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Creativity In The Music Classroom

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Abstract

In this paper, we present an educational experience developed at the University of Granada whose aim was to provide students taking the new degree in Music Education (Primary Education) with different methodological strategies which would enable them to learn in a much more active and critical way, whilst also encouraging a reflection on the teaching-learning processes of which they are the protagonists. Through an innovative methodological approach, we sought to help students taking the third year subject *Music in Primary Education* to create and develop their own code for musical writing, thus encouraging imagination, experimentation and autonomous learning in the context of significant learning. Understanding musical language as a tool to perceive, analyse and better understand the world we live in represents an innovative resource that has allowed our students to acquire not only the professional competences that are part of their specialized field but also the specific contents related to music education that they will need to work as teachers in primary education.

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1. Introduction

The new degree in Music Education (Primary Education) which is currently being set up at university should be fundamentally characterized by its aim to encourage students (who in the future will be teachers specializing in primary education), to develop educational processes that will help them to design and create alternative educational resources and tools, supervise their future students' tasks, offer guidance in learning situations, advise boys and girls in their decision-making, coordinate educational activities and stimulate the capacity for personal development of each and every one of the students they will be teaching. Essentially, the aim is to ensure that students on this degree

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receive a complete, high quality education in line with the vision of universities that more and more authors currently propose (De Miguel, 2006; García Ruiz, 2006; Mayor, 2003; Zabalza, 2006).

Within the context of higher education, music is a fundamental subject, particularly so in the field of teacher training where an increasing number of students demand a professional training with realistic methodology which can be adapted to the needs of our society (which is ever more demanding and changing) and allows them to work successfully in the teaching profession. Students increasingly expect university teacher training programmes to introduce changes in their methodology which will in turn enable them to put into practice in their own schools new ways of creating knowledge so that students can discover things for themselves and become the true protagonists of their own learning, and make innovation, research, experimentation, emotions, experiences, analysis and reflection the main ways to achieve the parallel development of all the facts of human potential.

As stated previously, music is undoubtedly a subject that, due to its multidimensional nature, is able to promote an educational model based on exploring, discovering and using students' creativity, originality and capacity for improvisation without any need for previous knowledge (Paynter, 1991). Music (especially reading and writing music) plays a fundamental role in the cognitive development of human beings since, like all advanced linguistic systems, it involves the development and mastery of multiples forms and systems of mental processing. Indeed, knowledge of the code used by music is essential, not only in order to create music messages but also, and more importantly, in order to understand and analyse the reality of our social situation: the evolution of human beings has been closely linked to the development of verbal language and music too of course.

In Prehistoric times, sounds were used as a means of expression and communication in different rituals (for socialization, to try to make it rain, hunting, etc.) in which there was a transcendental combination of the intellectual idea that people wished to express and the acoustic material which they had (sounds from nature, body percussion, onomatopoeia, verbalization). Over the course of time, the need to transmit different messages through sound led to the creation of a sign system which was capable of offering fast and simple communication. However, over the centuries this system became more complex and developed ways of reflecting ever more complicated forms of sound. This particular linguistic system (musical language) has made it possible not only to transmit a whole set of personal and collective experiences, emotions and feelings, but also to immerse ourselves in the cultural and aesthetic legacy of other periods in history (Ulrich, 1982).

Nevertheless, there are alternative ways of graphically representing the sounds that we perceive, and each one of them provides information about the characteristics of a particular sound and its interpretation. These musical representations, which are considered non-conventional, involve their own process of investigation based on discrimination and recognition of the acoustic elements in our environment, sound analysis, experimentation, discovery, familiarization with the mechanisms of musical creation and, above all, understanding the fact that all forms of creativity (whether they are musical or not) involve imaginative effort and a process of reflection.

Moreover, many musical works which have been composed using this alternative language can be played without any previous musical training, which increases the sense of confidence, self-fulfilment and personal satisfaction felt by the performer. The use of these musical compositions encourages integration, creativity, spontaneity and freedom, and also offers the chance to use music more easily to represent the world around us, our worries, problems and our daily reality.

As we are aware of the possibilities that music offers in terms of achieving changes in educational institutions and the considerable methodological boost that it can also provide, in this article we have sought to describe a teaching experience developed during the 2012- 2013 academic year, in which we tried to encourage 3rd year Music Education degree students to create and develop their own code of musical composition, thus promoting imagination experimentation and self-learning in a context of active and meaningful learning which encourages critical reflection on the learning-teaching processes of which they are the protagonists.

The idea of inventing an alternative code to conventional musical language is nothing new. Since the beginning of the 20th century, different methods have been developed which have sought to offer an alternative the passive method of learning to read music. These systems were mainly devised by musicians and musical theorists such as Emile Jacques-Dalcroze, Edgar Willems, Zoltan Kodaly and Carl Orff, although other less well known but equally interesting proposals were made by Justine Ward, Suzuki, John Paynter, Murray Schafer, Jos Wuytack, Joan Llongueres, Jaques Chapuis, etc. Other techniques are currently being developed by specialized teachers although these techniques are not new but instead are adaptations of the work of the aforementioned theorists (Agosti y Rapp,

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