

CHAPTER ONE

Early Childhood Music Education in the Mediterranean; Rational, aims, curriculum standards

Avra Pieridou Skoutella

Introduction - Rational

All our countries are old countries. They are situated on the margins of Europe; around the Mediterranean basin between east and west, north and south, between the European and non-European world, the Christian and non-Christian world. The Mediterranean is far from being a culturally homogeneous territory, but is a particularly complex, fascinating and challenging region. What Mediterranean people have in common is their six thousand years of history which infuses and influences their present existence in multifarious and complex ways.

Due to issues of history, religious differences, nationalist ideologies, political reasons and social class distinction, scholars have failed to study musical cultures in the contexts of Mediterranean cultures especially in comparison among European and non-Europeans, Christian denominations and non-Christian faiths. All these cultures and practices are excluded from our formal and informal music education practices and thus we as Mediterranean people do not know each other enough for intercultural understanding to take place. In fact, in cases such as Spain, Italy, Greece and Cyprus educators and researchers are unaware of the rich diversity of folk, and even the traditional and popular musical traditions of their own countries. As a result, our early childhood music education (ECME) systems have failed to educate our children into the poly-cultural, poly-musical, poly-glossic and multiethnic, syncretic, hybrid and cosmopolitan contexts of the Mediterranean basin. Multicultural cross-cultural interaction and cultural exchange have been taken place throughout the centuries leading to the creation of unique traditions, to syntheses of contrasting but at the same time familiar musical and cultural elements from east and west, north and south, past and present. All these sounds are part of their heritage and of their contemporary context and provide wide and rich availability of cultural values, different and multiple musical identities and profound ways of communicating and creating.

Another important conclusion has been the fact that there is a lack of ‘updating’ all these Mediterranean musical traditions with contemporary music education practices and research in order to providing high quality sound and teaching material to the ECME practitioners. As a result, there is (a) a lack of creativity and participatory music making in formal ECME contexts and practices and (b) a narrow provision of low quality sounds and teaching/learning material.

For us, the Mediterranean cosmopolitan sensibilities in music relate to the need to seriously reconsider issues of cosmopolitanism ‘from below’ in the everyday, ordinary and organic relationships, from ourselves and the children; and the distant or the intimate, the exotic or that people are increasingly able to create trajectories and pass over or through boundaries. This in turn can transform local lives, relationships, social institutions, cultural practices and the sense of identity and belongingness. This cosmopolitan approach *from below* invites music performance and music education move towards more effective musical communication, expression and creation and an intercultural concept of music education.

The Intercultural understanding-learning continuum is organized into four interrelated organizing elements accepting equitable cultural diversity and plurality, diversification:

- Recognizing ‘self’ and ‘other’ culture and developing respect.

- Interacting and empathizing with ‘my’ and ‘yours’, ‘near’ and ‘distant’ sounds and socio-musical practices.
- Creating intercultural experiences and taking responsibility.
- Continuous testing and exploring self and other, creating and recreating musical meaning, contrast and sameness, personal and collective local musical identities in heterogeneous, poly-glossic, multicultural modes and contexts of practice.

Fundamental concepts of interculturality in music education are (a) music-in-human culture (see uses and functions of music in B.4), (b) music-as-sound culture (musical structures, rules and processes), (c) adult-initiated musical practices and products, (d) child-initiated musical practices and products.

Our aim is to break out of limited worlds of culturally defined subjectivities and promote imaginative criticism; by enabling educators and young children to first understand and learn the musical cultures of their country and their nation, community and region away from ideological dilemmas, historical conflicts, allow access to learn and to comparatively understand and appreciate their neighbours’ music on equal terms. Our musical making, learning and teaching as Italians, Spanish, Greeks, Cypriots, Hebrews, etc, are intimately and unavoidably linked with our identities, historical and contemporary as being Mediterranean people, living, socializing and creating in the Mediterranean region. The differences and similarities in Mediterranean region are actually part of our ‘sameness’ of the dynamic nature of our cultures, of our common history, and the human specific trait of making music, of organizing sound according to sociocultural rules and in specific ways.

Our approach, justification, goals and aims

The approach goes through a journey of roughly three stages:

1. The study of the musical culture of our region is considered in terms of its own internal logic, customs, and the artistic, aesthetic, social, cultural values of those who live it and cultivate it. This stage enables us to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of each culture.
2. The comparative investigation focuses on the similarities and universals of music across the different musical cultures and practices. It provides a view of the network of relationships that binds these musical cultures and practices of our region in order to establish different types of linkages between musical traditions (similar elements/values may be found in different contexts, or elements that seem different cross-culturally may operate in similar contexts).
3. The intercultural music education approach attempts to provide a meaningful synthesis of the previous two stages. Our primary aim is to raise consciousness and purposefully, sensitively and critically explore a number of musical procedures, through the lived experiences of various intercultural and socio-musical encounters. These primary goals are musical, referring to teaching the major structural components within different musical styles and traditions. We, as educators and our students should get a perspective of music in culture and as culture – through the stories and fairytales, dances, the musical and cultural experience we should explore together. Music directs the content, structure and methodology of these teaching practices, lesson plans and material.

All cultures have their own native or local musical expressions, which can be readily exploited in the classroom, and the affective and conciliatory nature of these musical expressions can provoke equally conciliatory reactions among children from different cultures. Consequently, it would appear that the sooner children begin to work with music, the better the potential effects on their education in general, as

well as on their musical education and, of course, on their intercultural competence. Music is frequently considered to be a means of expression that can play an important role in a child's physical, emotional and intellectual growth. Similarly, there is widespread agreement that the earlier children start to work with music, the better results they can obtain in relation to their cognitive, emotional, motor and social development. In addition to these advantages, music can also facilitate classroom management and group cohesion. Musical activities help socialisation, collaboration and integration processes in early childhood music education, and are an essential resource for children to adapt to this new stage in their lives. Music and sound are important for auditory development even before children are born. These sounds are essential models of learning for children, and hearing and listening provide sources of input which are essential for imitation, repetition, participatory music making, creativity and improvisation. Musical play encourages resourceful, self-sufficient and self-managed behaviour, and it also provides a context for the generation and expression of individual and group creativity encouraging ingenuity and musical identity, as well as improvement of analytical and critical thinking.

In conjunction with other educational measures, the use of music can contribute to bringing people together, to enhancing mutual appreciation, and to reduce discrimination arising from ethnic and cultural differences. Therefore our approach aims include:

- Encourage encounters between different cultural elements, close in the school or distant from children's localised lives through planned musical activities.
- Facilitate socialisation, integration and adaptation processes for young children.
- Enhance children's emotional and cognitive development.
- Allow children to enjoy the company of classmates regardless of their background culture.
- Help develop children's empathy from multiple cultural perspectives.
- Give students the opportunity of learning songs from their own and other cultural backgrounds.
- Allow children to appreciate songs from other cultures and benefit from multicultural elements present in the school.
- Encourage the sharing of knowledge and encourage familiarity between classmates of the same and different cultures through learning activities.
- Improve respect, tolerance, self-esteem and inspire friendship between classmates through musical activities.
- Reduce conflict between students in the school.
- Encourage equality towards all cultures existing in the school.
- Encourage assertiveness among children through musical activities in groups.
- Initiate students to a culture of peace through musical activities.
- Encourage intercultural creativity from an early age through musical activities in groups.
- To extend peace and tolerance culture in the families and communities through children - students music experiences at school.

The music education manual offers a child-centered education *in certain* Mediterranean's cultures with different yet equal principles and values for different cultures and musical practices and shared universal principles and values. Our aims include:

- To overcome obstacles of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. To create awareness of national and cultural boundaries.
- To foster the development of personal beliefs and social behavior towards Mediterranean cosmopolitanism.
- To empower pupils to function competently (culturally and musically) within the many and multiple music-cultures of a society or within several musical cultures across the region.
- To develop familiarity across the Mediterranean region with understanding and respect.

- To become active, reflective participants.
- To create the necessary conditions for a sustained development of self-esteem.
- To cultivate peace and bridges of knowledge, understanding and communication in order to understand human relationships across the Mediterranean region.

Our musical goals include:

- To develop receptive pupils to diverse and rich types of musical expression.
- To develop a deeper understanding of the sonorous expressiveness of music and how the musical experience is related to cultural values and experiences. We use musical elements and concepts as unifying elements allowing the students to experience them in an immediate and direct way (see teacher curriculum map). It is a broader, global and musically-oriented approach.
- To develop musical ‘flexibility’ and ‘polymusicality’.
- To increase individuals’ ability to perform, listen intelligently and appreciate many types of music.

Our methodology follows the tripartite model *respond (incl. Listen) – create – perform* and a concept-based and process-based approach. Learning *through* music is an active music making: performing, improvising, moving, listening, investigating structure, cultural context and psychological meaning and then reapplying these understandings to the act of making music. These experiences form the basis for empathy.

Focal points of Early Childhood Music Education in the Mediterranean:

- It respects, celebrates and recognizes the normality of diversity in human musical life across the Mediterranean and induces the learner to the processes by which humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of musical being and becoming, enveloping customs, worldviews and musical products; that this breadth of human life enriches all of us.
- It promotes equality and human rights and challenges unfair any historical discrimination among Spanish, Italians, Greeks, Greek Cypriots, Arabs and Israelis.
- It contributes to the moral and spiritual development of the young person and to develop a tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of others
- It prepares the young person for the responsibilities of musical citizenship in the national context and in the context of the wider Mediterranean communities.
- It focuses on cultural differences and similarities in our region.
- It raises children’s awareness of their own culture and attunes them to the fact that there are other ways of behaving and other value systems develop respect for life-styles different from their own.
- It enables children to make informed choices about, and take action on, issues of musical creation and performance.
- It enables all children to musically speak for themselves and articulate their cultures and histories musically.

While it is important to give the child accurate cultural information and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions, developing the child’s intercultural capacity is more effective if it is done through musical processes with the child’s active and critical input. Intercultural education happens naturally through musical identities formation, musical performance and creativity, the human agency exercise, critical thinking and emotional development.

Standards for intercultural early childhood music education in the Mediterranean

1. Singing, alone and with others, a Mediterranean repertoire of music irrespective of language both child-initiated/developed and adult-produced.
2. Performing on instruments/sound material, alone and with others, a Mediterranean repertoire of music irrespective of language, both child-initiated and adult-produced.
3. Improvising melodies, rhythmic patterns variations, and accompaniments for this repertoire.
4. Improvising body movements and quality body gestures suitable to the offered musical repertoire.
5. Developing a rich repertoire of songs across the Mediterranean based on common themes, or common/similar melodic patterns, rhythmic similarities.
6. Reading, representing and notating music.
7. Listening to, analyzing and discussing about dances, musical games and songs.
8. Evaluating music and music performances in terms of aesthetic interpretations, personal and group preferences.
9. Understanding relationships between music, pretend play and story creating.
10. Creating intercultural experiences through music pretend play.
11. Understanding music in relation to history and culture, past and presence, local customs across the Mediterranean.

Please see attachments for Curriculum Maps A & B

Notes to the teachers:

A. Child appropriate educational practice:

1. Developmentally appropriate practice requires teachers knowing the children well and meeting them where they are, facilitating them to reach musical, cultural and educational goals that are both challenging and achievable. It does not mean teach easy material or make the learning process easier for them. Rather it means that the goals and methods are relevant and suitable to a child's learning processes, interests, abilities and challenging enough to promote their potential progress and sustain their motivation and interest.
2. The concept of flow refers to: state of heightened concentration wherein the actor is completely engrossed in an activity, such children during their musical play. The most important condition for flow is a good balance between a challenge and the skill of an actor in a given activity. If the challenges are too difficult, the activity leads to low self-perceptions of confidence and frustration. If they are too simple they lead to boredom and disinterest. It refers to a deep concentration in the present, a sense of collective music-making and performing, of belonging to a musical activity and a community and to feelings of control and belonging. Having entered into a state of pleasure, the children-performers keep repeating their activity over long and different periods of time modifying and adding elements at their own pace in order organically rise to greater challenges. They maintained a proper balance, thereby remaining in this state of pleasure and reward. A flow that is well-established, clearly defined goals and positive, step-by-step feedback are important elements in an intrinsically rewarding activity.

Reference: Csikszentmihalyi, M (1996) *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York: HarperCollins.

3. All teaching practices should be sensitive, inclusive and responsive to the social, cultural, ethnic, racial and religious contexts of their enculturation, the children's worlds, identities, the society, the state and the geographical region in which they live.
4. Best practice is based on knowledge – not on assumptions – of the diversity of how children learn and develop.

5. Research has shown that children learn differently with adults and differently with peers.
6. Motivation is the sustaining force to keep the state of flow throughout the lesson. Therefore although motivation is a strong initial force to start the lesson, it is also the fundamental pillow necessary for the successfully rewarding continuation of the lesson.
7. Emotional expression is also another element that is found in all children's behaviors. Children give out cues regarding the different emotions they experience and express at each learning moment.
8. Gradually as the teacher becomes more tuned-in and experienced in adopting a child-centered 'eye' and 'sense' of music learning and teaching, he/she might develop his own pathway of evaluating early childhood music education practices.

B. Explanatory Note for the curriculum map A:

1. Attentive listening is the directed listening that is focused on musical elements and structures, and that is guided by the use of specific points of focus or diagrams and maps.
2. Engaged listening refers to the active participation by a listener in some extent of music making (e.g. singing a melody, patting a rhythm) while the recorded music sounds.
3. Enactive listening refers to the performance of the work, where the intensive listening to every musical nuance of the selection for the purpose of recreating in performance the music in as stylistically accurate a way as possible.

(Reference: Campbell, P.S. (2004). *Teaching music globally*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4. Uses and functions of music include: emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcement of conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions and religious rituals, contribution to the continuity and stability of culture contribution to the integration of society.

References: Campbell, P. S. (1998/2011) *Songs in their Heads*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Merriam, A. (1964) *Anthropology of Music*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Hand-on tools for understanding and evaluating the music teaching/learning process

Observation:

During the music teaching/learning, move along a continuum between complete observer and complete participant in order to collect data for music learning/teaching evaluation. This role enables the educator to (1) facilitate and provide the necessary stimuli in order to observe children's reactions, (2) encourage children to undertake and develop their own ways of musically be and become in the lesson, (3) to carefully listen and watch for children's micro-behaviors and actions, and (4) to encourage children to talk about their musical responses and formulation of musical meaning and their views on the teaching element.

Observational notes:

Keep some notes during the lesson/activity, while put down notes right after the lesson or as early as possible noting successful strategies and changes for improvement. Critical examination on practice allow a constant cycle of review and forward planning for the teacher to continually develop and improve.

Video recording:

Video recording provides the opportunity to the observer to build on tacit knowledge, both his own and that of members of the group. Each teaching/learning moment can be re-examined repeatedly so that the observer can capture behavioral nuances precisely.

Using an assistant-operated camera, rather than one passively located in the room, facilitates a more focused recording of activities. For instance, the assistant can zoom in on children during the performance and then resume to record group dynamics. Certainly the quality of confidential data recorded is dependent on the empathy of the assistant to the activities.

Initiate conversations with the children or listen to conversations among them:

Such discussions offer the possibility for the children to reflect upon action within and outside of the music learning/teaching context. Taking notes from such conversations might be very useful to your organizing your strategies and your lesson.

Interpretation:

Collect, describe and interpret children's musical activities in order to evaluate the teaching/learning process and decide what is to follow and make lesson plans and activities compatible with the ways children will benefit the most.

Reflective diaries:

In your diary you can put your comments, observations, and your feelings, change of your understandings, good strategies, and bad strategies for each lesson separately. Diaries help teacher keep track of her personal and professional changes about understanding children's ways of learning and about the changes of their feelings regarding their educational practices. Look out for the details of children's ways of music learning, performing and creating.

Questions to consider:

1. Whether and how the children's contribution has helped you accomplish your lesson plan.
2. Did you need to change something (e.g. activity, strategy, material, your actions)?
3. What was your role during the lesson? How did you feel?
4. Did your lesson or teaching unit develop into an integrated holistic musical event?

Facilitating questions (with the contribution of Paola Anselmi):

Young children often do exhibit learning results during structured musical activities, yet they do afterwards while re-use these experiences in different settings and in different situations, especially during free play activities in the school settings and at home. Some questions to consider are the following:

1. With what attitude does the child welcome the arrival of music in class?
2. Does music play an important role during the school day?
3. Is musical experience present in everyday school life?
4. Does he/she re-use during symbolic games objects he/she has been using during music class?
5. Is he/she more active when participating in music activities if compared to other school activities?
6. How long has the class been having a musical teaching experience?
7. Does he/she use everyday objects in a musical way?
8. Does he/she involve his/her classmates and/or symbolic objects in his/her musical games?
9. Does he/she insert musical elements in his/her playing activities? (does he/she sing a lullaby, does he/she conduct an imaginary orchestra, does he/she mimic an unknown singer, does he/she play an instrument, does he/she play the "music class room" role-play...)
10. Do you notice any kind of improvement in his/her way of being part of a group during a ?
 - Is he/she at ease in his/her environment?
 - Does he/she respect his own space and that of others?
 - Does he/she wait for his/her turn?
 - Is he/she more helpful towards his/her mates?
 - Is he/she more careful when arranging and reorganizing school objects?
 - Does he/she express himself/herself more easily during general expressive activities?
 - Does he/she find a different social role within music if compared with other settings? (leader, assistant, follower, free-standing)
11. Did he/she increase the production of spontaneous singing during free playing activities?

12. Did he/she increase his ability to play with rhythm-related words, does he/she invent new words related to familiar music or does he/she improvise new music?
13. Have you noticed any:
 - Language improvements? (verbal productions, articulation of words, tuning profiles).
 - Motor coordination improvements?
 - Creative capacities improvement?
 - Musical representation (iconic, symbolic) improvement?
14. Is musical activity an important channel through which you observe your children's social behaviors?
 - Is the group more united since music became part of everyday activity?
 - Is musical activity an element that aids communication between school and family? How?
 - Is musical activity a particular and important moment of cultural integration? How?
 - Have children developed an "emotional" repertoire? (Music to make happy, to calm down, to get excited, to express their sadness or worry - music to be played together or individually)

Note for the teaching units and lesson plans

Our teaching units and lesson plans constitute one way of dealing with multiculturalism in early childhood music education and might serve as guidelines for interculturality in an early childhood music class. The different ways they are written express the idiosyncrasy of each of the partners, their professional and cultural point of departure and therefore represent different styles. Some are more detailed than others; some are more or less structured. Each teacher is invited to critically reflect on them, omit or add steps, make changes, get inspired for new creative paths of teaching and learning of the proposed sound material and creatively apply them in his/her music teaching practices. Sometimes different teaching units include common sound material. This allows the practitioner to see different perspectives of applying the sound material in music teaching and learning across the Mediterranean contexts of early childhood music education.