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The subject ‘music’ from inside versus outside the music teaching profession: a comparative case study on the views of music and non-music primary education teachers in Spain

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ABSTRACT

Music as a subject in compulsory education is thought to have both a low reputation and a globally declining relevance. However, research findings have been contradictory in exploring the beliefs of teachers on the subject and have mainly targeted the Anglo-Saxon context. With the present study, we aim to shed light on how teachers understand this subject by adopting an approach that is novel to the extant research. By means of a comparative multi-case study, we contrasted the views of purposefully selected music and non-music teachers in the context of primary education in Spain. Our findings indicate that both cases shared a relativistic perspective on the subject’s value, which is conceived as highly dependent on the advocacy and in-class teaching methodology adopted by each music teacher, as well as concerns about its teaching methodology. However, our analysis also reveals several discrepancies between the beliefs of both cases that may lead to mutual misunderstandings. Furthermore, our study suggests a lack of understanding of the role and needs of the music teacher by their counterparts, alongside music teachers having false assumptions about their counterparts’ views on their subject. Finally, we provide implications for increasing the perceived relevance of the subject that may also contribute to a better school climate for music teachers in the context of our participants.

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Introduction

The evidence for music as a subject in compulsory music education having a low reputation and experiencing a global decline in popularity is one that lacks a simple explanation (Aróstegui 2016; Bell 2001; Green 2002). In comparing the construction of the beliefs of music and non-music pre-service teachers, those regarding teaching are suggested to be dissimilar (Mateos-Moreno 2022a). Adding to this, the exploration of the beliefs of in-service non-music teachers is contradictory in terms of identifying positive (Rajan 2017; Vitale 2011), variable (Chant 2002; Levin 2015) or even negative (Glover and Ward 1993; Wong 1999) attitudes to the development of musical abilities in compulsory education. Studies comparing the views of music and non-music teachers on the subject are, furthermore, scarce and mainly related to the Anglo-Saxon context (e.g. Yamamoto & Anguiano 2017). Given the possible benefits of exploring different realities and using a novel approach to providing insights into the aforementioned issues, we aim to compare the views of

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music and non-music teachers on music as a subject in primary education in Spain. Accordingly, our work attempts to answer the following research questions by means of a comparative multiple-case (i.e. multi-case) study:

- Q1. What is similar in comparing the visions of music and non-music primary education teachers on music as a subject, if anything?
- Q2. How do they diverge in their respective visions, if at all?
- Q3. How do music teachers imagine their counterparts' views on the subject?

The results may be useful in providing a new perspective with which to understand the place of music as a subject in compulsory education. In addition, these may also contribute to a mutual understanding among music and non-music teachers that could lead to a better school climate. Finally, the comparative study of these groups' views may equally provide fresh insights into each other for the benefit of their respective teachings in relation to music.

Framework

One of the closest antecedents to our study regards the work of Yamamoto and Anguiano (2017), who explored the understandings of music education by generalist teachers in elementary education in the USA. By means of a case study, they found that those non-music elementary teachers who were engaged with music as a child by, for example, playing an instrument, are more inclined to show positive beliefs towards music education, as well as those who, as adults, declare that they regularly listen to music. In contrast, a similar study regarding early-childhood teachers in Australia suggests that they hold positive attitudes towards using music in their lessons even if they had no previous involvement with playing an instrument or singing (Barrett et al. 2019). In the same vein, non-music preschool teachers in the USA are suggested to steadily use music in their teachings while typically reporting a lack of musical ability or knowledge of music (Rajan 2017).

In relation to the specific views of foreign language teachers of English in primary education, previous research suggests that they consistently use music in their lessons and possess generally positive attitudes to music (Avdiu 2021). However, non-music teachers (including English teachers) are typically reluctant to teach music in primary education: they view this subject as a 'specialist area' to a higher degree than the teaching of any other subject (Holden and Button 2006; Seddon and Biasutti 2008). In addition, music teaching methodologies closer to those typical of informal musical contexts (i.e. the usual ways in which popular music is practiced and learned outside school) are typically seen positively by the non-music primary education specialist (Hallam, Creech, and McQueen 2016). In Singapore, non-music teachers in secondary education and their principals seem to show 'apathy' to the subject (Wong 1999), while, in Canada, non-music secondary teachers are suggested to hold a more positive attitude towards music as well as to deem creativity and informal education to be important aspects in relation to the subject (Vitale 2011).

With respect to the views of music teachers on their own subject, the results and topics explored in the extant research are extremely varied and resist synthesis. Therefore, we will present a selection of these findings based on our own judgement of their higher relevance to frame our study while bearing in mind that others might also hold some significance. Popular music instruments and repertoire, for example, are positively seen by North American K-12 teachers (Clauhs and Sanguinetti 2022), although music teachers have difficulties including such repertoire in their lessons (Kelly-McHale 2013). In addition, their choice of instructional approach seems quite individual, as well as their visions for their pre-service education (Thorgersen, Johansen, and Juntunen 2016). They also tend to see the usage of new technologies in education positively (Waddell and Williamson 2019), as well as the type of professional development that is oriented towards making music (Dobrota and Matoković 2022). In a geographically similar context to the present study, the typical

employment of the recorder in music education at school is congruent with the positive attitudes found among music teachers towards its regular usage (Gustems-Carnicer et al. 2020). Also, within this context, music education is typically seen as having a low consideration in the school curriculum (Morales 2017). Likewise, music teachers identify many varied shortcomings in the specialised music education provided at Spanish music schools, which is viewed as leading to high dropouts within that context (Socorro, Bermúdez, and Castro Sánchez 2016).

Regarding the development of musical abilities, which is a close topic to that of the present study, music teachers, on many occasions, attribute success to talent (Hewitt 2005; Shouldice 2019). In addition, their beliefs may differ based on aspects such as their views on the goals of music education or teaching (Salvador 2019; Shouldice 2019; Sloboda 2005). Likewise, there is evidence of how their conceptions of developing students' musical abilities may diverge from the national curriculum in which their teachings are framed (Asztalos 2023). With respect to non-music teachers in compulsory education, their views on the development of musical abilities may also vary depending on their years of experience, their teaching context and their own involvement with music (e.g. Chant 2002; Levin 2015). In comparing music and non-music teachers' beliefs on this same topic, the former tend to think that music is not sufficiently used as a teaching tool by their counterparts (Asztalos 2023).

In conclusion, the comparison of music and non-music teachers' views on music as a school subject is not a typical topic in previous research. Furthermore, the research that bears relation to this topic is greatly focused on the Anglo-Saxon world and holds contradictions regarding such areas as the role of music for non-music teachers (Yamamoto & Anguiano 2017; Barrett et al. 2019) and their attitudes towards the subject (Vitale 2011; Wong 1999).

Methodology

In the following section, we describe our methodology in relation to the research design, selection of participants, data collection and analysis methods. The procedures involved in the present study have been approved by the ethics committee of the University of Málaga.

Research design

This study is part of a larger research project aimed at exploring attitudes and motivations towards music at school, where each study has its own framework and research questions. Our research design is aligned with a comparative study as it 'embodies the logic of comparison, in that it implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases' (Bryman 2012, 72). To this end, we designed a qualitative multi-case study (Yin 2009) where the cases number two and regard music and non-music school teachers.

Participants and their selection

Our research involved $n = 20$ participants who were in-service primary school teachers in southern Spain, of which half ($n = 10$) were music teachers and the other half were teachers of other subjects. To select the participants, we first retrieved the email addresses of primary school teachers from fourteen different schools through Internet searches and by contacting their school principals. We then sent an email containing information about our research, a consent form and a questionnaire aimed at retrieving (a) sociodemographic information, (b) information on teaching experience, and (c) information on musical backgrounds, including questions such as 'What is your relationship to music?', or 'Have you consistently played a musical instrument?'. We reviewed the responses (an approximately 20% response ratio) and selected our participants through purposeful sampling in seeking to include a variety of subject profiles that may enhance our results by representing different populations (Creswell 2014) with respect to the following variables: (1)

urban/rural, (2) experienced/novice teacher (with five years of experience as a cut-off point), (3) male/female, (4) teaching specialisation area and (5) relationship to music. In regard to these variables, the sample included the following participants in approximate proportions: 60% working in urban areas versus 40% in rural ones, 30% males versus 70% females and 70% experienced versus 30% novice teachers. Among non-music teachers, all of the subjects of the school curriculum in primary education were represented, two of the participants had played a musical instrument up to a beginner's level, one of them declared that they regularly go to concerts, and the rest declaring no special involvement with music beyond sporadically listening to music.

Data collection and analysis

First, we asked our participants, as a study entry requirement, to freely write an essay with their thoughts on 'music as a school subject in primary education'. This served both as a complementary way for retrieving data and for triangulation purposes, as teachers' writings are indeed useful means for exploring their beliefs (Bullough 2015). We also designed an in-depth, semi-structured interview and piloted it with $n = 2$ individuals from a similar population. After pursuing minor modifications towards improving the intelligibility and the order of our questions, we interviewed our participants physically or by video conference (each interview lasting 40–70 min.), recorded and transcribed their answers. Examples of the questions included in our interview are 'What do you think about music lessons at school, in general?', 'What is the meaning of learning music at school, in your opinion?' and 'In your view, what is important about this subject?'. In addition, we formulated probing questions depending on each answer to foster reflection or clarification. Following this, we anonymised and joined the data and used MaxQDA for its analysis. To this end, we made use of thematic analysis and followed the steps detailed by Boyatzis (1998): multiple readings, developing codes and themes by constant comparison of patterns that inductively emerge from the analysis of the data, and, finally, creating a codebook and writing a research report; the authors discussed and reached agreements at each of the aforementioned steps. Saturation was reached at about 70% of the analysis, although all of the data was included in the analysis.

Results

Next, we present our results structured in sections according to our research questions. Letters represent participants (the first letter indicating the participant label, and the second letter an indication of whether they belong to the 'm'-usic case or to the 'n'-on music one), and the number in brackets represents the frequency of individuals whose expressions were identified in association to the accompanying code or theme. In addition, we include several participant quotes that were selected for their relevance in illustrating the participants' views, given their power to reveal subtleties and provoke a vicarious experience in the reader (Sandelowski 1994).

Similarities and divergences between our two cases

Three themes commonly emerged in our analysis of the views on the subject 'music' in both cases (i.e., music and non-music participants). These were 'relevance', regarding the importance of music as a school subject; 'methodology', regarding opinions on methodological aspects in teaching music in primary school; and 'aims', regarding appraisals of the purpose of the subject in compulsory education at the primary stage. However, the theme 'Music teachers', regarding characteristics attributed to this group, emerged only in the case of music teachers' responses. In addition, our analysis of the participants' written essays did not add new, diverging aspects to the analysis but, on the contrary, demonstrated a high concordance with the interviews. Likewise, in the specific analysis of the non-music teachers' expressions, we did not find significant

differences across their subjects or among those who had a higher involvement with music; on the contrary, we estimate that their contribution to the elaboration of codes and themes was more or less similar within their case.

Relevance

In relation to the theme ‘relevance’, we identified the code ‘too little weekly teaching time’ as having the highest number of appearances in both cases (18). The reasons argued are quite similar and regard how the subject in school ‘is far from the real importance of music in society’ (Hn). In the same vein, the code ‘among the most or the most important subject’ (10) is also frequent across both cases. However, we identified the code ‘as much [relevant] as whichever the subject’ (8) more frequently among non-music (6) than music (2) teachers. Also, in relation to the theme ‘relevance’, our analysis identified the code ‘[Music] as a subject of subjects’ (9) across both cases, which comprises expressions highlighting how music is intrinsically connected to other subjects or how it might be used in teaching these, e.g. ‘[music] might be used for teaching foreign language or mathematics because [music is] numbers, fractions, instruments made up of geometric figures’ (Mm).

Other codes that we identified within this theme concern how music ‘depends on the tradition of each school’ (5) and on ‘each music teacher role’ (4); this last code is in relation to the role of the music teacher at the school level and to the teaching methodology at the class level, e.g.:

It is in our hands to make visible what we do in the music lessons, through concert performances or by organising workshops. Let society see what we do here, in the classroom. Because if we stay inside the classroom, we will continue to be the last subject in school. (Rm)

The music subject depends a lot on the teachers. We can make children love music or hate it, depending on the teacher who teaches it. (Pm)

The code ‘Depends on each student’s characteristics’, which also relates to the importance of music, is similarly identified across cases, with expressions such as ‘it is not whether music is important, but the context of the child that will determine [its] importance’ (Sm). In addition, there are several codes that we identified within the theme ‘relevance’ only in relation to the case of music teachers: ‘Youngest families highly value music’ (2), which they explained in connection with the introduction of music as a subject in the Spanish primary education curriculum some decades ago, and ‘subject contents are unknown’ (1) or ‘Unimportant to families’ (2), which they describe as ‘except for parents who are closest to the music world, I think [the content of the subject] music is unknown (...) The lack of knowledge of what is being done in music education implies they are undervaluing the subject’ (Om).

Subject teaching methodology

In regard to the theme ‘methodology’, we identified the code ‘methodological flaws’ (5) as having the highest appearance rate in both cases. Within this code, our participants articulate concerns about the methodology that is typically used in teaching music, such as ‘being too focused on theory or history’ (In), ‘too much playing [of the] recorder’ (Tm, An), that music teaching and learning methodology should be eminently ‘practical’ (3) or that ‘[music teachers] do not develop it [their subject] properly or use music sufficiently in the classroom. I don’t just mean playing instruments, but making the children feel the music’ (Om). However, one of our music teachers highlighted that the reputation of music at school is affected by the false belief that the old-fashioned methodology that was indeed typical of the subject still remains:

I believe that society thinks that music is a waste of time and that only the flute is played. That it is useless (...) perhaps because of what has been transmitted for about 20 years ago on how the subject was taught; I mean, in many cases, the music subject was then limited to playing the flute and copying staves. (Tm)

In addition, we identified several codes that are only present in the responses of music teachers within the theme ‘methodology’. These regard what they think is methodologically desirable for the subject: ‘Avoiding textbooks’ (2), ‘Learning through play’ (2), ‘Based on students’ musical reality’ (1), ‘requires much planning’ (1) and ‘[the music subject] should encompass all types of musical knowledge’ (1).

Subject aims

Within the theme ‘aims’, while we commonly identified expressions related to ‘facilitating musical and bodily self-expression’ (6) as the main subject aim among non-music teachers, their counterparts were ranked in the highest place regarding the code ‘Enjoyment’ (10), with expressions that associate music with a ‘break’ to the rest of the curriculum: ‘If you ask me about music lessons, from my point of view, the most important thing in primary school is that the children enjoy [the subject] and disconnect from language, mathematics, science’ (Sm). Also dissimilarly between cases, we found the code ‘Pass on [a] love of music’ (5) commonly among music teachers’ aims, as well as several codes that we only associated with their responses: ‘open new doors’ (3) and ‘education of taste’ (1); in reference to ‘[developing] sensitivity to different cultures and folklores of the world’ (Tm) and ‘many [students] do not even know children’s songs, only radio hits. So, [the music subject] is a way [of] opening their horizons’ (Lm). In addition, we found only among non-music teachers the codes ‘Improve students’ mood’ (2) and ‘development of creativity’ (2) within this theme. However, a few codes were found across cases, such as ‘emotional learning’ (4), ‘learn to listen to / understand music’ (4), ‘learn to play a musical instrument’ (2) and ‘foster happiness’ (2).

Music teachers

The theme ‘Music teachers’ emerged uniquely in association with the population’s own statements. It comprised mainly complaints, such as the codes ‘having to teach visual art education’ (1), ‘music teachers not valuing their own subject’ (1) and ‘defective music teacher education’ (1). These are in relation to expressions such as ‘even we, music teachers, do not value sufficiently our own subject’ (Om) or ‘I perceive a fall in the musical knowledge of new colleagues that start working as music teachers’ (Pm).

Music teachers’ beliefs about their counterparts’ views

Beliefs about how their non-music counterparts perceive the music subject are divided among music teachers: within this theme, we identified the codes ‘my school colleagues value music as a subject’ (4) as well as ‘music [is] not given its real value’ (3), ‘other subjects are seen [as] more important’ (3) or ‘[non-music teachers] disrespecting music as a subject’ (1). Interestingly, many of the expressions that we identified within the aforementioned first code were close to others within the code ‘colleagues from other schools not valuing the subject’ (2). Additional expressions reflect negative appraisals by their counterparts, such as ‘non-music teachers [are] not knowledgeable on music’ (1), ‘music teacher needs [are] not worth school funds’ (1) or ‘the music teacher [is] seen as the school events’ manager’ (2), as expressed in the following example:

They believe that being a music teacher is having a party room, and for this reason, they want to put the music teacher in charge of the organisation of all the school events and anniversaries (...): We are their wild card (..) We can help and prepare events, yes, of course, but with only one 45-minute [music] lesson per week, it’s impossible to combine that with your teaching plan. (Nm)

Discussion

Our results revealed a structure for how music and non-music teachers experience the subject ‘music’ at school that was quite similar between groups, including reflections on its relevance, aims and methodology, except for aspects that music teachers express in regard to their specific

role at the school level. However, we found both similarities and dissimilarities between our cases beyond this structure.

In regard to the relevance of music as a subject in compulsory education, our music and non-music teachers were predominantly aligned in thinking that this is relative to different factors. Both cases are indeed highly coincident in that the role of each music teacher is crucial in their respective schools for advocating the subject's relevance. In other words, our participants think that the subject can be relevant only if music teachers make it relevant for both students and colleagues; depending on, for example, their teaching methodology, making their contents visible outside the classroom or involving the surrounding community. Similarly, both cases think that the subject relevance is relative to each student's background and environment in relation to music. All of this depicts a relativistic view that previous research has identified in line with Dewey's theory of valuation, where use-value and aspects of its experience are part of the process of subject validation (Westerlund 2008).

Both cases are also in agreement on the cross-disciplinary value of music, the high relevance of using music as a teaching tool in other subjects and its teaching time being too short. This situates our non-music teachers' beliefs in consonance with their fellows in previous studies (Avidu 2021; Rajan 2017; Underhill 2022). Moreover, their beliefs are aligned with those of the Australian teachers that participated in the study of Barrett et al. (2019), as we did not appreciate significant differences across their subjects, therefore contradicting the results found by Yamamoto and Anguiano (2017) in the North American context, where the teachers' musical backgrounds played a role in their beliefs.

The main difference that we found in comparing the relevance of the subject across the two cases regards how our non-music teachers possess a more balanced opinion: they do not tend to think that it is among the most or the least relevant subjects in school. They think indeed that 'maths' or 'language' (particularly regarding learning to read and write) are not necessarily more important. On the contrary, a part of our music teachers think that music is the most important subject and the rest that it is not as important as others in compulsory education. Furthermore, our results suggest that our music teachers' negative beliefs about their counterparts' views on the subject are not true. In our view, all of this evidence may implicitly indicate a wrongful advocacy of music teachers regarding their own subject in school, as suggested by previous research (Aróstegui 2016). Likewise, this is consonant with the suggested benefit of strengthening pre-service music teachers' competence in advocating for their own subject (Mateos-Moreno 2022b).

With regard to the views on the subject methodology, both cases greatly agree and highlight what are seen as methodological flaws in teaching music as a subject. These include teaching music too theoretically or playing the recorder too often. This contradicts the previous research that found positive beliefs about using the recorder in school in a geographically close context (Gustems-Carner et al. 2020). Furthermore, both groups think that the subject should be highly focused on making music at school, which aligns their visions on the subject to Small's praxial philosophy of music as 'musicking' (Small 1998). However, our music teachers state that '[the music subject] should [also] encompass all types of musical knowledge' instead of only practical ones. In addition, our non-music teachers positively view the inclusion of the traditions of informal musical contexts in music lessons in school in line with previous studies (Clauhs and Sanguinetti 2022; Hallam et al. 2016; Vitale 2011), which they think is being neglected in favour of a more traditional methodology. Our music teachers set limits to that belief by indicating that possible methodological flaws in teaching the subject were more typical '20 years ago' than nowadays, although they recognise that some of their colleagues still teach music in old-fashioned ways. This belief supports the existence of a great methodological diversity among music teachers that reflect the individuality of each one's instructional approach (Thorgersen, Johansen, and Juntunen 2016). In addition, our music teachers provide insights into what they see as methodological improvements for the subject, such as avoiding textbooks, learning through play, aligning their lessons with students' musical environments or planning these lessons carefully, which is partly in line with previous research in a geographically similar context (Mateos-Moreno and García 2022).

The aims of the subject are seen quite differently by our music and non-music teachers according to our results; the former are more inclined to aim the subject towards fostering enjoyment and passing on a love of music to their students. On the contrary, non-music teachers would more commonly situate the subject aims in the completion of learning its assumed contents, such as facilitating musical and bodily expression and playing instruments. Furthermore, our music teachers see the subject as a 'pause' or a 'break' in children's daily lessons. In other words, they believe music is particularly useful for disconnecting from the intellectual efforts made in, for example, language, maths or science. This result is compatible with our two cases conceptualising the subject aims in likely similar ways to their respective subjects: non-music teachers would assign an intrinsic value to their own subject aims (i.e., the significance of teaching their subject contents is intrinsic to the school curriculum), which they transfer to their reflections on other subject's aims, in comparison with the more extrinsic value that music teachers would attribute to their subject (i.e. its value as a complement for supporting other subjects in the school curriculum). Such a difference in their beliefs equally mirrors the different philosophical foundations for school subjects in primary education argued in previous research (Temmerman 1991). Additionally, we only identified a belief regarding the contribution of music to developing creativity among our non-music teachers' beliefs, which is in line with controversies on the definition and actual relevance of creativity in music education (Odena 2001).

Finally, music teachers' beliefs about their own roles and characteristics are highly alien to their counterparts. According to our analysis, our music teachers state complaints about them having to teach visual art education, their material needs not being a priority for school budgets or being given tasks that take them away from developing their teaching plans. Using our participants' words, the music teacher is indeed thought to be 'the school events' manager', as if the music class were a 'party room'. Therefore, the subject space in the curriculum is thought to be overly dedicated to the organisation of school events and anniversaries instead of to the development of teaching plans in music. Additionally, the deficient education of music teachers is equally present among the beliefs of our music teachers alone, which they attribute to the lack of sufficient content knowledge, in line with previous research in this same context (Mateos-Moreno 2013).

Conclusions

Our study reveals many similarities and several differences in the beliefs of the music and non-music teachers that comprised our two investigated cases. The relevance of the subject is variable for both our music and non-music teachers. Adding to this, negative beliefs about the subject's teaching methodology are found across both cases, which may contribute to the perceived low reputation of the subject in compulsory education that is argued in previous research. Likewise, our results are compatible with our non-music teachers attributing an intrinsic value to their respective subjects while music teachers do the opposite in relation to music, i.e. justifying its presence more commonly on its contribution to the development of other subject competencies and as a pause to the intellectualities involved in learning them. Furthermore, our study aligns with previous research in suggesting that unbalanced advocacy for the subject might be at play. In addition, the views of our music teachers on their counterparts' beliefs on the subject do not seem to reflect reality according to our results, whereas our music teachers' beliefs on their needs and role at the school level are also alien to their counterparts. Further studies that take this novel approach of comparing the views of these two cases would help in understanding the main limitation of this study, which is the impossibility of discriminating the degree to which our results are sample-dependent (Creswell 2014).

Implications

Our study suggests that, unlike the teachers of other subjects, music teachers are generally saddled with a high responsibility in justifying the presence of their subject in the primary education school

curriculum. According to the beliefs of our participants, this advocacy could be bolstered by two main means: First, by using a methodology that makes the subject something relevant to the school, which is thought to happen by using the music lesson time to do as much music as possible, incorporating repertoire and procedures of informal musical contexts, encompassing all types of musical knowledge, avoiding textbooks, learning through play, aligning with students' musical environments, developing children's creativity, planning the lessons carefully and avoiding overloading the music teacher with the systematic preparation of school events; and second, by music teachers adequately and actively advocating for their subject. According to our results, the latter may involve adopting a more balanced understanding of its value in the curriculum, making its contents visible outside classrooms and involving the school community in the subject activities. In addition, our study suggests a lack of understanding of the role and needs of the music teacher by their counterparts, as well as music teachers having an inaccurate image of their counterparts' views on their subject. We hypothesise that these issues may lead to mutual misunderstandings or even to combative environments for music teachers in the context of our participants if music teachers do not succeed in adequately advocating for their subject in the ways described above.

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Ethical review

This study is derived from a research project which has undergone ethical review and has received approval from the University of Malaga (ethics certificate attached as a.jpg document). Approval number/code is 132-2021-H.

Notes on contributors

Daniel Mateos-Moreno was educated at institutions in various countries, including the University of Cambridge (UK) and Carnegie Mellon University (USA). He holds degrees in piano, music composition and music education, with a particular interest in art therapy and art education. He currently works as associate professor of music education at the University of Malaga (Spain). He previously held the position of Reader in music pedagogy at the University of Karlstad (Sweden). His teaching and scientific contributions include acting as supervisor and referee for doctoral dissertations and leading funded research projects, as well as authoring publications in journals such as *Psychology of Music*, *Music Education Research* and *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. He is a happy father of two children, a cat and a dog and enjoys composing music and reading about physics.

Paloma Bravo-Fuentes holds a graduate degree in guitar (Conservatory of Cordoba) and in education (University of Castilla la Mancha), a Master's degree in Educative Technology (University of Murcia) and a Ph.D. in Informatics (University of Alicante). She has worked as music teacher in primary education for almost ten years. Ms. Bravo has published a number of articles in journals such as *Musica Hodie*, *International Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning*, *Revista Tecnología, Ciencia y Educación* and *Relatec*; as well as several book chapters and conference proceedings. She is currently pursuing a post-doctoral research stay under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Mateos-Moreno at the University of Malaga.

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