



Music Education in Early Childhood Education: Influence of the General Education Law on current regulations

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This study aims to analyze the evolution of the Musical Curriculum for the second cycle of Early Childhood Education in Spain from a historical perspective. Methodologically, a review and analysis of the legislative documents on Early Childhood Education from the end of the 19th century to the present has been carried out. To this end, a comprehensive review of the main legislative contributions in this context is carried out. The results reveal that since the 1980s to the present, there has been a trend toward a greater number of curricular elements in relation to the area of Music and, in addition, with respect to the different musical fields, it is seen that they too have undergone a progressive increase over time. The inclusion of the musical language within the area of Artistic Education is a premise that has remained present in all documents. The level of concretion of the normative text is discussed, which has been decreasing over time, contributing to greater freedom for the teacher when considering teaching practice in the classroom. The study of past references is considered necessary to adequately shape the new regulations, especially in a context such as Spain, characterized by constant change in the educational field.

Introduction

This study is a look at the past aiming to offer a vision of the emergence and current reality of the musical education curriculum of Early Childhood Education in Spain. Despite the fact that this stage is not part of compulsory schooling, several documents have been published in Spain over the last decades specifying the recommended minimum teachings in

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infant classrooms, taking as a starting point the legislative framework of the General Education Law and Financing of the Educational Reform of 1970.

According to Zabalza (1995, p. 14), the curriculum is “the set of starting assumptions, goals to be achieved and steps taken to reach them; the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc., deemed important to work on at school year after year”, making it a “project that presides over school educational activities, specifies its intentions and provides appropriate and useful action guides for teachers with direct responsibility for its execution” (Coll, 1987, p. 31).

Studies on the Music Education curriculum in Spain, and historical works about this stage, are scarce and can even be considered non-existent, depending on the school discipline addressed (Ballantyne, 2001, 2005; Figueras, 2014, Hodge et al., 1994; Le Roux & Van Niekerk, 2009; Öztürk & Öztürk, 2020; Sparkes et al., 2005). This is due to the prioritization of educational research in the teaching of other areas of knowledge such as the Spanish language, mathematics, or natural sciences, as well as a greater interest in musical aspects that contribute to psychomotor and emotional development as opposed to studies of a more theoretical or historical nature, although necessary.

This research aims to analyze the transformation of the Music curriculum for Early Childhood Education in Spain since this discipline was first included in an official document (Order of January 17, 1981) and its situation in light of Royal Decree 1630. /2006, of December 29. Thus, despite this study beginning with the last decades of the 19th century to understand the development of Early Childhood Education and how it was configured throughout the 20th century before becoming the educational reality of today, as certain authors point out (Coello Martín and Plata Suárez, 2000; Martos Sánchez, 2013), it goes hand in hand with the General Law of Education and Financing of the Educational Reform which will constitute the perfect legislative framework for Musical Education to become part of the curriculum of the stage object of this study, although this introduction is merely theoretical.

The theoretical and contextual framework

The beginnings of Early Childhood Education in Spain (19th century and first third of the 20th century): Early Childhood Education without music

The non-compulsory nature of the Early Childhood Education stage has contributed to slow development within the Spanish educational system compared to other stages such as Primary or Secondary education. Additionally, various governments' wish to guarantee its free status only caused its constitution further delay. Although Espinilla Herrarte and González Sánchez (2008) allude to the first steps of nursery schools during the Visigothic period, it was the educational project implemented by Pablo Montesinos (Sanchidrián Blanco and Ruiz Berrio, 2010) in the city of Madrid in the early nineteenth century which is deemed pioneering in this field. As Formentin Ibáñez and Villegas Sanz (1996, p. 6) point out, “prior to this date, apart from a few isolated examples –little studied or even ignored–, in our country one cannot speak of the existence of an educational methodology aimed at young children”.

This project was replaced with the opening of the Kindergartens in 1879, which would close its doors in 1914. Despite the fact that early childhood education had a more supportive and caring role, as opposed to the pedagogical work that would arrive in Spain in the second half of the 20th century (Sanchidrián Blanco, 2010), in Kindergarten classrooms, physical and

gymnastic exercises accompanied by songs were carried out, alluding to the discipline covered by this study.

The Moyano Law was undoubtedly the great promoter of Primary Education in Spain. Although together with the elementary and higher periods, the nursery stage was one of the three levels proposed, it did not receive the same support from institutions, since only the creation of nursery centers was recommended (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). With the arrival of the Second Republic and with the intention that all children have access to education, the stage benefited from the creation of numerous nurseries for children under two years of age, children's shelters for those aged between 2 and 4 years and also, Kindergartens for those from 4 to 6 in which toys, food or clothing were provided free of charge, financed by unions, municipalities and companies (Bejarano Pérez, 2010). Unfortunately, this boom was cut short in 1936 with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

After the end of the conflict, the new Primary Education law was published in 1945, which royally integrated the principles of a National-Catholic education (Cruz Sallavera, 2016). In this period, Early Childhood Education was configured as the first grade of primary education under the nomination of initiation, followed by elementary, improvement, and professional training. The initiation period, as with Infant Education today, was intended for children up to six years of age and was divided into two different grades: Nursery Schools (up to four years) and Nursery Schools (from four to six). These centers were managed exclusively by women and aimed to reproduce home life (Primary Education Law, 1945).

Together with female management, it was decided to separate the students from an early age according to gender. The only exception for the coexistence of sexes in the same classroom, was when two groups could not be formed due to a lack of school attendees. However, although this stage was not mandatory, it was established in the law itself that sufficient centers should be created and "compulsory in industrial and agricultural centers where the conditional work of the mother requires intelligent care and custody of the children under six years of age" (Primary Education Law 1945, p. 389). Although National Surveys were published in 1953 and in 1965 a second adapted to the decade for primary education that included a series of areas including Music, the incorporation of a minimum education proposal was not carried out. for the initiation period.

General Law of Education and Financing of the Educational Reform, 1970: Early Childhood Education as a Stage

The enactment of the General Law of Education and Financing of the Educational Reform in Spain in 1970 was to definitively modernize education in the country (Lozano Seijas, 1995). Changes introduced in a large number of territories that today comprise the European Union promoted educational reform to modernize education (Sánchez Huete, 2004), notwithstanding the internal political system and sociocultural reality that developed from the borders inwards will dictate a lot to respond to the principles of modernity that since the fifties were taking place in a large part of the West.

It is from this norm when Early Childhood Education acquires its own identity as a stage, ceasing to be a gradation of Primary Education. Thus, the objective of the stage from this moment on was to contribute to the "harmonious development of the child's personality" (General Law of Education and Financing of the Educational Reform, 1970, p. 12529). The General Education Law recognized "equal opportunities in educational matters for men and women, breaking with segregation by sex. Mixed schooling and a single curriculum were



established, so that all students shared teachers and school spaces” (Suberviola Ovejas, 2012, p. 62). As a result, both men and women could develop their teaching within the Early Childhood Education stage, thus ceasing to be a part of the educational system taught only by females, so that close social contexts could be represented in early childhood centers and classrooms. as where men and women live together (Vendrell Mañós et al., 2015). Likewise, the stage configured in two sections was maintained, though nursery schools were renamed kindergartens (two and three years old) and Nursery Schools for children aged between four and six years were maintained.

Although kindergartens continued to reproduce home life, Nursery Schools acquired a more pedagogical approach based on “games, language activities, including, where appropriate, the native language, rhythmic (sic) and plastic expression, observation of nature, logical and pre-numerical exercises, development of a sense of community, religious principles and moral attitudes” (General Law of Education and Financing of the Educational Reform, 1970, p. 12529). It is in the General Law itself where the first reference is made to musical teaching for the Early Childhood Education stage based on the express mention of the need to include rhythmic expression in the classroom. From the perspective of Dalcroze, a forerunner of one of the active methodologies of musical education based on rhythmic expression, rhythmic expression is necessary to glimpse the child's hidden musical abilities. This inclusion means carrying out musical teaching through expression based on rhythm where movement, consciousness and locomotion are an essential part of the child’s learning.

Methodology

In response to the proposed objective, following Herrero Pascual (1997), we have chosen a documentary analysis of certain legislative and proceeded to analyze and describe curricular elements directly related to the teaching of Musical Education. Coinciding with Dulzaides Iglesias and Molina Gómez (2004, p. 1) in their vision of what a documentary analysis entails, they have performed “a scientific-informative extraction, one aiming to be an objective reflection of the original source, but that ignores the new underlying messages in the document”. In this way, we can understand how Music Education has developed in Spain from a legislative standpoint, which sometimes differs from the educational reality of the classroom or what is designated as the real curriculum.

Results

The following sections will show sets where short films have been categorized, also pointing out derivations each will have for students in the flipped classroom work.

The first curriculum for Early Childhood Education: Order of January 17th, 1981

The Order of January 17, 1981, which regulates the teaching of Preschool Education and the initial cycle of Basic General Education, is the first document published in Spain as a curriculum for the Early Childhood Education stage. As various authors have stated (Batanz Palomares, 1984; Coello Martín and Plata Suárez, 2000; Martos Sánchez, 2013), these minimum prescriptive teachings were not transferred to classroom practice. As this is the official curriculum, it is pertinent to deepen the prescriptions set by this standard, since they laid the foundations of how Music Education has been configured in Spain for almost forty years.

Although the General Education Law grants its own identity to the Early Childhood

Education stage, the curricular decision to include minimum teachings for this stage in the same document together with those of the initial cycle of Basic General Education and the close relationship between the thematic blocks of all its areas for both periods, contributed from a normative and curricular viewpoint to early childhood education being conceived as a preparatory stage for a satisfactory beginning of basic general education.

The order does not conceive of Musical Education as its discipline, but configures it within the area of Artistic Education together with the Plastic Education contents. In 1981, five of the twenty-five teaching hours were allocated to the artistic training of students, with the teacher responsible for managing the schedule efficiently to develop both artistic languages (plastic and musical). Despite objectives being stated within the same area, the norm makes an express break within this, by allocating three thematic blocks for knowledge of each artistic language. Consequently, musical training is structured around three axes: rhythmic training, vocal education and auditory education, for which the following objectives are established in Table 1.

Table 1. Music contents for Early Childhood Education by thematic block

Thematic block	Objectives
1. Rhythmic training	1.1 Improve fluency in breathing 1.2 Capture sound rhythm 1.3 Discover metrics of words facilitating articulation and oral expressiveness 1.4 Capture contrast between sound-silence 1.5 Associate words by their rhythmic content 1.6 Integrate into group activities 1.7 Introduce the child to creative activity
2. Vocal training	2.1 Form a bridge between speaking and singing, so that initiation to singing occurs spontaneously, naturally. 2.2 Develop skills created through singing 2.3 Seek flexibility and the ability to adapt to a group, through vocal activity
3. Auditory training	3.1 Promote auditory concentration capacity 3.2 Achieving the capture of sound and its origin about space 3.3 Recognize different timbres 3.4 Cultivate auditory memory

Block 1 (Rhythmic Training) presents seven proposals aiming to provide breathing, rhythm, and words and, consequently, songs a significant presence in this curriculum. Likewise, it shares the principles of the active musical methodologies of the 20th century, in particular, that devised by Orff emphasizing the use of rhythm through language. Block 2 (Vocal Education) covers three broad propositions related to the teaching-learning process of singing. Finally, thematic block 3 (Auditory education) groups four proposals aimed at improving perception through listening close to the postulates of musical pedagogy developed by Edgar Willems (Pascual Mejía, 2010). These three thematic blocks focused on teaching rhythm, singing, and listening leave out two of the five disciplines or musical fields that would allow us to speak of a global or complete Music Education: instrumentation and movement.

Teacher Orientations: Revamped Programs

Together with the Order of January 17, 1981, and those regulating the various cycles of Basic General Education, the Renewed Programs were prepared and published in parallel “the result of the work of three hundred specialists, most of whom are practicing teachers, who had worked for three years” (Batanaz Palomares, 1984, p. 127). As in the Order, the curricular elements for Early Childhood Education are published together with the proposal for the first cycle of Basic General Education or the Initial Cycle. The Renewed Programs offered greater specification to the national regulations contemplated in the Order, responding to the dual role the official curriculum must fulfill: as a guide for teachers to develop their teaching activity while establishing claims pursued with the educational system from performing a series of minimum curricular elements that should be implemented in all classrooms countrywide.

Likewise, as in the Order of January 17, the Renewed Programs developed aspects related to musical education within the area of Artistic Education and according to the same three thematic blocks (Rhythmic Training, Vocal Education, and Auditory Education) and previously established goals.

The new contributions of the Renewed Programs regarding the Order, in their work of clarifying and as a true guide to help teachers implement the minimum teachings required by the national government, are found in various fragments of the text and curricular elements of new incorporation: an introduction for the area of joint Artistic Education for Preschool and Initial Cycle, a specific introduction for plastic language and another for musical language, a clarification within each stage for each thematic block that in turn make particular mention of elements and materials to consider when implementing musical practice and a series of suggested activities connected to each aim as examples that illustrate how these can be achieved.

The Renewed Programs not only helped expand aspects contemplated in the 1981 Order but also greatly contributed to the explicit introduction of movement and dance as a musical aspect in the musical training of the child. This is made explicit from the first lines of the introduction stating that the teacher to the teaching practice in the classroom with the students “cannot and should not try to keep them quiet and still while they listen to a long musical work. It is most likely that when they hear a melody they will start to move and even clap their hands happily, while they follow and try to live the music” (Renewed Preschool and Initial Cycle Programs, 1987, p. 114). This incorporation of movement to aspects considered in teaching of musical language is also found in the three thematic blocks from some of the activities linked to the set objectives.

For block 1 (rhythmic training) possible elements that can be used in rhythmic formation are listed, such as rhymes, riddles, rope or running games, etc. For block 2 (vocal education) conditions that must be assessed to carry out the choice of a melody adapted to the level of Preschool Education students are established. Thus, the text must be considered (clear, short, adequate, and age-adjusted vocabulary), rhythm (simple, balanced quadrature, echo form, ostinato, question-answer), melody (reduced scope, joint intervals, simple modalities), and, finally, form (echo, ostinato or lied). Finally, in block 3 (auditory education) useful materials or resources are mentioned for working on hearing, such as stories, popular Spanish children’s songs, or the need to have a record-player in the classroom (Renewed Preschool and Initial Cycle Programs, 1987).

In summary, the Renewed Programs undoubtedly meet the dual purpose of the curriculum. One, making explicit the intentions of the educational system while serving as a guide for teachers. Specificity of activities is again not observed in any subsequent document. Examples are as follows:

Block 1. Rhythmic Education: for objective “1.1. Improving fluency in breathing” is proposed as a possible activity “Matching breathing to calm and balanced music (Schumann’s Children’s Scenes)” (Renewed Preschool and Initial Cycle Programs, 1987, p. 115).

Block 2. Vocal Education: for objective “2.1. Form a bridge between speaking and singing so initiation to singing occurs spontaneously, naturally” it is suggested “Play at saying a well-known rhyme, using a single vowel. When repeating the same exercise, proceed to practice it with the other vowels” (Renewed Preschool and Initial Cycle Programs, 1987, p. 117).

Block 3. Auditory education: for objective “3.1. Promote auditory concentration capacity” indicates “proposal for games with gestural responses: When it sounds loud, raise your arms. When the sound is weak, double the waist” (Renewed Preschool and Initial Cycle Programs, 1987, p. 117).

However, despite this musical didactic enrichment compared to the 1981 Order, the Renewed Programs present a curricular inconsistency as regards instrumentation. Despite the fact that in the common introduction for Preschool Education and for the Initial Cycle of musical language among the most important is that students can “know how to improvise rhythmic schemes, simple melodies, instrumental accompaniments and other dynamic activities” (Renewed Programs for Preschool Education and Initial Cycle, 1987, p. 115), alluding to instrumental practice, no activity involving instrumental practice by students was formulated. Although it expressly alludes to instruments to be used by the teacher to accompany songs (piano, flute, Orff...), or to carry out activities auditory recognition or localization of the origin of sounds, in no case are activities that involve instrumental interpretation by the child.

The influence of the Musical Education of the General Law of Education on the subsequent curriculum

With the publication of the Law of General Regulation of the Educational System (LOGSE), the stage object of this study acquires the current name: Early Childhood Education. Even so, the Organic Law of Education (LOE) of 2006, which expressly mentions the recognition of Early Childhood Education as a stage of the Spanish educational system with its own identity, which the General Education Law of 1970 acknowledged.

The LOE assumed that this stage should focus on the student developing linguistic abilities at the same time as the reading process and in logical-mathematical skills together with adequate progress in the use of movement, gesture, and rhythm, as it is extracted from its objectives (Organic Law of Education, 2006, pp. 17158-17207). This last mention makes us look back to when the General Education Law first included the need to promote the development of rhythmic expression in infants, then pre-school students, an inclusion maintained today.

Royal Decree 1630/2006 groups curricular elements into three areas (Self-knowledge and personal autonomy, Knowledge of the environment, and Languages: communication and representation) unlike traditional grouping by school disciplines. However, as with the Order of January 17, 1981, it sets out contents for plastic and musical language together. Although only within a thematic block and not its area. Undoubtedly, thematic block 3 (Artistic



language in the Languages area: communication and representation) evokes the two documents published in the eighties (Order of January 17, 1981, and Renewed Programs). As data, for the curriculum published for the legislative framework of the LOGSE, this decision was not maintained, it was decided to separate content referring to plastic and musical language into two completely different thematic blocks. Nonetheless, twenty-five years after the publication of the regulations during the eighties, it was decided to recover the postulate and once again unite the artistic languages.

Unlike the Order of January 17, 1981, Royal Decree 1630/2006 contemplates a large number of curricular elements compared to the only objectives that the first includes by areas and thematic blocks. In the current, both general objectives of the stage and objectives and evaluation criteria by area and content by thematic blocks are contemplated for each of the three established. This curricular complexity comes from learning to put into practice the minimum teachings published for the LOGSE. Even so, it should be noted that the suggested activities of the Renewed Programs were the basis for the inclusion of curricular contents as we know them today.

There are seven area objectives formulated in a globalized way, taking into account the different languages of communication, although the language is explicitly affected as a vehicle of communication, both one's own and the beginning of knowledge of a foreign language. Though most objectives can be achieved through music, no express reference is made to this term or its synonyms.

Of the four thematic content blocks, the third, Artistic Language, brings together six proposals alluding to plastic and musical language. These are clearly differentiated by being used for teaching one discipline or another. Therefore, there are three musical contents formulated in this curriculum:

Exploration of the sound possibilities of the voice, the body itself, everyday objects, and musical instruments, use of the sounds found for musical interpretation and creation. Recognition of sounds from the natural and social environment, and discrimination of their distinctive features and some basic contrasts (long-short, loud-soft, high-low), and attentive listening to musical works present in the environment. Active participation and enjoyment in the interpretation of songs, musical games, and dances (Royal Decree 1630/2006, p. 481).

Finally, the seventeen Spanish autonomous communities are currently regulated by their own curricula published as of Royal Decree 1630/2006 of December 29, thanks to the recognition of full competencies in education performed through a long-term transfer over twenty years, from 1980 to 1999 (Vélaz de Medrano Ureta et al., 2012), from a single state regulation to seventeen educational regulations that share common elements, but also contain their own legislative identity. This fact allows new approaches for future educational laws (Otero Mayer et al., 2021).

Discussions and conclusions

From this review, conclusions are set at two levels: those related to the Early Childhood Education stage and the development of the documents themselves and those related to specific aspects of the music area. Firstly, Early Childhood Education and its development within Spanish education have not been accompanied by musical content since its inception.

Once the first official curriculum emerged in the early eighties, accompanied by the Renewed Programs, we witnessed the preparation and publication of a new document per decade. This supports the idea that the official curriculum is changing and dynamic therefore not considered as an immutable reality that, once promulgated, cannot be modified (Gimeno Sacristán, 2010). In this regard, we must be aware that the reformulation of the curricula should not be linked to a political change but to real educational needs. For this reason, teachers must constantly question this document and assess its usefulness, as only through a critical reflection of the curriculum can we formulate one which truly meets the needs of society.

Regarding musical aspects, it can be concluded that from 1970 to the present, there has been an increase in the number of curricular elements contemplated in the curricula, from a rule that only established a series of specific objectives related to the area to the present, which includes area objectives, content and evaluation criteria on the teaching of music. This legislative decision can be due to a process of introducing improvements in the curriculum through knowledge extracted from the experience of putting these into practice. The inclusion of new elements has been facilitating the teaching practice by using the documents as guides for teaching staff, as the Renewed Programs did. Thus, it provides a more effective understanding of the purposes of the official curriculum enabling better transfer of the official document to the classroom, that is, from the official to the real curriculum.

Likewise, the presence of different fields or musical disciplines has also undergone progressive increase over time. Initially, the curriculum was interested in singing, hearing, and musical language as presented in the Order of January 17, 1981. With the Renewed Programs, a movement was also included leaving instrumentation to one side. As a result of the incomplete formulation. The teaching of globalized musical education is chosen, considering the axes of perception and expression and comprising five disciplines within each. Undoubtedly, this is due to those first steps that were taken during the 1970s and 1980s in the hands of the General Education Law, because, although not the object of analysis in this study, with the LOGSE the five mentioned areas were consolidated.

In addition, it must be highlighted that this law was a decisive boost to Music Education. For the first time in Spain, the need to train students in a compulsory manner in some stages of Music Education is pointed out, which had not been achieved previously. Early Childhood Education was omitted from this obligation, however the fact that it was later implemented enabled children to have more direct contact at an early age, since schools were equipped with music teachers, a fact previously lacking. Therefore, it is understood that, from the LOGSE, one can speak of a Musical Education with greater guarantees of success. In any case, the following legislation has brought difficulties that cannot be ignored and potentialities that have been exploited to a greater or lesser degree.

Despite this evolution, there is a constant premise in the documents, although with some variations: the inclusion of Musical Language within the area of artistic education. The tendency over the decades has not been to differentiate between plastic and musical language, quite the opposite. From a differentiated formulation of the curricular elements in the eighties, passing to different thematic blocks, but within the area of Artistic Education sharing an introduction, to Royal Decree 1630/2006 that formulates musical content in the same thematic block as plastics to be considered both as belonging to the artistic language. In other words, though different configurations have been chosen for both the General Law and the LOE, Musical and Plastic Education should go together.



This is fundamental in the following legislative formulations. If the advance of artistic languages within general education in Spain is put in perspective, it must be verified that, from that moment on, Musical Education is an integral part of Artistic Education. Consequently, from subsequent legislations, the idea that all artistic languages can be developed jointly and integrated for the global development of childhood tends to be consolidated. This fact is relevant, as it opens the door to interdisciplinary elements that can enrich the training of students. In any case, in practice, it is found that said transversality is not always reached. Actually, to this day, subjects related to music and plastic act independently (generally being taught by different teachers). This fact is different in Spain since in other countries the arts are understood as a whole. Therefore, although legislation advances toward the integration of the arts, more time is needed for these intentions to crystallize.

Finally, the studies of the curriculum in Primary, Secondary or Higher Education, as well as evolution of the disciplinary code of different areas are numerous compared to those of Early Childhood Education that have little relevance in the field of educational research. Teachers and researchers must be able to perform new studies, to shed light on the historical particularities of educational practices, to explain the current workings of Music Education. If a sufficient theoretical corpus is generated, musical teaching in stages linked to early ages will gain importance, both symbolic and effective, so that the benefits of early Musical Education can be exploited practical through the works of different musical pedagogues but which, in the Spanish environment, have been repeatedly forgotten, due to lack of effective implementation. Undoubtedly, being able to increase the number of studies in this regard, and involving teachers who are more concerned with other stages, is a challenge for the future. Furthermore, another challenge that must not be forgotten is the fit of current laws to current times, so that musical languages are considered in Early Childhood Education in relation to others that are closer to students, such as audio-visuals. Therefore, this study facilitates the opening to other lines of research such as historical reviews.

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