Review

Rethinking the music curriculum theories: Towards an updated comprehensive student-centred approach

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Abstract: This article reports a theoretical investigation on music curriculum and explores the factors that shape the practice of music education in terms of the official and other music curricula. We drew on relevant literature and explored four key aspects of the design and implementation of music curriculum: policy-making contexts, teaching practices, students' practices and attitudes, and school contexts. Currently, music education research focuses on student-centredness as an important element in music practice. Embracing students' various ways of musical engagement as well as their music identities promotes further development of their musical-social skills and enhances their interests. We suggest the development of an updated and comprehensive music curriculum which is student-centred and based on new musical literacies that respond to students' daily musical needs and address the challenges of today's social context. Our suggestion is encompassed in five core principles: 1) Getting to know our students, 2) Discussing the teaching-learning goals with our students, 3) Adapting to local conditions, 4) Bottom-up and top-down perspectives: Finding the balance through authentic classroom activities, and 5) Contextualising assessment. The article advocates for the effective use of all types of music curricula so that students become active, responsible and critical thinkers in their personal, social and musical lives.

Keywords: Comprehensive music curriculum, Student centredness, New music literacies, Bottom-up perspectives, Social-technological context

The role of school curriculum has been questioned since the 20th century (Dewey, 1902). However, it was only at the beginning of the 21st century that the research interest in studying and reforming school curricula developed in a systematic way (Pinar, 2003). It was also found that what students learn does not correspond to what they are taught in schools. Therefore, it was suggested that further investigation into the intersections among curriculum content, classroom practices and students' learning was needed (Pinar, 2011).

Official school curricula reflect the specific political, ideological and educational decisions by the policy makers. It has also been asserted that curricula reflect the dominant values including cultural norms and elements of social control (Apple, 1979/2004; Pinar et al., 1995). Critical pedagogy proponents Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) stressed that schools adopt pedagogical practices that discourage democratic participation. They also highlighted that neoconservative school theorists seek curricula that "program students in a certain direction so that they behave in set ways, responding to predetermined situations" (p. 9). In this sense, curricula set the social standards for personal and collective identities (Coulby, 2000; Goodlad et al., 1979).

Despite policy makers setting the goals, limits and orientation of curriculum (Eisner, 1994), curriculum

practices and contexts are uncertain and unpredictable with every conceptualisation opening a space of meaning while closing others (Johnson-Mardones, 2014). According to Stenhouse (1975), curricula have two aspects: what is intended to happen in schools and what actually happens in schools. Therefore, in addition to the official curriculum, other forms of curriculum are always present in any learning environment, such as the ideological, the perceived, the operational and the experiential curriculum (Goodlad et al., 1979), the implicit or hidden and the null curriculum (Eisner, 1994).

Today, two themes are at the core of reconceptualising music curricula: questioning the dominance of specific music genres, and acknowledging the importance of students' music identities (Kokkidou, 2018). Over the last two decades, there has been increasing research interest in students' music preferences, knowledge and skills that are developed in out-of-school practices and digital contexts (Bickford, 2011; Elliott et al., 2019; Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008). In addition, the use of digital materials and internet resources has enriched and transformed the traditional ways of music engagement and learning (Kaschub & Smith, 2014; Tobias, 2016).

This article discusses the ideas and practices that promote the development of an updated comprehensive music curriculum that places the students at the core of music education and supports the use of a variety of music literacies. We choose to use the term "updated" in the sense that there needs to be space for the other music curricula to feed into the official music curriculum. In the following two paragraphs, we articulate our understanding of two core terms of an updated music curriculum: "student centredness" and "music literacies." We then discuss the role of a music educator within an updated comprehensive curriculum.

Our conceptualisation of student centredness draws on the principles of critical pedagogy (Abrahams, 2005b; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Freire, 1970) to support the partnership between students and teachers in the classroom. Learner-centred teaching involves investigating and acting according to the different ways in which students experience musics in their daily lives as well as the different goals they have in mind when they study music (López-Íñiguez et al., 2022; Regelski, 2021). Teachers work with students to address issues of curriculum content, context and suggested instructional practices, and even to question the value and purpose of education (Neumann, 2013). In a revised notion of student centredness, it is important to reflect on Dewey's pragmatic ideas of educational experiences that generate self-knowledge, as well as Freire's theory (1970) of critical pedagogy, in which curriculum planning is based on learners' expectations and desires, teachers respect learners' freedom, and students are empowered utilising their creative potential. In this perspective, students' own traits, such as their musical tastes, previous knowledge of music, learning processes, as well as fears, insecurities and emotions, can constitute key material for teachers to draw from and develop in the music class.

Students come to the music class with multiple literacies which they develop in experiences in the family, community, peer groups, and technological environments (Benedict, 2012). During the 19th century and the most of the 20th century, music literacy in Europe focused on print and text. This approach has strongly affected the music literacy methods that have been followed in schools. Music programs in elementary settings are often functionally understood as preparatory and aim at teaching students how to read and write notation (Benedict, 2012). However, music literacies serve the purpose of communicating musically and can therefore take many different forms depending on the values in various cultural contexts (McCarthy, 2009; Regelski, 2023). When music literacies are conceptualised as social practices in the music class, then opportunities are provided for the development of students' multiple skills (Skerrett, 2018). Musical communication can be achieved through a variety of music literacies, such as listening, improvisation, composition, arrangement, production, conducting and body expression.

In a holistic approach for music teaching, the music teacher "is not restricted to any one form of music making and learning or specific style and genre of music" (Abril & Gault, 2016, p. 7). Praxial theory, which combines reflection and action as praxis (Elliott & Silverman, 2015), provides useful insights on this matter highlighting that all musics have a good reason to be in the music classrooms when they serve "particular human benefits" for the students and the society (Regelski, 2009, p. 24). Today's music educator is "a connector - a person who introduces students to new and diverse ways of engaging or thinking about music" (Abril & Gault, 2022, p. 9), and organises the curriculum with students' curiosity being the driving force.

The focus of this article is not on one specific music curriculum. We have studied official music curricula of primary school from a variety of countries, such as Finland, Sweden, Japan, Singapore, Greece, Austria, Bulgaria, Germany (Bavaria), USA (Florida), Spain (Catalonia and Andalusia), Cyprus and Canada (Ontario), adopting the research model by Kokkidou (2006). Indeed, music curricula vary from country to country due to each country's distinct historical, social and cultural traditions. We have also identified commonalities which resulted in the discussions of ideas and practices towards an updated comprehensive music curriculum.

Our suggestions have been based on an in-depth investigation of the key aspects of music curriculum design and implementation: policy-making context, teaching practices, students' practices and attitudes, and school context. Our critical reading of literature on curriculum theories (e.g., Apple, 1979/2004; Brown, 2004; Eisner, 1994; Johnson-Mardones, 2014; Pinar et al., 1995; Scott, 2016) resulted in identifying the following categories and subcategories of curricula within the field of music education: the *official* music curriculum (including the *assessed/tested*, the *supported* and the *excluded/null* music

curriculum), the *aligned* music curriculum (including the *perceived* music curriculum), the *societal* music curriculum (including the *media/internet* and *received* music curriculum), and the *hidden* music curriculum.

Policy-making context

Official music curriculum

The official music curriculum is designed by specialists and constitutes the foundation of education systems. It specifies the content knowledge, activities, and skills that are considered as important to be taught, reflecting a country's educational ideals and policies as well as the dominant ideologies and social norms (Goodlad et al., 1979; Regelski, 2021). The official curriculum also refers to the documents and any other materials that are used to support school education and learning according to the specific educational aims (Coulby, 2000). In countries with a decentralised system, national curricula can serve to set common guidelines across states and regions, highlighting core aims such as literacy, creativity and diversity (McCarthy, 2012; Rolle, 2017).

Other terms, such as *overt*, *formal*, *core*, *intended*, *national*, *explicit* and *written curriculum* have been used in literature. The terms *recommended* and *ideal curriculum* also refer to the values and principles that underpin the purpose and aim of education and students' achievements (Brown, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2016). Applying an official curriculum entails provisions, such as facilities, funding and educational materials for each school subject, which form the *supported curriculum* (Johnson-Mardones, 2014). Today, the use of the internet (*virtual curriculum*) is also proposed as part of official curricula to support a variety of classroom activities.

Music curricula and practices collectively have drawn and still draw upon a wide range of approaches such as Orff, Kodaly, Dalcroze, interdisciplinarity, informal learning, world music as well as more traditional concept-centred or skill-centred methods (Abril & Gault, 2022). The recent trends put emphasis on flexibility. Skills for the music teaching also cover a wide range, from listening, performing (singing and instrument playing), creating (improvising and composing) to conducting, arranging and producing (playing and creating music using digital media and sound editing). Music curricula that aim at a holistic development of students' musical, social and personal lives do not dictate certain approaches, methods or skills, but can be adapted towards culturally responsive teaching (Beegle, 2022) and enable teachers to respond to the specifics of their situations (Jorgensen, 2023). Comprehensive music curricula take students' bodily-kinaesthetic, social, emotional, cultural, cognitive, aesthetic and ethical growth into consideration.

Tested/assessed music curriculum

Part of the official curricula is the *tested or assessed curriculum* (Di Michele Lalor, 2017), which contains standardised test forms, end-of-year and end-of-school exams, and local, national or international competitions. Both formative and summative assessments are designed to measure students' achievements in line with the objectives of official curricula. The efficiency of an education system draws elements from, or even is centred around, the tested curriculum (Creese et al., 2016).

In music education, the assessment on students is much more complex due to a wide range of music traditions, interests, and values found in the music class, as well as the vast differences in the ways of teaching music. Rolle (2017) stated that music education is becoming more and more formulated in terms of learning outcomes, coupled with an obsession with assessment, instead of promoting successful personal and collective development and musicianship. Indeed, music teachers are often burdened by heavy, top-down orders to test (Elliott et al., 2019). An approach that focuses on excellence in vocal or instrumental performance often deprives students of valuable feedback that could foster personal and collective musicianship, curiosity, joy for musicking, and validate motivation (Regelski, 2023).

In our view, music education in primary school cannot follow the conservatory system, which entails traditional, typical tests and a priori, rigid criteria. Much of this type of assessment does not promote distributed learning in schools. Additionally, it is questionable which standardised forms of assessment would be appropriate to measure and compare qualitative practices, data, and music-educational values (Väkevä, 2019). The insights that teachers gain from observing their students can modify curriculum methods, or change the pace of instruction. Assessment in an inclusive and student-centred music classroom can be a source of constructive feedback.

Excluded/null music curriculum

The outcomes of the learning processes derive from what we teach as well as from what we do *not* teach. The *excluded* or *null curriculum* relates to anything that is not taught in schools (such as the content that has been left out of the official curriculum and the elements that the teachers consider as less important, Brown, 2004). Specific content knowledge is considered as valuable, valid, and appropriate when it is presented as such.

Eisner (1994) noted that writing about a curriculum that does not exist might be a paradox. However, it is necessary to do so if we are concerned with the consequences of school programs. For example, students may assume that what is left out is not important for their academic or personal progress. Apple (1979/2004) urged us to think about "whose knowledge" is included. While the interests and values of dominant groups are legitimised in curricula, the knowledge and experiences of marginalised groups could be excluded or annulled. In this perspective, the discourse of critical pedagogy is crucial (Abrahams,

2005b; Allsup, 2003; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Eisner, 1994; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Freire, 1970; Regelski, 2021), as it links knowledge with power and social control. It advocates for the importance of teaching students how to stand critically towards issues that are embedded in music and music education, such as hegemony, privilege, racism, sexism and colonialism.

The excluded music curriculum reveals the values and expectations in music education, as well as its limitations (Kaschub & Smith, 2014; Regelski, 2009). Could it be the case that the music we teach does not have a place in the world in which our students live (Allsup, 2003)? Specific music genres or musical pieces that are not notated are often left unexplored, as they are not identified as worthwhile enough to be included in the official curricula (Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Regelski, 2021). However, music teaching-learning that ignores or underestimates the musical interests, skills or needs of specific student groups (in terms of gender, race, culture, class, physical or cognitive (dis)abilities), but culturally serves the dominant ones, leads to elitism (McCarthy, 2012; Regelski, 2009).

Teachers

Perceived music curriculum

The perceived curriculum entails teachers' own personal interpreting the content and methods of the official curricula (Eisner, 1994; Stenhouse, 1975). Other terms that have been used are: *curriculum in use*, *taught*, *emergent* and *operational*. Goodlad and colleagues (1979) defined the perceived curriculum as that which is shaped in teachers' minds (*curriculum of the mind*), and is linked to the *operational curriculum*, which is what really happens in the classroom. Teachers' varied perceptions and experiences imply different classroom practices (Di Michele Lalor, 2017). In the music class, teachers' beliefs and practices are highly influential on learners' musical identity (Kelly-McHale, 2013).

How a music curriculum is implemented in the classroom depends on music teachers' interpretation and own skills. Music curricula define the thematic areas that need to be covered according to specific criteria, but teachers have the freedom to make decision about its content (Rolle, 2017). While this is not necessarily a drawback, Regelski (2021) noted that music education is characterised by curricular anarchy, as teachers are often "doing their own thing" (p. 5).

Aligned music curriculum

The aligned curriculum is based on official curricula and the guidelines stipulated by the state, but is finalised on a local level and is particular for each school. The *aligned balanced curriculum* is a product of collective work, which is carried out by education specialists, school headteachers,

educators and parents (Creese et al., 2016), and targets student populations in specific contexts. Teachers act collectively and democratically (Cutietta, 2017; Després & Dubé, 2020; Jorgensen, 2003, 2023; Scott, 2016). Together with their students, they discuss beliefs and ideologies, and re-examine the ways that knowledge and reality are interpreted (Hernández et al., 2013; Tobias et al., 2015).

In music education, aligned curricula suggest that music classrooms are flexible spaces where students and their cultures are accommodated (Kaschub & Smith, 2014; Rolle, 2017; Spruce, 2015). Music can be experienced differently: from the way the musical elements (e.g., melody, rhythm) are perceived, to the way music is used for social purposes (e.g., performance, entertainment), or even the degree to which music is accessible.

Jorgensen (2023) held that "the idea of democracy still offers the best hope for creating public spaces in which music teachers and their students may collectively converse and peacefully work out approaches to humane music educations that foreshadow decent societies" (p. 2). Culturally responsive teaching is key to a democratic approach to school music education: it accepts and affirms students' cultural identity, instills critical thinking (Ladson-Billings, 1995), accommodates the increasing number of ethnically diverse students (migrants, refugees), and enables learner agency (Wiggins, 2015). Aligned curricula that are based on the assumption that each student comes to class with their own biography are the way to democratic education (Aróstegui, 2011; Jorgensen, 2023).

Students

Societal music curriculum

Societal music curriculum includes all aspects of an ongoing education that individuals receive from family, peer groups, neighbourhoods, churches, organisations, occupations, mass media, and other socialising forces (Cortes, 1979). Learning and all types of development (social, emotional, moral and aesthetic) is happening in everyday encounters and experiences.

Official music education can benefit from real-life practices engaged with music (Jorgensen, 2003; Pinar et al., 1995). Relative studies (Campbell, 1998; Green, 2008; Marsh, 2008) have indicated that performing and experimenting with the music materials in daily life are inherently motivated and meaningful practices and happen in a holistic performance context.

Experiences that are acquired in the family have drawn special research interest in terms of values and morals that the young members develop in relation to school learning (*concomitant/ familial curriculum*). Engagement with music also takes place at a very early age and media-rich environments are likely to reinforce this process. Findings from research within family contexts, from listening and dancing to music, rhythmic and vocalised activity, singing

and music-making (Barrett, 2009; Young, 2006) to the presence and use of popular music (Sole & Cali, 2022), indicate the cases of familial music curricula. While research has shown that family can influence students' readiness and progress in school (Kokkidou, 2017), the school curriculum and the familial curriculum are much different (Huber et al., 2011).

Knowing our students musically means not only to know what they have learned about music, but also what they do with music for their own enjoyment, such as listen and dance to music, watch TV programmes or movies, and play video games (Kaschub & Smith, 2014). By knowing our students musically, we support their musical experiences and cultural backgrounds (Campbell & Wiggins, 2012). Simply listening to our students' stories and providing them with a forum where they actively shape their lives might be "a revolutionary action" (Allsup, 2003, p. 12).

Mass media/internet music curriculum

The *mass media/internet curriculum* refers to digital technologies, media (i.e., TV, radio, computers, video games, mobile phones) and internet-based sources (i.e., social media, apps, platforms) that students use for educational and recreational purposes. These environments play a significant role in students' learning and identity building. The information that becomes available through the systematic use of technological advances has an impact on students' perceptions of learning and evaluation of what they officially learn in school (Schoenfeld, 2016).

Students who use the media are bombarded with all types of information and messages, some of which may be valid and accurate, but some may be inaccurate or even manipulative. On this basis, students need to develop their critical thinking on the reliability of the sources and the provided information so that they are able to make choices (Mygdanis & Kokkidou, 2021), reject what is not factual or useful, and adopt an appropriate and acceptable online behaviour in virtual social interactions. As information is available at the click of a button, emphasis should not be given on content but on learning mastery, where how we learn takes precedence over what we learn (Clements, 2016).

Technological advances offer new ways of music enjoyment, creation, and performance in real life or online. Children's daily digital engagement with music shapes their musical biographies from a very young age all the more, mainly at homes with economic prestige (de Vries, 2009; Wu & Welch, 2022). Students use musical digital platforms and social media to search for and share their favourite music(s), learn a musical instrument, and express their opinion about an artist (Tobias, 2016). Music listening, performing and creating can easily take place on apps or mobile phones. Finding and analysing YouTube videos and song lyrics can constitute the initial attempts for music creation and production (Waldron, 2020). Although technological forms of music engagement tend

to be portrayed negatively, there have been reports that individuals create physical and online connections in these environments (Bickford, 2011). Teenagers in particular develop music dissemination skills by networking with other musicians or fans, sharing music events and taking part in discussions on forums.

All the above are examples of digital music learning that complements official curricula and can lead to musical understanding without teachers' help, often in ways that are more attractive than school teaching. Students feel disappointed when their musical skills gained outside of school are unacceptable in school music learning (Mygdanis & Kokkidou 2021; Waldron, 2020). The media/internet music curriculum suggests that learning experiences in school are not separate from and unrelated to life outside school (Tobias, 2016). Teachers can effectively use students' own technological stories and concerns to motivate and inspire them.

Received music curriculum

Received music curriculum refers to what students learn from the implementation of official curricula and anything that they acquire out of the classroom (Di Michele Lalor, 2017; Huber et al., 2011). Cuban (1992) referred to this as the "learned or enacted" curriculum, noting that "the gap between what is taught and what is learned -both intended and unintended- is large" (p. 223). In other words, what students learn is not what they are taught in schools (Rahman, 2013). As has been suggested, learning cannot be imposed but occurs as long as the brain is ready to receive and process information, which also indicates that brains learn differently (Kokkidou, 2017).

There is very little information as to what students have really acquired after they leave music classroom. Hanley and Montgomery (2005) suggested that more emphasis is usually placed on curriculum development, less on its implementation and even less on the curriculum's impact on students' learning. To the best of our knowledge, there are only two published relevant studies that investigated the received curriculum (Economidou Stavrou, 2006; Forari, 2007). Both studies conducted in Cyprus reported that the received music curriculum did not correspond to the official music curriculum but there were points of dissonance among formation, implementation and reception.

Perhaps the focus of the received curriculum should not be on what students take with them when they leave the classroom, but what is happening in the classroom. Practices that are meaningful for the learners enhance the curiosity and positive feelings in music learning. Additionally, when students are in control of their learning and are challenged to follow their desire, their intrinsic motivation will increase. Elliott and Silverman (2014) articulated that "in educative, ethical, and praxial music teaching circumstances, students can achieve flow" in learning to meet the challenges of music making (p. 66). Flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) are instrumental in music practices and can create

self-esteem and happiness in the music classroom. On the contrary, feelings of boredom and frustration can lead to idleness and disengagement from the learning processes.

School context

Hidden/covert music curriculum

Initially used by Jackson (1968), the *hidden curriculum* refers to the implicit values, attitudes and power relations in the school community. These include the entire school culture as it is expressed in the unwritten rules and codes, routines, teachers' attitudes and disciplinary methods used in the classroom and the school playground, in the way that space is organised, and in the messages which are communicated in the school textbooks (Coulby, 2000; Pinar, 2003). These are invisible factors that shape the school environment and the knowledge received by students outside the official contexts (Apple, 1979/2004; Hernández et al., 2013). The hidden curriculum is taken for granted to such a degree that it is often invisible to teachers as well (Regelski, 2021).

Curriculum theorists have highlighted the socio-cultural and socio-economic variables of hidden curricula and their impact on students' education (Apple, 1979/2004; Huber et al., 2011; Pinar, 2003). For example, cases of discrimination in school imply that the principles of democracy and equality, although usually articulated in official curricula, could be subverted by hidden curricula (Spruce, 2015). Students are more likely to succeed in school when their cultural knowledge from family and community converges with hidden curricula. In contrast, hidden curricula may hinder the school performance of students from ethnic, cultural and religious minorities (Rahman, 2013).

In music education, the hidden curriculum can be traced in classroom practices which promote the dominant music culture (Bradley, 2015), by recreating the concert hall model in classrooms, asking students to listen while standing still, quietly, without moving or dancing, and lecturing on great composers' biographies but not making any references to musicians from other musical styles. Such practices can establish the cultural hegemony of the Western art music in the classroom (Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Regelski, 2009), which is an important heritage, but it represents just one of the many cultures of the music world. Such musical thinking and values, which are hidden in the curricula, may have a negative impact on students' natural curiosity about music(s).

Towards an updated comprehensive student-centred music curriculum

Understanding the theories of music curriculum offers the grounds for reviewing the educational objectives of learner-oriented and meaningful music practices. Besides the official music curricula, a number of music curricula were also discussed in above sections, which shape the music learning and development of students. Should we consider the other curricula as enemies or allies? This is not the real question. We certainly cannot ignore them. All types of music curricula should be acknowledged, not as separate entities, but as different aspects of the same process (Johnson-Mardones, 2014).

In curriculum theory, interdisciplinarity suggests focusing the learning on big ideas, such as identity, race, ethnicity, gender, technology and social justice (Pinar, 2011; Walker, 2014). In music education, such an approach implies posing problems and questions that emerge in the real music world (Tobias et al., 2015) so that meta-cognitive skills can be fostered in the classroom. Teaching music in ways that parallel its nature and function in real life (Folkestad, 2006; Wiggins, 2015) creates the conditions for the students to develop musicianship of the 21st century.

An updated and comprehensive music curriculum is centred on learners' experiences and creates the conditions for new music literacies to be developed (Kokkidou, 2018). McCarthy (2009) noted that the shift from a teacher-centered orientation "to a more egalitarian, student-centered orientation highlights several issues about musical and educational values" (p. 31). Learning environments in diverse musical contexts benefit from students' multifaceted realities as long as the strict hierarchical partnership between teachers and students is challenged. Allowing learners to bring their multiple and complex ways in which they interact with music in the classroom implies providing opportunities for their voices to be heard, generating a call for belonging and participation. In addition, providing reasoning about how classroom musical experiences benefit the students promotes learners' agency and social responsibility. In light of the above, our student-centred approach towards a comprehensive music curriculum emphasises on five principles which are discussed below.

Getting to know our students

This is a fundamental practice that needs to be conducted throughout the whole academic year. Starting the music lessons, not with the teachers teaching but with them learning from their students, enables teachers to find out about their students' music identities, cultural backgrounds, previous knowledge, out-of-school experiences, skills, tastes as well as dreams. Such information can be gained through observation and note-keeping, questionnaires, group discussions, and team-work activities. Today, it is often the case that discussions on an individual basis are not allowed due to the large number of students in music class. However, collecting information about all music trends in the classroom is necessary.

The societal and the media/internet music curricula are essential for the development of a comprehensive curriculum that is in line with students' musical needs

and interests (Allsup, 2003; Aróstegui, 2011; Tobias et al., 2015). In and through the perceived curriculum, teachers have the responsibility to make students be aware of the ways that real-life engagement with music shapes them not only musically but also socially, emotionally, aesthetically and morally. This can be reinforced when teachers value and validate students' diverse music cultures. Listening to students' voices is the antipole of an impersonal, formalised and homogenised education, and it is a student-centred approach in real sense.

Discussing the teaching-learning goals with our students

In music classrooms, learners need to be aware of what they are supposed to do and to learn. Given that "the purposes of teachers and students may be diverse, rather than mutual, leading to potential conflicts", one of the challenges for music education is to create a community of practice (Barrett, 2005, p. 19) in which tensions can serve as a means for mutual learning or experimenting. Teachers are responsible for explaining the aims of curriculum, encouraging students to ask questions about the curriculum content, and suggesting learning areas that meet students' expectations (Dewey, 1902).

Student participation in the curriculum can be achieved through exchange and dialogue (Allsup, 2003; Jorgensen, 2003). Dialectical processes can constitute the starting points for the aligned curriculum, function as a basis for reflection on the excluded/null music curriculum, and reveal the hidden music curriculum. Freire (1970) argued that critical teaching and learning enables teachers and students to recreate the knowledge of reality "through common reflection and action" (p. 51). Such interaction between teachers and students is inherently democratic and promotes the social justice of education (Jorgensen, 2023; Spruce, 2015).

Adapting to local conditions

Local conditions refer to the specific classroom, school, neighbourhood, and community in which students live, develop, learn, act, and interact. Curriculum choices "have to be made locally, in each school, in each classroom, for and by each group of learners" (Rolle, 2017, p. 94). Teaching music from a local perspective addresses and benefits students in the classroom (Campbell & Wiggins, 2012). In this direction, the global-local dialectic is another point of tension in curriculum design (McCarthy, 2012). Music is a cultural phenomenon, thus music knowledge cannot be universally applicable. The functions of music should be investigated across the globe as well as within a society (Kokkidou, 2018).

The interconnection among the various contexts can be established through practices that derive from the societal and the aligned music curricula and are meaningful for the individuals. Students can be encouraged to explore the local

music and the traditions that are entwined with it, organise music events in neighbourhoods, public spaces, and care homes, and invite and perform with local musicians in schools. Commitment to the communities implies that educators approach music "with an understanding of its contextually situated nature" which validates and reinforces the main principles of multiculturalism (Bradley, 2012, p. 429). Such a perspective provides open spaces for music contemplation and action. Student-centred education and local society-centred education are intertwined.

Bottom-up and top-down perspectives: Finding the balance through authentic classroom activities

In the bottom-up perspective, students are set as the departure point of the teaching-learning process. This requires the ability to reflect on the implicit constructs of music curricula and their role in the interaction between teachers and students. In contrast, in the top-down perspective, teachers have control over the class and the teaching content. The latter could indeed be effective in the music classroom and students would learn how to sing a song accurately. However, it is probably unlikely to address their diverse worldviews or develop their critical thinking (Abril & Gault, 2016). Listening to students' voices is a philosophical position based on the belief that children's ideas and perceptions are valuable (Després & Dubé, 2020). In this sense, dialoguing with students is a privilege if we wish to achieve the democratic, pedagogical and social goals of music education in the 21st century.

Critical thinking can be promoted by setting the classroom as a problem-solving space where learners try to find solutions to their musical challenges. Students' learning initiatives with other peers, in projects or through methods such as student-as-teacher and student-as-researcher promote expertise on various topics, enhance self-esteem and foster creativity and independent thinking.

The above practices and perspectives lead to a better understanding of the received and hidden music curricula. Insights on students' music cultures can be provided through the use of the societal, familial, and media/internet music curricula. However, this is not an easy task and may have the opposite effect if it is done without consideration and respect to the cultural origin of the specific music(s).

The inclusion of students' music in the curriculum does not necessarily promote cultural equality in the classroom, if this practice is approached using the pedagogical methods of the dominant culture (Bradley, 2015). It is crucial to respect learners' music cultures and adapt teaching approaches accordingly.

Contextualising assessment

The tested music curriculum can be developed on the basis of formative assessment rather than summative, through

asking open-ended and Socratic questions, such as "What was today's lesson about and what basic ideas were covered?", "What did you know about this topic before the lesson?", "How can you make use of what you have just learned?" Such engagement not only indicates what students want to learn in depth, but can also lead to them learning about content, processes and mediums of the official curricula. In addition, regular feedback between teachers and students as well as among students provides insights into the curriculum received and places the aligned curriculum at the center of the teaching-learning process.

In school music education, tested curricula that aim at competition among students, or at measuring outcomes, such as rhythm accuracy or intonation, do not target the substantial value of music education (Aróstegui, 2011; Elliott & Silverman, 2015). In contrast, assessing whether and how students find music knowledge useful can foster skills of lifelong engagement with music. Errors can inform teachers about the type of students' comprehension and can be a great opportunity for constructive feedback and clarification that goes beyond simply providing learners with the correct answers (López-Íñiguez et al., 2022).

Concluding remarks

In this article, we maintain that official music curricula, which shape the teaching-learning processes, are also shaped by other curricula, i.e. the tested/assessed, excluded/null, perceived, aligned, societal, mass media/internet, received and hidden/covert curricula. We advocate for the importance of using these other curricula in synergy with the official ones in the music classrooms. Our suggestion towards an updated, comprehensive and student-centred music curriculum are summarised in five core principles: 1) Getting to know our students, 2) Discussing the teaching-learning goals with our students, 3) Adapting to local conditions, 4) Bottom-up and top-down perspectives: Finding the balance through authentic classroom activities, and 5) Contextualising assessment.

Music curricula cannot exist in isolation from social reality (Regelski, 2023). As society, individuals, music, and musical values are altering, any initiative for curriculum review needs to take into consideration of the specific local, national, and global context (Scott, 2016). Useful insights can be gained from research on music education as well as social research with the emphasis given on reflecting about *why*, *what*, and *how* music is taught, *who* teaches and *who* learns, as well as *when* and *where*. The misleading assumption that music is a fine art as well as the obsolete, elitistic aesthetic values which derive from it (Regelski, 2009) needs to be addressed. Music curricula today should challenge stereotypes and prejudicial treatment, give voice to marginalised groups, and advocate for democratic citizens. Such aims can be achieved when music literacies are also connected with other literacies. It is worth noting that the education systems that are considered successful

have open curricula (Creese et al., 2016; Scott, 2016). In this direction, the less-is-more principle can be a wise option for providing flexibility.

Music educators are able to teach music curricula that address today's challenges by reflecting the teaching-learning aims, reviewing their decisions on ethical criteria (Bowman, 2012), and maintaining traditions that are really worth to be preserved. Ethically-oriented music teachers do not only focus their teaching purely on musical objectives, but also on students' sense of community and belonging. In practice, this means that musical achievements serve greater aims in education, such as finding meaningful ways to connect to others and to the world (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Elliott et al., 2019). Listening to our students' stories and providing them with a forum where they can actively shape their lives might be "a revolutionary action" (Allsup, 2003, p. 12).

Of course there are practical challenges for the above suggestions, given that music teachers often work in various schools and with different cultures. In such contexts, they are required to adapt the goals, content, and methods to the conditions and needs of various individuals and academic institutions. In addition, the resources, time and space for music are limited in curriculum (Aróstegui, 2011; Wright, 2016). Following the principles of critical pedagogy, Abrahams (2005a) suggested that music educators reflect about themselves and their students by asking questions, such as "Who am I?", "Who are my students?", "What could they become?", and "What could we become together"?

One of the biggest challenges for curricula is to prepare the students to live in a world that has not existed yet and might be radically different from today's reality. In a way, curricula are like crystal balls, they refer to the present and at the same time must predict the future. Jorgensen (2003) highlighted the necessity for each generation "to renew education and culture for its time and place" (p. 8). Such renewal can be the starting point for musical, cultural, and societal transformation.

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The authors confirm joint responsibility of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

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