

Music Education and the Construction of Musical Knowledge in Spain and Brazil

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Abstract: This paper is intended to discuss what counts as musical knowledge in the context of two countries: Spain and Brazil. In Spain, issues concerning cultural diversity in schooling have led us to investigate how both teachers and students conceive the value of different musics in educational contexts. In Brazil, the recent Law 11.769/2008 made music a compulsory subject in schools. Since then, there have been increasing discussions about which music(s) should be considered valid to be taught, and how it can be implemented in different levels of schooling. We are going to address these topics considering the idea that music education can help to shape, perpetuate, legitimate and modify ideologies concerning the value of music. Thus, we claim the importance of opening up musical curricula and incorporating different musics in schooling as a means to construct musical realities in these countries and deconstruct dominant ideologies concerning musical values and meanings. Such concepts will be analyzed according to Green's (1988) theory aiming to celebrate musical practices in order to readapt the function of music education to the social contexts these countries demand.

Keywords: Music, Education, Knowledge, Spain, Brazil

Introduction

THIS PAPER IS a result of a discussion initiated in a seminar on the Sociology of Music Education attended by the authors, who come from Spain and Brazil. While Spain has been offering music as a compulsory subject, with specialized music teachers, in primary education since the beginning of 1990s, Brazil has only recently placed music back on its school curricula. The current realities of these countries are briefly dealt with as the authors suggest an agenda for music education in their countries, analyzing how musical knowledge has been constructed.

Addressing to Green's theories (1988; 1999; 2003a; 2003b) concerning the power of ideologies in validating and reproducing musical knowledge and practices, we will discuss how formal music education has constructed values about what is considered to be *good* educational musical practices in both contexts. The following section presents Green's ideas in a nutshell. Then, we pose curricular issues related to cultural diversity in Spain. Subsequently, some differences in the Brazilian music education scenario are dealt with and, finally, in the last section, we present some considerations for music education in our countries.

Ideology and Formal Education

Drawing on research about the uses of different types of music in formal education, particularly Western classical music and popular music, Green (2003b) posits that, although one could claim that the curriculum in many countries offers a diversity of music, the way each

of them is approached and dealt with in classrooms reflects the value attributed to each type of music. In Britain, she found out that supporters of popular music theoretically tend to attribute its value to the qualities usually related to classical music—“universality, complexity, originality [and] autonomy”—but, in practice, they treat popular music as if it lacks such qualities (Green, 2003b: 266). Besides criticisms for using values that may not be pertinent to popular music, this approach affirms classical music ideology, as popular music is taught, analyzed and practiced according to classical music parameters such as notated scores. As a result, the experience of popular music in school may sound ‘dissonant’ to schooling (i.e. classical music) parameters. So, even if a curriculum offers equal opportunities for engaging with a variety of music, the pedagogical practices usually rely heavily on classical music ideology, conveying a clear message of what is considered appropriate to school settings and, consequently, what is considered a valid knowledge.

So, besides curricular changes, Green invites us to rethink our pedagogical strategies aiming at what she calls a celebratory musical experience, which is the result of affirmative responses to musical meanings when we get involved with music, listening to it, playing, improvising, composing etc. She acknowledges two different musical meanings that coexist in every musical experience: the inherent or intersonic (Green, 2008) meanings, and the delineated meanings. Both arise from our response to music; however, the former arises when both the sign and the object are made of musical materials; that is, the sound, a musical material we hear, is identified as other musical materials ‘decoded’ as notes, chords and phrases. The latter arises from our extra-musical associations brought by the musical materials; that is, the sound we hear brings us memories related to the various contexts of life. An affirmative response to both types of musical meanings occurs when we are used to a certain style of music and are able to understand the sound relationships within this style, and we also relate it to situations or sensations we identify with. This positive musical experience is what Green (1988: 137) calls *celebration*. She also explains that our responses to both types of musical meanings can lead us to *alienated* or *ambiguous* experiences. Alienation would be the negative response to both delineated and intersonic meanings, while ambiguity would be the result of a positive response to only one of those meanings.

Bearing this in mind, we could try to promote more musical practices that broaden pupils’ familiarity with styles so that they are able to understand how sound materials function within each style. In Green’s (2005: 33) research using informal learning practices, she found out that “when [pupils] engage with music’s materials themselves, ... [they] are touching on an aspect of inherent meaning which is virtually freed for a moment from social context”. This allows new delineations to come up and, consequently, change previous negative responses into positive experiences that lead to celebration.

The Construction of a Musical Curriculum and Cultural Diversity in Spain

We are aware that each educational proposal is based on some principles which need to be applied in one way or another depending on the frame of reference for the place where it is to be implemented. Every teaching organization, just like every individual involved in educational processes, must adapt its educational work to the particular social context where it is established. Music education should not be indifferent to this fact. It should therefore be

designed starting with a critical reflection in order to develop a musical curriculum to meet the needs of each particular context and society.

Spain has historically been a multicultural nation and nowadays it is even more so. Cultural diversity has been a reality that Spanish society has often had to deal with, debate and organize in education. The tremendous development of the media, means of transport and technology have greatly helped to increase migration flows which, in the Spanish situation, have resulted in the growth of multiculturalism in our classrooms. We consider that cultural diversity clearly enriches educational forums. The existence of a multicultural reality offers a chance to increase our knowledge by learning from other cultures. It makes different organizational structures possible. It also extends knowledge and promotes learning from other viewpoints, helping us to discover other social and interpersonal ways of living together.

However, a multicultural situation involves several conflicts that need to be managed properly. The discovery of other cultures can be the origin of a violent relationship between people. This must necessarily be well articulated, so peaceful communication can guide our everyday coexistence in the classroom and go beyond the boundaries of the school. It is our responsibility to promote an attitude that is not merely based on respect and tolerance towards diverse cultural forms, but which also stimulates relationships based on recognition and interaction. Only in this way will we be able to achieve an actual intercultural relationship between people.

The promotion of an intercultural attitude is, therefore, a necessary competence in our educational system. The Organic Law 2/2006, dated 3rd May, of Education (2006: 17165), currently in force, spells out, as one of the essential aims of educational processes, “respect for and recognition of Spain’s linguistic and cultural plurality and of inter-culturality as an enriching factor in society”.

We uphold the idea that the music classroom can be used as a proper place to develop competences focused on promoting intercultural ways of living together and of learning from our differences. This is firstly because we understand that the educational process is capable of modifying the social reality that surrounds us. Teachers must have the abilities and tools to encourage a change in relationships in their surroundings. Secondly, we highlight the music classroom as a propitious environment for learning how to coexist due to music’s capacity to belong not only to the aesthetic dimension of people, but also to their cultural and communicative dimensions.

The main proposals for dealing with the incorporation of the intercultural competence in the music classroom include, firstly, the broadening of musical styles in the educative curricula. Historically, there has been a tendency to reduce the musical styles in the school curriculum. Because of this, few musical styles have been considered appropriate for the classroom. Western classical music has been the paradigm of this dominant ideology that has constructed musical knowledge in recent centuries in Spain. However, new views taken from music education theory have, over the last 40 years, proposed the inclusion and validation of other musics in the educational environment.

The deconstruction of this dominant ideology in music education has allowed us to introduce competences focused on developing intercultural skills in the music classroom. The need to introduce a plurality of musical styles and genres is upheld by a series of benefits that this provides to the student at both social and musical levels.

From a social point of view, the study of cultural diversity through music entails the construction of intercultural awareness. It also promotes tolerance and mutual understanding,

and contributes to the elimination of both racial and generational prejudices (Giráldez, 1998). One of the important points of intercultural educational theories is based on knowledge of one's own and other people's cultures. By understanding music as an element that belongs to the cultural dimension of societies, we can discover similar and different features between cultural organizations through their music. This knowledge is essential to promoting an intercultural attitude (Siankope and Villa, 2004: 16).

From a musical view, learning different musical styles contributes to numerous benefits in the development of musical abilities. Musical plurality in the curriculum encourages the acquisition of listening and performing skills in certain musical styles, which other styles lack. It also promotes musical critical thinking and a breadth of views in analyzing different kinds of music; reinforces the knowledge of musical elements, and develops motor abilities. Increasing the understanding of diverse musical materials will provide the student with greater tolerance to new or strange musical styles (Giráldez, 1998). The exclusive use of only one type of music in education limits, therefore, the range of possibilities offered by musical activity and reduces the acquisition of musical abilities.

By combining the social and musical benefits of plural music education, we reflect the need to incorporate an intercultural dimension in the music classroom. In our opinion, music education in Spain has made some advances in opening up the curriculum as is required in education. However, we believe it has not yet taken a decisive step: it has not made the necessary efforts to manage all these different cultural and musical situations in music classrooms.

The first time that the inclusion of other musics on the music education curriculum was debated was in 1966 (Giráldez, 1998). The new multi-cultural music education began to be developed in the '70s, mainly in the UK and the USA. In Spain, this proposal did not become important until the '90s, with the educational reform of the LOGSE (*General Organic Education System Law*, 1990). However, this inclusion focused mainly on traditional folk music from the Autonomous Communities (Ibarretxe Txakartegi and Díaz Gómez, 2008: 343-344). Since then, several documents encouraging multi-cultural music education in Spain have been written. Important musicologists and musical educators, like Giráldez, Díaz Gómez, Ibarretxe or Martí have devoted research to the study, promotion and implementation of intercultural music educational practices. In 1997, the journal *Euphony* dedicated one volume to intercultural music education, and the Ministry of Education and Science supported the publishing in 2003 of a series of Intercultural Education Workbooks, including the book *Music and Interculturalism*, written by Siankope and Villa. Beyond folk music, other modern popular music styles, such as *jazz*, *rock*, *hip-hop*, *heavy* or *Top 40* have been included in the music classroom. Finally, in addition to learning other musical styles, some schools have promoted knowledge of other societies and their cultural profiles through their music.

Nevertheless, these musical practices are frequently relegated to mere one-off or isolated activities. Although the inclusion of diverse musical styles in the classroom is sometimes supported, Western classical music is often still considered as the best for educational purposes. Furthermore, Spanish teachers tend to include different musical styles in the music classroom using the educational criteria of Western music. Because of this, they often feel unable to teach other musics using classical practices and guidelines. Therefore, as Green noticed in UK, also in the Spanish context "rather than intramusical processes (the "notes"), teachers tend to concentrate on extramusical associations related to the social circumstances of the music's production and reception, such as the social functions or effects of the music,

the dress of the performers, or the lyrics” (2003b: 266). This therefore reinforces the reproduction and legitimization of a previously constructed ideology about the value of certain musics depending on their educational properties. So, in the end, the constant process of validation of what counts as good music on the Spanish music education scene continues.

We tend to think that, mostly, the exclusion of certain musics from music education is not a consequence of not being valued by the music teacher himself or herself. Music teachers are often aware of the need to broaden their students’ and their own musical scopes. However, they limit the time devoted to teaching styles of music they feel unfamiliar with—music that does not form part of their own musical background—because their lack of knowledge makes them feel uncomfortable (Giráldez, 1998).

We are fully convinced that now, when interculturalism is constantly being debated on the international scene, we, as music teachers, should rethink this issue and try to develop new music education practices and proposals concerning cultural diversity. Only by collecting and analyzing multiple and different views will music teachers be able to offer some common directives in order to promote the construction of a plural and creative music education. Such an education must also include and be adapted to the complexity of the society in which it is established. We understand that only then can the music classroom become a space that, beyond music learning, promotes intercultural relationships among its members, promoting peaceful coexistence between people.

Music Education in Brazil: Towards the Implementation of a New Law

Having discussed the inclusion of cultural diversity on the curriculum in Spain, we will now present some issues related to the implementation of a music curriculum in Brazil, since the Law 11.769 was signed in 2008.

In Brazil, we are now living a moment in which we are going to witness what is going to happen to musical practices. They are found in conservatories, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private schools and other settings such as churches and educational/cultural projects sites and are carried out both in groups and on one-to-one tuition basis. Every musical practice has been conducted depending on the teacher’s/ leader’s/ master’s/ facilitator’s beliefs about what counts as valid musical knowledge and skills. In formal and non-formal settings, it is mostly Western classical music ideology that has been validated, as Arroyo (2001) pointed out when she investigated Popular Music in a conservatoire in Uberlândia, a city in the state of Minas Gerais, Southeast Brazil. Ten years have passed, and some practices have changed, but the power of classical music ideology can be found in discourses in the academic world, the places responsible for music training. As Luedy (2009) reports in a discussion about the need for musical literacy (reading and writing Western musical notation) as a pre-requisite for entering an undergraduate music course, we can infer the value attributed to notational skills to the detriment of music making. Without judging whether this value attribution is right or wrong, the fact is that such a decision may be taken as a model for shaping other music teaching practices and choices that will now, formally, happen below undergraduate level, in the entire compulsory schooling system in Brazil, according to the Law 11.769/2008.

After this Law was signed, in August 2008, discussions about what music should be taught, how it should be done and who should teach it in schools have increasingly been addressed. Inequalities of access to music education before the above-mentioned law, as in many regions

it was restricted to those who could afford private tuition or conservatories, may have led to an uneven distribution and concentration of music teachers in some areas in Brazil to the benefit of wealthy regions. However, as Figueiredo (2000) has shown, the political collaboration between universities and Education Offices has proven effective in the design of a curriculum and implementing music teaching practices that cater for local needs and for a diversity of musical values and beliefs. So, long before the new law made music a compulsory subject in schools, Florianópolis, in the state of Santa Catarina, South Brazil, has been providing music lessons for its pupils.

Unfortunately, this is not the situation in many other places in Brazil. At the eleventh hour of the 3-year deadline given for schools to adapt to the new law, one of the main concerns is the lack of music teachers in certain areas of the country and the consequences that a “provisional” remedy for this may cause: the employment of teachers without musical training. In a recent Internet discussion forum, a music teacher from Rio Grande do Norte, a state in Northeast Brazil, explained his worries about teachers from other fields of knowledge being trained to teach music due to the lack of music teachers. As a response to his post, a colleague from the state of Ceará, also Northeast Brazil, posits that in his state, although the teachers who will attend in-service training may be from other fields of knowledge, they will need to prove their knowledge of music and teaching skills in a mock lesson. He adds that the in-service training will be delivered in partnership with the Music Department of the Universidade Federal do Ceará, a government-funded university.

Initial teacher training in Brazil is also a responsibility of universities and other Higher Education institutions. They have been adapting their curricula since the Resolution no.1 was issued in 2002 by the National Council for Education presenting the guidance for General Initial Teacher Education courses. Based on such Resolution, institutions of Higher Education with music degrees started shaping their curricula aiming to train prospective music teachers to work at different levels of schooling. However, it seems that the 72 institutions¹ that offer music teacher education in Brazil are not enough to cover the need for teachers once the law is in operation.

As can be seen, the Law 11.769/2008 has unfolded issues related to music teacher training, which is formally under the responsibility of universities and colleges. Such institutions are being compelled to join efforts with other organizations to offer teacher training to help meet the demand for music teachers. The Ministry of Culture and its associate organizations have already shown willingness to cooperate in this process, as Lemos (2010: 118) presents the support from Funarte, the National Foundation for the Arts, in gathering representatives from different areas connected to music—musicians, music teachers, universities, Education Offices, the Brazilian Society for Music Education (ABEM), music schools among others—to draw up a strategic plan to implement music lessons according to the new law. The discussions include flexibility in initial music teacher training via a mixed-mode course, in-service training for those without formal musical training and partnerships with music schools and social projects related to music. While on one hand the need for music teachers in Brazilian schools is undeniable in order to implement the law, on the other hand, it is fundamental to consider the quality of the lessons if we want music to be enjoyed to its full potential. The aforementioned strategies need to be carefully planned and the formal institutions responsible

¹ Data drawn from research conducted by Mateiro (2009).

for music teacher training need to get involved in collaborative work between the different sectors related to music.

Besides such partnerships, higher education institutions are being compelled to increase their range of courses via distance learning and evening classes. Although some new lecturers are being hired and, in the case of government-funded institutions, public contests carried out to hire academics, the work overload is a concern if we want to guarantee the quality of the teacher training delivered. Thus, not only are music teachers needed in primary and secondary schools, but they are also needed in HE institutions in order to provide teacher training and carry out research related to the many musical practices still available in our diverse country.

The implementation of the Law 11.769/2008 will certainly need to be complemented by other government actions. In addition to strategies for hiring more academics in HE institutions and more teachers in primary and secondary schools, there is an urgent need for policies to help schools adapt a place for musical practices and to obtain musical instruments and other equipment to enhance the quality of music lessons. As further efforts, we could highlight actions taken by the state of Paraná, South Brazil, whose Education Office provided musical instruments to schools and, since 2003, has organized three public contests to hire teachers. The Brazilian Society for Music Education (ABEM) has also been actively engaged in public policies, dialoguing with governments and promoting discussions among music teachers through regional and national annual conferences. As can be seen, there is still much to be done to ensure that musical practices will in fact be part of the whole Brazilian compulsory schooling system. The passing of the law was the first step and we must now be willing to seek different strategies for implementing musical practices in schools, respecting the diversity of musics and practices that have been implemented informally and being aware of the power formal education has to affirm whatever ideologies it subscribes to.

Final Considerations

As we have been attempting to show, we uphold the approach that, through broadening the musical styles on music education curricula, and by also incorporating new music pedagogies, such as bringing informal music learning practices into the music classroom (Green, 2008), students will have wider experience with music that may lead to celebratory practices and a better understanding of musical knowledge. However, learning from different cultures, other sub-cultures and diverse social classes may require different pedagogical approaches that teachers need to be at least open to embrace. The music teacher education offered by the HE institutions therefore needs to be attuned to this demand of a globalized/localized world and we, as music teachers and as music teacher trainers, need to be fully aware of the ideology we are subscribing to in each choice we make. Whether we are perpetuating, challenging or changing ideologies, what is fundamental is that we should remain aware of the power everyone has when exercising their choices. So, if we want to offer our students celebratory musical practices, we really need to value and allow room for different musics and musical practices.

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