



HOLIDAY CONTENT IN MUSIC EDUCATION TEXTBOOKS FOR THE FIRST CYCLE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION: POTENTIAL FOR CONNECTING SCHOOL AND FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

Holidays represent significant cultural, affective, and educational phenomena whose ritual and symbolic dimensions can serve as a basis for connecting school learning with students' personal and family experiences. In the context of music education, holiday-related content has the potential to foster cultural sensitivity, emotional development, and a sense of community belonging. The aim of this study was to examine the representation, structure, and ways of addressing holiday-related teaching content in music education textbooks for the first cycle of primary education in Serbia. The research was conducted through a qualitative content analysis of 34 textbooks published by various Serbian publishers.

The findings show that content related to family and secular holidays – particularly birthdays and New Year's – is the most prevalent, while content related to religious holidays is moderately represented and appears primarily through traditional Christmas and Easter songs. Content reflecting holidays and musical traditions of other cultures and confessional groups is nearly absent, indicating an underused potential for developing intercultural understanding.

The analysis of methodological procedures indicates that textbooks predominantly offer music performance through singing and activities involving listening to music, whereas creative, analytical, and interdisciplinary forms of work are significantly less represented. Although holiday themes possess strong affective and cultural potential,

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this potential is only partially utilized in the textbooks, especially regarding the promotion of cultural diversity and the integration of school learning with students' family experiences.

The findings highlight the need for a more systematic and methodologically diverse inclusion of holiday-related content in music education textbooks, in order to support educational goals, foster students' creative musical expression, and strengthen the potential for constructive connections between school and family environments.

Key words

holidays, music education, primary education, school and family, textbooks.

Introduction

In contemporary pedagogical context, holidays are viewed as complex cultural, social, affective, and educational phenomena that integrate elements of tradition, ritual, emotion, and community. This multidimensionality, as Hallam (2010) notes, makes them particularly significant for shaping the personality of young school-aged children and for developing cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and a sense of belonging to a community.

When integrated into teaching activities, holidays may serve as a valuable link between formal education and students' personal experiences. According to Bartleet and Sunderland (2016), such content facilitates the connection between school topics and children's everyday lives, encouraging affective learning as a basis for empathy. The use of music – an indispensable component of many holiday rituals – contributes to aesthetic experience, the development of cultural sensitivity, and the strengthening of social connectedness (Shaw, 2016; Villodre, 2014). In the family context, music often functions as a carrier of tradition, which is confirmed by Ćalić and Đurđanović (2020), who highlight the family as the primary space where children encounter musical heritage.

In line with contemporary didactic and methodological approaches, holidays in teaching may be examined as multidimensional content:

– *cultural*, as they offer insight into one's own cultural and value frameworks and enable the exploration of different traditions (Edensor, 2020; Karlsen, 2011);

– *social*, as they encourage cooperation, interaction, and joint activities in school and family settings (Fitzpatrick, 2022; Joseph & Southcott, 2013; Stamatović & Milošević, 2017);

– *affective and aesthetic*, as they engage emotions through music and foster ecological and emotional intelligence (Westerlund & Partti, 2015).

Teaching content, as part of the educational process, should foster critical thinking, affective development, and connections with students' cultural and

personal experiences. Belojica Pavlović and Cicović Sarajlić (2018) point out that teaching content is culturally conditioned and changeable, which makes holidays an appropriate framework for an integrated approach to learning.

It is important to stress methodologically that family experiences of holidays may, but do not have to be religious: they encompass secular customs, family traditions, cultural activities such as attending concerts, theatre performances, or museums, as well as global events and international days. Therefore, family values cannot be equated exclusively with religious content.

Although the family context serves as the starting point for children's first cultural experiences, holidays acquire pedagogical significance in school only when they are methodologically shaped within teaching materials. The constructivist approach to teaching (Kelly-McHale, 2011; Španović, 2013; Webster, 2011) emphasises that topics grounded in students' real-life experiences encourage deeper understanding and the active construction of knowledge, which makes holidays suitable, though only when they are methodologically thoughtfully presented.

The normative framework of holidays in Serbia is defined by the Law on State and Other Holidays (2001), which distinguishes among state, religious, and other holidays. Although this classification is not an instructional standard, it constitutes the social context within which schools and textbooks operate. Thus, it is relevant as a background for analysis but does not determine teaching content.

The study by Ćalić and Đurđanović (2020) shows that many families celebrate certain holidays, but these data do not indicate value orientations; rather, they reflect the prevalence of certain rituals. This raises important pedagogical questions about the extent to which textbooks recognise the diversity of holiday practices in society.

Within a culturally sensitive approach, music education textbooks have the potential to support the understanding of cultural patterns and the connection of teaching content with students' experiences, without imposing any particular value orientation. In line with this, Antić (2016) and Hus (2013) emphasise that textbooks should encourage critical thinking, emotional engagement, and students' creativity, rather than offer simplified representations of holidays.

Based on these theoretical and pedagogical frameworks, holidays in music education should not be presented merely as simple "occasions for singing," but rather as complex cultural phenomena whose representation in textbooks may carry significant pedagogical implications.

For this reason, it is important to examine how different types of holidays – religious, secular, cultural, and customary – are represented in music education textbooks for the first cycle of primary education, and to what extent the ways in which they are addressed support the understanding of cultural diversity and the affective development of students. This analysis constitutes the central aim of the present study.

Method

The subject of this research is the holiday-related content found in music education textbooks for the first cycle of primary education in the Republic of Serbia. Considering that holidays, as cultural, social, and affective phenomena, have not previously been the focus of systematic analysis in textbook literature in this field, the aim of the study was to determine how and to what extent music education textbooks present different types of holidays and to analyse the musical content and didactic-methodical procedures through which these themes are addressed.

In accordance with the theoretical premises outlined in the Introduction, the research sought to determine the extent to which textbook content on holidays reflects the diversity of students' cultural practices – religious, secular, family-based, local, and international – as well as the ways in which teaching approaches to holiday-related content may support learning outcomes in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, in line with Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956).

Based on this aim, the following research tasks were defined:

- (1) to determine the representation of holiday-related content in music education textbooks for grades I–IV;
- (2) to classify holiday content according to the established criteria (sphere of observance, character of the holiday, and place of celebration);
- (3) to analyse the didactic-methodical procedures used in presenting holiday-related content (modes of presentation, accompanying activities, questions, and tasks);
- (4) to analyse the types of musical content associated with holidays (songs, compositions, musical games).

Tasks formulated in this way enable a systematic and analytically consistent examination of teaching materials.

The research applied qualitative content analysis, involving the identification, classification, and interpretation of textual, visual, and musical elements in music education textbooks.

The unit of analysis was every teaching segment that thematically refers to a holiday or is directly connected to its celebration (song, composition, illustration, supplement, or textual instruction for an activity).

To ensure that the analysis was systematic and aligned with contemporary theoretical approaches (Barna, 2017), holiday-related content was classified according to three groups of criteria:

Sphere of observance

- public holidays – celebrated at the state level or within a broader community (e.g., national and international holidays);
- private holidays – significant within the family or a smaller community (e.g., birthday, family patron saint’s day).

Character of the holiday

- religious holidays – based on religious traditions (e.g., Christmas, Easter, Ramadan Bayram);
- secular holidays – without religious meaning, based on social or cultural observances (e.g., New Year’s Day, Statehood Day).

Place of celebration

- family holidays – celebrated within the family community (e.g., birthday, family patron saint’s day);
- local holidays – specific to a particular community or region (e.g., city patron days, local festivities);
- national holidays – celebrated at the national level (e.g., Statehood Day, Armistice Day);
- international holidays – recognised and celebrated globally (e.g., Children’s Day, Peace Day).

Such a classification enables the textbook material to be analysed within a broader cultural and social context, allowing for the identification of diversity and the ways in which content is addressed didactically.

The material analysed consisted of music education textbooks for the first cycle of primary education that were, at the time of the research, officially approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, in accordance with the Law on Textbooks (2018).

A total of 34 textbooks were analysed: 8 textbooks for the first grade, 8 textbooks for the second grade, 9 textbooks for the third grade and 9 textbooks for the fourth grade.

The research included textbooks published by all major publishers: ZUNS, Kreativni centar, Klett, BIGZ školstvo, Eduka, Novi Logos, Nova škola, and Vulkan znanje. Such a sample design ensures representativeness in terms of publishing practices and programme diversity.

Results

In accordance with the defined research tasks, this section presents the results of the content analysis of music education textbooks for the first cycle of primary education. The aim of the analysis was to determine the extent to which, and the ways in which, the textbooks include content related to holidays – family, religious, secular, and other cultural forms of celebration.

The analysis encompassed textbooks from all publishers currently in use, and the results are systematised in tables by grade level. Each table provides an overview of the teaching units in which songs and musical content related to holidays appear, enabling a comparative examination of their representation and diversity across the grades of the first cycle.

The overall data form the basis for interpreting the results in relation to the research tasks and for assessing the pedagogical function of holiday-related content in the development of students' musical culture.

*Table 1. Overview of Holiday Content in Music Culture Textbooks
for the 1st Grade of Primary School*

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
1. <i>Music Culture 1</i> , Textbook for the 1st Grade of Primary School / ZUNS	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>New Year's Song</i> , Z. M. Vasiljević; <i>Santa Claus</i> , A. Korać
2. <i>Music Culture for the 1st Grade of Primary School</i> / Kreativni centar	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>The Most Beautiful Mom in the World</i> , A. Korać
3. <i>Music Culture – Maša and Raša</i> , Textbook for the 1st Grade of Primary School / Klett	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>Christmas Father</i> , traditional song; <i>Easter Morning</i> , L. Pat; <i>The Tree is Showing Off</i> , G. Grujić; <i>Jingle Bells</i> , adaptation: L. Pat, J. Pierpont
4. <i>Music Culture 1</i> , Textbook for the 1st Grade of Primary School / BIGZ Školstvo	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>The Most Beautiful Mom in the World</i> , A. Korać
5. <i>Musical Picture Book 1 – Music Culture</i> for the 1st Grade of Primary School / Eduka	<i>Oh, Badnjak</i> , traditional song; <i>The Most Beautiful Mom in the World</i> , A. Korać

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
6. <i>Music Culture 1</i> / Novi Logos	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>The Christmas Tree</i> , M. Kraseva; <i>Jingle Bells</i> , J. Pierpont; <i>We Have Just Received the News</i> , R. Milosavljević; <i>Santa, Don't Step Off the Path</i> , A. Korać; <i>Christmas, Christmas Holy Day</i> , traditional song; <i>Christmas Father</i> , traditional song; <i>Mother's Dance</i> , L. Prelaz; <i>The Most Beautiful Mom in the World</i> , A. Korać; <i>Grandma</i> , Z. Kolarić Kišur; <i>Easter Song</i> , S. Milić
7. <i>I Sing, I Play, I Listen 1</i> , Music Culture for the 1st Grade of Primary School / Nova škola	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author
8. <i>The Magical World of Music – Music</i> Culture for the 1st Grade of Primary School / Klett	<i>Santa Claus</i> , G. Ilić <i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author

Table 2. Overview of Holiday Content in Music Culture Textbooks
 for the 2nd Grade of Primary School

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
1. <i>Music Culture 2</i> , Textbook for the 2nd Grade of Primary School / Zavod za udžbenike	<i>We Have Just Received the News</i> , R. Milosavljević
2. <i>Music Culture for the 2nd Grade</i> <i>of Primary School</i> / Kreativni centar	<i>Heart</i> , V. Ilić
3. <i>Music Culture – Maša and Raša</i> , Textbook for the 2nd Grade of Primary School / Klett	<i>Let's Save the Christmas Trees</i> , L. Pat
4. <i>Music Culture 2</i> , Textbook for the 2nd Grade of Primary School/ BIGZ Školstvo	<i>Oh, Badnjak, Badnjak</i> , traditional song; <i>Christmas, Christmas, Holy Day</i> , traditional song; <i>Mother's Dance</i> , L. Prelaz; <i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
5. <i>Music Culture 2</i> , Textbook for the 2nd Grade of Primary School / Novi Logos	<i>New Year's Greeting Card</i> , J. Adamov; <i>Oh, Badnjak, Badnjak</i> , traditional song; <i>Rejoice, People</i> , traditional song; <i>Greeting Card for Mother</i> , J. Kaplan; <i>My Mom Tells Wonderful Stories Every Night</i> , A. Korać; <i>Green Song</i> , D. M. Bokan
6. <i>Musical Carousel 2</i> – Textbook for the 2nd Grade of Primary School / Eduka	<i>Oh, Badnjak, Badnjak</i> , traditional song; <i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić
7. <i>I Sing, I Play, I Listen 2</i> – Music Culture for the 2nd Grade of Primary School / Nova škola	<i>Mother's Dance</i> , L. Prelaz; <i>New Year</i> , St. Korunović; <i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author
8. <i>The Magical World of Music</i> – Music Culture for the 2nd Grade of Primary School / Klett	<i>Santa Claus</i> , J. Bitenc; <i>Christmas, Christmas</i> , traditional song; <i>Mother's Dance</i> , L. Prelaz

Table 3. Overview of Holiday Content in Music Culture Textbooks for the 3rd Grade of Primary School

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
1. <i>Music Culture 3</i> , Textbook for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / Zavod za udžbenike	<i>Jingle Bells</i> , J. Pierpont; <i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić; <i>Santa Claus</i> , A. Korać; <i>Christmas Song</i> , traditional song
2. <i>Music Culture for the 3rd Grade of Primary School</i> / Kreativni centar	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>Santa Claus</i> , A. Korać
3. <i>Music Culture – Maša and Raša</i> , Textbook for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / Klett	/
4. <i>Music Culture 3</i> , Textbook for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / BIGZ Školstvo	<i>Jingle Bells</i> , J. Pierpont; <i>Letter to Santa Claus</i> , I. Lolić; <i>Rejoice, People</i> , Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
5. <i>Music Culture 3</i> – Textbook for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / Logos	<i>New Year's Song</i> , A. Baloš; <i>Letter to Santa Claus</i> , I. Lolić; <i>Jingle Bells</i> , J. Pierpont; <i>Rejoice, People</i> , traditional song; <i>Oh, Badnjak, Badnjak</i> , monastery song; <i>Angels Are Singing</i> , Bishop N. Velimirović, M. Đurđević; <i>The Most Beautiful Mom in the World</i> , A. Korać
6. <i>I Sing, I Play, I Listen 3</i> – Music Culture for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / Nova škola	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>New Year Holiday</i> , M. Dragutinović; <i>Mother's Dance</i> , L. Prelaz
7. <i>The Magical World of Music</i> – Music Culture for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / Klett	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author
8. <i>Music Culture 3</i> , Textbook for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / Vulkan znanje	<i>Oh, Badnjak, Badnjak</i> , traditional song; <i>New Year's Song for Children</i> , lyrics and music by “Zemlja gruva”; <i>Colourful Egg</i> , M. Obradović; <i>Rejoice, People</i> , traditional song
9. <i>The Singing Child 3</i> , Music Culture – Textbook for the 3rd Grade of Primary School / BIGZ Školstvo	<i>Jingle Bells</i> , J. Pierpont; <i>Christmas, Christmas, Holy Day</i> , traditional song; <i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>Mother's Dance</i> , L. Prelaz; <i>Rejoice, People</i> , Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović; <i>On Good Friday</i> , M. Galjević

Table 4. Overview of Holiday Content in Music Culture Textbooks for the 4th Grade of Primary School

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
1. <i>Music Culture 4</i> , Textbook for the 4th Grade of Primary School / Zavod za udžbenike	<i>Christmas, Christmas, Holy Day</i> , traditional church song

Textbook	Teaching content on holidays
2. <i>Music Culture for the 4th Grade of Primary School / Kreativni centar</i>	<i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić; <i>Jingle Bells</i> , J. Pierpont
3. <i>Music Culture 4</i> , Textbook for the 4th Grade of Primary School / BIGZ školstvo	<i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić
4. <i>Music Culture 4</i> , Textbook for the 4th Grade of Primary School / Novi Logos	<i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić
5. <i>I Sing, I Play, I Listen 4 – Music Culture for the 4th Grade of Primary School / Nova škola</i>	<i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić
6. <i>The Magical World of Music – Music Culture for the 4th Grade of Primary School / Klett</i>	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author
7. <i>The Singing Child 4</i> , Music Culture – Textbook for the 4th Grade of Primary School / BIGZ	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić; <i>Christmas Is Coming</i> , Customary Song; <i>Christmas, Christmas, Holy Day</i> , traditional song
8. <i>In the World of Melodies and Verses</i> , Music Culture for the 4th Grade of Primary School / Eduka	<i>Birthday Song</i> , unknown author; <i>New Year's Song</i> , P. Stupel
9. <i>Music Culture 4</i> , Textbook for the 4th Grade of Primary School / Vulkan znanje	<i>Christmas, Christmas, Holy Day</i> , traditional song; <i>Happy New Year</i> , S. Barić; <i>Rejoice, People</i> , traditional song

Representation of Holiday-Related Content in Music Education Textbooks.
The first research task concerned determining the scope and representation of holiday-related themes in music education textbooks.

The results indicate significant variation in the number and structure of holiday-themed songs across grade levels and publishers.

Number of different songs by grade level:

– First grade: 17 different songs (range 1–11). The textbook by Novi Logos contains the highest number of such content (11 songs).

– Second grade: 15 songs (range 1–7). The textbook by Novi Logos shows the highest representation (7 songs).

– Third grade: 18 songs (range 0–7). The highest diversity appears in the textbooks published by Novi Logos and Vulkan znanje.

– Fourth grade: 7 different songs (range 1–4), representing a noticeable decrease compared to other grades.

Total number of identified holiday-themed songs: 95

– Grade I: 34

– Grade II: 20

– Grade III: 26

– Grade IV: 15

These data show that holiday content is most prevalent in the first and third grades, while in the fourth grade the number decreases considerably.

Classification of Holiday-Related Content. In accordance with the classification criteria presented in the Methodology, the results showed the following:

Family holidays

– The most frequent category.

– Dominant songs: *Birthday Song, The Most Beautiful Mum in the World, Mother's Dance, Grandma.*

– These songs emphasise the affective dimension of teaching and the connection between musical content and students' immediate life experiences.

Secular holidays

– The most diverse group in terms of genre and style.

– Most common songs: *Happy New Year, Jingle Bells, Santa Claus, New Year's Song.*

– They have strong motivational potential and are easily recognisable to students.

Religious holidays

– Moderately represented, present across all grades.

– Most frequent songs: *Christmas, Christmas, Holy Day, Oh, Badnjak, Father Christmas, Easter Song.*

– These contents most often follow traditional melodies and lyrics.

Category proportions:

- Family: 45–50%
- Secular: 30–35%
- Religious: approximately 15%

This structure shows that textbooks rely most heavily on content familiar from students' everyday lives, with moderate representation of religious holidays and minimal inclusion of intercultural elements.

Analysis of Methodical Procedures. The third research task focused on analysing the ways in which holiday-related teaching content is addressed.

Type of activity	Number of textbook	Percentage (%)
Singing	34	100
Listening to music	28	82.3
Creative activities (rhythm, movement, dramatization)	6	17.6
Analytical activities (song origins, symbolism, role in customs)	4	11.7
Textual explanations of holidays	20	58.8

Singing is the dominant teaching strategy for presenting holiday-related content, while listening activities appear in most textbooks, usually as examples of musical experience connected to holidays.

Creative and analytical activities are rare, indicating that the potential of holiday content for developing critical thinking, understanding cultural values, or fostering interdisciplinary connections remains underutilised.

The fourth research task analysed the didactic components accompanying holiday-related content.

In the lower grades, descriptive textual explanations predominate (*What is Christmas?*, *What is Easter?*), adapted to students' age. These explanations are short, conceptually simple, and often linked to illustrations. Accompanying questions direct students toward personal experience (*Which holidays are celebrated in your family?*), thereby creating a close connection between school content and family life. Tasks are simple, typically involving recognition or listing.

In the third grade, more complex questions and tasks appear, requiring students to classify or systematise holidays. For example, the task *Write the names*

of all the holidays you and your family celebrate within each season of the year introduces elements of analysis and logical organisation. This connects holiday content not only with music but with broader conceptual frameworks (calendar, seasons, cultural tradition).

In the final grade of the first cycle, some textbooks include discussion questions and more complex tasks that open space for evaluation and critical thinking. These include questions about the significance of holidays for the community or comparisons of how different holidays are celebrated. Although such tasks are less frequent, they carry notable didactic potential, as they extend beyond music education and integrate elements of civic and cultural education.

Overall, the accompanying questions and tasks reflect students' developmental progression: from simple recognition (grades I–II), through classification and systematisation (grade III), to initial forms of critical analysis and evaluation (grade IV). Nevertheless, the dominance of reproductive tasks indicates the need to strengthen creative and analytical elements across all grades.

The accompanying questions and tasks related to holidays have a pronounced potential to bring music education closer to students' everyday lives. Their gradual development across grade levels shows that textbooks recognise the role of holidays as both a motivational and cultural factor. However, a more systematic inclusion of creative and discussion-based tasks could contribute to the development of critical thinking and to a deeper understanding of cultural tradition.

Holiday-related content is represented to a considerable extent in music education textbooks.

Family and secular holidays are the most frequent, while religious holidays are present but less common. The methodological approach is predominantly reproductive, with insufficiently developed creative and analytical activities.

The accompanying tasks show a progression from simple to more complex forms, yet there remains significant room for introducing critical thinking and interdisciplinary connections.

Discussion

The results of the conducted research show that holiday-related content in music education textbooks carries significant affective, cultural, and motivational potential, but that the ways in which this content is addressed through didactic-methodical procedures are partially limited. The high prevalence of family and secular holidays, particularly birthday- and New Year-related content, indicates an intention on the part of textbook authors to connect teaching topics with students' immediate and emotionally familiar experiences, which is consistent with the constructivist approach to teaching (Kelly-McHale, 2011; Španović, 2013). Such

representation is expected, as the family context is one of the most important sources of cultural and affective experiences in early childhood.

Religious holidays, however, constitute about 15% of the analysed content, which is considerably less compared to family (45–50%) and secular holidays (30–35%). Although the presence of Christian holidays – primarily Christmas and Easter – is aligned with findings on family practices in Serbia (Ćalić & Đurđanović, 2020), it was observed that textbooks do not include examples related to holidays of other confessional groups, even though they are legally recognised.

This omission indicates an underutilised potential of holiday themes for developing intercultural sensitivity, understanding, and respect for diversity – values central to contemporary approaches to music education (Karlsen, 2011; Villodre, 2014).

The analysis of methodical procedures showed that textbooks most commonly rely on singing and listening activities, while creative, analytical, and interdisciplinary forms of work are present to a much lesser extent. Although these basic forms of activity are appropriate for the age group and essential for the development of foundational musical skills, their dominance does not fully enable the realisation of the potential of holiday-related content for developing higher cognitive and affective outcomes. More complex activities that could contribute to this goal may include:

- analysis of the cultural and musical characteristics of holidays,
- comparison of how the same holidays are celebrated in different cultures,
- mini research projects on family musical traditions,
- improvisation or creation of short musical motifs inspired by holidays,
- staging or dramatization of holiday songs.

Such activities are consistent with contemporary demands in music education, which encourage critical thinking, creativity, interdisciplinary connections, and active student participation (Antić, 2016; Hus, 2013).

The observed decline in the number and diversity of holiday-related content in the fourth grade suggests that holiday themes are not developed continuously in alignment with students' cognitive progression. It is precisely at this age that initial elements of analytical thinking, discussion, and evaluation can be introduced.

For this reason, it would be pedagogically appropriate for textbooks to include more complex content that enables consideration of the cultural roles of holidays, their symbolism, and their significance in different communities (Fleer, 2004; Westerlund & Partti, 2015).

Including content on holidays from different cultural groups would significantly contribute to the development of multiculturalism and mutual understanding.

From the perspective of school-family partnership, the results show that holidays have substantial potential to encourage cooperation between these two environments, but that textbooks do not fully utilise this potential. Instead of viewing the school merely as a “mirror” of family practices, it is desirable that holidays serve as a starting point for joint activities that encourage interaction, dialogue, and understanding within the school community, while respecting its diversity. Such activities may include school–family projects, musical workshops, collecting family music stories, or presenting traditional family songs (Bartleet & Sunderland, 2016; Joseph & Southcott, 2013; Stamatović & Milošević, 2017).

Overall, the results indicate that holidays in music education can serve as an important pedagogical resource which connects affective, aesthetic, and cultural dimensions of learning. To fully realise this potential, it is necessary to further develop creative, analytical, and intercultural activities, as well as activities that enable active student participation. In this way, holidays can function as integrative teaching content that contributes to students’ holistic development and to the strengthening of school-family partnerships.

Conclusion

The results of this research show that holiday-related content in music education textbooks for the first cycle of primary education possesses significant affective, cultural, and educational potential. However, the extent to which this potential is realised depends on the type of holiday and the ways in which it is addressed through didactic and methodological procedures. Family and secular holidays, particularly birthdays and New Year, dominate textbook content, which aligns with their presence in students’ life experience and their motivational character. Religious holidays are moderately represented, which can be explained by the organisation of the school year and the nature of the curriculum, as well as by the limitations of existing research on family practices.

These findings do not suggest the marginalisation of religious content but rather indicate the need to view holidays within a broader cultural framework – as an opportunity to develop cultural sensitivity, intercultural understanding, and respect for diversity. The absence of content reflecting holidays of other cultural and confessional groups shows that the potential for enhancing the multicultural and inclusive dimension of teaching has not been fully utilised.

The analysis indicates that textbooks predominantly offer singing and music-listening activities, while creative, analytical, and interdisciplinary forms of work are considerably less present. Although such an approach is partly expected in the

earliest grades, it does not allow the full potential of holiday themes to be realised for the development of critical thinking, imaginative musical expression, intercultural dialogue, and the connection of school learning with students' own experiences.

The data also point to the need for developmentally appropriate progression of content across grades. The decrease in the number and diversity of holiday-related content in the fourth grade may limit the development of students' analytical and critical perspectives on cultural patterns of celebration, particularly during a period in which their cognitive strategies are rapidly advancing.

From the perspective of school-family partnership, the results show that holidays offer valuable opportunities for cooperation, but textbooks rarely support these opportunities systematically. Introducing joint school-family projects, music workshops, and presentations of family musical traditions could strengthen the connection between these two key environments in students' lives and foster the development of cultural sensitivity and creativity.

In conclusion, a more deliberate, content-diverse, and methodologically comprehensive inclusion of holiday-related content could significantly enrich music education. In this way, holidays would not merely represent an occasional motif but would function as an integrated cultural and pedagogical resource that supports creative expression, interdisciplinary connections, and the development of cultural sensitivity, while simultaneously strengthening the partnership between school and family.

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