

# INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN ARTS EDUCATION: A WORK PROPOSAL

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## Abstract

The inclusion of the basic competences in the *Ley Orgánica de Educación (LOE 2006)*, as one of the basic elements of the *curriculum* and reference for the evaluation, opened a discussion into the educative community that still today is a matter of study and research. These competences answer to the combination of skills, knowledge, aptitudes, attitudes and to the disposition of learning and to the knowledge of how to learn. In addition, we might say that the term “basic”, which belongs to the term itself, refers to the consideration of indispensable learning we should accurately orientate the educational and learning process towards.

Besides this legislative change, and regarding that the competential approach opens the way through the interdisciplinary aspect and integrates both formal and non-formal learning, there is not any methodology that allows educators to work the artistic education from this viewpoint. As a paradox, one of the fields where dissociation is more evident is in the artistic one that is to say, in literature, music, visual arts and corporal expression. This artificial disconnection started some centuries ago in order to be included in the *academia*. This has supposed, on the one hand, the study of the different arts in isolated academic spaces without any relation between them, and, on the other hand, depriving the students of seeing art as a whole. As a consequence, showing the different disciplines as a unique way of human creativity has been forgotten.

Thus, we consider that working by competences can surely help to unify *criteria* from an open and interdisciplinary methodology. From our view, the best genre that can enlighten this methodology is the opera as a fact of total art, which includes the different disciplines mentioned before. Then, we present a project to work the opera in an interdisciplinary way and also the methodological frame that we consider non-existing in this field.

Key words: opera, interdisciplinarity, arts education

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of the basic competences in the *Ley Orgánica de Educación (LOE 2006)*, [1] as one of the basic elements of the *curriculum* and reference for the evaluation, opened a discussion into the educative community that still today is a matter of study and research. These competences answer to the combination of skills, knowledge, aptitudes, attitudes and to the disposition of learning and to the knowledge of how to learn. In addition, we might say that the term “basic”, which belongs to the term itself, refers to the consideration of indispensable learning we should accurately orientate the educational and learning process towards. We consider that working by competences can surely help to unify *criteria* from an open and cross-disciplinary methodology and present a project to work the opera in an cross-disciplinary way and also the methodological frame that we consider non-existing in this field.

## 2 PRECEDENTS AND CURRENT STATUS OF THE ISSUE

It's a fact that multiculturalism is a reality in the classrooms in all European countries and the response to this situation shouldn't be expected to come from the institutions or the administration but from schools themselves and professionals [2]. As we said before, there is not a clearly defined background in research respect to using cross-disciplinary in arts and literature for teaching. There are two reasons for this: the isolation of the different studying areas for arts and the division of teachers in more and more specialized subjects. This has become a situation where research and teaching in every discipline is completely different and disconnected one from the other. This happens in primary school and especially in secondary school. On the other hand kindergarten education has been more capable of working in a more integrated way using the "Expression Area" as a way of globalize the different disciplines. Even so, it is well known that teachers of this level have worked mainly in an individualized way, focused on the elaboration of working activities for the classroom. Nevertheless, although there is not a proper methodology to work arts in a cross-disciplinary way, we can consider as antecedent the projects based learning methodology or inquiry based learning and competential approach [3]. The last one has lately experienced an increase of bibliography since the publication of the new curriculum but not as a result of a consolidated research guidelines [4].

Therefore, although this field it is not completely new in research, we can consider that it hasn't been very often studied yet and it is weak in two different aspects:

- a) The data capture, the cataloguing and systematizing of work about opera as an cross-disciplinary art for education.
- b) A proposal of integrated methodological frame following the academic scientific principia.

The current status gives us the chance not only for the data retrieval but also the realisation of a theoretical corpus for a new methodology.

### 2.1 Specific Didactics

The areas of *Didactics in Musical Expression and Visual Arts* and *Didactics of Language and Literature* belong to general didactics, which include the objectives, contents, methodology and evaluation of the teaching-learning process of the subjects involved.

Therefore the specific didactics consist of:

- a) A space to act with the teaching-learning procedures.
- b) A space to integrate the disciplines that refers to *what-to-teach* and the fact of teaching.

According to this, we can say that arts are a space to integrate different fields not as the addition of their contributions but as a space of transformation. These disciplines have the origin in praxis, which means that objectives are involved in the procedures.

The objectives of didactics of language and literature are:

- a) On the one hand to develop the aptitudes of the students related to comprehension and expression of oral and written texts.
- b) On the other hand to lead students to achieve the amount of rules and conventional characteristics of the studied language as an aid for communication.

Furthermore, the objectives of didactics of musical and plastic expression try to develop the students' skills related to comprehension and expression of artistic texts. Also should allow students to understand and to use the rules and conventions of different artistic expressions.

We are convinced that the musical pieces we include in this work proposal through the Opera, gathers the access to two different kinds of texts: linguistic and artistic which will probably be very relevant and interesting.

### 2.2 Interest and need of the proposal

The initial need of offering a representative corpus about *cross-disciplinary* work through the opera, obeys to the scarcity of documentation and work materials about the issue. Therefore, the methodological questions to be solved become a huge work for the research about the opera specially if we examine the didactic component, which is almost non-existent. We can say the same about the cross-disciplinary work between areas. All the data collection will compound a primordial database to

use for further investigations about didactics of the *Opera* and it will provide the cross-disciplinary component that remains absent in most of the existent works about it.

Related to the didactic proposals that we try to initiate, we know that it will be a big challenge. All the proposals addressed to primary school will have the advantage of finding more flexible and generally better-coordinated teachers. However the proposals for secondary school will have to deal necessarily with the separation of disciplines and the isolation between them. That is to say, it's not enough to make a valid methodology but to study its real implementation in the class in an accurate way.

### 3 GOALS

The objectives we'd like to achieve are:

1. To evaluate the current status of the issue. For that purpose we will look through the actual bibliography about this matter, which means to make a search in the references not only in Spanish but also in other languages.
2. To establish a net of collaborators both in Spain and Europe not only academically but also at institutional level. This net will give us the possibility of having a more complete point of view of the complexity of the phenomena at European level and also a more accurate idea of this matter.
3. To elaborate a theoretical corpus about the main studied concepts. This is a must to avoid a partial or poor strict view about the object under study.
4. To check all the existent curricular materials and the works made by the auditoria and concert halls. The critical reading of all these works will give us the chance to check the grade of deepness of compulsory education and the different perspectives used until now.
5. To propose a methodological frame to work in a cross-disciplinary way having the *Opera* as a base. This frame will allow the layout for activities of cross-disciplinary character following the convenient scientific principia adjusted to the new law of education.
6. To validate this methodological frame. To do it, we will need the collaboration of the didactic department of *Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia de València* and also some primary and secondary schools.
7. To prepare a teaching guide for cross-disciplinary working. This guide might be a useful tool for teachers to face the increasing diversity in class.

### 4 HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

The principal hypotheses of our proposal are:

1. The revision of the existent bibliography will give us the guidelines to elaborate further activities.
2. The opera is a paradigmatic gender for cross-disciplinary work.
3. Working at European level will allow the deepening in interculturality.
4. A methodological frame to work in a cross-disciplinary way could be easily transposed to other multidimensional genders.

#### 4.1 The revision of the existent bibliography will give us the guidelines to elaborate further activities.

We firmly think that cross-disciplinary work about *Opera* still remains fragmented in several little initiatives mainly in the concert halls themselves. Therefore we may find very interesting work proposals together with materials with a poor theoretical base line. For this reason, we find it completely necessary to collect all this information scattered in concert halls, webs, schools, etc. to form a previous bibliography corpus to use the proposals that, surely, include profitable elements.

Even though, as a hypothesis to work on, we are almost convinced that the cross-disciplinary contributions will be a minority and mostly addressed to only one of the disciplines (from literary, musical or visual point of view).

## **4.2 The opera is a paradigmatic gender for cross-disciplinary work.**

Another of our hypotheses is that *Opera* would be a privileged gender to make a work based in basic competences and cross-disciplinary because it includes different artistic expressions. Even when music is the most remarkable discipline in such shows, behind every *Opera* a story often based in a novel or tale remains. For instance, *Carmen* by G. Bizet is made upon a short tale by P. Merimée, Rossini's *La Cenerentola* upon a classic tale gathered by Perrault... The examples are so many that it becomes indispensable to look up in the original text to understand and to interpret the piece accurately.

This way, the representation includes scenography that can be changed according to the tastes of the time, set designer, hall, country, etc. As a consequence, the same *Opera* can offer a big diversity of interpretations due to the scenography. The fact of considering *Opera* as an elitist gender has become a handicap for this artistic expression but, as we can see, it gathers all the elements to make a global reading of the artistic fact.

## **4.3 Working at European level will allow the deepening in interculturality.**

Working with other countries' people gives us the chance to consider all the cultural facts that lay under the *Opera* pieces and also behind the different proposed methods. With this information, it will be easier to build an intercultural work. Interculturality as paradigm is considered as an increasing need for Europe, which is becoming more and more multicultural. There is a need to learn how to manage with cultures from different countries and different subcultures of every country itself. The *Opera* has been a perfect scene for multicultural experiments partly due to the romantic taste for exotic scenery. This way a big amount of stereotypes have been created, still with relevance, like *Madame Butterfly* or *Othello*. Therefore, we think that it won't be very difficult to start an intercultural work based on these or other operas.

## **4.4 A methodological frame to work cross-disciplinary could be easily transposed to other multidimensional genders.**

Finally, we think that the methodological frame developed will allow the application not only in the *Opera* but also in every work that could gather different artistic expressions: theatre, performances, poetry and illustrated books, etc. The very common tools that gather different expressions are TIC (Technologies of information and communication). Without any doubt, the digital storytelling could be considered as one of these kinds of cross-disciplinary activities. It could integer several different expressions only one click away (artistic, encyclopaedic, literary, etc.). So, since TIC are getting more and more common in the class, a methodology that treats the artistic fact as a unity is more required.

The necessary methods to achieve the goals defined before and to validate the hypotheses lie in a cross-disciplinary frame. Despite the increasing interest about the matter and how concerned educators are about artistic education in a world that is turning more pragmatic, there is still a lack of serious studies about the relation between music, literature and visual arts. We might also say that the same lack is found in curricular materials that integer all these subjects that allow teachers to look up for a well coordinated and even work. On the other hand, the fact of the non-existence of a specific area for this matter produces the dissemination of the materials and the almost inexistent connexion between researchers interested in this issue.

Thus we have to face different difficulties like the embryonic status of this kind of research, particularly in our country. This situation implies that the bibliography will be enormous because there are not basic studies with the guidelines from every discipline related to the matter of cross-disciplinary and interculturality. Therefore, the path through bibliography will have to consider the task of defining and delimiting the mind map of this matter from the viewpoint of all different disciplines. This will involve an enormous deal of work because one must detect the key contribution, confluent aspects of every discipline and the conceptual updates among the specific bibliography. So then the departure point of our methodological strategy will be the bibliographical search and to propose an action research to evaluate the validity of the didactic sequences and to try to improve them for a new proposal. Thus, we will follow the steps below:

- a) Plan of lay out to be applied.
- b) Sample. Yet not confirmed, we already have contacts to create a net of different primary and secondary schools, to prove our proposal to be validated with real students of all levels.

- c) Resources. Basically the listening and attendance to the opera representations, workbook with didactic guidelines and other complements such as computer aid materials or musical instruments.
- d) Data collection procedure. Besides the analysis of the results of the data collection, we'll use a class diary, evaluation patterns of the proposal...

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The new curricular designs and the modern perspectives of acting in the classroom observe the cross-disciplinary work in education. This approach implies the exigency of looking for an integrated formation in different subjects, organizing a working plan to achieve the connexion between contents of different areas. It seems very easy to find connexions between text and music; there is not need to remark the double condition of the song as a composition between disciplines, music and literature (lyrics and music). Furthermore, genres like *Opera* find a kind of exigency to become genuine in this parallel cohabitation. As said before, classical masterpieces of literature have been taken to the musical world through the *Opera* (*La Cenerentola* by Perrault- Rossini, *Carmen* by Merimée-Bizet).

Throughout these pages, one tries to approach the reader to this work proposal, the cross-disciplinary work through the *Opera* creating a methodological frame. This frame tries to observe the curriculum and to enable teachers of all education levels to accede this kind of resources together with the possibility to combine them with other artistic expressions where different disciplines are combined.

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