46.7% (therefore with a shorter duration of the music education), 26.7% come from music high schools, while 26.7% attended private schools, so that their motivation to attend a university is mainly linked to the field of activity in which they are employed, which corresponds to similar data gathered at the international level (Fryer, Bovee, 2016):

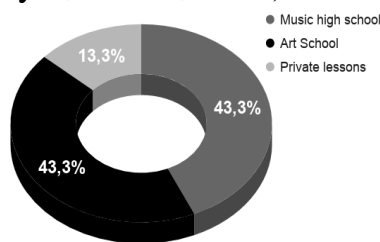


Fig. 4. Previous musical education of distance students

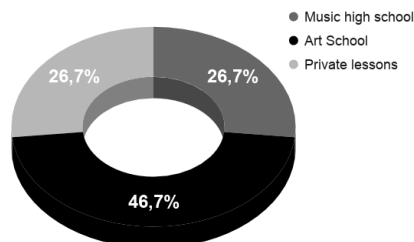


Fig. 5. Previous musical education of full-time students

The research aimed mainly to measure the training level of all competencies included in the study programme *Music*; our paper approaches only

a few of the content areas for the competencies necessary for the Bachelor programme in the two forms of education: full time and distance learning. The competencies were explained by means of level descriptors; the statistical processing of the data obtained from the students' responses in the questionnaires highlighted the following issues:

Competency 1. By means of the level descriptor C1.3 it stipulates: *Coding - decoding the configuration of sounds in music writing, applying specific methods and principles*, referring to the area of methodology through its requirement for the acquisition of tools of music creation and analysis. The statistically derived outcomes, according to Table 1, highlight the fact that the average values of the observation data are equal (1.8667). This means that both full-time and distance students believe they have these competencies largely due to their previous education.

Tab. no. 1

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
C13ID	30	1.00	3.00	1.8667	.77608
C13ZI	30	1.00	3.00	1.8667	.73030
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Figure 6 shows a comparative chart of these observations:

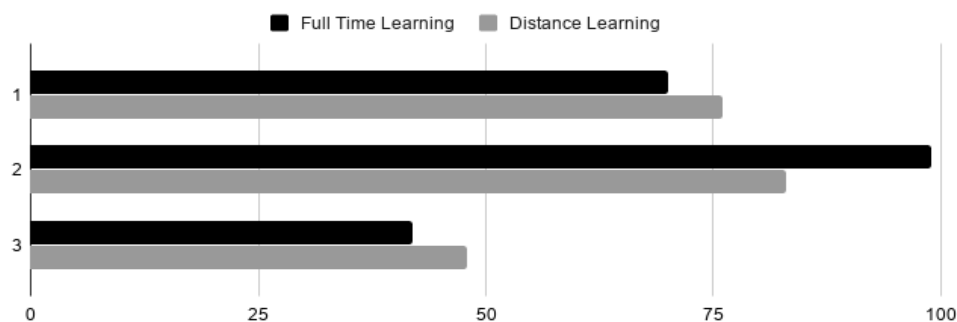


Fig. 6. Comparative analysis of the distance and the full-time students for group C1.3

Competency 2 stipulates at descriptor C2.1. *the description, on a conceptual level, of the structural musical language elements, in order to define the classical writing techniques and the fundamental methods of analysis*, the theoretical area targeted being the theoretical knowledge and consolidation of the musical elements. The comparative study of the means (described in Table 2 and then in Figure 7) reveals the fact that, unlike the full-time students, who possess these competencies to a larger extent, distance students possess only to an average or a small extent abilities to describe the structural elements of the musical language conceptually, an aspect which is quite frequently highlighted in the literature (Webster, 2007).

Tab. no. 2

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
C21ID	30	2.00	5.00	3.5667	.93526
C21ZI	30	1.00	4.00	2.1000	.88474
Valid N (listwise)	30				

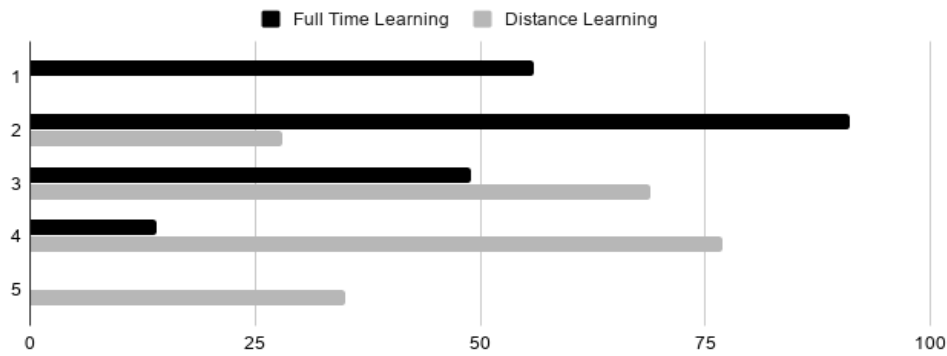


Fig. 7. Comparative analysis of the distance and the full-time students for group C2.1

Competency 4 explains by means of descriptor C4.2 the necessity to *train the capacity of performing (vocal, instrumental) works of music and of examining a students' repertoire depending on its features (degree of difficulty, features of style, performance, etc.)*. The artistic area targeted: envisioning and accomplishing expressive and creative performances, with aesthetic value. In the case of this competency, the distance students have better abilities, between “to a very large extent” and “to a large extent” unlike the full-time students, who tend towards “average extent”, according to the results in Table 3.

Tab. no. 3

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
C42ID	30	1.00	4.00	1.8333	.83391
C42ZI	30	1.00	5.00	2.9333	1.14269
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Figure 8 shows a comparative chart of the competency training in the two groups:

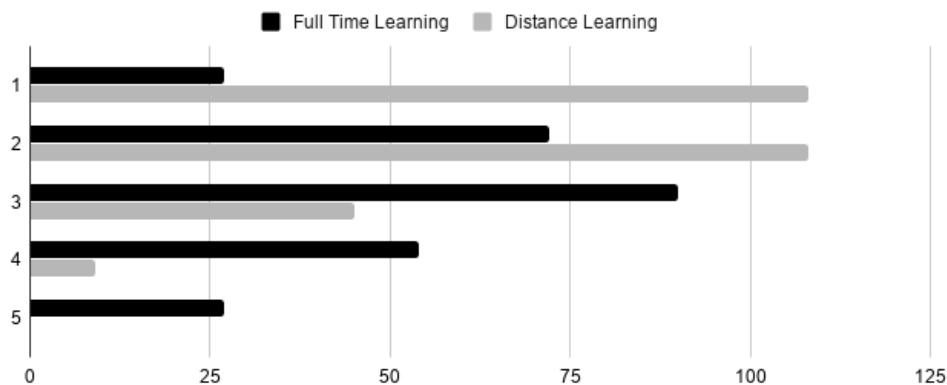


Fig. 8. Comparative analysis of the distance and the full-time students for group C.4.2

For **Competency 5**, which refers to *Organizing and conducting vocal and instrumental groups in schools, also through elementary technical assistance for music productions* we analyzed two distinct directions; the first pursues the acquisition of tools of musical analysis and creation, while the second pursues the theoretical knowledge of music. In the case of the first descriptor, recorded in the

standards as C5.1, *The identification and utilization of theoretical knowledge necessary for organizing, training, and leading a music group or ensemble, experiencing of skills for singing in a group*, the full-time students believed they possess better competencies than distance students, being closer to “to a great extent”, whereas the others are closer to “average extent”.

Tab. no. 4

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
C51ID	30	1.00	5.00	2.8000	1.24291
C51ZI	30	1.00	4.00	2.1000	.88474
Valid N (listwise)	30				

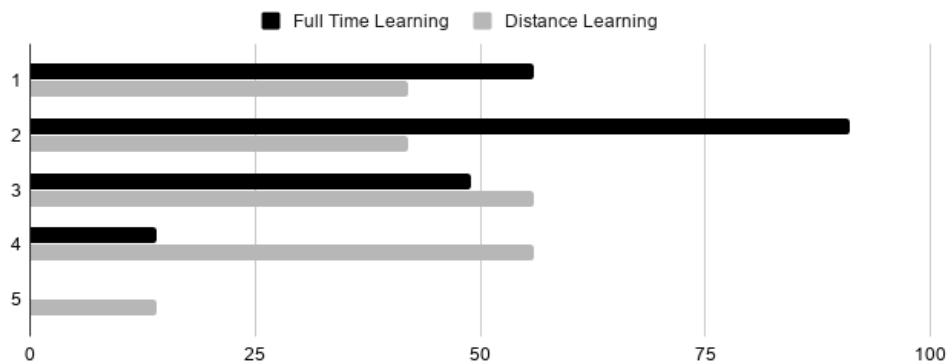


Fig. 9. Comparative analysis of the distance and the full-time students for group C5.1

For the second descriptor, C5.5 – *Solving problems related to particular vocal-instrumental features in view of the correct and functional use thereof*, the full-time students have very good abilities, unlike distance students, who have average abilities (Table 5 and Figure 10):

Tab. no. 5

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
C55ID	30	1.00	5.00	2.8000	.96132
C55ZI	30	1.00	4.00	1.6667	.84418
Valid N (listwise)	30				

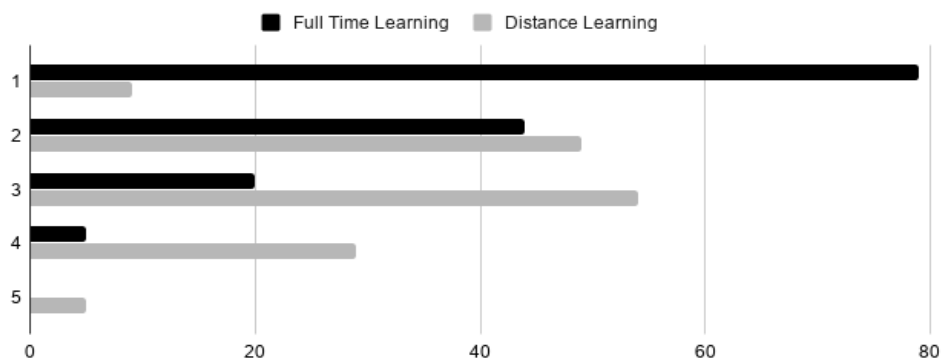


Fig. 10. Comparative analysis of the distance and the full-time students for group C5.5

4. Conclusions

The demographic data collected by means of the questionnaires completed by the students of the same Bachelor programme revealed that the distance learning system, which organizes learning through on-line educational resources and monthly meetings with the teaching staff at week-ends, facilitates the schooling of a much larger number of people who live in other places than the city where the education-providing university is located or even abroad. The students of this learning system have the opportunity to learn in their own rhythm, in a flexible place and at a flexible time. As far as the interest to continue the education of students with prior schooling in a musical system is concerned, distance learning offers a considerable number of students with prior undergraduate musical education the possibility to stay within the field of music (Islam, 2016).

The comparative analysis of the competencies developed within the two learning systems reveals that in the case of two competencies -2 and 4- the distance students are more interested in developing their practical abilities, and this is one of the motivations of students who are already employed to continue their education (Joo, Joung, Son, 2013).

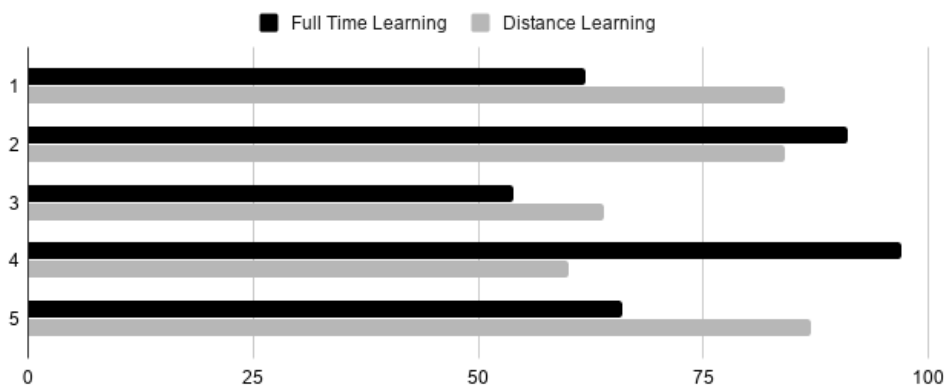


Fig. 11. Comparative analysis of the distance and the full-time students for groups C.1, C.2, C3., C4., C.5

For the set of abilities corresponding to competency 1, the full-time students are located in the area “to a great extent”, unlike the distance students, who tend towards “average extent”. In the case of competency 3, the full-time students have slightly better results than the distance students, however still tending towards “to a great extent” and we should also mention the spectacular result of the distance students in acquiring competency 4, as they tend towards “to a great extent”, while the full-time students tend merely towards “average extent”. For competency 5, the full-time students are better situated, on the “great extent” level, as compared to the distance students who reach “average extent”. These cases support the interest of the distance students for developing practical competencies, which are not correlated with the education they received prior to enrolling in the Bachelor programme, but rather to the practical activity carried

on during their education, their workplace or by participating in productions of artistic ensembles they are part of.

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