

MUSIC TEACHERS AND THEIR PUPILS: MUSICAL ACTIVITIES, SELF-PERCEPTIONS, AND ATTITUDES TO MUSIC

Milhano, Sandrina

Escola Superior de Educação e Ciências Sociais / CIID / IPLeia (PORTUGAL)

sandrina.milhano@ipleiria.pt

Abstract

This paper examines the influences of music teachers' on primary school pupils' musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music. We will discuss issues that involve results about the relations between music teachers' and their profile according to their musical background, academic training, and professional and artistic activities', with their pupils musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music. The main findings were gathered from two studies that were carried out in two phases (year 1 and 2): the Pupil Questionnaire Study and the Music Teachers Study. The total participants were 9 music teachers carrying out extracurricular musical activities in 16 Portuguese primary schools and 406 children from grades 3 and 4 (aged 8-11 years). The findings were drawn from the connections and relationships found between the results from the Music Teachers Study and the results obtained through the Pupil Questionnaire Study, in each school. These last results involve the description of pupils' perceived activities during extracurricular music classes, musical attitudes, and self-perceptions to music, and their perceptions of their music teachers in school during their participation in the musical activities.

The main findings are discussed according to five main themes: a) Musical activities: singing and playing musical instruments and music notation learning. b) Pupils' self-assessments of themselves on the activities of singing, playing musical instruments and notation learning. c) Pupils' self-perceptions of themselves in two aspects: musicality and competence in music classes. d) Pupils' attitudes to music; and e) Pupils' attitudes and perceptions of their music teacher. Findings across the sample suggested that music teachers background, academic, professional and artistic, did not seem to have influenced the musical activities they have provided to their pupils' in the musical activities, except in some cases for the use of the recorder in classes. The same teachers in different schools developed different musical activities. Music teachers do not seem to significantly influence pupils' musical skills assessments; however, the 'time effect' was an interesting find. That is, the time pupils' spent participating in the extracurricular musical activities may have influenced more pupils' self-assessments more than the music teachers possibly did. Results also suggested that pupils' attitudes and self-perceptions of music do not appear to be influenced by particular aspect of a teacher's profile, background or experience, and more specifically, the presence of pedagogical training appears to have little or no impact. Also, it was not possible to establish a direct connection between the ways pupils' perceived themselves as being 'musical' or not, with their attitudes to music. No associations were found between music teachers' academic backgrounds and general 'profile' and the aspects relating to how much pupils' felt they were learning in the music classes and towards their idea of having a profession connected to music. In summary, it was not really possible to establish with any degree of consistency that a connection exists across the sample between pupils' musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music and their music teachers' academic background during both phases. We will also discuss some implications of this study for music teachers training.

Keywords: Attitudes to music, extracurricular, music, music education, musical activities, music teachers, primary school music, self-perception, teacher training.

1 INTRODUCTION

As MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell [1] suggested, the prominence of socio-cultural perspectives in studies of development and education involve self-perceptions of the learner and the teacher, and their perceptions of each other and the relationships between these. We have previously argued [2, 4, 5] that children's ability-related self-perceptions and motivations in music may be intimately associated in the specific contexts of music education studied, not only with their own opinions and with perceptions, but also, as those expressed by their music teachers.

We have reflected about the transformations in the contexts of teaching and learning in first cycle Portuguese schools, particularly in the case of music education through the generalisation of the curriculum enrichment activities [3, 4, 5]. We have considered [4, 5] that these new established contexts of music education instituted in first cycle of education schools, as an example of musical activities within the informal dimension of the 'globe' model of opportunities in music education [6].

This model was developed as part of the work of the Music Development Task Group of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, responsible for the music education policy in schools in England. It proposed a view of the range of opportunities available to pupils in the social and cultural contexts of music education at Portuguese institutional and cultural levels. It refers to music at school as a means of helping pupils 'to develop and form important links between pupil's home, school, and the wider world, and that it should develop pupils' ability to listen and appreciate a wider variety of music and to make judgments about musical quality' [6]. The mentioned informal dimension of the 'model' include generalist and specialist provision, namely informal music education provision that is available at schools such as extracurricular activities, school concerts, and plays at the 'generalist' level, and 'specialist' activities such as composer-in-residence schemes, or other contact with professional musicians [7].

Also, as we have agreed [4, 5] that pupil's developing musical identities can be shaped by socio-cultural factors which may be essential in the rationalization of individual development, perception, and motivation. And as Jorgensen [8] concluded, 'teacher and student choice can affect instruction in compelling ways, since teachers and students embody and are essentially committed to particular beliefs and practices and disposed to act in particular ways (...). The interactions between teacher and student (...) are affected by our expectations of others and ourselves and the instructional contexts in which we meet.' Therefore, different influences may eventually arise in children's music education and musical identities as a direct consequence of the dissimilar and varied 'music teachers' profile they have.

Therefore, as it is possible that the disposition to teach music in these new extracurricular settings, influenced children's ability related self-perceptions and motivation to commence and pursue their musical activities, this paper examines the influences of music teachers' on their pupils' musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music. Particularly, and considering that there are not enough qualified professionals in the music domain in Portugal able to cover and sustain all the provision needed for music in education, even as an elective provision at schools. we will discuss issues that involve results about the relations between music teachers' and their profile according to their musical background, academic training, and professional and artistic activities', with their pupils musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music.

2 METHODOLOGY

The main findings were gathered from two studies that were carried out in two phases (year 1 and 2): the Pupil Questionnaire Study [4, 5], and the Music Teachers Study. The total participants were 9 music teachers carrying out extracurricular musical activities in 16 Portuguese primary schools and 406 children from grades 3 and 4 (aged 8-11 years). There were 8 music teachers involved in phase I (year 2008), and 6 music teachers in phase II (year 2009). This study included data collection and the categorization the *curricula vitae* of all music teachers involved with the children participating in the Pupil Questionnaire study, and their teaching of extracurricular music activities during phases I and II.

It was important to relate each music teacher to their schools, since this allowed balancing this information with both the data gathered from the analysis of their *curricula vitae* with the results obtained through another study: the Pupil Questionnaire Study [4, 5]. The Pupil Questionnaire Study provided evidence of the music teachers 'influences on children' musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music through a detailed description of pupils' perceived activities during extracurricular music classes, musical attitudes, and self-perceptions to music, and their perceptions of their music teachers in school during their participation in the musical activities. Therefore, the findings of the present study were drawn from the connections and relationships found between the results from the Music Teachers Study and the results obtained through the Pupil Questionnaire Study, in each school in two phases.

The CV of each teacher was analysed according to three main types of measures [5]: Academic background, Professional experience, and Musical activities.

'*Academic background*' refers to the academic degrees possessed by the music teachers running the extracurricular activities. Therefore, two main profiles were identified: general class teachers with extra training in music education, and instrumental teachers without pedagogical training. The first group is trained to teach both at first and second cycle's schools and the others are not. Therefore, 6 teachers possessed academic degrees that also included pedagogical training in music that was defined for working in the first cycle of education and 3 teachers possessed music degrees that related to instrumental practice without pedagogical training. As Jorgensen [8] suggested, those two groups could be seen as the dichotomy between the "musician" *versus* the "music teacher", or as suggested by Regelski [9], "praxis" *versus* "profession". Through either view, it is possible that the two different profiles may have implications on music teaching and learning, and therefore these may also have different influences' on children's musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music.

Within the data collected from the teachers, the term '*professional experience*' referred to previous occupations prior to their employment as teachers on the extracurricular activities program. The data collected highlighted the diverse professional experiences amongst the music teacher population and included: music teacher in community institutions; director or musician in Banda's Philharmonic; orchestral musicians, instrumental teacher in conservatoire, music education teacher in first and second cycles of schools and teacher without previous professional experience.

The term '*musical activities*' referred to informal musical and artistic activities that teachers developed and reported taking part in, in order to enrich their own CV. The main musical activities that music teachers developed tended to relate to choral and instrumental practice within community institutions, instrumental participation, direction in Banda's philharmonic, and participation as musicians in pop / rock and classical musical groups.

3 RESULTS

The main findings are discussed according to five main themes: a) Musical activities: singing and playing musical instruments and music notation learning. b) Pupils' self-assessments of themselves on the activities of singing, playing musical instruments and notation learning. c) Pupils' self-perceptions of themselves in two aspects: musicality and competence in music classes. d) Pupils' attitudes to music; and e) Pupils' attitudes and perceptions of their music teacher.

3.1 Musical activities: singing and playing musical instruments and music notation learning

In order to understand any variations amongst the musical activities delivered by each music teacher during the extracurricular music classes, pupils were asked to indicate the frequency of the activities they had experienced in each phase. As presented in the Pupil Questionnaire Study [4, 5], the mostly common activity children reported undertaking in both phases I and II, with their music teachers in the extracurricular musical activities was singing. The results showed that, in phase I, one specific music teacher was, comparatively, the one who represented having fewer reports from his pupils in this activity. However, it is not possible to establish a connection between this teacher's background and his teaching practice as he reported having been a choral singer.

As reported in the Pupil Questionnaire Study [4, 5], 24% of the pupils across the sample reported having learned to play musical instruments with their music teacher. However, in four of the teachers involved, reportedly undertook fewer instrumental musical activities in their classes in phase I. Those teachers had different academic backgrounds and were all music practitioners in different musical contexts of music performance.

Differences were found between schools, particularly since pupils from two schools reported more consistently over time not having learned to play musical instruments. Whenever pupils referred to having played musical instruments during the extracurricular music classes, these were mostly reported as Orff musical instruments. It is important to notice however, that in phase I, the results show that three music teachers used the recorder more consistently in their classes and only one of them, in phase II. Results also show that, in some schools, only some pupils' had the same music teacher reported having played the recorder in class. Two distinct explanations may be suggested by this fact: some pupils' may have forgotten that they had played the recorder in class and omitted it in their questionnaire reports, and by doing so, they provoked an apparent inconsistency in their class results. Alternatively, pupils did not play the recorder, perhaps for the reason that did not have their own instrument. Therefore, schools available resources may have influence teacher practice.

Some differences were found between schools on the activities undertaken in class with their music teachers. Some consistency was found in relation to two teachers since both classes' reports are consistent. However, very few suggestions can be made about the music teachers' major influence on the opportunities given to pupils since some teachers behaved differently in each school.

An association may exist between activities involving playing musical instruments such as the recorder and some academic degree. All music teachers with degrees in general class teacher education and extra training in music with pedagogical training, tended to develop more recorder practice with their classes. This might be due for the reason that these teachers receive training that usually privileges teaching strategies for an entire class in simultaneous, by opposite to a more individualized teaching used by teachers that possess degrees in one instrument. Also, the firsts usually learn how to teach the recorder, as well as Orff instruments for a class as a group musical activity, and the others do not.

Two teachers seem to be an exception to this group by developing instrumental practice especially with the use of the recorder. However, those particular music teachers possess a substantial amount of performing experience in groups and Banda's philharmonic and had experience as recorder teachers in community organization and conservatoires.

As an elective music education provision, it was important to investigate other aspects of music teaching in the extracurricular sessions, such as the frequency of music notation teaching. Results show non-constant reports regarding the frequency of notation learning according to schools. However, in phase II, pupils' reported learning notation more often than they did in phase I. Also, overall, we can observe that three particular teachers in phase I, taught music notation in their classes more often than the other music teachers did. However, again no association was found with music teachers' musical backgrounds.

Other characteristics that usually are associated with the development of musical skills in an 'informal' manner, refers to the opportunities pupils have to bring music of their own into classes and the use of creative and composition activities. As results suggest, whether or not pupils' use of their own music recordings in music classes did not appear to be dependent on a particular music teacher. Also, activities related to music creation and composition are not usually used by the majority of teachers during classes.

3.2 Pupils' self-assessments of themselves on the activities of singing, playing musical instruments and notation learning

It was not possible to establish a relation between pupils' self-assessments in those three musical activities - singing, playing musical instruments, and notation, and the music teachers' influence, since in both phases, the same teachers presented different results according to the school. Results however evidenced further, that in all schools, except one, over time, pupils tended to not assess themselves as being 'bad' or 'very bad' in singing, playing and notation activities. Therefore, music teachers did not seem to significantly influence pupils' musical skills assessments, and perhaps, the explanation involved the 'time effect', that is, the time pupils' spent participating in the extracurricular musical activities may have influenced more pupils' self-assessments than the music teachers possibly have.

3.3 Pupils' self-perceptions of themselves in two aspects: musicality and competence in music classes

In phase I, pupils' clearly distinguished themselves in these two aspects: pupils' generally perceived themselves as not being 'musical', especially in two schools, but these perceptions did not necessarily lead them to believe that they would not be good students in the music classes. Generally, pupils' distinguished between 'being musical' and being 'good students' in music. No association was found between music teachers' influence and pupils' self-perceptions of themselves in aspects of musicality and competence in music classes. A similar situation was found in phase II: it was not possible to establish any association between music teachers' influence and pupils' self-perceptions of themselves in aspects of musicality and competence in music classes.

3.4 Pupils' attitudes to music

Results showed that the lowest attitudes were found in three schools, which were taught by different music teachers with different academic backgrounds. We can also observe that the same teacher may have had, different 'effects' on their pupils' attitudes to music, therefore, no association can be clearly

established between pupils' attitudes to music and their music teachers. Also, was not possible to establish a direct connection between the way pupils' perceived themselves as being 'musical' or not, with their attitudes to music, since the results are not always positively associated, excepting the results from one particular school.

No associations were found between music teachers' academic backgrounds and general 'profile' and the aspects relating to how much pupils' felt they were learning in the music classes and their idea of having a profession connected to music. The same teachers had different results according to the school. However, it was possible to see that general attitudes to music increased over time, excepting for one school. Possibly, in this particular school, this drop of pupils' attitudes towards music found, may be associated with pupils' self-perceptions of themselves in music since they also dropped over.

3.5 Pupils' attitudes and perceptions of their music teacher

Pupils' attitudes and perceptions of their music teacher were discussed according to the following five aspects: how much do they like their music teacher; if they think their music teacher is a good musician; if they think their music teacher teaches them well; if they would like to know music as much as their music teacher; if they think their music teacher helps them liking music more.

Only a few percentages of pupils' reported lower perceptions and attitudes towards their music teachers in phase I, and this seemed not to have influenced pupils' attitudes and self-perceptions to music. A particular teacher presented a lower rating from his pupils at one of his schools. An association was suggested in this same school in phase I, between these pupils' lower attitudes and their self-perceptions to music and their attitudes and perceptions of their music teacher. This music teacher possessed a degree in general class teacher education with extra training in music, and with pedagogical training. Nevertheless, it was not possible to generalize this association since all other results contradicted the findings found in this particular school. Therefore, music teaching and learning in this specific school may have been affected by other factors than by the music teacher influence.

Results showed [4, 5] that most pupils' did not report low perceptions and attitudes towards their music teachers, and no associations could be found between schools over time, except in one school. This might suggest that the changes in the music teachers over time may have been influential in the results available from these schools in phase II. This assumption may be supported by the results found in the school with divergent results, since in that school, pupils' reported lower perceptions, and attitudes towards their music teacher over time. Possibly, the maintenance of the same teacher during both phases seems having influenced those pupils' attitudes and self-perceptions to music, since these indicators also dropped in phase II. These findings supported the previous suggestion that in this particular school, the music teacher may have been the determining element in pupils' attitudes towards music during the extracurricular musical activities.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to generalize this association between pupils' attitudes and perceptions of their music teacher and their attitudes and self-perceptions to music, since not all other results support this assumption since teachers changed schools. However, it would be interesting to see if any changes would occur in the pupils' attitudes and self-perceptions to music in this particular school, only by changing their music teacher.

In addition, it was possible to observe another interesting aspect in a different school. In this other school, pupils' saw their teacher, in this case a professional musician, as not being a very good musician. This fact may be eventually explained through the lack of practical musical activities, especially instrumental music practice, aspect that pupils reported [4, 5]. As shown, this music teacher did not regularly played musical instruments in that class, and did not provided pupils with enough perceived opportunities to play and to participate in music performances and concerts.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the influence of music teachers' on their pupils' musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music. This study included data collection and the categorization of all music teachers' curricula vitae teaching the children participating in the Pupil Questionnaire study [4, 5], and their teaching of extracurricular music activities during two years, corresponding to phases I and II of this study.

Some differences were found between schools on the activities undertaken in class with their music teachers. Some consistency was found in relation to two teachers since both classes' reports are

consistent. However, very few suggestions can be made about the music teachers' major influence on the opportunities given to pupils since some teachers behaved differently in each school.

An association may exist between activities involving playing musical instruments such as the recorder and some academic degree. All music teachers with degrees in general class teacher education and extra training in music with pedagogical training, tended to develop more recorder practice with their classes. This might be due for the reason that these teachers receive training that usually privileges teaching strategies for an entire class in simultaneous, by opposite to a more individualized teaching usually used by teachers that possess a degree in one instrument. Also, the firsts usually learn how to teach the recorder, as well as Orff instruments for a class as a group musical activity, and the others do not.

It was possible to explore some of the characteristics that usually are associated to the development of musical skills in an 'informal' manner [10, 11]. It would be expected that developing musical skills would predominantly occur in an 'informal' manner, because extracurricular musical activities are settled outside 'formal' music education. Results should have for instance, provided few references to the teaching and learning of music notation, and some predominant references to pupils bringing music of their own to classes and the undertaking musical creation and composition activities. However, as results suggests, over time, pupils' were provided with more opportunities to develop their musical skills in other ways than in an 'informal' manner. This fact did not appear to be dependent on a particular music teacher, but a generally tendency found over time.

In summary, music teachers background, academic, professional and artistic, did not seem to have influenced the musical activities they have provided to their pupils' in the extracurricular musical activities, except in some cases for the use of the recorder in classes as seen with general class teachers. Other elements were suggested that could have influenced the musical activities which include schools available recourses.

Findings suggest that music teachers do not seem to be the only factor that influences music teaching. The practical nature of music does require teachers and pupils' access to classrooms with facilities for vocal and instrumental practice with equipment in sufficient quantity to suit class sizes. Additionally possibilities to group music performances are need since results showed that most pupils do not have opportunities to participate in those at their schools. According to results, the same teachers in different schools developed different musical activities. For that reason, results sustain previous suggestions [8] that support that eventually, one conditioning element to instrumental practice for instance, may have been the variability of available resources, such as musical instruments

Music teachers do not seem to significantly influence pupils' musical skills assessments. However, the 'time effect' was an interesting find. That is, the time pupils' spent participating in the extracurricular musical activities may have influenced more pupils' self-assessments more than the music teachers possibly did.

Alongside, results also suggested that pupils' attitudes and self-perceptions of music do not appear to be influenced by particular aspect of a teacher's profile, background, or experience, and more specifically, the presence of pedagogical training appears to have little or no impact. No association was found between pupils' perceptions and specific teachers' academic backgrounds and profiles. However, results concerning phase II, produced some particular evidence that in particular situations, music teachers may have been the main influence on pupils' attitudes to music during the extracurricular musical activities. Therefore, pupils developing musical identities [4, 5] may have been, in some specific situations, shaped by the pupils' perceptions of their teachers. Also, it was not possible to establish a direct connection between the ways pupils' perceived themselves as being 'musical' or not, with their attitudes to music, since the results do not always positively relate, except for the results from one school. However, findings suggested that the changes of music teachers that occurred in schools over time might have been influential in obtaining more positive results in pupils' perceptions and attitudes towards music available from these schools.

No associations were found between music teachers' academic backgrounds and general 'profile' and the aspects relating to how much pupils' felt they were learning in the music classes and towards their idea of having a profession connected to music. The same teachers have different results according to the school. However, teachers educational practices and the kind of interactions established between teachers and students, may have affected the instructional contexts of a small number of particular groups of students. As a result, problems in children's music education and development could not consistently be said to be a direct consequence of music teachers' profile and academic background.

In, summary, this research was helpful in enlightening some concerns which relate to music teachers' possible influences on pupils' developing musical identities. As we have seen through the literature review, there are not enough qualified professionals or even amateurs in the music domain in Portugal able to cover and sustain all the provision needed for music in education, even as an elective provision at schools. Also, some arguments were explored towards the existence of possible differences and effects that could be inherent to music teaching, such as the ones underlined in the dichotomies 'specialist' versus 'generalist' music teachers, and towards 'musicians' versus 'music teachers'. Therefore, it was important to better understand the possible influences that those different music teachers could have on their pupils' development and learning in music and on the development of their musical identities.

Through this study, it was not really possible to establish with any degree of consistency that a connection exists between pupils' musical activities, self-perceptions, and attitudes to music and their music teachers' academic background during both phases. It seems apparent that music teachers from the extracurricular musical activities need some pedagogical support in order to develop further activities that involve music making and instrumental practice in group and class settings, as it is the case of music teaching in these activities.

The findings also showed that music teachers' influence on pupils' self-perceptions became progressively more positive for most pupils in the second phase. In addition, pupils' perceptions of their music teachers are generally very positive and higher for grade 4 pupils [4, 5], and for that reason, we have argued that the time pupils' spent participating in the extracurricular musical activities may have influenced pupils' own self-assessments, attitudes and perceptions to music than the music teachers possibly have.

Music teachers are important vehicles for music learning in the first cycle of education on flourishing pupils' musical development. Therefore, we consider essential that music teachers need to acknowledge and value their role in providing most pupils with the few musical opportunities and experiences they have access to by being receptive and open to pupils' interests and motivations in music, particularly in the actual context of music education in Portuguese schools. Consequently, this emphasises the need to provide rigorous and quality teaching that continues to encourage and support pupils' music engagement and practice. This research has suggested the need for additional training for teachers, especially in aspects of instrumental group practice and methodological issues.

As we previously highlighted [4, 5], the extracurricular activities at schools brought the opportunity for most children to participate in music. However, if school remains a bastion of democracy, both informal and formal learning should be considered by schools as a particularly effective means of strengthening pupils' access to music education and practice.

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