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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES OF MUSIC TEACHERS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY 73

*Julio Hurtado , Vicent Fontelles*

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN A BROADER SPECTRUM OF CULTURAL EXPERIENCES: A CASE STUDY FOR HERMENEUTICS IN THE ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION 78

*Levent Kara*

RHETORICAL READING IN LAW I: AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY FOR MEETING ESSENTIAL ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS REQUIRMENTS 86

*Margaret Liddle*

CHANGE IN UNDERGRADUATES' RESEARCH SELF-EFFICACY: A PILOT STUDY 96

*Stefanie S. Boswell*

ANALYSIS OF DISTANCE LEARNING IN SMART SCHOOLS IN IRAN: A CASE STUDY OF TEHRAN'S SMART SCHOOLS 103

*Vahid Motamedi*

MALAYSIAN STUDENTS LEARNING THE ARABIC LANGUAGE IN ARAB SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA: A FUTURE STUDY 112

*Abduljalil Al-Bazeli, Abdullah N. G. Alreshidi, Zahra Naimie , Siti Hajar Halili*

## Good Teaching Practices Of Music Teachers In Secondary Education: A Multiple Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

In this work we show the most significant features of our research which has been accomplished with the collaboration of the Research and Scientific Politic Department of the University of Valencia. It has been elaborated following a case study methodology, and it analyses the practice of six secondary school teachers who have been able to wake up their student’s interest by using an innovative and contextualized methodology that provokes a significant learning.

Instruments for data recompilation have been: in-depth interview, non-intervened observation and the analysis of the multimedia documents produced during their lessons. From the analysis of these data we have reached to the following conclusions among others: firstly, independently of the socio-cultural context and even using different methodologies, these teachers are obtaining good results due to their personal implication in the development of students-based activities; and, secondly, teachers’ vocation and motivation are the basis for a good teaching professionalization.

**Keywords:** Good practice, secondary, music teaching

### INTRODUCTION

In this articles I will briefly describe the Research Project called “Good Teaching Practices of Music Teachers in Secondary Education: a Multiple Case-study”, which has been financed by the Vice-president of Research and Scientific Policy of the University of Valencia (Spain).

This study surged from the necessity detected by our group of teachers of the Secondary Master Degree to have more knowledge on the practices fulfilled by those teachers of secondary that had a long and consolidated trajectory, in order to show them later to their students of the mentioned degree. This way, we could be closer to the teaching reality at the same time we would have a bank of didactical resources to be part of the different subjects included in the specialty of music.

By means of this Master Degree, students graduated in different fields are trained to be teachers in the secondary education stage. In it, there is a specialization to be teacher of music for high schools, and the main part of these students comes from the Superior Conservatory studies. Nevertheless, training received at the conservatory is oriented to the musical creation or interpretation but it is not valid for teaching. If we add that secondary stage is compulsory for all the teenagers, training at the conservatory is even less adjusted to this educative context.

## 1. THE CONTEXT

### 1.1 University of Valencia

The University of Valencia of today is the outcome of more than five centuries of history that have led to the accumulation of knowledge and unique documentary treasures, making it one of the top Spanish universities. In the thirteenth century, higher education was established in the city of Valencia thanks to King James I of Aragon who, in 1245, had obtained a Studium Generale institution from Pope Innocent IV. However, not until 30 October 1499 did the Juries of Valencia draw up the Constitutions of what was to become the first University of Valencia: a university authorized by the Papal Bull on 23 January 1501, signed by the valencian Pope Alexander VI and by the royal privilege of Ferdinand II the Catholic. It was granted on 16 February 1502.

For more than 500 years, the development of the University of Valencia has run in parallel with the development of the city and has been an inextricable part of its urban fabric, creating spaces for teaching, research, creation and dissemination of

culture and science as well as knowledge transfer. Initially dedicated to the studies of medicine, humanities, theology and law, the past two decades have suffered an accelerated process of transformation and growth, incomparable to earlier periods. This significant effort has turned the University of Valencia into a modern, global university. It has become a leader in the application of new technologies, connected to important international scientific and teaching networks.

The University of Valencia has become one to the top five scientific centers in Spain thanks to the wide range of teaching and research activities offered in all areas of knowledge (basic sciences and engineering, health sciences, educational sciences, humanities and social sciences, economics and law) and its commitment to excellence.

## 1.2 The Master's Degree

The current legal regulations in Spain establish that in order to access to the regulated professions of professor in the different fields of secondary education, the students must have a graduate, or equivalent, qualification, and a pedagogical and educational training with the master's degree level. The Master's Degree in Secondary Education Teaching by the University of Valencia provides this professional authorization required by the educational Administration to practice the previously mentioned professions in secondary education public and private centers. This master's degree is structured in different specialties corresponding to the current specialties of the secondary education.

The Master's Degree provides both a basic training to the teaching practice in the secondary levels of the educational system, and a specific training to one of the areas in which the previously mentioned professions are structured. The qualification also includes a work placement period in educational centers.

All classes, including the tutorials for the practicum and for the Master's degree final project, are taught by the teaching staff of the corresponding university department. If more teaching staff is needed, the call for new places will be published in the DOCV (Official Journal of the Valencia's Community). The information about these places is available on the Human Resources (PDI) website of the University. Teaching staff from the secondary schools –within the framework of schools and tutors determined by the Valencia's Department for Education– and from the corresponding departments of the University will participate in the tutorials for the practicum. The regulations for postgraduate studies confer the Master's Academic Coordinating Committee the competence to approve the teaching staff who will participate in the Master's degree.

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAME

Broadly and very synthetically speaking, we built the theoretical framework on the basis of the different existing opinions about what was the degree required for teaching music in secondary and baccalaureate degree in this specialty faculty, whether through a degree disciplines of musicology or history and the science of music or Conservatory. Other possibilities in the public service since they can also choose another specialty graduates, whenever they pass tests in the competition specific opposition to this field of knowledge and acquire specialty music (Oriol, 2005) following. Adaptation to the European convergence process and according to the proposals submitted by the Conference of deans and directors of education and teaching this training is done through the Master Teacher of secondary education, which lasts one academic year with a load of 60 ECTS credits and common to all the specialty generic subjects and specific materials for each specialty. Despite the increase in workload of the specialty in this new proposal, different authors (Yanes, 1998) agree that it is still insufficient for the internalization of the teaching skills needed to approach the task of teaching music in secondary education successfully.

## 4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAME

Our research work is framed within the qualitative methodology, which according to Taylor and Bogdan (1986) is a way of addressing the empirical world in an inductive way, in which the researcher or researchers see the stage and the people from a holistic perspective. In particular we have used the methodology of a case-study (Stake 1998), since by studying an individual in an intense and detailed manner, it offers an extraordinary depth in the study. It is increasing the number of authors who defend its undisputed scientific validity (Yin, 2003 or Kemp, 1993), as it is a very appropriate approach to reveal the diversity and richness of the human behaviour, which is more difficult to study from other methodological approaches.

Besides, this case-study is multiple as we selected 6 cases: three female teachers and three male teachers of different socio-cultural contexts and with different teaching styles. Finally, based on the analysis of the content and the testimonies of the six protagonists we drawn up two reports about the characteristics of each one, and later we made a video which should be projected to the master of secondary students in the master classes as examples of good professional practice.

## 5. PHASES OF THE PROJECT

The research process was divided into six phases which I will briefly describe below:

Phase A: in this phase we sent a questionnaire to the music teachers of 50 secondary educational centers and high schools of Valencia. Then, taking into account their answers, we selected a group of 10 teachers and reviewed in depth the answers about their teaching practices, so finally we decided to choose three female teachers and three male teachers, who seemed the most outstanding by their activities and the diverse characteristics offered in their practices, diversity that constituted one of the main keys of our study.

Phase B: the authorization to access in the centers. We contacted with the management teams and the selected teachers, and ask them permission to carry out the direct observance and the rest of phases for our research inside their schools. As we did not find any obstacles to do it, we immediately arranged the dates for the first interviews and for the process of obtaining evidences.

Phase C: in this phase we maintained personal interviews with each of the protagonists of the cases that we had selected and visited them at their centers in order to watch them at work. Although we were not allowed by the Ministry of Education to record these observations, these teachers gave us their own recordings, which were publicity owned, to use them as examples of their practices. Then, we analyzed all their educational materials, including the decoration of the classrooms, and asked them all the documentation they could give us, such as concert programs, posters of activities and others. In this sense, they again offered us their support and facilitated what we needed. In this phase we also maintained semi-structured interviews with the students.

Phase D: Once the evidences had been collected and the video-interviews recorded, we turned to the prescription of the audios and videos for the analysis of information obtained in the sense described by Dezin (1989). With the descriptive and interpretative reports in our hands, we went back to the centers in order to compare the information we had and receive the teachers' approval of the content.

Phase E: Having the permission of all the protagonists, we passed to assemble the audiovisual file.

Phase F: Lastly, we are broadcasting the results of this project by means of publications in education magazines and specialized journals, and at the same time, we are presenting it in congresses and workshops around the world.

## 6. INSTRUMENTS

The first instrument used was the questionnaire, built by researchers with the help of a team of professional experts for validation. This questionnaire intends to get information from those teachers with the specialty of music who are teaching in secondary schools. The processing of data was carried out with the help of a quantitative analysis program, SPSS, which enabled us to segment and recalculate the data in each of the proposed parameters. After the different phases, expressed above, once we have selected the six protagonists of our cases, we used as instruments for collecting information:

- a) in-depth interviews which are one of the instruments most used in qualitative research techniques, a very useful method to collect data that cannot be reached by the observation or questionnaires (Blaxter 2008)
- b) the analysis of documents such as schedules, magazines, posters of classes, programs of concerts...
- c) audio and video recordings of images and assertions of the protagonists in order to make an analysis of content and one rear audiovisual document

## 7. RESULTS OBTAINED

The procedures, used to obtain the information, the analysis and the audiovisual file, have brought us a large amount of qualitative data that have allowed us to describe different variables of each of the cases as well as comparisons to understand the events experienced by the protagonists of the cases.

### 7.1 Particular features of the cases

When each of the cases and its most important features are described, it must be pointed out that, of course, in each case we found many common points both in their methodological and didactic aspects, and that our intention was to remark their distinctiveness in order to understand much better their idiosyncrasy, because, in our opinion, it transcends the individual

peculiarities of the music teachers in general. The order followed in the following exposition does not respond to any hierarchical or qualitative criteria, it is a descriptive process indeed:

Case number 1: a teacher whose teaching practices are based in the student's corporal development. He does not guide them, on the contrary, students research the sounds and how it is produced on their own by recording and reproducing it again and again. This teacher uses many sources and elements from the information technologies (TICs).

Case number 2: a female teacher who produces her own musicals in an interdisciplinary and cooperative way with the rest of teachers of her school in order to develop the principles of the connivance plan of the educative centre where she they are working. This way, she offers models of reference to face the quotidian conflicts of a multicultural student body by means of musical activities.

Case number 3: a teacher that arranges musical themes previously selected by his pupils; he adapts those songs to the musical and technical level of his students so these themes can be played with the instruments of his school. During his lessons, he develops the required technique in order to play new orchestrations based on the themes that his pupils like the most, which are later shown in concerts offered both at the school and outside.

Case number 4: a female teacher who basically develops, in all her lessons, a musical sensitiveness through the movement, in order to make a repertory with the student's orchestra and the chorus of her school. With this activity, she does not only approach the contents of the curriculum in music teaching but besides they participate in all the parties that are celebrated at the school. At the same time, one of her goals is to participate in all the musical events that take place in her city which are organized by different public and private institutions, so her pupils can develop their social skills by means of these musical meetings and scholar events.

Case number 5: a teacher who uses the Valencia's traditional music to approach the contents of the music language at the same time that he reflects about the music and the human being evolution, the cultural melt and the human identity, as music is fundamental for any transformation.

Case number 6: a female teacher that uses the chorus and the orchestra of her school as tools for her program. She considers music at the school must be professional music. Therefore students have to experience the diverse emotions and reactions that music produces in other ambits. Feeling the music outside the classroom is the best way to study, to understand and to love music. To do that, year by year the contents of her lessons are adapted to the level of her pupils.

In all these cases we also had the opportunity to interview some of the students, whose declarations were added to the observing and analyzing documentary evidence and videos collected for analysis of the activities and the behavior of the participants.

## 7.2. Common general features

Main conclusions of our project made us to find out those characteristics in the teaching practices which were common to the six teachers, despite being so different among them:

a) Their initial training: they all had their first relation with music when they were very young; it was a complementary activity to their compulsory education and they all were motivated by members of their family.

b) Their prompt vocation to be teachers of music: They all have in common that, at the time they were studying music in the Conservatory as a professional activity, they felt the necessity of teaching music with a method that was different to that they were learning, so they leaned towards teaching instead of being professional musicians as they had being prepared at the Conservatory.

c) The meaning of "teaching music" in Secondary: playing music in order to understand it. This is a common characteristic to the majority of the methodologies in the XX century such as Dalcroze, Orf or Willems. Music has to be lived and explored in order to intellectualize it later. All the protagonists of our research follow this line.

d) The importance and dedication given to their professional activity at the high school: It is part of their life's project and makes them to feel complete both as human beings and as teachers who are committed with the society.

e) Their altruist spirit, their capacity to work in a team and be leaders that are continuously developing new educative projects.

f) The way the consider teaching: a horizontal scheme where teacher and student work together towards a common finish without any kind of hierarchy.

g) Their empathy with teenagers and their knowledge about the psychological factors that evolve young people, and

their good relationship with them both inside and outside their classroom.

### 7.3 Concept of the didactic of music

There are other characteristics, more linked to their musical education, which are common to these teachers too:

a) They all use and give importance to the different functions of the musical education, such as the sense-motor, the audio-perceptive, the cognitive, the ideational and the denotative. This means that there are different ways to understand and fulfill the educative program contents.

b) They all consider that students must be approached to the knowledge of the music language basic elements. For that, they start from their own compositions and non-conventional graphics in order to reach this level.

c) It is essential for them to teach all the procedural blocks of musical education, that is, movement, dance, instrumentation, voice... but each teacher give more emphasis to one or other depending on their previous knowledge and experience.

d) Finally, they all share what it is done into the music classroom with their colleagues in similar activities and also with the rest of the educative sphere. Therefore, they offer concerts to other students and teachers and also to the student's families.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

As we have observed through the documental evidences and the analysis of the data obtained during the whole researching process, we can affirm the following:

a) Teachers feel completely satisfied when their educative labor is accepted by the student body and the rest of the educative community.

b) At the same time, the educative community appreciates this type of musical practices that are contextualized with their environment and produce shared activities.

c) Teaching music at high schools must be useful for students to know the multiple possibilities they can find at a musical level, not only as music lovers or enthusiastic public in the future, but also as a way to work as professionals by means of the different jobs related to the music industry.

d) Students enjoy much more those activities that are translated into significant learning. Staging of musical activities motivates them and increases their interest to learn and participate in the classroom.

e) Music turns into a powerful tool for global education, education for the citizens, human being values and fundamental rights, etc.

f) Music, in the XXI century, may be understood as a basic subject whereas it can be used as the axis to access to the whole knowledge and contents included into the curriculum in order to generate a significant learning.

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