

Music Education in Brazil: Music as A Tool for the Complete Development of Students

Abstract: Music in Brazil has always had a secondary importance on the chairs of the schools. Now, through a law created by the Brazilian government, starting on the second half of 2011 all the country's elementary and high schools should include the teaching of music in the official curriculum. This article shows the importance of music education in schools through the results obtained by the Projeto Educação pela Arte (Education through Art Project), developed from 2008 to 2010 in a Brazilian public school located in a poor area of Campinas, São Paulo, with high rates of crime and teenage pregnancy.

Keywords: music, education, schools, brazilian, Brazil.

Educação musical no Brasil: a música como ferramenta para o desenvolvimento completo dos alunos

Resumo: A música no Brasil sempre teve importância secundária, sobretudo nos bancos das escolas. Agora, através de uma lei criada pelo governo brasileiro, as escolas de ensino fundamental e médio do país deverão incluir o ensino de música no currículo oficial a partir de do segundo semestre de 2011. Este artigo mostra a importância do ensino de música nas escolas a partir dos resultados obtidos em através do Projeto Educação pela Arte, desenvolvido entre os anos de 2008 a 2010 em uma escola pública brasileira localizada em uma região pobre da cidade de Campinas, São Paulo, com elevados índices de criminalidade e gravidez entre jovens adolescentes.

Palavras-chave: música, educação, escolas, brasileiro, Brasil



Moisés Cantos

Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas, Center of Culture and Arts

e-mail: moisescantos@puc-campinas.edu.br

web: www.puc-campinas.edu.br/cca

The second half of 2011 was the last year that Brazilian Elementary and High School Education Institutions had to add the music education into the curriculum.

Unlike other countries, teaching music in schools was not mandatory in Brazil. There were several reasons for this, but Santos believes that the lack of preparation of educators was a major factor for the failure of music education in schools in Brazil (Santos, 2005). It is important to remember that “Music being a complex discipline, which covers both theory and practical implementation, it must be taught by qualified people. No compromises. We would not allow someone who had attended a summer course in Physics to teach this discipline in our schools. Why should we tolerate this situation with respect to music? Does it demand less complex acts of discernment? No.” (Shafer, 1991, p. 303)

Several teachers who taught music in Brazilian schools weren't able to sing a perfect fifth interval, let alone play an instrument. On the other hand, musicians themselves hadn't the necessary didactics to be teachers, although many of them were great musicians.

Another reason, raised this time by Fonterrada, is that other segments of society do not value music as much as the musicians (Fonterrada, 2008), even though they consider their value as art. As a consequence, in the 1970s the discipline of Music was replaced by the discipline of Art Education, which determined the disappearance not only of music as a curricular subject, but also of music teachers or music educators (Fonterrada, 2008).

In an attempt to resume the subject, in the late 1990s the Brazilian government published a law sanctioning the return of Music education in schools. About that Penna (2004, p.23) says: “The current LDB (Brazilian guidelines for law), stating that 'art education will be obligatory curriculum at various levels of basic education in order to promote the cultural development of students' (Law 9394/96 - Art. 26 paragraphs 2), provides a space for the arts in schools, as established in 1971 with the inclusion of art education in the full curriculum. And they continue to persist in the vagueness and ambiguity that allow multiplicity, since the term 'art education' can have different interpretations, being necessary to define it more precisely.”

Simultaneously, some institutions, like the Federação das Entidades Assistenciais de Campinas – FEAC (Federation of Welfare Organizations of Campinas) engaged in the struggle to bring music back to Brazilian schools and to contribute to the holistic development of students. In this sense, projects like Educação: Conquista Coletiva (Education: Collective Conquest) developed by FEAC, has supported public schools that wish

to develop activities focused on music and the arts. This support has been translated in investments in logistics, educational resources and the hiring of qualified professionals for the development of activities, as well as the training of existing ones.

These institutions started to minimize the problem of musical education in Brazil, working in an area where the Brazilian government has always been inefficient.

Now, in this new phase, schools should include music in their school programs, but without having the obligation to make its students professional musicians. The focus this time is in providing the complete training of the students, respecting their own limitations and origins and encouraging more their development as persons than as musicians.

This proposal seems to be more consistent with the Brazilian reality. In a project developed from 2008 to 2010, at EMEF Pe. Leão Vallerié (Father Leon Vallerié Elementary and High School), located in the northwest region of Campinas, São Paulo, 130 students had the opportunity to develop activities in music and dance.

The development and performance of these students were accompanied by a multidisciplinary team that considered parameters, so far, hardly observed when the subject is the importance of music and the benefits it brings to people:

- a) Development of the student as a person
- b) Interpersonal Development
- c) School performance

The research engaged 130 students, from age 08 to 16, in music and dance activities in which they learned to play percussion instruments (Marching Band) and dancing (Marching Band Dancers) with the use of tapes and rods.

During the three-year project, these students had classes in their respective groups (instrument and dance) and prepared for presentations at the local community, at other schools and at different celebrations, like Independence Day (September 7 in Brazil).

During the project, students were given instruction on citizenship, interpersonal relationships, sex and drugs, and received support from teachers who helped them in the school subjects that they had more difficulty on. Furthermore, they had the assistance of a multidisciplinary team formed by a music teacher, a dance teacher, a social worker and a psychologist.

The songs or themes played by the fanfare were created by the students themselves, who recorded their musical ideas using their own cell phones (which are very common among lower-class teenagers in Brazil). These ideas were copied (by Bluetooth) to the Music Teacher's cell phone, who in turn created from them the sheet music used on theory classes.

In addition to encouraging creativity, the project proved another use for the cell phones. As result, there was a decrease in cases of sexting and bullying between the students.

The students gathered after school for rehearsals and also to participate in cultural events promoted to bring them closer to each other. They also visited the factory of musical instruments, where they could understand in practice how to apply the concepts of Math, Portuguese Language, Physics and Chemistry that they had learned in those classes.

The survey results finally confirmed what we all believed, but had not been sure of:

- 95% of the students had improved self-esteem
- 62% had improved relationships with teachers and friends
- 73% showed improvement in academic performance

Beyond these promising improvements, other important information was gathered referring to the involvement of civil society groups in the students' development. When asked about the participation of other groups in their development, the result was as follows:

- 49% of the students live with single parents or grandparents and uncles;
- 55% believe that their progress depends more on themselves than on external factors;
- 79% think the teachers are not worried about their progress;

The result of research done in EMEF Pe. Leão Vallerié confirms that involvement of students with music is extremely beneficial, but it's still not enough. The teacher's involvement is essential if full development is to be achieved.

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