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Economic rationale shaping music teacher education: the case of Spain

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Abstract

This article discusses the literature on music teacher education programmes for mainstream education in order to undertake critical reflection on what we are doing and why in our university classrooms, what theories are implicit and what could be done to improve our programmes. After analysis, mainly from European contexts, and considering the Spanish one in particular, we find an influence of the economic – and, ultimately, political – rationale on substantial aspects, manifested in apparent disjunctions between musical and educational features, as well as in formal issues, fundamentally due to the European Higher Education Area. In the end, it is concluded that, without renouncing the economic aspects, curricula should be more addressed towards the integration of pedagogical and musical knowledge, and the treatment of aspects related to social justice, if we do not want an uncritical reproduction of rationalities that are often obsolete in the training of pre-service music teachers.

Keywords: Music teacher education; social justice; economy and education; music education

Introduction

Capitalism and its proposal to diversify labour markets has atomised and regulated roles, spaces, relationships and knowledge in social life. As a consequence, schools and universities have been forced to reconfigure their training profiles, which currently have more to do with the professional specialisation and flexibility of teachers in order to be adapted to the labour market and the consequent instrumentalisation of knowledge, than with the real needs of each degree (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2014). In the case of teacher training, this economic conception would omit the intellectual profile of the teaching staff and, consequently, limit critical proposals in education (Giroux, 1997). At the same time, training traditions in music teacher education (MTE) have tended to be, on the one hand, academicist, with their strongly conservative character in the sense of the inalterability of Eurocentric musical knowledge, and, on the other hand, practical in the search for adaptation to the school situation (Ballantyne, 2007).

Within this contextual framework, we reflect on the influence of economic logic in the design and development of MTE programmes. For this reflection, we start with a review of the literature on MTE curricula in ordinary education in order to find out what we are doing and why in our university classrooms, what theories are implicit in them and what could be done to improve them. We will mainly consider the European context at large with emphasis on the Spanish one in particular.

The literature review is narrative and qualitative, following the procedure proposed by Guirao (2015). In this regard, we searched for literature in both English and Spanish languages in the main journal indexing databases (WoS; SCOPUS; EBSCO; Dialnet; Google Scholar; and DOAJ)

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and set up the search using various keywords such as music teacher training, educational policy, social justice, and music education. From this search, 68 articles were collected, 22 from the Spanish context and 46 from the international. Subsequently, analysis of this literature was organised into categories including economic rationale, social justice, teacher education (theoretical, practical, music, general, concurrent, consecutive) and European convergence. This categorisation left out 15 articles, since they coped with topics peripheral to the categories worked on.

After the review we found, on the one hand, that the main issues affecting the design and development of curricula are posed as dilemmas between two apparently opposing options. This probably happens as a reflection of the capitalist economic logic – characterised by dichotomic splits such as production and market, owner and workers, and so forth – that permeates our social life and the training traditions in MTE, as we will argue throughout the article. On the other hand, we also find that the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a framework that conditions the design and development of teacher education programmes, also with an economic emphasis. This may seem a truism, since obviously the EHEA is the framework in which this and any other degree course is developed and therefore has to influence the design and development of curricula. However, in the literature review we find specific circumstances that condition MTE, and which we will refer to in the corresponding section. All these issues are evidences of the economic rationale priming at all levels of MTE curriculum design and development, which neglects inescapable issues in a democratic education system, such as social justice.

We then go on to present the review of the literature, starting with the dilemmas encountered that are common to most of the programmes in MTE across the world, and then discuss the EHEA and the consequences it has brought for the teachers' training programmes concretely in Spain as illustration of how the economic rationale shapes MTE programmes. Finally, we draw some conclusions, which can be summarised as the need to develop curricula that goes beyond the usual disciplinary and performative training, including social issues of our current world.

Tensions or disjunctions in the curricula

Theory and practice

The economic logic implicit in the design and development of teacher education curricula presents a first tension or dilemma focused on the relationship between educational theory and practice, and the influence that each of them should have on initial training and subsequent professional development. A recurring theme in teacher education in general is the question of how much weight should be given to training in psychological and pedagogical theories (i.e., educational research) and how much should be given to teaching and practice. If the emphasis is on abstract knowledge rather than concrete skills, the result may be a “praxis shock” when pre-service teachers start their professional career, or even in the internship phase (Vonk, 2018). And if we put the emphasis on practice, teacher education and its subsequent curriculum development in school becomes a recipe book of unreflective activities (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996). However, every teaching action carries an implicit moral conception that is impossible to separate from theory, that is, the explicitness of our moral choice in practice (Aróstegui, 2000). And since it is impossible to reach unanimity on the moral ideal of education, “we would do better to find ways to reconcile our differences, while enriching our community life through democratic debate” (Gutmann, 1987, p. 12).

Education and music

A second disjunction found is between musical and educational issues. This tension is a consequence of the former, but specific to music education. That is, here the conflict is manifested

by understanding “theory” as approaches focused on general education or psychological aspects, and “practice” as training more focused on musical making, as understood by musicians dedicated to teaching from the perspective of active music methodologies (Heiling & Aróstegui, 2011). These authors found that such tensions end up translating into curricula either considering music teaching as an end in itself or using it as a means to achieve school curriculum objectives. The former supports the concept of “music education” per se, that is, educating for music, and would be carried out by, literally, “music teachers,” while the latter could be considered as “educational music” taught by “educating musicians” who educate through music (Aróstegui, 2011; Hoskyns, 2002).

Therefore, the question is what balance there needs to be between musical and pedagogical education. In the case of a “music education” as an end in itself, the pedagogical component becomes dispensable and at best complementary to what really matters to this perspective: the music itself. So, very often, when music teachers talk about practice they are referring to musical practice rather than teaching practice. From this point of view, the increased attention paid to music practice may mean that being a good musician is the main, if not the only, requirement for being a good music teacher (Aróstegui & Cisneros-Cohernour, 2010).

The described tension between theory and practice leading to the dilemma between education and music will inevitably be reflected in each MTE programme. As a result, more emphasis will be placed on one element or the other, depending on what the curriculum understands as pedagogical practice, more directed towards music teaching or education through music. These different ways of training teachers will, in turn, give rise to different approaches to teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Díez & Raths, 2007; Hallam, 2006; Knowles, 1992; Olsen, 2016; Sachs, 2005), as teaching practice is defined by much more than the interaction between their teaching skills and the learning context in which the curriculum takes place. This interaction, which is mediated by a dynamic element (Clemente, 2007), integrates motivations and intentions that depend on the circumstances in which theory and practice interact, thus conforming their identity.

Much research in the field of identity in music education (Ballantyne et al., 2012; Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Bouij, 1998; Hargreaves et al., 2007; Mark, 1998; Pellegrino, 2009; Scheib, 2006) has revealed that pre-service teachers perceive themselves either as “experts in the discipline” or as “teachers,” depending largely on their experiences before entering university. Teaching identity thus becomes a key element that explains whether they perceive themselves as educators or as musicians.

Generalist and specialist

A new tension is derived from the two previous ones: that of who should teach music in general education, the generalist teacher or the specialist. Different arguments are given in favour of one or the other position. A generalist teacher tends to focus more on the academic part of the musical content than on aesthetics, serving as a means to work on other fields (such as vocabulary), while perceiving that the time devoted to music means taking it away from the “core” disciplines (Bresler, 1993). On the other hand, when the teacher is a specialist, there is a risk of cultural reproduction, as they see themselves as musicians and not as teachers (*ibid.*). Aróstegui & Kyakuwa (2021), on the other hand, argue that either position can be valid or wrong as long as the focus moves from content, whether musical or general curriculum content, to the actual needs of the student body, regardless of whether the teacher is a generalist or a specialist.

In a study on the implementation of music standards in the USA, Byo (2000) found striking differences between generalist and specialist music teachers:

Generalists’ responses [to a questionnaire] were likely based upon scant prior knowledge about the existence, content, or implementation of the music standards. Music specialists’

responses reflected significantly more familiarity with the standards' content and implications for implementation, while many expressed a lack of knowledge about their existence (p. 33).

Byo also found that music specialists rely less on the assistance of generalists, but generalists need the assistance of music specialists to successfully implement most standards.

Concurrent and consecutive training

The tensions and disjunctions indicated in the previous points arise, and at the same time derive, from what the latest Eurydice Report of the European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2017) on teacher training in Europe points out: the existence of two widely extended training paths, concurrent and consecutive programmes. The former is characterised by the fact that disciplinary training in content and pedagogical training take place at the same time, while in the consecutive mode there is first training focused on the disciplinary and later on the pedagogical (Valle & Manso, 2011). As we present below, the literature shows variety within the European countries.

In the concurrent modality, future educators go through a programme with general and specific psycho-pedagogical training lines of different disciplines and those specific of music. In addition, these pre-service music teachers have the possibility of living early experiences as educators, thus being able to "relate theory and practice, significantly enhancing the professional nature of the degree" (Iotova & Siebenaler, 2018, p. 308). The strong emphasis on the pedagogical aspect of these programmes (Manso & Martín, 2014) is reflected in "the practical model, with some presence of the academic model and the playful communicative model, and with very little presence of the complex model" (Duque & Jorquera, 2013, p. 254). That this modality is the one applied to train teachers, in the case of Spain at primary level, would imply a training that seeks adaptation to the demands of the school, while at the same time building a practical professionalism and self-definition as a music educator (Esteve, 2003; Duque & Jorquera, 2013).

Following the example of Spain, the MTE for secondary education takes the consecutive training itinerary. This is a master's degree in which graduates from one of the music degrees on offer (and from other disciplines in the school curriculum) access training with a focus on general and specific psycho-pedagogical lines of music education. This means that, once musical expertise has been acquired in the first stage, which lasts four years, an attempt is made to articulate this training with pedagogical experiences, lasting one more year.

This training modality implies a distance between musical training and the educational phenomenon of the school, which would "easily translate into a training situation in which theory and practice are isolated from each other and in which student teachers are trained in an environment separated from the future school reality" (Valcke, 2013, p. 61). This separation makes it essential to articulate previous musical skills and professionalism with the new educational experiences acquired in the master's degree (González-Sanmamed, 2015). However, the sought-after articulation between disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge is sometimes difficult to achieve (Shulman, 1986), probably due to the difficulty of integrating self-concepts as a musician with new concepts of what it is to be a teacher and educational practice (Esteve, 2003; Duque & Jorquera, 2013), which connects with the issue of teaching and musical identities previously discussed.

If we put these two training structures face to face, a bi-national research carried out in Switzerland and France (Güeswell *et al.*, 2017) points out that there are no differences in perceptions of preparation for music teaching between students of the concurrent and consecutive model, although it refers to the need to have a musical proficiency appropriate to the school demands. However, beyond the training pathways, it is suggested that MTE programmes strike a balance between musical and pedagogical knowledge (OECD, 2019) and give "the opportunity to

reflect on identity issues from different points of view” (Bouij, 2007, p. 13), issues mainly problematic in secondary teacher education because of the consecutive mode on which it is based.

The influence of the EHEA on the development of MTE curricula

In 1999, the countries of the European Union signed the Bologna Declaration, the agreement that laid the foundations for the construction of a common EHEA, for which quality, mobility, diversity and competitiveness were basic principles. This process entailed significant changes in the regulations of the different European universities and, consequently, in their degrees, which had to be student-centred rather than content-centred (Rodríguez-Quiles, 2010a). With the backing of an increasingly present globalisation, an equivalent system was sought, that is to say, a European convergence that would facilitate the mobility of students, teaching staff and graduates between all the countries that adhere to it (49 at present). There was a desire to homogenise qualifications in order to provide students with a comprehensive education and thus achieve the same job opportunities for all Europeans (Díaz, 2005).

To make this possible, equivalence between degrees was established through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System with the same academic structure: a bachelor’s degree as the backbone, followed by master and doctoral programmes. In other words, curricula were organised in a two-cycle system: the first cycle was professionally oriented, providing students with comprehensive training and specific knowledge for the world of work, and the second cycle focused on academic specialisation (Aróstegui, 2006).

If we focus on observing the economic logic implicit in the education system, López-Peláez (2019) draws a double parallel between the euro and the EHEA: first, both allow mobility without barriers, one in the business world and the other in the world of higher education; second, in the same way that the euro was designed on the basis of the strongest national currency that existed until then, the German mark, the EHEA is made in the image and likeness of the Anglo-Saxon university model, initially of the United Kingdom and Ireland and later assimilated by the Netherlands and Sweden. This university system, in contrast to the French and Spanish models, is characterised by fewer lectures, more group tutorials, not so many exams and an increasing emphasis on student presentations and independent work.

As is logical, all these changes made in pursuit of European convergence also affected the MTE. Specifically, in Spain, it meant the disappearance of the degree of specialist teacher in music education, creating in its place a degree in primary education, within which there is a specialisation in music education much shorter than it used to be with the prior degree. The two main reasons for this disappearance are set out in the *Libro Blanco de Magisterio* (White Book of Teacher Education) (ANECA, 2005) which was the basis for the reform of teacher training studies in Spain:

1. Specialist teachers need to be trained to work as generalists in primary education, as this is what they will be doing in practice when they are in school to complete their working day.
2. The training of specialist teachers is completely misaligned with the needs of the labour market.

With the disappearance of the specialist degrees, a new one in Primary Education was created according to the EHEA requirements, with some specialisation during the last year. Even though these programmes went from three to four years, time allotted to this specialisation in music education for primary school teachers was drastically reduced – as average, 50% fewer credits, depending on the programme. In the case of secondary school teachers, this led to an increase in instructional and pedagogical content (Carrillo & Vilar, 2016; Valdés & Bolívar, 2014), although for them, specialised music training continued to fall

more heavily on the music departments (i.e., musicology) than on music education departments, with the consequent emphasis that in principle continued to be placed on the disciplinary as opposed to the pedagogical (Aróstegui & Kyakuwa, 2021).

Heterogeneous convergence

This is, briefly, the situation in Spain with regard to the MTE after the 2010 curriculum reform we have taken as example of the implementation of the EHEA in these studies. One might think that, if there is a common framework throughout the EHEA, the studies carried out should be similar in the other European countries, which is not at all the case. Aróstegui and Cisneros-Cohernour (2010) show how the countries that are part of the EHEA have curricula with differences in terms of structure, content and the professional who is in charge of music education (music specialist or generalist classroom teacher). On this last point, Muruamendiaraz *et al.* (2010) add that in countries such as France, for example, there is not even the figure of music specialist for primary education, which conditions the training of teachers who will teach music and their ability to carry out different musical activities in the classroom. Díaz (2005), paraphrasing Tafuri (2000), comments that in Italy, too, there is no specialisation in music for teachers throughout their training. In fact, she specifies that in primary school there is no fixed timetable established for this subject, which means that music education at this stage is severely lacking, according to these authors. The same happens in Portugal, where in the primary stage, the music specialist only appears as a compulsory subject during the middle cycle, and the generalist is the one who teaches music in the initial cycle, leaving this subject as optional in the upper cycle (Díaz, 2005). Likewise, the number of hours of music training received by music teachers in different countries is also disparate (Muruamendiaraz *et al.*, 2010). Finally, the study by Ferm *et al.* (2015), focused on Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway and Finland), points out that not only the qualifications but also the knowledge and educational traditions of the different music courses are diverse among countries. This situation, that of diversity, would be deepened once music teacher training in Germany and Austria remain reluctant to European convergence due to their musical traditions (Rodríguez-Quiles, 2010b). Thus, it is noted that, as far as music education training is concerned, the same reform policy, that of European convergence in higher education, has different implementations and effects in each country because, although the criteria are the same, the context is not, hence the different impact.

While these different consequences are worthy of further discussion, for the purposes of this paper what it matters is that there is no homogeneity between the different orientations of music teacher education curricula, as some countries focus on the study of pedagogical or educational-musical aspects, while others emphasise more technical aspects of music education (Heiling, 2010). There are also other countries, such as the United Kingdom, which present curricula that seek a balance between both aspects (Herrera *et al.*, 2010; Kaschub & Smith, 2014), but this is not the general trend. For example, in the study carried out by Díaz (2010) on the curricula of the Baltic countries, it is emphasised that the weight that the musical and the educational aspects should have in music education is an unresolved debate that determines the professional profile of future teachers, as it is the case in Southern Europe (Carmona & Jurado, 2010).

It can be concluded, therefore, that the EHEA does not seem to have been able to cope with the dichotomies previously discussed in relation to MTE, which is but a product of the very idiosyncrasies of the different institutions in charge of it and the teaching staff who carry out this work (Rodríguez-Quiles, 2010b). The ideal situation would be to find a collaborative process between both aspects, that is, practice and research on music education should be combined in different ways in order to meet the needs of students, those who are and will be the citizens of the 21st-century society (Ferm *et al.*, 2015).

Conclusions

After reviewing the literature, we found that economic logic, together with educational traditions, conditions the design and development of MTE curricula, both in their rationale and in the structure shaped.

Thus, underlying the dilemmas or tensions in music teacher education mentioned above there is a capitalist economic logic underneath that is, by definition, also political. That is, just as production and circulation are presented as separate from each other in capitalist economy, as is the separation between the use value of a product and its market value in terms of offer and demand, employer and employee, so in the MTE programmes issues are presented as opposing options when in fact they are complementary. In other words, they are shown in different areas: (1) the theory-practice relationship, as if there could be a teaching practice separated from theory – that is, from research– and vice versa; (2) the music-education relationship, as if educating for music implied disengaging from the rest of the school curriculum or, put the other way around, as if education could be complete without including the arts; (3) consequently, the relationship between specialist and generalist, as if the specialist were not part of the teaching team, or as if the generalist could afford the luxury of not using music to educate; and (4) in the field of traditions, as if academicism and instructional training for school could be left out critical reflections on social injustices.

As far as the structure and design of curricula are concerned, the EHEA is also being developed on the basis of an economic logic, in this case rather explicitly, as expressly indicated in the aforementioned Spanish Ministry of Education's White Paper on Teacher Education. There is no doubt that training graduates who respond to a future professional profile is a necessity for any programme, and although the diagnosis of the situation was correct in saying that, for example, Spanish universities were training specialist music teachers who then only partly carried out their work as such, nothing is said about the circumstances that lead to such a mismatch (basically, the teaching of a maximum of one hour per week to each group, which makes it unfeasible to complete 25 teaching hours per week as a primary music teacher alone). The context is not only economic but also political, at the level of school and university curricula, where specific musical training is being reduced on the pretext of the creation of the EHEA, despite the fact that the duration of training has increased by one year.

This reproduction of economic logic in the foundations of teacher education programmes is probably unconscious, at least for most teacher educators. However, the qualifications and the institutions that host them respond to political precisions as they project their educational ideals (Apple, 1997). This means that, whether intended or not, they produce adherence to educational traditions which, in the field of teacher education, are understood as representations of the socio-cultural conditions of the school and of what a music teacher should be and do (Liston & Zeichner, 1997). Consequently, they are projections that involve decisions about what musical and educational contents to include, what value to assign to research and practice and, ultimately, what areas for reflection to promote in teachers.

Moreover, thinking that training is presented as either theoretical or practical reveals the division between knowing and doing, and the way in which teaching knowledge is constructed and the role assigned to each of them. In this way, praxis, as a possibility of grounded and practical action with an innate reflexive sense, is minimised, losing all theorising and inquiring potential by accepting the traditional separation between theoretical learning and real life (Allsup, 2003). This would explain the difficulties of initiating comprehensive teacher education processes, where the construction of knowledge based mostly on praxis is a recurrent exercise. However, teacher training is not only professional training to acquire technical skills of direct, universal and deterministic application in the classroom; it also involves reflection in connection with research for its permanent updating. That is why they are university-level studies.

As we have already discussed, this theory-practice separation brings us back to the separation between the musical and the educational (Shulman, 1986), as if they were not complementary dimensions in the syllabi and in the school curricula that pre-service teachers will then have to develop when they are in service. This reveals that, in general, the training tradition fragments this knowledge and assumes it to be practical or musical on the one hand and theoretical or educational on the other. Two problems arise from this: firstly, explaining and basing the teaching and learning of music as a different (perhaps alien) parcel of educational knowledge; and, secondly, to conceive it in the image and likeness of traditions that prefix musical and pedagogical knowledge. As a consequence, music teachers lack the intentionality that refers to musical praxis, being unable to construct musical educational proposals where practice and theory (i.e., research) are inseparable.

On the question of who should teach music at school, generalist and specialist teachers are confronted in their apparently different roles, both in terms of the valid knowledge base assigned to them and the respective levels of depth at which they act. This has consequences in the learning of discourses transmitted to them by their training and which shape their teaching identity: the generalist with a “superficial” view of music and in balance with the educational component; the specialist with musical depth, generally academic, together with practical constructs about the school. Hence, the acquisition of specific codes that divide tasks classifies teachers (Bernstein, 2003) and facilitates their suitability or otherwise for the job market, which ultimately determines their status in the education system of each type of teacher. In this way, the ethos of the modern economy, competition instead of collaboration (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2015), division instead of integration of teachers’ knowledge, is installed in the culture and subjectivity of teachers.

Finally, the literature review summarises the presence of academicist and social efficiency traditions in MTE, which reveals another dilemma: the (re)productive role of music education and its teachers in relation to the specific conditions of communities and schools. This means that curricula encourage, on the one hand, teachers’ reflection on and reproduction of the canonical repertoire, and, on the other, the search for tools for adaptation in the school (Ballantyne, 2007), all of which results in curricula remaining essentially unchanged, anchored to tradition and shrouded by inertia (Zemelman, 2010). According to Rusinek and Aróstegui (2015), there is no general evidence of MTE focusing on the issues of racism, sexism and different abilities, which would be a form of social injustice to the music teachers themselves and their future students. Although pre-service teachers claim for the opposite (Zeichner, 2016), “today’s educators focus on individual competence (as in music composition, for example) rather than community goals” (Colwell, 2017, p. 83). This would be in line with Zeichner’s (2010) idea of the marginality of critical and teacher training programmes prepared to address social injustices and inequity in schools, as evils of capitalism.

Social justice curricula, according to Cochran-Smith (2010), should promote theoretical, practical, critical and relational training, revising: (1) canonised knowledge; (2) interpretive frameworks about what it would mean to be a teacher of social change and transformation; (3) methodologies that put rich and relevant student experiences before specific methods; and (4) advocacy and activist positions within schools and communities. These ideas as applied to MTE would revise the tensions referred above in terms of the notoriously academicist and practical training that curricula expose while obviating the social challenges in our days. To this end, teacher education should challenge itself to develop a democratic professionalism and activist identity (Sachs, 2003) that can: (1) unveil the issues that affect the school; (2) promote musical learning for all its students, in connection with relations of power and oppression; (3) reflect on the musical experience from socio-historical and political frameworks; and (4) create interdisciplinary projects with other teachers and students in the school community (Hess, 2018). It is not possible to look the other way, as attempting to do so implies positioning oneself in ignorance of these social issues, which can never be described as “neutral.” Teacher education today more than ever is not only economic but also political.

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