

Synergistic approaches in music academic education through designing interdisciplinary projects

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ABSTRACT: In today's education, both traditional and modern teaching methods are needed, as well as the teaching of theoretical knowledge specific to a particular discipline and the corroboration of information with terms, phenomena, and methods of systematization taken from other fields. This research aims to take a synergistic, multilateral, interdisciplinary approach to university music education by combining the knowledge taught in theoretical disciplines such as Musical Forms and Analysis, Music Theory, Music History, Stylistics, Harmony, Counterpoint and the organization of extracurricular activities, projects, partnerships between institutions with the purpose of implementing a viable strategy over time for the development of current and future generations of music students.

KEYWORDS: Teamwork; interdisciplinary approach; co-teaching; co-learning; blended/hybrid learning; open educational resources;

Introduction

Education is a complex process that is constantly changing, affecting all the parties involved, requiring teachers, professors, mentors in every institution to adapt, improve, and even transform in order to ensure the necessary and relevant updates in the context of cultural, social, and political conditions in general. Proposals for change and reform in education and contemporary society are inevitable because, over time, each historical era has brought with it different innovations, opportunities, and challenges in teaching and learning activities. The need for improvement and updating does not only refer to content, but also focuses on teaching methods, application, consolidation, evaluation, and the development of an adequate level of emotional intelligence on the part of the

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disciples, regardless of their age and level of study.

In the current period of the first decades of the 21st century, the educational process is becoming increasingly challenging for mentors and disciples equally, due to numerous changes in mentality, currents of thought, technological innovations, and global issues (immigration, pandemics, wars). The most challenging situations in a university teaching career arise when teachers must quickly find solutions to unexpected situations, adapt to new means of communication, and provide students with study materials, practical applications, learning exercises, and forms of knowledge assessment that motivate them to continue the learning process. An approach based on collaboration, cooperation, mutual support, and the stimulating circulation of ideas will always lead to better results in both teaching and learning, streamlining both teaching and research in the field of academic education.

Premises and general aspects of synergy

In general terms, **synergy** means interactive, multidirectional, and reciprocal cooperation between two or more entities (people, communities, organizations, subjects of study, etc.) to produce a stronger impact than the sum of their separate effects. The term comes from the Greek *synergos*, which means "to work together." In the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, *synergy* is defined in two ways: as the association of several organs or tissues to perform the same function, but also as "the combined power of a group of things when they are working together that is greater than the total power achieved by each working separately (Cambridge Dictionary on-line). Therefore, some basic aspects of synergy are:

- cooperation and collaboration, referring to the forms of activity through which those involved work together to achieve a common goal;
- complementarity, considering the individual skills and unique personal perspectives of each person involved in an activity, traits that complete each other, in order to create the aimed synergistic effect;
- exponential growth which, by the very meaning of the two associated terms, refers to the result of an activity achieved through participation and synergistic involvement (often greater than the sum of its parts). In other words, this parameter, created through collaboration and complementarity, determines achievements that exceed individual possibilities.

Synergy can be observed in many areas – science, technology, economics, education, culture –. The form in which it is promoted and implemented in work activities is the **team**, whose members can be more efficient together, can bring innovative ideas, and discover optimal solutions to challenging situations.

In university music education, synergy refers to the integration of knowledge that is specific to a discipline into other courses and subjects studied, due to the need to relate

to a broader context than that of a single discipline, through the intertwining of information and the circulation of ideas in a stimulating, interactive, and enlightening manner. Active collaboration between different disciplines of study serves to enrich the learning process for students and the methods of applying the knowledge they have assimilated, contributing to the creation of an educational experience that is as useful, enjoyable, and effective as possible. In academic contexts, music can not only be approached in an interdisciplinary manner, but **must** and **should** also be perceived by teachers and transmitted to students from a synergistic perspective by combining theoretical and practical, technical and aesthetic, normative and creative aspects, bringing together multiple points of view in order to provide a holistic understanding of music in all its dimensions. Therefore, collaboration between teachers and students is necessary, as is the use of effective methods, both traditional and modern, and the development of a learning environment that encourages teamwork, interaction, and creativity.

Analysis of literature

Previous research in studies and articles from specialized journals

Synergistic approaches in university music education are well represented in the specialised literature, focusing on the organisation and collaboration of disciplines, the adaptation of the *curriculum* to the context, and the use of different working methods to create a more consistent and effective learning environment.

A relatively recent study that caught our attention due to its direct approach to highlighting certain situations in higher education, not only in Europe, but also on other continents around the world, was written by Ashley Bear and David Skorton (2019). This research emphasizes and demonstrates the idea that holistic education, through the integration of the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and technology, helps students acquire skills and behavioural traits that are more attractive to employers, giving them the chance to develop a richer, more adaptable, and relaxed cultural and psychological profile adaptable, and relaxed, leading them to a balanced existence and a successful career. In the near future, one of the most important goals for university education will be to encourage students to discover and understand the connections between different forms of knowledge. The study strongly emphasizes the idea that employers are increasingly interested in individuals who are both professionally well-trained and capable of solving problems that go beyond the boundaries of disciplines or specializations. "In order to realize a vision of higher education that emphasize the importance of a holistic, integrative education, institutions must first ensure that effective teaching practices are a priority for faculty and administrators. This may mean re-examining incentive structures such as tenure and promotion criteria, which, as everyone knows, too often emphasize and reward publication and grant funding over teaching practices, integrative or otherwise." (Bear & Skorton, 2019, p. 62)

Another study that made a significant contribution to this area of research was published in 2005 by Patrick Schmidt, who explores ways in which music education can be reconceptualized and transformed using the pedagogical principles of renowned Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Schmidt argues that music should be understood as a "way of perceiving" and "a means of interacting with the world." (Schmidt, 2005, p. 9). Synergistic approaches inspired by P. Freire's pedagogy can transform music education, thanks to their emphasis on critical learning and collaborative pedagogy, which determine the power of music to influence human development as a transformative practice. According to the Brazilian philosopher, music should not be approached as a discipline, as an object of study, as this status creates a separation from the reality of the concerns of the world we live in, and music has always contributed to cultural, social, and historical transformations, becoming an integral and inseparable part of other concerns for human well-being and the development of society. If Freire saw education as a process of practicing freedom, in which students become aware of their power to act, Schmidt aims to analyse and demonstrate in his study how critical pedagogy can be applied in music education to actively engage pupils, students, disciples of any age to awaken their motivation, desire to get involved, and their initiative to take concrete actions to enjoy music and freely practice artistic activities. Dialogue is essential in Freirean pedagogy, being a two-way process through which teachers and students work together in an atmosphere of respect and collaboration. The transformative framework through which learning and studying music can encourage students' critical thinking must include a flexible *curriculum* that is relevant to students' experiences and interests, depending on cultural and social diversity. The role of teachers should be as facilitators of learning, guiding students toward discovering information from multiple sources, without imposing themselves as the sole sources of knowledge in the classroom. Schmidt emphasizes the need for a fundamental change in music teaching through the implementation of Freirean practices, in order to make the educational process more relevant, more connected to the general socio-human context and to the needs of students. The study proposes a model of music education that is not only instructive but also transformative, so as to create a secure, motivating, and stimulating learning environment for the development of students as social beings and future members of society.

Renée Crawford (2016) explores in another article the results of an online music education project used in a blended learning or hybrid learning context, an idea that was conceived and implemented with the aim of providing high-quality music learning resources for rural and isolated schools in Australia. Across all continents, it has become clear that teaching and learning pedagogy needs to be rethought for the 21st-century education systems, as a result of the growing needs and changing societal demands. Thus, in Australia, government authorities have expressed concern about the significant

discrepancy between the education promoted in classrooms and what happens in contexts outside of school. In response to this change in mentality brought about by economic, socio-political, and technological transformations, it has become imperative to apply online resources and applications, available to both teachers and students, in all subjects taught in schools, high schools, colleges, academies, and universities, regardless of the field of study.

The project, designed by a group of Australian teachers, is designed for online teaching of music subjects, due to the need identified in regions far from large cities, where there is a widespread problem with the efficiency of teaching methods and the poor quality of the technologies used in teaching both music and other subjects of study. In her research study, R. Crawford formulated three objectives for the project in response to the shortage of music education in the identified target areas: (1) to provide students and teachers in rural and isolated schools with access to high-quality learning materials and resources; (2) to facilitate the use of online music technology in a blended learning context and to engage students in online music composition; (3) to help build capacity within these schools to enable music education and the use of online technology to continue after the project ends. The premise of this project was to find sustainable ways to provide musical experiences and useful resources for students and teachers with limited opportunities to attend elite concerts or high-level artistic events due to location and cost. As education systems adapt to the challenges of the 21st century, blended learning will become a necessity in music education. The music project carried out in Australia was "an example of the positive learning and teaching outcomes that can occur when new technologies are implemented in an authentic and multidimensional way." (Crawford, 2016, p. 210)

Extensive research in individual books or collective volumes with a unifying theme

In addition to studies and articles published in specialized magazines, periodicals, and journals dedicated to both pre-university and academic music education, research topics in the areas of synergy, interdisciplinarity, collaborative teaching, team learning, and mixed methods through the integration of technology into teaching processes have also been addressed in more extensive works such as collective volumes with a unifying theme or individual books, in which these modern perspectives and strategies for working with pupils, students, disciples of different ages and developmental stages have been explored in depth.

Lindsay McGregor and Carol Webb (2019) explore in their volume how these approaches in university teaching can improve the entire educational process in the field of music. The book highlights the importance of integrating music with other academic fields, such as the social sciences, natural sciences, literature, and technology, through courses that combine music theory with aspects of music psychology, historiography with

socio-cultural context research, technology, and even engineering with musical composition and performance. It also discusses pedagogical methods that facilitate interdisciplinary learning, such as group projects, practical workshops, and the use of educational technology. The emphasis is on active assimilation and participatory involvement, with students being encouraged to collaborate to explore and solve complex problems together. However, the interdisciplinary approach also brings numerous challenges, the most important of which are the creation of a coherent and well-structured *curriculum* that effectively combines different disciplines, the need for close collaboration between faculties and departments through flexibility and openness to organizing workshops, communication sessions, and round tables, which involves the acquisition of adequate resources for the development of new teaching methods and educational events. The book emphasizes the need for continuous training and professional development for teachers in order to effectively implement interdisciplinary approaches.

Another significant book of research in this area of investigation is signed by Janet Salmons (2019), who presents strategies for encouraging collaboration among students both in classrooms and in online learning environments, providing examples of theoretical frameworks and case studies to illustrate effective collaborative learning practices. J. Salmons discusses the importance of creating learning environments that facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and synergy, based on the idea that they aim to "synthesize multiple processes that involve both individual and collective efforts." (Salmons, 2023, p. 13) Collaboration involves several types and degrees of cooperation, requiring a clear delineation of tasks from the outset of the project and the possibility of interfering with actions in case of need for support between members and mutual takeover of tasks. An important idea highlighted by the author is that successful collaboration requires a carefully thought-out work plan for finding and using material resources, managing and resolving possible crisis situations, and effectively managing work and interpersonal relationships. And in the case of online activities, team partners must agree on work strategies and the types of technology used, both for real-time synchronization and for individual activities, which must be carried out and completed within the time frame set for the efficient functioning of the entire team and the project.

An important source for research into synergy in contemporary music education is a volume bringing together theoretical works and practical case studies, edited by Helena Gaunt and Heidi Westerlund in their collective research published in 2013. The authors of the chapters have attempted to respond to the challenge of encouraging teachers and mentors in the field of music to become more aware of the multiple implications of interaction and collaboration in music learning, through the need to organize interdisciplinary projects, to introduce and apply collaborative teaching methods, active learning, or through individual courses, all of which are so necessary in

the contemporary context of rapid changes in the cultural industry and in higher education today. Among the topics covered in the studies in this volume are collaborative creativity, the creation of communities of practice, peer learning, collaborative teaching and learning (co-teaching and co-learning), assessment and curricular structures, challenges and opportunities in contemporary music education, emphasizing the need to prepare students for versatile careers that involve teamwork. We note the idea that “the dominant one-to-one mode of tuition has tended to be extended into group contexts, and specifically collaborative possibilities of learning have featured less. This situation is paradoxical: on the one hand music involves, as a necessary element of it, a great amount of individual work (e.g. Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 2008); on the other hand, music is largely collaborative in nature – music-making is rarely a solo affair. Collaboration takes place on multiple levels: between performers, between composers and performers, performers and audiences, teachers and students, and creative artists and their participants.” (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013, pp. 32-33). This volume offers numerous case studies from various higher music education institutions, presenting concrete examples of collaborative projects and educational initiatives. It highlights the role of technology in facilitating co-learning by using online platforms and digital tools that allow students to collaborate remotely. The future of collaborative learning looks at future trends and perspectives in education, emphasizing the need for innovation and adaptability in higher arts education programs.

Formulating a possible theory of synergy in university music education

In order to outline a possible theory of synergy in university music education, a multidimensional approach to this concept would be necessary, including the following aspects: the definition and conceptualization of synergy in the field of music, the philosophical and theoretical foundations of synergy in general, its origins, and theoretical models for unifying, multidisciplinary, and interconnected thinking, followed by pedagogical models and theories developed by worldwide-known musicians, whose work has led to the creation of validated, accredited, and practiced theories in music teaching in international educational systems, ultimately reaching the concrete methods and practices through which synergy can be applied in the academic curriculum in the field of music.

Defining and conceptualizing synergy in the field of music

Synergy can be defined as a dynamic interaction between the components of music education (both pre-university and university) that has the potential to generate results superior to those obtained through individual activity. This principle involves the fusion of the theoretical, practical, and creative aspects of music, both through an interdisciplinary approach and through collaboration between mentors (joint projects,

collaborative teaching, partnerships with teachers from other relevant institutions), between disciples (collaborative learning), between mentors and disciples, as well as between specialists in the same field of research who teach a discipline or between musicians with multiple activities who are concerned with a holistic perspective on music.

The philosophical and theoretical foundations of synergy in a general sense

The foundation on which such a theory of learning should be built requires the bringing together of powerful, interconnected ideas with enduring and universal value, applicable in any contemporary teaching and learning context – aspects formulated by Renée Crawford in a 2014 research study and which we have adapted for university/higher music education.

- **Valued knowledge** – Learning content, including skill development and teaching methods, should be considered relevant and necessary for social contexts. There are significant discrepancy and some tension between what educational institutions consider to be valuable knowledge in education and what students actually value.
- **Authentic learning** – Teaching and learning should be experience-based and connected to students' real-life learning environments. Students' lack of motivation and low interest in participating in classroom activities can be explained by the fact that the knowledge taught in educational institutions is not related to their daily experiences or the specific needs of their future careers, which is why the music they study is not perceived by them as authentic.
- **Multidimensional/non-linear learning** – Teaching and learning practices should reflect today's society, which is multifaceted due to the presence of electronic devices in most places where people live, work, and relax. Therefore, the teaching of music subjects should also integrate technology, online activity programs, and individual study using seamless platforms.

These three concepts work simultaneously, contributing to the holistic practice of learning and to the shaping of a particular phenomenon, referred to by R. Crawford (2014) as *the whole-person phenomenon*, emphasizing the essential impact of a synergistic perspective on the disciplines in the field of music, which involves numerous ramifications and interdisciplinary connections, and is imperative for the harmonious development of the human being, both in its internal structure, through its direct relationship with the psyche, reason, spirituality, and also in the relationship between humans and the external universe, through the way they integrate into different social, economic, and cultural environments.

Origins and theoretical models

In education, synergy is based on theories formulated in other fields of activity,

whose operating mechanism has proven effective in the arts education as well, by transposing basic principles into different contexts.

A theory that exemplifies this is **social constructivism**, promoted through other concepts specific to the field of education by Russian psychologist and theorist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), who emphasized the importance of social and cultural interactions in the cognitive development of human beings at all stages of life. Applying this theory to music education involves collaborative teaching and learning in groups of students. Vygotsky did not use the term “social constructivism” in his writings, but the ideas he promoted formed the basis of this theory:

- the social origin of the mind (Vygotsky believed that human mental and cognitive abilities are not biologically determined, but are created and shaped by using language in the process of interaction and construction of the cultural and social environment);
- the importance of cultural mediation (learning and development are mediated through cultural artifacts such as language, symbols, social tools, and knowledge is transmitted through cultural mediation, unable to develop in isolation from the social context);
- *Zone of Proximal Development* (Vygotsky introduced this concept, abbreviated as ZPD, referring to the difference between a child's current level of development and the level they can reach with the help of tools provided by people with a higher level of knowledge and experience);
- the significance of game and play (which were considered fundamental to children's development, building and practicing mediation skills) (Bruffee, 1986).

As a matter of fact, studies on the use of classroom discussions among students as learning methods are based on the theories that gave rise to social constructivism. Engaging in group discussions allows students to generalize, debate, and correlate their knowledge with each other, playing an essential role in increasing students' ability to test their ideas, synthesize the perspectives of others, and better understand what they are learning. Group discussions give students the opportunity to practice self-regulation, take ownership of their learning, and persevere in completing tasks, increasing motivation and stimulating collaboration skills to solve problems more effectively. In addition, the sense of belonging to a community and teacher-led collaboration in the classroom contribute to raising self-esteem and confidence in one's own abilities by creating opportunities to express oneself, defend a point of view, and discover solutions together with others.

Another theory that provides a solid foundation for theorizing synergy in education is that of **experiential learning**, proposed by the American educational theorist David Kolb (n. 1939). In the early 1970s, the *Experiential Learning Model* – ELM – (Kolb & Fry, 1975) was developed, which promoted learning through direct experience

and individual reflection, generating a cycle consisting of four stages: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualization, and (4) active experimentation of new concepts, followed by their repetition in the same order, generating a perpetual cycle of learning. Although this model is widely used in various fields, the theory has been criticized for its lack of flexibility and excessive simplification. Kolb also gained appreciation in the field of education for his *Learning Style Inventory* (LSI), which refers to the existence of two mutually continuous relationships that constitute the essence of learning:

Active experimentation ↔ Reflective observation
Abstract conceptualization ↔ Concrete experience

By associating each learning style with a principle from the other inter-influence report, four categories of disciples involved in the learning process emerge:

1. **converging** (active experimentation + abstract conceptualization), who are effective at applying ideas in practice and solving problems;
2. **diverging** (reflective observation + concrete experience), who are good at generating ideas and visualizing multiple perspectives;
3. **accommodating** (active experimentation + concrete experience), who are good at adapting to new situations and implementing strategic plans;
4. **assimilating** (reflective observation + abstract conceptualization), who are good at formulating theories and understanding abstract information. (Peterson & Kolb, 2017).

This "inventory" was designed to determine a person's learning preferences based on their native and acquired skills, in order to assimilate new knowledge and develop new skills. Learning is seen as a continuous, cyclical process, necessary throughout life, involving both thinking (observation and reflection) and action (personal experiences, and also application, testing of theoretical ideas). David Kolb's model is widely used in professional development, management and leadership training, both in pre-university and higher education, as well as in adult education courses.

In the context of music education, the principles of experiential learning can be applied to improve the teaching process by integrating theory and practice in the form of group projects, in which the four stages are followed and applied in a coherent learning cycle, using collaborative working methods and personalized development techniques in equal measure (adapting the learning styles identified by Kolb to help teachers personalize learning experiences to better suit the individual preferences and needs of students).

Educational models, pedagogical theories

In the context of music education, teachers, performers, composers, and researchers from different geographical areas and cultural backgrounds have become famous for

developing innovative educational models and pedagogical theories that can also be applied to promote synergy in the vocational academic curriculum. The theories developed by renowned musicians such as Zoltán Kodály, Carl Orff, Shinichi Suzuki, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, and Edwin Elias Gordon are well known. Combining elements from the methodological systems created and implemented by these musicians, researchers, and educators can lead to the creation of integrative, holistic, comprehensive music education programs adapted to different learning styles and needs. Auditory training exercises inspired by Kodály develop musical literacy and sound comprehension skills. The involvement of parents and the community, promoted by the Suzuki method, creates a positive learning environment that stimulates student motivation and engagement. The movement activities proposed by Dalcroze are ideal for kinesthetics' learners, contributing to an understanding of rhythm and musical expressiveness through physical involvement. The Orff-Schulwerk approach, which integrates music, movement, speech, dramatization, and simple percussion instruments, stimulates creativity and active involvement in the process of musical creation. This multisensory method develops children's imagination and helps them experience music and other arts in a syncretic way. On the other hand, Gordon's method, focused on listening, helps students assimilate musical concepts into their own thought processes, contributing to cognitive development and artistic performance.

The **Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance** method was not "invented" by a particular teacher but has its origins in the intuitive practice valued by many musicians around the world, who are performers, teachers, composers, and theorists alike. The method is based on a strategy of working with students in group activities that require the involvement of a larger number of participants than classroom lessons, such as choirs, orchestras, and instrumental ensembles of various sizes. The method promotes a holistic approach to music education, integrating theoretical disciplines and musical analysis, vocal or instrumental performance, and even some notions, skills, and attempts at composition and conducting. Within this theory, rehearsals are not just activities for practicing performance together, but are approached as workshops in which students are encouraged to observe and understand the components of musical discourse (melody, rhythm, harmony, notation, timbre, form) by analysing the score to be rehearsed, as well as other musical works, by participating in various specialized courses, taking on "roles" such as vocal or instrumental performance, improvisation, arrangement, composition, conducting, and music analysis (information available on the website of Wisconsin Music Educators Association).

The Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (CMP) project was initiated in the US state of Wisconsin in 1977 as a way to bring together and support teachers in improving music teaching and performance on various instruments through a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts and awareness of them during musical

practice. The project began with a group of music teachers from different school districts and a project steering committee that developed the administrative framework of the association. The teachers developed and tested a process for planning and conducting music instruction in target groups from different schools. The initial need for the project was formulated and argued by well-known educators such as Charles Benner, who wrote that "in order to have an impact on musical behaviour, there must be a planned effort on the part of the teacher to enrich the experience of performance with additional modes of musical understanding." (Benner, 1972) The choice of musical styles or genres to be addressed starts with an assessment of the student's needs or previous experiences, with the analysis facilitating the recognition of those musical elements that need to be learned in order to develop comprehensive musical competence through performance. Teachers' strategies aim to bring music and performers together so that effective learning and successful performance of a score take place through interweaving, complementing, and consolidating in the same work sessions. This vision promotes an integrative and inclusive form of music learning through teamwork, promoting cohesion among ensemble members, and approaching interdisciplinary knowledge in related musical disciplines, thus contributing to the creation of a coherent and flexible curriculum, the development of a music-specific vocational education system, and the deepening of artistic research.

By integrating these methods, teachers, mentors, and educators capitalize on the strengths of each approach, providing students with a diverse and important musical experience for harmonious development. A balanced educational strategy can integrate elements from each working system to access the artistic potential of students as deeply as possible, giving them the opportunity to develop their skills effectively, regardless of their learning style.

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The following pedagogical models are not specific to the field of music, but are particularly relevant to educational systems around the world, having proven their effectiveness over time through numerous studies and research on these topics and through methods of implementing ideas drawn from theories originating in other fields of study, adapting them and applying them in teaching activities with different age groups and levels of experience.

Transformative pedagogy, theorized by Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, was mentioned and discussed in one of the previous chapters of this study, in which we discussed the existing literature on synergy in education. Even though it is not a method of teaching music *per se*, this approach is important in a general sense for the field of education, as it emphasizes the process of social and personal transformation, going beyond the transmission of knowledge from teacher to students. The key concept promoted by Freire is *critical consciousness*, whereby education should help students become aware of the social, economic, and political realities that influence their lives,

implying awareness of the general systems, critical analysis, sense of agency, action and transformation. The idea behind this education system is that there is no such thing as a neutral educational process, as education either functions as a tool used to shape the formation of generations according to the norms of society and to facilitate their integration into the logic of that system, or it becomes the *practice of freedom*, that is, a distinct path of formation and development of critical thinking through which students, future citizens of society, consciously confront the reality of their time and discover how to contribute to changing, correcting, or improving the system in which they live. In Freirean transformative pedagogy, the teaching process is based on dialogue, promoting the exchange of ideas between teachers and students in a relationship of equality, and education acquires extraordinary power as a practice of freedom, providing students with the thinking tools necessary to intervene in community life and in the socio-political decisions that influence their lives. Thus, students are encouraged to become co-creators of knowledge, not just passive recipients, so that education is an active, implicative and participatory process.

Co-teaching [Collaborative teaching] methods (Robinson * Schaible, 1995; Benjamin, 2000; Helms et al. 2005; Anderson & Landy, 2006; Bouck, 2007; Vlahopol, 2018) constitute a pedagogical approach in which two or more teachers work together, in an equal partnership, to design, plan, and organize lessons together and to implement common teaching, reinforcement, and assessment methods, providing personalized support and effective activities for a common group of pupils, students, disciples, aiming to optimize learning outcomes through the use of synergy and professional openness to novelty, diversity, and collaboration. The implementation of this working model in academic music education involves creating a curriculum that allows teachers to participate in each other's courses, encouraging continuous training through the possibility of traveling and regularly attending workshops and debates on the efficiency of higher music education, to ensure the development of projects and activities that integrate the principles of collaboration and the interweaving of knowledge assimilated in several disciplines and, as a much-desired outcome at the end of semesters or study cycles, to include the holistic assessment of students through evaluating methods that take into account their progress from multiple perspectives, in several directions of the training process and professionalization.

In the same area of collaborative education, there are numerous studies and research projects (Goodsell et al. 1992; Panitz & Panitz, 1997; Luce, 2001; Kelly, 2002; Nel & Wilkinson, 2006; Vlahopol, 2016) on the application of **Co-learning [collaborative learning] methods** among pupils and students, by organising them into small groups of three to four people, assigning distinct tasks to each team member, with the aim of achieving common learning objectives and obtaining better results together than individually. At the same time, this way of working contributes to the development of

communication skills and critical thinking through interaction and the ability to cooperate with colleagues through effective debates and the selection of optimal solutions. As a pedagogical strategy, collaborative learning aims to give students responsibility for their own learning, while the teacher rethinks their role in the classroom, changing their mindset from being the sole source of knowledge to that of a coordinator or team coach, directing the learning process by being among and alongside their students to facilitate the understanding of information and the use of knowledge acquired in team activities.

By applying these renowned pedagogical models, university music education can become more effective, providing students with a balanced and useful musical education in the long term.

Applying synergy in the academic curriculum in the field of music

In The concrete forms through which synergistic pedagogical approaches can be implemented are interdisciplinary activities, such as concerts, performances, recitals, as well as scientific events such as conferences, symposiums, communication sessions, or practical workshops, collaborative projects between teachers within the same discipline (courses with teams of teachers) and between mentors who teach different disciplines in the field of music (combined courses), cooperative tasks between students (group projects), creative or research laboratories, online digital platforms that meet the need for widely accessible and available educational resources (Open Educational Resources), Blended/Hybrid Learning methods (face-to-face teaching combined with distance learning, using digital programs and resources), sessions for presenting one's own work (compositions, arrangements, analyses, research, concert repertoires to be conducted, etc.) with critical feedback from peers and teachers, lessons or moments in the lesson dedicated to student self-assessment, in order to identify their own strengths and areas for improvement.

In the context of academic education, synergy can be achieved through various methods and professional practices that combine musical expertise with other fields:

a. Integrating ideas of individual contribution, creation and composition into the discipline of Theory. Solfeggio. Dictation

As students assimilate the fundamental principles of Music Theory, developing their skills in intonation of solfeggio pieces of varying degrees of difficulty and in the correct notation of musical dictations, this knowledge is supplemented, during the years of their studies, with increasingly advanced skills through the study of theoretical disciplines such as harmony, counterpoint, and musical forms. The assimilation of basic concepts and techniques in these areas of study allows their application in the process of composition. Thus, activities that stimulate musical creativity can also be approached with students studying specializations other than composition, through interactive workshops and practical projects, where students can experiment with their ideas, giving rise to original works. The analysis of established musical creations from the European academic

repertoire contributes even more to the creation of a deep connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application, developing students' imagination and their ability to use principles of construction, writing, and elaboration based on a thorough understanding of musical mechanisms.

b. Contextualizing compositional, performative, and analytical practices in historical contexts with their corresponding musical styles

Music history is a particularly vast and elaborate academic course, branching out into a multitude of connections with other theoretical and practical disciplines alike. Starting from learning about historical periods, artistic currents, and traditional compositional schools, as well as the styles, genres, and musical languages representative of each historical stage, every student must learn that all this knowledge is not only made of abstract notions and facts that took place in temporal sequences disconnected from our days, but consists of phenomena, conditions, and processes of universal circuit in constant motion, transformation, interaction. The social, cultural, economic, and political context determines the evolution of performance practices and the conditions for organizing events for the presentation of musical creations in different environments and locations (closed or open spaces, religious institutions or halls for cultural-artistic events, private or public places, intended for either a wide or limited audience). A synergistic approach to teaching music history may include listening to old recordings, studying manuscripts available in online archives, comparative analysis of two or more documentary sources, interpretations or critical commentaries from the same period, referring to the same musical phenomenon or the same performed work. Through this process, students learn to appreciate and distinguish between particular features of artistic currents, to understand how cultural and social contexts have shaped compositional styles, writing techniques, and performative practices, so that they can build in their minds an informed and authentic overview of music history.

c. Stimulating students' interest in ethnomusicology, world music traditions, and cultural studies in musicological research

Students can explore the diversity of musical traditions around the world, analysing not only elements of genre, style, and musical language, but also the social, cultural, and geographical context in which they were formed and developed. Cultural identity is a topic of current interest in all fields, and the way in which music reflects and influences different cultures around the world requires a special approach within the academic curriculum so that students can learn about, respect, and appreciate the values, traditions, and artistic concerns of other peoples, sometimes even learning about the social issues or conflicts that determine certain currents of thought, education, and artistic expression in a geographical-cultural area. Coordinating teachers can engage students in discussion and debate sessions, in individual or group research projects, which can result in research studies and bachelor's theses on topics related to these areas of interest. They

can also organize international mobility programs to facilitate the exchange of intercultural experiences, so that there are numerous benefits for a balanced understanding of global musical diversity, by connecting to the most authentic sources of documentation and experimentation.

d. The study of specific teaching methods and musical systems by integrating them into their historical context and adapting them to contemporary education

The pedagogical models described in subchapter 4.4. are referential methods in the field of music education worldwide, but they are not included and studied in all institutions that train future musicians. It is necessary for these methods to be studied primarily by students enrolled in programs focusing on music pedagogy or music in general, but also by future conductors, composers, musicologists, and performers, because any musician will need this knowledge in their career. Whether working with younger or older age groups, with children, young people, or adults, with individual students in instrument or singing lessons, with classes of students, or with choral or orchestral ensembles, etc., a musician must possess knowledge and skills related to teaching, in addition to the professional training corresponding to their specialization. The future is often unpredictable, and the subsequent path of a graduate in the field of music may undergo changes in direction and context, requiring the adaptation of acquired knowledge and experience to unforeseen situations. Therefore, knowledge of the Kodály, Orff, Suzuki, Dalcroze, Gordon, Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance, and transformative pedagogy methods, Co-teaching [collaborative teaching] and Co-learning [collaborative learning] methods are important in the training and development of future generations of musicians, as the specific nature of an artistic career generally involves working with people, interacting with the public, disciples, members of an ensemble, contact with the press, so communication skills and the ability to convey complex information in an essentialised form are necessary, through the ability to synthesise and simplify scholarly concepts and through the adaptative use of working tools specific to the aforementioned teaching methods.

All these ideas and techniques for applying the concept of synergy in academic music education promote a collaborative learning environment that is stimulating for both mentors and disciples, leading to significant changes in students' attitudes toward the subjects they are studying, in particular, and toward the learning process in general. An important idea to highlight is that synergistic approaches in the educational process do not seek to eliminate classical teaching methods (based on the teacher's lecture and the students' written notes), but aim to combine the traditional style with modern techniques, so that they coexist in a balanced and efficient way, promoting active learning, debate, testing, and the application of ideas.

Synergistic assessment also involves combining traditional forms of assessment with new methods, through daily or weekly observations, quick tests and questionnaires,

classroom discussions, questions and answers sessions, feedback on previously proposed topics and lessons taught in class, but also by requesting the writing of summary essays, diagrams with essential information on a given topic, oral presentations based on certain ideas suggested by the teacher, etc. A fair and effective assessment must always consider the improvement of the learning process in real time and the quantification of results at the end of a study unit, semester, or school/university year, to observe the degree of achievement of the teaching objectives. Thus, assessment adapted to a synergistic teaching-learning style involves both ongoing assessment (formative assessment) and final examination (summative assessment), as it aims at continuous learning, regular and frequent feedback, ongoing improvement of students' level, as well as the overall measurement of their progress and performance level, and their ability to synthesise and extract the necessary information from the knowledge they have assimilated so as to solve a specific task.

Conclusions – Benefits of synergistic approaches in university music education

A balanced educational system, involving both traditional methods and new techniques adapted to the contemporary context of life, which emphasizes both the stimulating evolution of teachers and the harmonious development of students, brings numerous benefits to all parties involved in this process, leading to an increase in the overall level of motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and preparation for a fulfilling career. Synergistic education values communication, cooperation, and creativity, contributing to the development of social skills and adaptability, improving individual expression and the ability to collaborate in team projects, taking responsibility, stimulating critical thinking, and discovering viable solutions.

Applying synergy in university music education requires a shift of paradigm in the pedagogical approach, necessary for the training and multilateral formation of future generations of musicians, so as to provide them with sufficient training to enter the field of work, perform at the highest level, and adapt to the dynamic demands of an artistic career in today's world, which is in constant motion and transformation. An integrative approach is essential for synergistic teaching processes, which must be designed in a structured and organized manner to enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to use them as effectively as possible.

The implementation of a synergistic educational system will lead to improvements in academic performance in the short term, and in the long term, it will contribute to the development of a complex and versatile artistic personality, ensuring the multidimensional evolution of both students and mentors alike. Creating a holistic perspective on music helps young graduates integrate harmoniously into society,

providing them with the necessary tools for thinking about the essential role that music plays on all existential levels.

Therefore, synergy is both an educational strategy and a vital pragmatic perspective on the 21st century, encouraging people to think in multiple directions, observe connections, understand mechanisms, collaborate, and work effectively together in an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

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