

## **Emerging Trends in Romanian Music Education: A Literature Review**

**Alexandra Belibou**

Faculty of Music, Transilvania University of Braşov

[alexandra.belibou@unitbv.ro](mailto:alexandra.belibou@unitbv.ro)

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### **Abstract**

Romanian music education is changing significantly as a result of international trends and technology breakthroughs. In order to identify important new trends, this paper examines the literature on music education in Romania from the last five years. The study's main topics are interdisciplinarity, digitalization, creative teaching strategies, and future challenges. The article focuses on the growing integration of music into interdisciplinary learning, the use of digital tools, and alternative pedagogical approaches like Orff, Dalcroze, and Kodály methods. Even though there are many advantages to new teaching methods and technology, problems like unequal access to digital resources and teacher training still exist. The study is based on articles published in the last five years, retrieved from the Scopus and Web of Science databases.

**Keywords:** music education, interdisciplinarity, digitalization, ICT.

## 1. Introduction

Romanian music education has been evolving significantly in recent years, influenced by international trends and advancements in technology. This paper aims to identify emerging trends in Romanian music education by reviewing literature published in the last five years. To gather relevant sources, two academic databases were consulted: Scopus and Web of Science. In Scopus, the search term “music education Romania” generated a total of 9 articles from the last five years, of which only 2 were relevant to the focus of this study. In Web of Science, using the same search term, 117 articles were found, of which 22 met the criteria for relevance, also covering the years 2020-2025.

The search included general education until higher education level and not integrated/supplementary education with a focus on arts – music (music schools with vocational education). The main areas of focus in this review include interdisciplinarity, digitalization, creative teaching strategies, and the challenges faced by music educators in Romania, with particular emphasis on the integration of music into interdisciplinary learning, the use of digital tools, and alternative pedagogical approaches such as Orff, Dalcroze, and Kodály methods.

## 2. Music Education in Romania

In Romania, music education at the primary level (general education) is regulated by the national curriculum, which includes the subject Music and Movement starting from the preparatory class. According to the curriculum plan, students in the preparatory, first, second, third, and fourth grades study music for 2 hours per week in the first three grades and 1 hour per week in the third and fourth grades. The main goal is to develop competencies related to cultural awareness and expression, with music education playing a crucial role in helping children appreciate and actively participate in cultural activities. Music also fosters creativity, expressiveness, and appreciation for both national and universal cultural heritage. At this level, students are encouraged to recognize and explore simple musical elements, participate in cultural projects,

and express various emotions and ideas through music (Ministry of National Education, 2019). However, there is a challenge in the system: primary school teachers, who are often referred to as generalist teachers, typically do not have advanced musical training. This presents a problem because the education system asks these teachers to teach subjects that require specialized knowledge and skills, which are developed over time through initial and continuous training. As a result, many teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach music effectively at the primary level (Milencovici, 2023b).

In middle school (grades 5-8 – general education), music education continues to play an essential role in students' development, being part of the Arts curricular area with one hour per week allocated. In this case, music education is taught by a teacher who has graduated from a Music Faculty with a specialization in pedagogy. The curriculum for music education is competency-based, aiming to foster students' personal and academic growth. Unlike the earlier stages, the focus shifts to more structured learning, emphasizing the development of skills like music notation and an understanding of sound parameters, such as pitch and duration. This stage builds upon the foundational knowledge gained in primary school, gradually introducing students to more complex musical concepts.

Music education at this level encourages artistic expression, cultural awareness, and the development of aesthetic judgment, creativity, and musical memory. It also promotes general skills such as self-discipline, concentration, and positive social interaction. The goal is to create a well-rounded experience that enhances students' overall educational journey, guiding them toward a deeper appreciation of music and the arts through activities that stimulate both their musical and personal growth (\*\*\*, 2017).

In Romania, in the case of Music Education at the high school level, the curriculum is designed for students in the 9th and 10th grades, across all tracks and profiles, with the exception of the artistic profile, specializing in music. The aim is to contribute to the development of an autonomous and creative personality by fostering competencies, values, and attitudes. In the 9th grade, students are allocated one hour of music education per week within the common



curriculum. The curriculum introduces a new approach to music learning, promoting direct engagement with music, enhancing the way music listening is approached, and continuing the study of accessible musical instruments. In the 10th grade, Music Education continues with one hour per week, maintaining a flexible structure that allows teachers and textbook authors to innovate in presenting content and teaching strategies. The curriculum is applicable in schools where instruction is provided in minority languages. By the 11th grade, the curriculum is adapted for specific profiles, such as philology, social sciences, sports, and pedagogical tracks, with different lesson durations and a more in-depth exploration of musical content for vocational tracks (\*\*\*, n.d.).

### 3. Literature Review

#### Music Across Disciplines

When discussing research on music within a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary framework, we consider the functions of music as a form of general education. Music is not solely an artistic or aesthetic experience; rather, it plays a significant role in shaping cognitive, emotional, social, and even ethical dimensions of human development. Within educational contexts, music transcends disciplinary boundaries by integrating elements from psychology, neuroscience, pedagogy, and cultural studies. This multifaceted nature allows music to contribute meaningfully to the development of critical thinking, emotional regulation, memory, and social interaction skills (Jäncke, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2012; Sacks, 2008).

A 2021 article argues that music serves as a medium for promoting children's cognitive development and emotional intelligence. The article explores various learning styles and emphasizes the importance of musical listening experiences that support their growth. It also addresses different types of intelligence and how music can enhance them, drawing on the theory of multiple intelligences. All these aspects are examined through early childhood music listening interventions, presented as a form of early music education (Vasiu, 2021).

Also, Simion's article supports the ideas outlined above, highlighting the complex role of music education in both traditional and specialized music schools. It emphasizes that beyond skill acquisition, music contributes to the formation of children's personalities and prepares them for future professional environments. The article advocates for nurturing, holistic educational models that integrate cognitive, emotional, and artistic development. It also underlines music's potential to foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking—skills that are transferable beyond the musical domain. Finally, the article contrasts the immediacy and subjectivity emphasized in music schools with the structured feedback of traditional systems, suggesting that aligning these approaches could enrich educational practices overall (Simion, 2024b).

Among the sources analyzed, only one article addresses the integration of music into the teaching of other subjects, which highlights a significant gap in recent research. This finding suggests that, in the past five years, no studies indexed in the two selected databases matched our keywords or demonstrated the use of musical activities as tools for teaching other disciplines. The article in question explores how music, as a widely accessible and popular cultural practice, can be employed to teach topics such as geopolitics by fostering critical thinking and deeper understanding. Building on this perspective, it is recommended that educators from various fields collaborate on interdisciplinary projects where music serves as a medium for teaching foreign languages, geography, history, native language, mathematics, and more (Gavriș, 2022).

### **Alternative Approaches to Music Education**

Alternative approaches to music education find their roots in the pioneering work of several key 20th-century pedagogues, whose methods continue to influence contemporary practices. Rather than adhering to rigid, standardized instruction, these educators—Dalcroze, Orff, Kodály, and Suzuki—developed holistic, child-centered models that emphasized creativity, active participation, and deep musical understanding. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's eurhythmics encouraged students to internalize rhythm through movement, fostering a physical connection to music (Daly, 2022). Carl Orff introduced a method based on elemental music-making, utilizing

percussion instruments and simple, engaging repertoires designed for children (Sogin & Wang, 2008). Zoltán Kodály placed vocal training and music literacy at the core of his approach, promoting the use of folk songs and systematic solfège instruction (Wei, 2022).

These approaches remain largely absent from mass or state-run music education programs from Romania, which often prioritize technical proficiency and standardized outcomes over creative exploration and individual growth. Nevertheless, there are educators who incorporate principles and elements from these pedagogical models into their traditional music education classes.

An article identified in the research highlights how elements of the Kodály approach have been deeply integrated into Hungarian music education practices in Transylvania. The study explores the evolution of this pedagogical model across all levels of education, showing how local musicians, educators, and scholars have contributed to its adaptation and continuity. Through original compositions, theoretical contributions, and the development of curricular materials, these individuals have embedded Kodály's vision within the cultural and educational fabric of the region. Their work demonstrates how an alternative educational philosophy can be meaningfully localized and sustained within a specific cultural context (Peter, 2023).

One article offers a comparative perspective on music education in Romania and Italy, highlighting both shared classical traditions and distinct national approaches shaped by cultural and historical contexts. While Romania emphasizes auditory learning and instrumental mastery rooted in folk and classical influences, Italy balances technical rigor with interpretive freedom, with both systems reflecting a blend of tradition and innovation (Bălan & Demenescu, 2024).

Another relevant contribution to the rethinking of music education methods is the study focused on the role of musicograms and creative listening strategies in the classroom. The article emphasizes the importance of preparing musical audition activities in a structured and imaginative way, highlighting the difference between passive hearing and conscious, active listening. By combining music with literature and visual arts or ICT, and translating musical content into graphic forms, the approach enhances students' receptiveness and interpretative skills. The experimental component of the study confirmed that such interdisciplinary and visually supported activities—anchored in the teacher's

creativity—significantly improve the quality of musical understanding and engagement. This reinforces the idea that innovative, multimodal teaching tools can make music more accessible and meaningful in the general education context (Homone, 2020).

Unfortunately, there is a noticeable lack of research on innovative music education methods beyond the well-established 20th-century models discussed earlier. These alternative approaches could offer valuable points of comparison with the standardized music education system currently in place in Romania. Comparative studies, as well as the development of new teaching materials inspired by models already implemented in other European countries, represent promising directions for future research and pedagogical innovation.

### **Music Education and Digital Technologies**

The area of ICT and music education has generated the highest number of research articles in the past five years. This trend can be attributed both to rapid technological advancements and to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled educators to adapt and rethink their teaching strategies through digital tools and platforms.

A growing body of literature reflects the increasing theoretical and practical interest in the integration of ICT and music technologies into educational contexts, particularly in response to recent global shifts. One interesting article explores students' expectations and highlights the challenges posed by self-directed learning through digital tools, emphasizing the need for educators to adjust their practices accordingly (Demenescu et al., 2020). There are two articles that underscore the urgency of aligning national music education strategies with technological developments, while also recognizing the transformative potential of music technologies in teaching, learning, and assessment processes, especially during crises. These studies point to the inconsistency between the rapid evolution of technology and the slow institutional response, revealing a need for coordinated policy and investment in teacher training (Moldovan, 2020, 2021).

Two studies offer quantitative insights, confirming that digital tools are increasingly embedded in primary-level music instruction and suggesting the need for curricular adaptations to match this



shift. They also reveal that music technologies not only support musical skill development, but also foster motivation, creativity, and student autonomy. The findings support the idea that music education is evolving from a focus on traditional performance skills to include composition and creative digital expression, democratized by widespread access to software and hardware (Milencovici, 2023a; Muntean, 2023). Additionally, Sârb's article highlights how both current teachers and future educators perceive digital tools not only as necessary, but as natural extensions of modern pedagogy—tools that promote interdisciplinary learning, flexibility, and individualized educational paths (Sârb, 2021). Collectively, these studies portray ICT not as a supplementary option but as a structural component of contemporary music education, calling for systemic adaptation, curriculum redesign, and sustained theoretical inquiry to meet the realities of 21st-century teaching and learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant gaps in Romanian music education, particularly regarding the availability of digital tools adapted to the national curriculum and language. In response, the article called *A New e-Learning Resource to Support Music Education in Romanian Schools* presents the development and testing of a locally relevant software platform designed to align with curricular outcomes and improve student engagement during online instruction. The study's findings demonstrate notable improvements in both motivation and learning outcomes among students who used the tool consistently, especially when learning was supported by teacher guidance (Moldovan & Nedelcut, 2022). Complementing this, the research named *Solfy: An AI Didactic Support for Updating School Music Education* introduces an AI-based application aimed at enhancing solfège literacy through voice synthesis, feedback, and user performance tracking. Developed during pandemic-related restrictions, Solfy bridges classical pedagogical principles (such as those of Dalcroze, Orff, and Kodály) with technological innovation, promoting both autonomous and guided learning in online and hybrid settings (Pop-Sarb et al., 2021). While the first two studies illustrate practical and technological responses to the urgent needs of music education during the pandemic, there is one article that



offers a necessary theoretical reflection. It examines whether the shift toward digital tools represents a genuine paradigm change or merely a temporary adaptation to an exceptional context. By analyzing the structural changes, pedagogical novelties, and emerging challenges brought on by pandemic-driven digitalization, the study situates these developments within a broader inquiry into the future of music education (Muntean, 2021). Together, these contributions highlight both the creative resilience and the critical need for long-term strategic thinking in redefining music pedagogy for the post-pandemic era.

A diverse range of studies highlights the growing reliance on educational software and digital platforms as tools for enhancing creativity, performance, and conceptual understanding in music education. For instance, Mihai Popean underscores the value of musical improvisation and proposes using visual programming to create classroom applications that support improvisation with live electronics, compensating for the traditional curriculum's lack of such content (Popean, 2021). Similarly, Belibou's study explores the use of Reaper software to foster creative expression, suggesting that digital tools can cultivate both aesthetic sensitivity and technical proficiency (Belibou, 2021).

A broader review of Google Play applications reveals their role as accessible, auxiliary resources for teaching music reading and notation, now embraced even by initially skeptical educators (Spân, 2024). The case study involving the Musicators platform shows its effectiveness in developing ear training and music theory skills among young learners, with measurable improvements in engagement and individual practice (Demian & Nedelcut, 2021).

Complementing these, a 2024 study investigates digital assessment tools that allow personalized feedback in areas such as performance, composition, and music theory—further emphasizing the pedagogical shift toward student-centered and reflective learning (Simion, 2024a). The research of Banuț and Albulescu introduces Sonic Pi, integrating programming with music education through inductive strategies that develop computational thinking and composition skills (Bănuț & Albulescu, 2024). Meanwhile, another study focused on rhythm education provides evidence

from students and teachers that ICT tools significantly enhance rhythmic competence and pedagogical clarity (Mârza & Yurevna Samohvalova, 2020). Collectively, these contributions illustrate the vast potential of technology—from specialized software to general-use applications—as a structural support for modernizing music education, increasing learner autonomy, and promoting creativity across various educational levels.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is encouraging to observe the increasing interest shown by educators in integrating various forms of technology into music education, a reflection of their efforts to adapt pedagogical practices to the demands of a rapidly evolving world. This growing openness to digital tools and platforms illustrates not only a responsiveness to technological change but also a willingness to explore new ways of engaging students in the learning process. However, alongside this positive trend, a recurring concern identified in the literature is the lack of structured training programs for music educators in Romania. Most teachers who incorporate technology into their teaching do so independently, without formal guidance, which highlights a significant gap in professional development. There is a clear need for specialized programs that support music educators in acquiring digital competencies, including the use of educational software, applications for composition and ear training, and platforms that facilitate creative expression and student assessment.

Beyond technological integration, this review also reveals notable absences in Romanian music education research over the past five years. In particular, there is a scarcity of complex, practice-based studies exploring alternative educational models inspired by renowned 20th-century pedagogues such as Dalcroze, Orff, Kodály, or Suzuki. Likewise, the role of collective music-making—such as choral singing and group instrumental activities—remains underexplored, despite its recognized social, emotional, and cognitive benefits. Interdisciplinary approaches are also limited, and future research examining the potential of music as a tool for



teaching other disciplines, such as languages, history, or mathematics, would be both innovative and impactful.

Finally, this literature review is not without its limitations. A significant challenge lies in the fact that many Romanian journals are not indexed in the international databases consulted, which may have led to the omission of relevant perspectives and research. Additionally, the specificity of the search terms (music education Romania) may have constrained the scope of the review and excluded studies that addressed the topic from adjacent or complementary angles. These limitations point to the importance of developing broader research strategies and expanding the visibility of Romanian scholarship in global academic networks.

In light of these findings, it becomes evident that a more structured, interdisciplinary, and internationally visible approach to music education research in Romania is essential for aligning educational practice with the evolving needs of contemporary learners.

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