

Music in secondary education: interest in content according to students and teachers in year four of compulsory secondary education

Música en Secundaria: interés por los contenidos, según el alumnado y el profesorado de 4º de ESO

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Abstract:

In this work we start from the hypothesis that there is a lack of connection between what students find interesting and the content set by the curriculum because the curriculum was set by taking into consideration professional and/or political interests. In this article the level of interest of students in year four of compulsory secondary education in the content of the music subject are described, as interest is a factor that influences learning. This is a descriptive study based on survey methods and qualitative research, and it examines which types of content are most interesting for students and which ones inspire little or no interest in them. After analysing the results, we make some proposals that might help to increase students' interest in the content of music as a subject.

Keywords: Secondary school, music, interest, content.

Resumen:

En esta investigación partimos de la hipótesis de que existe desconexión entre los intereses del alumnado y los contenidos que fija el currículo, ya que éste se realiza desde intereses profesionales y/o políticos. En este artículo se muestran los intereses que tiene el alumnado de 4º curso de Secundaria por los contenidos de Música, al ser el interés uno de los factores que influyen en su aprendizaje. Se trata de un estudio descriptivo basado en métodos de encuesta e investigación cualitativa, y en él se analizan qué contenidos resultan más interesantes para el alumnado y cuáles suscitan menos o ningún interés. Tras el análisis de los resultados, sugerimos propuestas que creemos podrían contribuir a mejorar el interés por los contenidos de la asignatura de Música.

Descriptores: Educación Secundaria, música, intereses, contenidos.

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1. Introduction

At present music is the most important mass art form and is one of the most significant identifying references for young people. Therefore, one of the aims of the subject of music in Spain's Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) is to be a point of contact between the outside world and the music imparted in the classroom. One important way to achieve this end is to start from students' interests in the content presented to them using a teaching model based on dialogue, where context is of fundamental importance.

In addition, in ESO special attention must be paid to the acquisition and development of basic skills, including artistic and cultural ones, such as: «appreciating, understanding, and critically evaluating different cultural and artistic expressions, using them as a source of pleasure and personal enrichment and seeing them as part of the cultural heritage of a people» («apreciar, comprender y valorar críticamente diferentes manifestaciones culturales y artísticas, utilizarlas como fuente de disfrute y enriquecimiento personal y considerarlas como parte del patrimonio cultural de los pueblos», Decree 231/2007 of the Junta of Andalusia).

The music curriculum, like that of any other subject, comprises objectives, content, activities, means and resources, and evaluation, all of which should be directed towards the development of artistic and cultural competences, among others. Therefore, in this piece we describe how interested fourth-year ESO students are in the different types of content of this subject, with the assumption that an understanding of this will help with and improve the

work of the teachers and the music education of the students, through the preparation of a more personalised curriculum.

2. Theoretical framework

Interest can be understood as a means for achieving learning and as an educational aim. The pedagogues of the classical world believed that interest could be awoken by making lessons enjoyable and appealing and by getting to know the students. According to Dewey (1925), making the subject interesting means presenting it in such a way that students can appreciate its importance, its connections, its value and how it relates to what is meaningful to them, anticipating what Ausubel proposes in his theory of significant learning (cf. Pozo, 1989) and Freire in his idea of dialogic learning based on interaction and communication. Freire maintains that it is important to educate curiosity, something indispensable for the cognitive process, suggesting dialogue as a way of doing this — asking and answering questions (1997, p. 19) — and making teaching, learning, and studying serious acts but also sources of joy.

As an aim, interest transcends didactics to be educational. To achieve this, it has been proposed that students' interest in the values contained in the ESO curriculum and in respect for the differences that integrate the various curricular and extracurricular contexts be awakened, as «we should not forget that the general curricular framework must connect with the real needs and interests of the students, at all levels of education» («no hay que olvidar que el marco curricular general ha de conectar con las necesidades e intereses reales de los estudiantes, en todos

los niveles educativos», Díaz & Ibarretxe, 2008, p. 100). Ultimately, it is a case of awakening an interest in everything in the music classes that leads to the overall education of the students.

It is important to note that the universal interest to which Freire refers agrees with Herbart's concept of multiple interests (1923), according to which anything can be of interest.

We cannot neglect the very important role of motivation in everything proposed above, as both concepts are interrelated. As García Hoz (1982) notes, when a student is interested in a certain subject or activity, the problem of motivation is solved, and, more recently, Bonetto and Calderón (2014) affirm that students who are motivated show more interest in the activities to be performed in the classroom.

We agree with Cerezo and Casanova (2004) when they say that the treatment received from teachers affects students' motivational orientations, and we also agree with Guillén (2012) who states that as teachers we should encourage the required motivation among students, arousing their interest and connecting with their desires for autonomy, progress, recognition, or simply well-being (initial motivation). Following on from this, the entire process must be managed so that the stated objectives can be attained, providing strategies for approaching the different tasks (achievement motivation). To do so, effort — so little valued at present — is vital. Furthermore, we must assume that not everything we do will be interesting and appealing for our students, and so we should optimise the learning, starting from their prior knowledge and interests.

It is also important to be able to transmit our enthusiasm for what we do and to be responsible for creating a positive emotional climate that favours the continuous acquisition of appropriate knowledge and social habits. The interdisciplinary role with other subjects is crucial in this aspect, as supporting it means supporting a new more open, flexible, supportive, democratic, and critical type of person. The contemporary world needs people to have an ever more adaptable education so they can cope with a society where the future has a degree of unpredictability that has never before been seen in the history of humankind.

As Gilbert (2005) observes, we should ask ourselves the questions every student asks when entering the classroom: «What is in it for me? What is it for? Why should I bother learning this?» (p. 27). We should discuss these questions with the students, to make it possible for them to be motivated based on how they can benefit from the subject, and especially knowledge of its content.

Focussing on content, Coll (1992) defines it as the set of cultural forms and knowledges selected to form part of the different curricular areas, the assimilation and ownership of which is vital for the development and socialisation of the students.

Subject-specific content, as in the case of the content of music, must be seen as a means for developing competences in the students as these are more lasting and transferable than the content itself. Accordingly, it is important to approach it through projects where teachers can motivate the need to explore new things through an initial activity that awakens

interest and encourages questions. This could be a video, a debate, a guest in class, a book, etc. (Pereira, 2014).

Nonetheless, like the curricula from other eras, the current secondary education curriculum — the definitive implementation of the LOMCE (Organic Law for Improving the Quality of Education) is on hold — was prepared based on political interests, ignoring the psychological and social focus in the design of the curriculum. This means that it lacks a full connection with the students' interests, something that occurs in practically all subjects.

Gil de la Serna and Escaño (2010) note that the content delivered in the centres comprises cultural forms that society, through its educational institutions, has selected independently of the interests of specific students. Teachers play a fundamental role, as they make the students see the interest of this content, but to achieve this they must consider students' expectations, prior knowledge, and the contexts in which they live, as it is they who interpret the new information. Ultimately, «it is necessary to explore the ways in which content can be inserted that is consistent with the characteristics of the students, the teaching staff, and specific educational groups» («hay que indagar en las maneras en que se posibilita la inserción de contenidos acordes con las particularidades de los estudiantes, los equipos docentes y los colectivos educativos concretos», Díaz & Ibarretxe, 2008, p. 101).

Furthermore, since the implementation of the LOGSE (Organic Law on the General Organisation of the Educational System), music has been an optional subject in year four of ESO, and it is striking

how little motivation some students have as they enter a year where, as well as completing compulsory education, they must choose some subjects. Turning this lack of motivation into epistemological curiosity, as Freire proposes, is what we have attempted to do by investigating the interests of the students based on their experience and the curiosity of the teachers, since the education of the twenty-first century most needs «an in-depth theoretical reflection based on one's own experience of practical and intellectual work» («una profunda reflexión teórica realizada desde la propia experiencia de trabajo práctico e intelectual», see Flecha, 1997, p. 9). Also, as Rusinek states (2004), we should note that in secondary school, students have an attitude of consumerist passiveness and lack of motivation towards acquiring the information that the teacher offers them.

3. Aim and objectives of the research

The aim of this work, based on knowledge of what content is of more or less interest to students in year four of ESO, is to make proposals that might contribute to boosting interest in the subject and to preparing a curriculum that is more connected with the students. Taking the students' interests as a starting point means considering their knowledge, something which is necessary for dialogic learning and for the principle of quality teaching, as stated in the educational legislation.

This research intends to consider the voices of students and teachers, who, as learners and agents in education respectively, can provide ideas and vital data for improving the teaching and learning

processes of music. The proposed aim is broken down into the following objectives:

- To discover the interests of year-4 ESO students from centres in Seville regarding the content of music as a subject, from their own perspective.
- To analyse the interests of these students regarding the content, according to the teachers.
- To examine the possible reasons for any lack of interest or lack of motivation regarding certain content.
- To make proposals to improve interest levels in the content of ESO music, based on how it is rated by students.

Taking the objectives proposed in this research as a starting point, we start to carry out the study with some prior assumptions, that is to say, proposals or hypotheses that relate our empirical data to theories previously adopted in the theoretical framework. We emphasise the following:

- a. We believe that it is necessary to know and analyse the students' interest in the content of the music subject in ESO, as well as the opinion of their teachers on this matter.
- b. We believe that there is a disassociation between content and interests, as these interests are not known or taken into account as much as they should be when planning the teaching methodology.
- c. We think that there is a lack of interest among students about anything that is not contemporary to them, is not topical or that they do not see as clearly useful in their everyday life.

4. Research methodology

The focus of the work we present is framed within a descriptive methodology, which, according to Best (1970, p. 61), «refers to what it is in detail and interprets it. It relates to existing conditions or connections; prevailing practices, opinions, perspectives, or attitudes that are maintained; ongoing processes; effects that are felt or trends that develop». We see our research as descriptive owing to its proposed objectives, which are none other than to describe a specific reality which we are studying when it has already taken place without the intervention of the researcher. In other words, it represents a descriptive methodology defined as *ex post facto*, meaning «after the fact», which alludes to the event occurring first and its possible causes and consequences being analysed afterwards. We performed the research with a quantitative focus using surveys, and qualitatively with interviews. This is a case of methodological complementarity, as both methods provide information about different aspects of reality: the students' interests, and the teachers' perspectives. As Bericat notes (1998), the strategy of complementarity is based on examining a given social reality from two different viewpoints, combining them to enrich our understanding of the facts.

The survey was carried out using a questionnaire in which the students were asked to state freely their level of interest in the content of the subject. The criterion followed for preparing the questionnaires was to list the content contained in the legislation in force that covers the fourth year of ESO and formulate questions relating to the level of interest in this content (see Table 3). Each question has four possible

answers: not at all interested (1), not interested much (2), reasonably interested (3), and very interested (4). There is also an open question. Similarly, the interviews were carried out by asking the teachers a series of questions relating to the level of interest which, according to them, students show in the content delivered in the classroom and the possible justification for this.

It is then a matter of being able to compare and complete the answers given by the students with those given by the teachers to find common features and differences. In this way, we can reach conclusions with the hope of improving levels of student interest and their learning processes and of reducing the lack of alignment between their interests and the content delivered.

The target population of the study is the students taking music in the public and private schools in the city of Seville that offer it as an optional subject in year four of ESO. Of the 50 public centres, 37 offer it (74%), while only three of the 61 private schools offer it (4.90%). This very low percentage could be because other

subjects are offered, as they feel that the musical education received in the first two years of secondary education is sufficient. In total, 40 centres in Seville offer music in year four of ESO and these form the population of our research. The sample comprises 30 centres, as we believe that it was not necessary to include all of them given that some of them are fairly close to each other, and so there are zones with more centres than others. In any case, the 30 centres represent 75% of the population; of these, 27 are public (72.90%) and 3 private (100%). The centres selected correspond to different areas in the city, thus representing a range of socioeconomic profiles and the ten school zones established by the Department of Education. Within each zone, the criterion followed was to try to choose the centres that are furthest from each other, and, in this way, achieve a greater level of representativeness. The sample comprises 405 students, of whom 354 (87.41%) attend public centres and 51 (12.59%) attend private centres. Of those surveyed, 224 are girls (55.30%) and 181 boys (44.70%). These data are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Centres of the population and schools and students in the sample.

ESO centres in the city of Seville		Population (schools offering music in year 4 of ESO)	Sample		
			Schools	Students	
				Male	Female
Private	61	3	3	14	37
Public	50	37	27	210	144
Total	111	40	30	224	181
				405	

Source: Own elaboration.

The schools where the questionnaire was distributed were used for selecting the teachers, and the criterion followed for this process was the representativeness of the different zones, the different socioeconomic contexts, and, obviously, the teachers' willingness to participate in the study.

In Table 2 the distribution by zones and schools of the 20 teachers selected can be seen, as well as their sex and teaching experience. They are all from public centres, since, as noted above, the number of private centres that offer music in the fourth year of ESO is of low significance.

TABLE 2. Distribution and characteristics of the teachers in the sample.

Zones	Teachers selected	Characteristics of the teachers
Zone 1	IES «G.A. Bécquer»	Male, 25 years' experience
	IES «Carlos Haya»	Male, 15 years' experience
Zone 2	IES «San Isidoro»	Male, 11 years' experience
	IES «San Jerónimo»	Female, 16 years' experience
	IES «Miguel de Cervantes»	Female, 14 years' experience
	IES «Inmaculada Vieira»	Female, 9 years' experience
Zone 3	IES «Pino Montano»	Male, 13 years' experience
Zone 4	IES «San Pablo»	Female, 25 years' experience
	IES «Joaquín Turina»	Male, 19 years' experience
Zone 5	IES «Pablo Picasso»	Female, 11 years' experience
	IES «Valle Inclán»	Male, 15 years' experience
Zone 6	IES «Torreblanca»	Female, 12 years' experience
Zone 7	IES «Luis Cernuda»	Male, 25 years' experience
Zone 8	IES «Murillo»	Female, 11 years' experience
	IES «Luca de Tena»	Female, 24 years' experience
	IES «Ramón Carande»	Male, 25 years' experience
	IES «Nervión»	Female, 12 years' experience
Zone 9	IES «Bellavista»	Male, 13 years' experience
	IES «Punta del Verde»	Female, 16 years' experience
Zone 10	IES «Romero Murube»	Female, 11 years' experience

(IES = Instituto de Educación Secundaria, Secondary School)

Source: Own elaboration.

As Table 2 shows, the teachers interviewed included 11 women and 9 men. The average experience was slightly over 14 years in the case of the women and was almost 18 years in the case of the men, and so we believe that the sam-

ple comprised teachers with minor differences regarding gender and teaching experience. Given the differing number of schools in each zone, some zones were represented by just one while others needed four.

TABLE 3. Content of the questionnaire related to the thematic blocks from the official curriculum.

Thematic blocks	Thematic units	Content of the questionnaire
Music, society, and technology	Basic elements of music	Reading and writing musical notation on the staff
		Analysing a song or piece of music
	The importance of music	Music criticism through textual commentary
	Electronics and computing in music	Electronic music in general
	Music in the media	Music on the radio
		Film soundtracks
Concert music	Concert music in Spain	Spanish music from several centuries ago
	Concert music from around the world	Gregorian chant
		Music with several voices or polyphonic music
		Music from the Baroque period (Bach, Vivaldi)
		Music from the classical period (Mozart)
		The music of the Romantic period (Brahms, Wagner)
		The concert music of the 20th century (Ravel, Falla)
Traditional music in Spain and around the world	Traditional music in Spain	Folk music or traditional Spanish music
		Andalusian popular music
		Sevillana dancing The music of Holy Week
	Flamenco	Flamenco
Popular urban music	Traditional music around the world	Folk music from the rest of the world
	Jazz	Jazz
	Popular urban music since jazz	Rock music
		Pop music
		Disco music
		House music
		Hip-hop music
		Reggaeton music
		Rap

Source: Own elaboration.

For collecting the data, we prepared a Questionnaire on students' interests regarding content with 27 items complemented by an open question about how they would like music classes to be. The items refer to the different thematic units in year-four ESO music, units which in turn derive from the established thematic blocks. This is shown in Table 3. We should note that the questionnaire was administered during the third term to ensure that a greater number of content areas had already been covered by the teachers during the academic year.

To analyse the data, the answers were given numerical codes from 1 (not at all interested) to 4 (very interested) as appropriate. After this initial coding process, they were analysed and the values were entered in the SPSS computer program, giving the first tables of results. More specifically, basic descriptive studies were performed for each of the items; frequencies and percentages of answers for those

surveyed were calculated for each item, as well as its average and standard deviation.

For the interviews, we used the Nudist program and we codified the answers, paying special attention to the most significant answers.

5. Data analysis

5.1. Students' interest in the content of music as a subject

In Table 4 we show the results of the analysis of the answers, the reliability of which calculated as 0.83 by applying Cronbach's α . They refer to the level of interest for each of the pieces of content. These results expressed in percentages are complemented by the average and the standard deviation so that the most significant values can be selected. The content is ordered from highest to lowest level of interest.

TABLE 4. Frequency distribution and descriptive statistics for level of interest in the course content.

Item	Interest in the content	Answers (%)				Mean	S.D
		None	Little	Fairly	A lot		
22	Disco music	9.18	17.62	31.51	41.69	3.06	.980
20	Pop music	8.44	20.10	37.72	33.75	2.97	.937
25	Reggaeton music	18.86	10.92	25.06	45.16	2.97	1.148
24	Hip-hop music	10.42	28.29	29.28	32.01	2.83	.996
15	Flamenco	15.00	24.75	30.50	29.75	2.75	1.042
2	Music on the radio	6.20	34.00	40.20	19.60	2.73	.845
23	House music	12.94	27.61	33.33	26.12	2.73	.991
1	Film soundtracks	6.68	34.41	39.11	19.80	2.72	.856

Item	Interest in the content	Answers (%)				Mean	S.D
		None	Little	Fairly	A lot		
17	Sevillana dancing	19.11	28.54	24.07	28.29	2.62	1.090
26	Rap	18.36	29.53	26.30	25.81	2.60	1.062
3	The music of Holy Week	25.00	25.50	19.80	29.70	2.54	1.160
27	Electronic music in general	17.12	34.74	26.55	21.59	2.53	1.013
16	Andalusian popular music	17.62	33.75	28.78	19.85	2.51	1.001
21	Rock music	26.93	39.65	19.20	14.21	2.21	.995
9	Music with several voices or polyphonic music	23.02	43.07	26.98	6.93	2.18	.864
18	Folk music from the rest of the world	32.01	44.91	16.13	6.95	1.98	.872
19	Jazz	37.47	36.72	18.86	6.95	1.95	.917
4	Reading and writing musical notation on the staff	39.95	40.45	14.14	5.46	1.85	.860
5	Analysing a song or piece of music	39.85	40.59	14.11	5.45	1.85	.859
6	Music criticism through textual commentary	39.45	43.18	14.14	3.23	1.81	.794
11	Music from the classical period (Mozart)	46.27	31.84	17.41	4.48	1.80	.882
14	Folk music or traditional Spanish music	44.53	38.06	14.18	3.23	1.76	.813
10	Music from the Baroque period (Bach, Vivaldi)	52.87	28.68	14.96	3.49	1.69	.851
12	Music from the Romantic period (Brahms, Wagner)	49.50	36.57	10.45	3.48	1.68	.798
8	Spanish music from several centuries ago	51.24	34.16	10.89	3.71	1.67	.814
13	20th century concert music (Ravel, Falla)	51.49	35.57	9.95	2.99	1.64	.780
7	Gregorian chant	64.60	27.97	5.69	1.73	1.45	.683

Source: Own elaboration.

By examining Table 4 we can see that 13 of the 27 items exceed the mid value on the scale (2.5). These correspond to the content that most interests the stu-

dents. The content that inspired the most interest was disco music (3.06), followed by pop and reggaeton, both on the same score (2.97), hip-hop (2.83), and flamenco

(2.75). In contrast, the items with the lowest scores are those relating to historical topics, with Gregorian chant standing out (1.45). Other types with similar scores include twentieth century concert music (1.64), Spanish music from several centuries ago (1.67), music from the Romantic period (1.68) and Baroque music (1.69). Going into more detail, it is worth noting that 45.16% of those surveyed said they were very interested in reggaeton music, 41.69% in dance music, and 33.75% in hip-hop. As well as these, a considerable percentage of students also said they found flamenco, music on the radio, house music, and film soundtracks very interesting. With regards to flamenco, it is worth noting that in the open question most of the students said that it had little presence in the classroom and wanted it to have a greater weight in the curriculum with a greater focus on practice. This is understandable as the questionnaire was distributed in Seville. It is also important to note the interest shown in the music of Holy Week, electronic music and Andalusian popular music, albeit with somewhat lower scores than the previous types.

They showed little or no interest, as stated above, towards content of a historical nature, in particular Gregorian chant which was identified by over 64% of the students. Furthermore, 51% of those surveyed did not have an interest in Spanish music from several centuries ago or Baroque, classical, or Romantic music or twentieth-century music from outside Spain. The lack of interest in writing musical notation or analysing a song or piece of music is also noteworthy, with 40% showing no interest.

5.2. Teachers' views on students' interest in the content

The main topics covered by teachers in the interviews, through five general questions and six more specific ones, were as follows:

- Interest in the areas' content and whether they need modifying.
- Students' motivation, starting from their prior interests and knowledge.
- The preparedness and motivation of the teachers, as well as their methodology.
- The question of whether to tackle the history of music.
- ICT and its application in the classroom.
- Music in the media.
- The importance of music education for the government and society in general.

A considerable percentage of the students said that they have little interest in the content, as just over 50% of the items (14 of 27) scored below 2.5 on the table, according to the teachers the content of the music subject is interesting for the students and so they do not believe that it is necessary to modify it.

When evaluating the students' interest in the content, many teachers commented that it depends to a significant extent on the preparation of the teachers and their interests in the content, as in general what the student essentially wants to do is get a pass mark. One teacher said:

The student's level of interest mainly relates to passing, the most dedicated ones do what they are told and the least

dedicated also try ... I see that how much the students' interest is inspired depends quite a lot on how inspired the teacher is on that day.

Consequently, the motivation that the teacher transmits to the students is fundamental and is of significant importance in turning something which might be expected to be boring into appealing content. In one interview a teacher said:

In the blocks of content the teacher's enthusiasm has an impact, because with something the students really don't know about, but I really like, I can see that it hooks them better.

Large amounts of theory bore the students, but they do like to sing or cover pop songs or other songs that they know, something we already saw in the information provided in the questionnaires. Motivation is fundamental. One teacher commented:

They get bored more in the theoretical part, they are more motivated in the practical part. Although a student who lacks motivation will lack motivation in everything, ... they always love singing, seeing any pop song they already know.

Some teachers emphasise the importance of instrumental practice, especially the use of carillons, going so far as to say that:

what they like most is playing instruments, especially with the carillons. ... They are very interested in making music, more than in studying.

Regarding this, we should note that Scoppola (2012), in the light of the results

of some research, says that playing an instrument can help to develop an interest in music as a subject.

They also like listening, although they find it harder than playing:

They like playing most. At first they find listening hard, but they come to like it too.

According to the interviewees, it is a good idea to work on contemporary music, as it is much requested by the adolescents, albeit moving backwards while analysing it to explore its origins. One teacher said:

With pop, rock, and jazz music, I try to focus on it backwards. In other words, I said to them: You see this? Well this comes from this group from the 70s, it did something similar to this, and that really caught their attention; listening to different versions of lots of songs from the 60s or soul music, they liked that.

Similarly, it is important that the students see the content as relevant to them, and so are more interested in it:

Obviously, rock and pop music are very relevant and there is lots of interest in it. I also try to get students hooked on a type of content because they see it as relevant.

Some teachers start by reviewing musical language and then they move on to pop music, with the students playing it on instruments. One teacher said:

I start with content relating to musical language, and then, from the second term, pop music with a theory part and exercises in oral classes, and this alternates with playing songs from different periods on the keyboard.

Other teachers said:

I think it is very important that they know where the music they listen to now comes from.

When you start to come to the most recent stuff, this is what they like most, they like it when you talk about rap, hip-hop, DJs. When you start telling them about where this has come from, they are interested.

Therefore, not only is explaining certain contemporary musical topics gratifying, but the process by which they were formed is even more so.

What the teachers have said has an implicit methodology based on the principles of significant and dialogic learning, which we mentioned above in the theoretical foundations, as well as the importance of arousing students' interest through their motivation.

When establishing whether the types of content delivered by the teachers match the types that most interest the students, we can see that historical content inspires little interest. One of the reasons for this problem might be the elimination of music as a subject in year three of ESO. This means that the historical topics must be covered in the second year and so might not coincide with the content of history for that year. This can cause problems with comprehension if students who do not know what the Baroque is because they have never covered it have to study the music of that period in history. One teacher said:

The students are not as well prepared for covering historical content, because,

also, it does not run in parallel with what is covered in general history.

Furthermore, the students do not understand very well why they must study historical content, as was stated in one interview:

What appeals to them the least is the history of music, and what they like most is music in the media and contemporary music.

Nevertheless, most of the teachers cover the history of music, focussing on the musical history of the twentieth century, ranging from jazz to pop, and in some cases touching on contemporary concert music. We note the following opinions:

A bit of history, but mainly from the twentieth century, from the birth of jazz and its evolution until we reach music from now.

We cover twentieth century music, jazz, musical genres. Other content as well, but basically music from the twentieth century.

Knowledge of general historical context is important and this is one way of boosting levels of interest in topics in history of music. One teacher argued:

Really there is a lack of interest and knowledge of history, and I often must do a history class to explain the context, the reason why these things develop from here.

Faced with the problems caused by the history of music, it is worth reviewing the historical content, seeking interdisciplinary connections with the social sciences, as we can see in one interview:

I revise the content of second-year social sciences ... then we start on history of music and then we move on to new technologies.

As we can see, teachers say that they are in favour of covering the history of music, alternating with contemporary music in an attempt to make the subject more appealing. Most start by reviewing the content studied in the second year because of the elimination of the subject in the third year. Among a variety of opinions, we note:

In the fourth year, I try to make the subject more attractive; so, in the first term I spend some time on general revision, then we do «The Carnival of the Animals» (El Carnaval de los animales), which is a very interesting piece.

I do an overview of content from previous years, with a foundation in harmony and then I try to do practical things, based on music they like.

It is a good idea occasionally to alternate historical music with tasks performed by the students on more recent musical groups, presenting them in class. Here are the answers of two teachers:

In the second year we do pop music and they do a piece of work on a group or a soloist and present it. ... They find their concerts, they bring in their posters, they read about the group they have chosen.

And in the other hours they carry on doing history of music, where I lean towards tasks they do relating to styles of music they like.

With regards to this, Frega (2000) considers that contemporary music should be a frequently-used material in our class-

rooms, especially if, as we always maintain, the school must be connected to the setting to which our students belong.

As for IT, the students are more interested in how the content is approached, and knowing this helps with the approach to any type of content, to ensure it is more interesting for them. One teacher said in an interview:

The students worry if the approach is too open, if they have to think. They are not concerned with the content, but rather the form ... they much prefer to use computers.

Therefore, the most appealing types of content are those that encourage the use of new technologies and those relating to the music they demand and consume on a daily basis. However, it is also important to bring them closer to music they do not usually request, especially from past eras, and this is where the teacher's task becomes difficult.

Other teachers have said that they find it very fruitful to cover content relating to music in the media, such as film, radio, and television, engaging in dialogue with what is seen and heard in these media. For example:

We look at music in the cinema, in advertising, on the radio, on TV.

And then in the last trimester we cover music in the cinema. First I give them some notes, and then we watch some films and I give them questionnaires about films, I ask them which sequence was most interesting to them, so that they pay attention.

It is also interesting to look at analysis and interpretation midway through the year. One teacher said to us:

In the second and third terms, we look at analysis and interpretation.

On the other hand, the possibility that some students might do a Baccalaureate which includes music as a subject makes it vital, if applicable, to cover certain content in depth, such as harmony, melody, and rhythm. Consequently, one teacher argued:

What I try to do is prepare them so that the next year, if I have classes with them in Baccalaureate, they have basic knowledge of harmony, melody, rhythm.

In summary, the teachers believe it is vital to use the students' previous knowledge as a starting point, giving an overview of what they have already learnt to connect it to the new material. They generally start with an overview of what was covered in the first and especially the second years, and then alternate with historical content from inside and outside Spain, with other content relating to music in the media, and popular music. This last type, along with new technologies, is in high demand from the students, although, as we have seen, it is not just important to know what content to cover, but also how to cover it. Furthermore, attention is given to interpreting and analysing scores.

Finally, regarding the importance of music education for society, which López-Quintás discusses acutely (2013), the teachers are aware that it is not valued highly enough and that the subject is somewhat side-lined by the authorities. Here are the views of some of the interviewees:

A musical education can give us a lot, and I think it is criticised and insulted a fair bit.

We are very badly treated by the authorities. I even have colleagues who have said that the music department should be closed.

It is vital to work on emotions and feelings, and our subject covers them in an elemental way. And well, we need more support from the authorities, to give our subject some recognition.

6. Conclusions

We have grouped our conclusions around the four research objectives.

Regarding the first objective, the interests of students from year four of ESO regarding the content of the music subject, are as follows:

— Disco music is the genre that raises the most interest among those surveyed, followed by pop music, reggaeton, hip-hop and flamenco.

— Music on the radio, house music, and film soundtracks were also rated as very interesting by a large percentage of students.

— The interest shown in the music of Holy Week, electronic music, and Andalusian popular music also stands out, albeit with somewhat lower ratings than the previous types.

— Little interest was shown in writing musical notation or analysing songs or pieces of music.

— Historical topics received the lowest ratings, in particular Gregorian chant, followed by twentieth-century

concert music, Spanish music from several centuries ago, music from the Romantic period and Baroque music.

As for the second objective, regarding the teachers' views of the students' interest in the content:

- The teachers do not believe it is necessary to modify the content delivered.

- They believe that it is up to them to arouse the students' interest, although this depends on the teachers' motivation and preparation.

- They think that the students will be more interested if:

- Their motivation is boosted through a methodology based on a practical focus.

- Music is experienced by performing and creating it.

- Contemporary music is linked to music from the past.

- Historical music is given less coverage, albeit without side-lining it.

- Technological resources are used.

- The students' surroundings are taken into account.

- They recognise that music should have a greater presence in the curriculum and a greater weight in society.

Regarding the third objective concerning the possible causes of lack of interest in certain areas of content of the curriculum:

- Logically, certain less appealing content areas should not be eliminated, but instead they should be linked to

the students' interests and surroundings. This involves connecting with the students' prior knowledge, making them understand that it is important for them to expand their knowledge, using the full range of musical styles, and modifying the methodology. Consequently, the first and second hypotheses are confirmed relating to the need to know the interests of the students to avoid the separation between these interests and the content delivered.

- The mass media barely broadcasts music connected with the historical content of the curriculum, which contributes to the lack of knowledge and lack of interest in it by the students. This justifies our third hypothesis regarding their lack of interest in anything that is not new.

- Some teachers have little motivation to stay up-to-date with musical styles and teacher training so that they can apply the different options and methodological resources that encourage motivation and interest among the students.

- Limited use of new technologies to avoid lecture-style classes and boost significant learning.

- Limited cooperation between other subjects and music to make initial motivation of the students possible.

- Lack of interest in choosing the subject in year four because of its elimination in year three.

- Lack of unity in educational settings to defend the rights and importance of the presence of music in compulsory teaching.

As for the fourth objective, regarding coming up with ideas to increase interest in the content of the subject:

— We reiterate that teachers do not favour modifying the content, as all the parts of it are to a greater or lesser extent important for students' cognitive and cultural development. What should be done is to prioritise those that are most fruitful. The focus on different periods should depend on the students' interests.

— It is vital to encourage motivation, starting with the teacher, as a motivated teacher will connect better with the students.

— The students' continuing consumption of music through the mass media (radio, internet, TV, etc.) should not be forgotten, as it is essential to connect with their musical tastes, and by using their consumption as a starting point they can get to know and enjoy other musical styles.

— Encouraging the importance of understanding the cultural value of music, as this way the subject will be more highly valued and regarded, something that has been lacking on the part of the authorities for some time.

— Covering historical content and setting activities that are more process based, where the students experience knowledge for themselves with the help of ICTs and where music can also have a recreational character and help them relate to their classmates.

— Not delivering a subject as universal as music from a purely theory-based perspective but instead

including meaningful experiences of musical practice so that students experience it through performance and playing instruments, making it part of their personal and social life, since, as Rusinek states (2004), motivation is related to the meaningfulness of musical experiences in the classroom.

— Connecting music as a subject in an interdisciplinary way with other subjects, especially social sciences, language, English, and physical education, taking part in projects in the school where creativity is the common link so that music can enjoy the role it deserves in the curriculum.

As a final reflection, we should ask ourselves what as teachers we expect of our students in relation to the purpose we expect music — considered by many to be the most popular art form — to have in their lives, in contributing to both their happiness and their personal fulfilment. If we are not concerned with raising the students' cultural level and we deny them the opportunity presented by introducing them to something unknown, we probably contribute to them not valuing, feeling, or enjoying music from a critical and reflexive perspective. Ultimately, as teachers we must inspire this interest, not just in mere areas of content, but in learning to learn and being happier and more cultured at a time when culture does not seem to generate enough interest in society.

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