



## ARTICLES

### Social emotional learning and values education in the Musical Language classroom

#### Aprendizaje socioemocional y educación en valores en el aula de Lenguaje Musical

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#### Abstract

The present study focuses on two potential benefits of music education: social-emotional learning and education in values, in the context of training given in professional music conservatories in the subject of Musical Language. The qualitative methodology used, through the focus group technique, has made it possible to analyze the perceptions of teachers, students and families regarding these benefits. As a result of the analysis, a coincidence has been evidenced between the interlocutors about the importance that should be given to education in values and social-emotional learning in professional music conservatories, and, especially, with students who present specific needs. Despite the absence of evidence of conscious planning of social-emotional contents or those related to education in values in the subject of Musical Language, the participants perceive that the subject does contribute to their development. It is also pointed out as future improvements: the promotion of group work, interaction and intragroup cohesion.

**Key words:** music education; social emotional learning; values education; music.

#### Resumen

El presente estudio se centra en dos beneficios potenciales de la educación musical: el aprendizaje socioemocional y la educación en valores, en el contexto de la formación impartida en conservatorios profesionales de Música en la asignatura de Lenguaje Musical. La metodología cualitativa utilizada, a través de la técnica de grupos focales, ha permitido analizar las percepciones del profesorado, el alumnado y las familias en torno a estos beneficios. Como resultado del análisis, se ha evidenciado una coincidencia entre interlocutores acerca de la importancia que se le debe otorgar a la educación en valores y el aprendizaje socioemocional en los conservatorios profesionales de Música, y, en especial, con el alumnado que presenta necesidades específicas. A pesar de la ausencia de evidencias de planificación consciente de contenidos socioemocionales o relacionados con la educación en valores en la asignatura de Lenguaje Musical, los/as participantes perciben que la asignatura sí contribuye al desarrollo de estos aspectos. Como futuras mejoras se señalan el fomento del trabajo grupal, la interacción y la cohesión intragrupal.

**Palabras claves:** educación musical; aprendizaje social y emocional; educación en valores; música.

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## 1. Introduction

There is a growing interest in the scientific community on the benefits of music education in cognitive and emotional development (Campayo-Muñoz & Cabedo-Mas, 2017; Dumont *et al.*, 2017; Habibi *et al.*, 2018; Shen *et al.*, 2019; Varadi, 2022). Peñalba (2017) rightly warns against the risk of justifying music education solely on the basis of its benefits, noting that these utilitarian arguments can "ratify the consideration of music as something accessory, or as a second-order subject within the curriculum that has no value in itself" (p.116). However, if music education can favour the holistic development of students, equip them with the necessary skills to function in the society of the present century and, also, positively influence their well-being (Vasil *et al.*, 2018; Cruywagen, 2018), it is necessary to continue delving into the potential advantages of studying Music and the strategies that should be implemented in educational establishments and classrooms, in order for these results to become truly effective.

The present study focuses on two potential benefits of music education, such as social-emotional learning and education in values, in a specific context and subject: the training given in professional music conservatories in the subject of Musical Language. The perceptions of teachers, students and families regarding the importance of social-emotional learning and education in values, the needs of students in this regard, the current contribution of the subject to the development of these aspects, as well as possible suggestions for the future to promote them to a greater extent are analysed in this paper.

The following sections justify the decision to focus on the subject of Musical Language, included in the curriculum in Spanish conservatories, and explore some of the links raised in the scientific literature between music education, social-emotional learning (SEL) and values education.

### 1.1. The emotional development of students as an objective in professional music conservatories

Although it could be considered that the teachings imparted in conservatories are aimed at the preparation and qualification of future music professionals, this should not reduce the importance of the development of the student as a person during the process. Emotional aspects require special attention, as indicated in the curriculum of Elementary Music Education in the Community of Madrid:

As in any educational task, it is the development of the student's own personality and sensitivity that is the ultimate goal pursued here, all the more so because music is, first and foremost, a vehicle for the expression of emotions (*Decree 7/2014*, p.20).

The emotional development of students in these educational establishments should not only be understood as a consequence of the training received, but as one of the main objectives to be addressed in order to improve expressive skills in musical performance (Bonastre & Nuevo, 2020). A musical education that pays due attention to these aspects will ensure that students develop better emotional control, and strengthen their self-esteem and self-confidence, necessary elements in the performing arts (Campayo-Muñoz & Cabedo-Mas, 2017). Attention to emotional aspects can contribute to mitigating the impact of potential problems such as stage anxiety (Zarza

*et al.*, 2016), which prevent students from enjoying the learning process and jeopardize the well-being of the student body, and can lead to school dropouts.

The high dropout rate in specialized music education (Sánchez-Escribano, 2020) is a worrying aspect that demands reflection on the approach to education in these institutions. It would be desirable that musical education offered in conservatories provided, in addition to musical knowledge and skills, valuable learning for life, regardless of the academic and professional decisions that students could make in the future, such as social-emotional learning and education in values. In this way, the percentage of students who decide to drop out of specialized education would probably be reduced.

## **1.2. Attention to emotional aspects in the subject of Musical Language**

Our study focuses on Musical Language, a group subject that is taken during the first six years of music education in Spanish conservatories. Several reasons make it necessary to focus on the possible goals of the subject, beyond the contents dictated by the curriculum.

Multiple studies highlight the feelings of rejection that the subject can produce in students. Martínez (2022) makes a diagnosis of Musical Language students and identifies boredom, fatigue, rejection, absenteeism and dropout, highlighting the need to seek strategies to increase motivation and interest. Romero (2020) indicates that a good part of the resources and didactic models used in this subject generate feelings of rejection and apathy in students. Berrón *et al.* (2017) point out that the subject of Musical Language can not only be unattractive to students, but also generates anxiety. Balo *et al.* (2014, 2015) also stress the feelings of insecurity, anxiety and other unpleasant feelings that are frequently associated with the activity of musical dictation, a common practice in the Musical Language classroom. These factors may also influence the high dropout rate in these studies (Valencia *et al.*, 2003). The student experiences revealed by the above studies highlight the need to keep in mind other objectives that are not strictly related to the contents of the subject, such as conscious attention to emotions and creating a positive learning climate.

Despite the negative emotions that the subject of Musical Language often provokes in students, the literature suggests that this subject has the potential to contribute positively to emotional education. Hallam (2019) reviews the literature related to the effects of music on the intellectual, personal, and social development of children and youth. The author suggests that the positive effects of music on personal and social development would only take place if the musical experiences were enjoyable and rewarding. Saarikallo (2019) also points out that music can facilitate the acquisition of competencies related to fundamental aspects in social-emotional development, such as affective self-regulation or social interaction. Varner (2019) stresses the importance of music teachers and how they can help their students to be socially and emotionally competent, while developing the skills specified in the subject curriculum. Specific activities are mentioned, such as improvisation, group singing and performance, or the representation of emotions through music, which can be ideal for fostering social-emotional development in the music classroom.

Music Language teachers themselves are aware of the need to pay greater attention to these aspects in the subject. The work and development of emotional intelligence is one of the

changes most demanded by teachers of this specialty in Spanish professional conservatories (Sánchez-Parra *et al.*, 2020). The teaching staff demands more training in aspects linked to social-emotional learning, such as team management or conflict resolution in the classroom. Their requests are in line with what has been pointed out by Campayo-Muñoz and Cabedo-Mas (2017), who stress that teachers must have an adequate predisposition and training to address these issues.

The fact that the subject of Musical Language is taught in groups allows many opportunities for student interaction with each other and with the teaching staff, a key aspect in social-emotional learning processes. By paying due attention to interactions and classroom culture, the Music Language class-group has the potential to become, like a band, orchestra, choir or other musical ensembles, a space of safety and stability for students (Kelly-McHale, 2017), an ideal context for learning, enjoyment and the holistic development of students.

### 1.3. Social-emotional learning through music education

Social-emotional learning (SEL), can be defined as:

[...] the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2012).

As well as contributing to students' all-round development, SEL enhances academic learning (Fallas, 2022). As pointed out by Pentón (2020), SEL may be especially necessary in the case of students who experience negative emotions or situations, such as discrimination or lack of support, that are hindering their learning process. Along the same lines, Cantor *et al.* (2018) point out that a positive school climate and student participation, aspects pursued by SEL, favor student learning and retention.

The links between arts education and SEL are being explored in a growing number of studies in the literature. The study by Farrington *et al.* (2019) reveals the potential of arts education to foster social-emotional learning. Arts education gives rise to social-emotional effects, regardless of the teacher's intentions, and these, the authors warn, can be both positive and negative. Hence the importance of consciously planning the social-emotional contexts that will be generated in the classroom.

Conscious planning of social-emotional goals is a key aspect that is also emphasized by other authors. Edgar and Elias (2021) point out that, despite the SEL-related benefits that arts education can promote, such as creativity, collaboration, and self-discovery, "intentionality, consistency, and sequencing" (p.207) are required in order to harness the potential of these teachings in SEL. Omasta *et al.* (2021) also agree, warning that, on many occasions, there is a mistaken assumption that social-emotional learning simply "happens" as soon as students participate in arts education processes (p.159).

The effect of SEL-based educational interventions has been the subject of recent research. The *Connect with Kids* program (Mogro-Wilson & Tredinnick, 2020) achieves, through music and visual arts activities, a significant improvement in the social-emotional behaviours of adolescent participants, compared to the control group. The meta-analysis by Taylor *et al.* (2017) shows how educational interventions based on SEL favour, in the short and long term, social-

emotional skills, attitudes and well-being of the subjects, independently of variables such as socioeconomic context, race or school location.

The potential of music education to favour SEL goals should not overshadow the value of music education *per se*, as previously noted. In this regard, Omasta *et al.* (2021) caution that while arts education and social-emotional learning can be promoted together, extrinsic benefits such as social-emotional learning should not become the main argument for justifying the importance of arts education.

#### 1.4. Music education and education in values

Proposing a definition of the term "value" is not an easy task. We can start from the didactic definition of values proposed by Bonilla *et al.* (2013):

[...] "ideas" that serve as an orientation for us to be in the world, knowing what is our position in being part of the society in which we live, living with others, being happy and collaborating in the happiness of others. Therefore, we must also understand them as guides of conduct (p.121).

Gracia and Gozávez (2016, p.92) argue for the existence of five inalienable ethical values in education: freedom, responsibility, equality (complemented by the value of difference), solidarity and respect.

The potential of music to promote values is recognized by the International Society for Music Education (ISME, n.d.), pointing out the advantages of the richness and diversity of the repertoire of different musical cultures in promoting intercultural learning, international understanding, cooperation and peace. Along these lines, authors such as Ramírez-Hurtado (2017) and Urbain (2020) have delved into the convergence between music education and peace education.

In order for the music classroom to contribute to values education, an ethical music education is necessary, as Elliott and Silverman (2014) point out, an education not only in music, but also through music. This would entail taking advantage of the potential of music education to develop the necessary skills and attitudes that allow students to achieve the most important goals and values in life.

The possibilities offered by music education, and artistic education in general, to address values education are also explored by Cabedo-Mas and Arriaga-Sanz (2016). The authors emphasize the hidden curriculum and the importance of reflecting on the values expressed in textbooks and other materials, as well as in communication and in everyday relationships in the classroom. The ideal choice of the musical repertoire to be worked on, depending on the values to be promoted, is also an element highlighted in the study by Muldma and Kiilu (2012). The authors state that the discussion of the content of musical works and the resolution of possible conflicts that arise in the course of musical activities are some of the many opportunities offered by the music class to foster education in values.

It is worth mentioning specific programs, such as the one proposed by Rodrigo-Martín *et al.* (2020), which uses music as a backbone with objectives related to the improvement of the classroom climate and the promotion of respect and appreciation of diversity. Another notable example is the project designed by Pérez-Aldeguer (2013), which focuses on intercultural

competence through rhythmic education, achieving statistically significant changes in the values and attitudes of primary school students.

### **1.5. Research questions**

The questions that guided our study were the following:

- To what extent are values education and social-emotional learning a priority in the context of music conservatory education?
- To what extent do conservatory students require a different values education and social-emotional learning in comparison to their peers in schools and high schools?
- Has the subject of Musical Language favoured or does it currently favour education in values and social-emotional learning?
- What strategies could be implemented in the future to take advantage of the potential of the subject of Musical Language to favour values education and social-emotional learning?

### **1.6. Research aims**

The main objective of this study is to analyse the perceptions of teachers of Musical Language, students and families in the context of professional music conservatories regarding two potential benefits of music education: social-emotional learning and education in values. From this main objective, the following specific objectives are derived:

- To compare and contrast the importance given by conservatory students, students' parents and Musical Language teachers to education in values and social-emotional learning.
- To identify the specific needs that Musical Language students in a conservatory may have in relation to social-emotional learning and education in values.
- To compare and contrast the perceptions of students, families and teachers regarding the contribution of the subject of Musical Language to education in values and social-emotional learning.
- To gather the suggestions for improvement pointed out by students, families and teachers to favour education in values and social-emotional learning through the subject of Musical Language.

## **2. Method and research design**

In order to achieve the proposed objectives and answer the research questions, the epistemological and methodological foundations are shaped on the paradigm of qualitative research through phenomenological design, since what is intended to discover are the views of each participant, as well as the collective perception (Creswell, 2014; Hernández *et al.*, 2010; Mertens, 2006), on social-emotional learning and values education in the Musical Language classroom, in the field of professional conservatories of Music in the Community of Madrid.

From this perspective, the research focuses on meaning, on the sense of words or expressions. It is a "systematic activity oriented to the in-depth understanding of educational and social phenomena" (Sandín, 2004, p.123) that privileges the interpretative character of the studied reality, through people's perceptions and meanings.

The focus group has been used as a qualitative technique (Vallés, 1999), which allows for a detailed knowledge of the personal experiences of a relatively small group, on the discussion of a given topic, with deductions of a high level of depth (Martínez, 2012). In addition, it allows the approach of the issues studied envisaging future research with a broader spectrum and a rapid and multidimensional discussion of a topic, thanks to the creation of a forum of experts in the central aspects of the object of study, observed from a broad and diverse perspective in terms of context (Brown, 2018).

The focus groups have been designed around the functionalist approach as opposed to the discourse analysis which is more typical of the discussion group technique. Focus groups have been used in a restrictive way with a directive, focused and subjective moderation of the people exposed to the pre-analysed situation, determining their definitions of the situation (Berrocal *et al.*, 2021), as opposed to discussion groups, where data are constructed from a structural point of view (Rogel, 2018).

Thus, the starting point is to identify situations that, from a critical perspective and a systemic qualitative approach, make it possible to detect categories that offer relevant and contextualized information. To this end, the first step was to prepare a guide for the collection of information in order to organize, validate and homogenize the process. The dimensions and questions developed in the guide were focused on the basis of a prior systematic analysis of the literature and research on the focus of the study.

## **2.1. Participants**

Participants were selected based on purposive sampling by convenience and according to the criterion of representativeness of cases (Mendieta-Izquierdo *et al.*, 2015). In this way, the recommendations for the configuration of the focus groups are followed: heterogeneity in terms of the profiles of the participants and heterogeneity in terms of the forms and degrees of application of the interventions and their own personal experiences and experiences (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). In this sense, the distribution of the three focus groups with students, family members and teachers of professional music conservatories in the Community of Madrid was as follows:

- Group 1 (Students and former students; 3 women, 2 men): 1 student who was currently taking the subject Musical Language (4th year of Elementary Education), 1 student who recently finished taking the subject, 1 student who took the subject several years ago and 2 students who graduated from the conservatory. All students who had previously taken Musical Language had completed the six courses foreseen in the curriculum. In the focus group transcripts, the following codes are used to refer, respectively, to the above participants: G1M3, G1M2, G1H2, G1M1 and G1H1.

- Group 2 (Families of students and a counsellor; 3 males, 2 females): 1 father of two conservatory graduates (participant G2H2), 1 father of two conservatory students (G2H3), 1 mother of a conservatory student (G2M2), 1 mother of two conservatory graduates (G2M1), and 1 conservatory counsellor (G2H1).

- Group 3 (active teachers of Musical Language in different conservatories in Madrid; 3 women, 3 men; Participants G3M1, G3M2, G3M3, G3H1, G3H2 and G3H3).

## 2.2. Procedure

To facilitate discussion, questions were drawn up following a previously established script, based on the objectives of the study and agreed upon by the participants who were to take part in the focus group. The focus groups were conducted in June 2022. A researcher guided the process, proposing each of the four key questions of the study and giving turns to speak, ensuring that all participants made at least one contribution to each of the four key issues addressed. Interaction among the participants was sought, without the researcher contributing ideas, opinions or new questions at any time. The four topics were addressed within the approximate one-hour duration foreseen for each group. The development of each session was audio-recorded for subsequent transcription (Ponce de León *et al.*, 2022). All participants previously signed an informed consent form, following the precepts of the Ethics Committee in Social Research of the UCLM.

In the data analysis, the Heideggerian perspective was followed, which contemplates three stages: intentionality (noesis), reduction (codification) and constitution (reflection and interpretation) (Heidegger, 2006).

Once the transcriptions of the three focus groups were completed, using the Sonix.ai application, a process of analytical reading of the data and primary coding was carried out, establishing comparisons in search of similarities and differences. Due to the similarities and the generation of concepts with a higher degree of abstraction, the conception of a new, more explicit coding became feasible, with which a system of categories was designed. The content analysis and its consequent inductive theoretical elaboration was carried out with the help of the computer program Atlas.ti v22, allowing to express the circular sense of the analysis, as it grants the possibility of sequentially incorporating the data without the need to collect all the material at the same time (San Martín, 2014). This tool strengthens the coherence and rigor of the analytical procedures (Seale, 1999), while speeding up the mechanical processes: segmentation, retrieval and coding of information (Amezcuca & Gálvez, 2002), as well as the subsequent work of recoding, hierarchization and theoretical subsumption of codes into families.

## 3. Results

For the content analysis, the sequence proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2002) was followed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The starting point was a series of categories established a priori on the basis of the questions. Four relevant categories of analysis that share a logical relationship were considered: a) General aspects, b) Student needs, c) Contribution of Musical Language, and d) Suggestions for improvement. In addition, the

relevance of the codes and categories was subjected to expert judgment as a method of triangulation.

An outline of the categories of the analysis is presented in Figure 1:

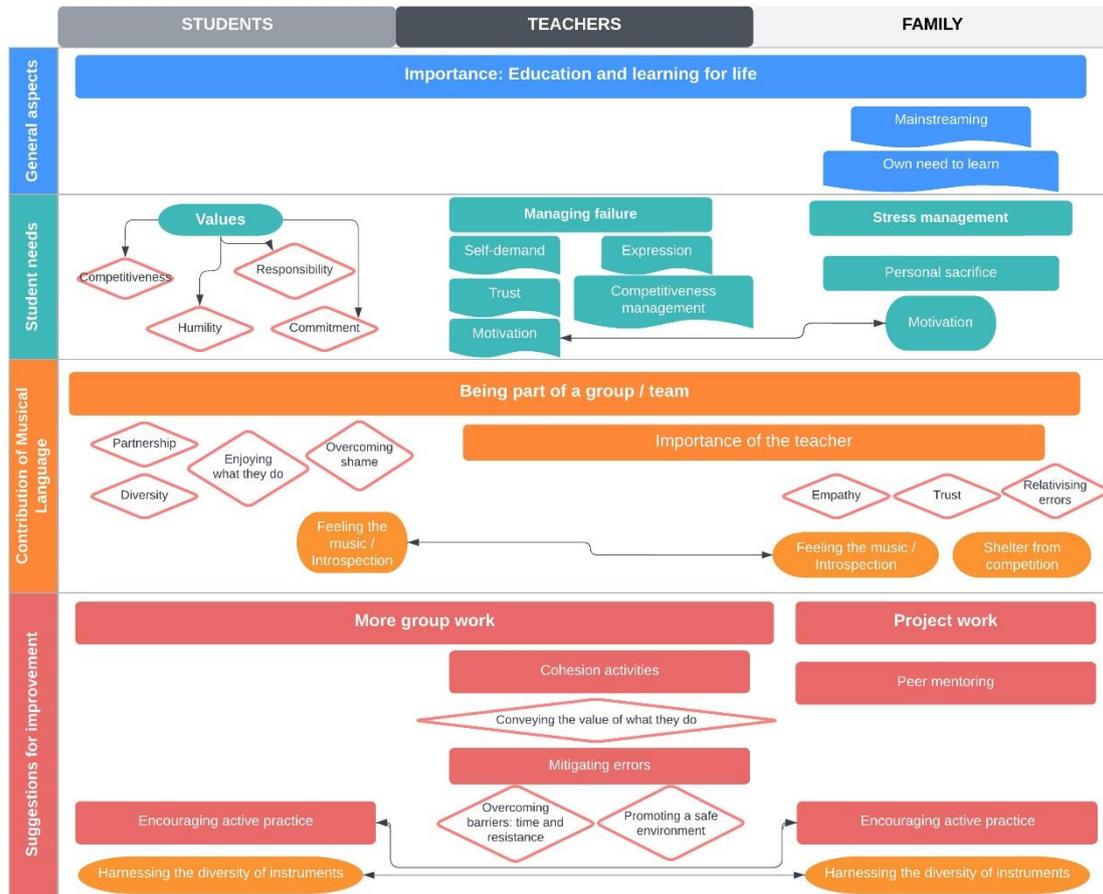


Figure 1. Analysis categories

### 3.1. Category on the general aspects and degree of importance of values education and SEL in student learning

The main properties of the category are: a) Mainstreaming/Transversality and b) Own need to learn.

Both teachers and students and their families attach great importance to values and social-emotional learning as an essential part of education and learning for life:

"[...] you realize over time that everything you learn, in one way or another, also has something in your day-to-day life, and right there, all the topics more related to emotions, values and so on, are fundamental" (Participant G1H1).

"Education in values seems basic to me to create a society that knows how to live together" (Participant G2M2).

"[...] emotional and social skills, seem basic to me to move forward and as a person to integrate and manage everything" (Participant G2M2).

"[...] I attach great importance to both [...] it allows you to know yourself and also how to improve interpersonal relationships [...] a more intellectual knowledge, if it is not accompanied by the other, remains very poor" (Participant G3M2).

Families emphasize the transversality of this learning and their own need to learn about it:

"[...] I see it, not as something specific to a class, but as something, as they call it now, transversal [...] that can affect both the music class and others and also, perhaps, that it is evident among teachers [...] that we also learn things about emotional learning and education in values as parents or as teachers" (Participant G2H1).

"I think it is new and I think it is great that it is starting to be implemented [...] it should be transversal on all sides because those of my generation, or our generation, lack a lot of that teaching" (Participant G2M2).

### **3.2. Category on student needs in terms of values education and SEL**

The main properties of the category are: a) Values, b) Failure management and c) Stress management.

The students point out responsibility, commitment, competitiveness, but also humility as necessary values in specialized music education:

"[...] the issue of being very organized in time [...] having those values also of perseverance, of working hard, of responsibility, of knowing that you have to reach a little bit of everything" (Participant G1H1).

"[...] it is a much more competitive environment, I think, in the conservatory [...] you know that you have to be very, very good to be able to dedicate yourself to this [...] it is one of the most differential facts with other spaces" (Participant G1H1).

"[...] it is the teachers themselves many times who encourage that feeling of "no, you have to be better than the rest" [...] all conservatory teaching is very focused on being a soloist" (Participant G1M1).

"[...] humility is one of the great things that you need to have and that is very difficult to maintain when you reach a higher scale" (Participant G1M1).

They consider that social-emotional learning is necessary to manage failure, self-demand, promote self-trust and prevent demotivation:

"In situations where you have a very high level of demand [...] if you fail, you have to know that it doesn't matter" (Participant G1M1).

"[...] having very good self-confidence and having high self-esteem, which seems to me to be something fundamental when you are a musician" (Participant G1M1).

Families emphasize that SEL is necessary to foster motivation, to cope with stress and the personal and social sacrifice of not being able to participate in the same activities as other children or adolescents of the same age:

"[...] in the school environment, people do not normally face activities that take up so much time, that are so sacrificed. So, there is a moment when they feel strange, that they don't fit in perfectly" (Participant G2H3).

The teachers emphasize the need for specific values to face these studies and a learning process that allows students to manage competitiveness, manage failure and work on the necessary socioemotional aspects, both to face external judgments and to be able to express themselves adequately through music:

"[...] there is always someone who will be judging you and not always with objective criteria [...] they need to learn to tolerate, well, that, the negative [...] that somehow they tell you that you are not worth it because that happens sometimes" (Participant G3H3).

"[...] it is about expressing and transmitting [...] in that aspect I do see that there is a plus that you have to help or favour that development, more than if you are going to be a computer scientist" (Participant G3M2).

### **3.3. Category on the contribution of the subject of Musical Language to values education and SEL**

The main properties of the category are: a) Being part of a group and b) Importance of the teacher's figure.

The students, in their discourse, point out that the subject and its context taught them to overcome shame, to enjoy what they do and to feel music:

"[...] it is the first subject in which you really begin to understand music, and how through music you can express other issues, other feelings" (Participant G1H1).

They emphasize the importance of being part of a group, the camaraderie that is generated and how they learn to value diversity, even from the variety of instruments that take place in the classroom:

"[...] you start to get in contact with other instrumentalists [...] you start to meet cellists, people who play bassoon, trombone [...] learning a little bit of those differences, for me is one of the most important values" (Participant G1H1).

Families give primary relevance to the figure of the teacher within the subject and how he/she can contribute to this learning:

"[...] passion, which I think is the greatest value, isn't it? From a teacher that you are listening to, that you are watching him explain. You see him passionate [...] that instils in the student a seed that sprouts" (Participant G2H1).

In turn, they attach importance to the group class as a source of social-emotional learning and values:

"[...] the group is the one that educates the most [...] the teacher facilitates of course, but [...] the social group is the one that can dynamize the most values" (Participant G2H1).

The teachers also emphasize the opportunity provided by the group class and the role of the teacher's example:

"[...] the group class in a conservatory, moreover, is a particularly good place for this because we get very different kids [...] it encourages a lot the development of the ability to accept, even if you do not understand the other, because here they live together in a much closer way" (Participant G3M3).

"[...] we are an example for them and even just with the way we treat the students, we are transmitting values of respect, trust, tolerance" (Participant G3M3).

According to the teachers' perceptions, the subject of Musical Language favours teamwork, the development of empathy, helps to strengthen confidence, to relativize mistakes, to cope with competitiveness and encourages introspection:

"[...] it's a place where they can also learn [...] how to survive competitiveness and [...] the bad criticisms of others" (Participant G3H3).

"[...] co-evaluation and co-education [...] for me it's fundamentally to encourage empathy [...] to contribute ideas among all of us on what we can do" (Participant G3H1).

"[...] they are insisted that they have to internalize, and that is like an exercise of understanding what is going on inside you [...] how you have to think about it to be able to sing it, that internal pulse [...] that exercise of introspection I think can be a way in which, once they have analysed how they feel those physical stimuli, they can also begin to analyse the sensations" (Participant G3M3).

### **3.4. Category on improvement suggestions**

The main properties of the category are: a) Greater emphasis on group work and b) Project work.

The participating students recommend emphasizing group work in the classroom and taking advantage of diversity, for example, in terms of instrumental specialties, as a source of learning:

"I relate that to humility [...] sometimes you think your instrument is always the most difficult, then you see a cello and you say "but how does it know where the note is?" (Participant G1H1).

They also insist on the importance of active participation:

"I would do everything from practice [...] so that they do not get the idea that Musical Language is learning theory, but feeling, doing and internalizing" (Participant G1M1).

Families suggest promoting greater interaction in class, proposing peer tutoring, project work, increasing active participation and movement, and encouraging students to learn from their peers' instruments:

"[...] each child can be the protagonist one day, one moment of the class with his instrument [...] because he feels like: "hey, I'm the one with the violin" (Participant G2H3).

"[...] you have to interact more, you have to dance more, you have to feel more with your body" (Participant G2M2).

"[...] peer tutoring [...] older students teach younger students and they learn very well, and older students feel very good because they are helping others" (Participant G2H1).

"[...] you could work on certain rhythms like by projects, we are going to make a song with this rhythm and then we are going to present it in front of the classmates" (Participant G2M2).

Teachers point out the need to relativize the importance of mistakes and to transmit to students the value of what they do:

"[...] to minimize what we are saying, the mistakes or when a student starts crying in the classroom for something silly, to empathize with that" (Participant G3H1).

"[...] that they feel somehow important, and that they feel that they are doing something that has a value" (Participant G3H2).

In the group of teachers, it was also suggested that group work should be encouraged, a safe environment should be favoured and more group cohesion activities should be proposed:

"[...] the Musical Language class, in the end, is often an individual group class and they sing together or read together, but they do not work together [...] there should be a rapprochement between them and a common responsibility for the final result" (Participant G3M3).

"[...] creating a safe environment [...] favouring the expression and development of every student; verbalizing, which has also been pointed out before, yes, emotions, values, conflicts" (Participant G3M2).

"... they do it in schools [...] you go one day to have a snack in the countryside with the children [...] activities where I put aside the objective of my work and I make a group, creating that climate where [...] you learn much better" (Participant G3M3).

The teachers also highlight some barriers such as limited class time and the resistance that may be encountered by the rest of the faculty:

"[...] the entire teaching staff should be well informed that what is being done has a value, because it is essential to have the support of the rest of the teachers for this type of innovation" (Participant G3H2).

### 3.5. Degree of consensus in focus groups

Tables 1, 2 and 3 below show the degree of consensus reached in each focus group on the four questions addressed:

**Table 1.** Degree of consensus reached in student focus group

PARTICIPANT	QUESTION RAISED IN FOCUS GROUP			
	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
G1M1	DC	DC	DC	DC
G1M2	DC	DC	DC	DC
G1M3	C	DC	DC	DC
G1H1	DC	DC	DC	DC
G1H2	DC	C	DC	DC

(C = indication of consensus (verbal or non-verbal); D = indication of dissent (verbal or non-verbal); DC = provides substantive statement or example suggesting consensus; DD = provides substantive statement or example suggesting dissent)

**Table 2.** Degree of consensus reached in parent focus group

PARTICIPANT	QUESTION RAISED IN FOCUS GROUP			
	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
G2M1	DC	DC	DC	DC
G2M2	DC	DD	DC	DC
G2H1	DC	C	DC	DC
G2H2	DC	C	DC	DC
G2H3	DC	DC	DC	DC

(C = indication of consensus (verbal or non-verbal); D = indication of dissent (verbal or non-verbal); DC = provides substantive statement or example suggesting consensus; DD = provides substantive statement or example suggesting dissent)

**Table 3.** Degree of consensus reached in teacher focus group

PARTICIPANT	QUESTION RAISED IN FOCUS GROUP			
	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
G3M1	DC	C	C	DC
G3M2	DC	DC	DC	DC
G3M3	DC	DD	DC	DC
G3H1	DC	DD	DC	DC
G3H2	DC	C	DC	DC
G3H3	DC	DC	DC	DC

(C = indication of consensus (verbal or non-verbal); D = indication of dissent (verbal or non-verbal); DC = provides substantive statement or example suggesting consensus; DD = provides substantive statement or example suggesting dissent)

The tables above show that there is consensus among the participating students on the four issues raised in the focus group. In the case of families and teachers, we observe that there is consensus on three of the questions raised, but not on the existence of specific needs for education in values and social-emotional learning of the conservatory students. There are no differences in the assessment and consensus on the questions raised in terms of the gender of the participants. One male and one female teacher consider that the conservatory students do not have specific needs, but that they can benefit from more opportunities to develop this learning thanks to the fact that they are taking specialized music courses:

"I think that, more than having different needs, they have more opportunities than others [...] here they have the opportunity, I think, to develop a series of values" (Participant G3M3).

"This student body has an extra opportunity because it is like a separate school [...] a person who comes to study music has specific needs, I don't think so" (Participant G3H1).

In the case of the parent group, one mother states that the needs are different only in terms of social-emotional learning:

"In terms of values education, I think the needs are the same as in school [...] in terms of social-emotional learning, I do think they need a lot more" (Participant G2M2).

#### **4. Discussion and conclusions**

In this last section, the main conclusions derived from each of the specific objectives will be highlighted and some global reflections will be added.

The three groups of participants express the importance that education in values and social-emotional learning has for them. They consider these to be fundamental aspects of education, components of development and personal enrichment that help students in their lives, regardless of the professional options they choose later on. The importance they attach to classroom culture, to interactions in the group, as can occur in any musical ensemble, is in line with the SEL-enabling elements highlighted by Kelly-McHale (2017).

The fact that conservatory students present specific needs related to values education and social-emotional learning is evident in view of the contributions of the three groups. Of special relevance is the personal and social sacrifice made by the students of these educational establishments, which, to a certain extent, distances them from other children or adolescents and from activities that are common for their age group. Students and teachers observe that artistic activity itself requires learning to manage failure, achieving a high and healthy self-esteem, and acquiring an emotional development that favours expressive performances. The latter coincides with what Bonastre and Nuevo (2020) state about emotional competence, which should not be conceived only as a result of musical education, but as a requirement to increase expressive skills, necessary to ensure a quality musical performance.

No reference is made in any of the focus groups to the planning of social-emotional objectives in the subject of Musical Language, an aspect that several authors consider indispensable to take full advantage of the SEL-related potential of music education (Edgar and Elías, 2021; Omasta *et al.*, 2021). Despite the absence of evidence of conscious planning of social-emotional objectives or those related to values education, the participants perceive that the subject

of Musical Language contributes to the development of this learning. Although each group emphasizes different nuances, the three groups coincide in highlighting the importance of the group as a source of support, motivation and learning. The importance of the teachers as examples of respectful beings and the passion for the subject they teach is pointed out, attitudes that end up being part of a hidden curriculum that, as Cabedo-Mas and Arriaga-Sanz (2016) point out, is fundamental in values education.

As for the suggestions to foster education in values and social-emotional learning in the Musical Language classroom, the three groups coincide in mentioning the need to encourage group work, interaction and cohesion. Project-based learning or peer tutoring are some of the suggested strategies, actions that require prior planning, something that several authors agree in highlighting as an essential requirement to optimize social-emotional learning (Edgar & Elías, 2021; Omasta *et al.*, 2021). Teachers and students stress the need to devote time to feel the music, to internalize it, to work on emotions through the music that takes place in the classroom, which requires establishing an ideal climate, so that students feel confident to express themselves, to be able to solve auditory perception tasks more successfully (Balo *et al.*, 2014, 2015) or to face any other challenge proposed in class. All these suggestions are in line with Elliott and Silverman's (2014) recommendations regarding the importance of not focusing only on the technical aspects of music.

To summarize, in Figure 2 we present some of the most significant results extracted from the focus groups, associated with each of the four specific objectives:

<p><b>IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN VALUES AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students:</b> importance at a personal level and in the classroom context</li> <li>• <b>Families:</b> transversal nature of this learning and importance for day-to-day life</li> <li>• <b>Teachers:</b> general importance and importance in the classroom</li> </ul>	<p><b>STUDENT NEEDS RELATED TO EDUCATION IN VALUES AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students:</b> necessary values and social-emotional learning</li> <li>• <b>Families:</b> perceived needs in order to cope with music studies</li> <li>• <b>Teachers:</b> specific student needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONTRIBUTION OF THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE SUBJECT IN EDUCATION IN VALUES AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students:</b> contribution of the subject and its context</li> <li>• <b>Families:</b> contribution of the teachers and the group itself</li> <li>• <b>Teachers:</b> value attributions and social-emotional aspects</li> </ul>	<p><b>IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION IN VALUES AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students:</b> group work, importance of diversity and feeling the music</li> <li>• <b>Families:</b> peer tutoring, group work, active lessons, taking advantage of instrument diversity</li> <li>• <b>Teachers:</b> practical actions and barriers</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.** Summary of the inferences drawn from the analysis of results

Overall, it has been observed that there is considerable consensus among the three groups of participants. Both teachers, students and families consider that education in values and SEL are essential aspects in the training process of any student. They do not all agree in affirming that conservatory students have different needs to those of other students, but most consider that special emphasis should be placed on education in values and SEL in order to adequately face the

demands of specialized music education. The participants agree in recognizing that the subject of Musical Language and, in particular, the fact that it is taught in groups, contributes to education in values and SEL; but they are also aware of the improvements that should be made to enhance these benefits in the future.

It is surprising that none of the groups mentioned the importance that the selected repertoire, particularly songs, can have in these learning processes, as pointed out by other authors (Muldma & Kiilu, 2012). In the same way that Godoy (2021) identifies the criteria applied by choir conductors to choose the repertoire in children's choirs, it would be advisable to investigate, in future studies, the criteria of the Musical Language teachers when selecting the didactic material. It would also be convenient to analyse in depth students' perceptions on how the songs and works addressed in the subject contribute to education in values and social-emotional learning.

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**Note:** this text is an automatic translation from Spanish to English. Some errors may have crept into this translation. We apologise for this.

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