MONOGRAPH

Listening to Students through their Musical Preferences: Dialogical Gatherings, an Opportunity for Critical Music Education

Escuchando al estudiantado a través de sus preferencias musicales: Tertulias dialógicas, una oportunidad para una educación musical crítica

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of the introduction in Primary and Secondary Education of a musical repertoire based on the musical preferences of the students. Starting from a socio-critical position and through an interpretative methodological process by means of a multi-case study, the aim is to analyse how the implementation of dialogical music gatherings affects classroom dynamics and whether this didactic strategy can facilitate a change towards a critical music education. Six cases are studied in six schools, both primary and secondary. The information was obtained from focus groups with students and researchers, research diaries, playlists and conversations held on a social network. After analysing the data, the focus is on a) what the students listen to and how this shapes their identity; b) the topics discussed after listening; c) the educational changes after the implementation of the *tertulias* and their strengths; and d) the difficulties encountered. This study is in line with some of the findings of previous research and can help teachers and researchers to open up more democratic, open, committed, reflective and critical educational-musical scenarios.

Key words: Music Appreciation; Teacher Collaboration; Qualitative Research; Focus Groups.

Resumen

Este trabajo investiga el impacto que tiene la introducción en Educación Primaria y Secundaria de un repertorio musical basado en las preferencias musicales del estudiantado. Partiendo de un posicionamiento sociocrítico y a través de un proceso metodológico interpretativo mediante un estudio multicaso, se busca analizar cómo la implementación de tertulias musicales dialógicas afecta a las dinámicas de aula y si esta estrategia didáctica puede facilitar un cambio hacia una educación musical crítica. Se estudian seis casos en seis centros educativos, tanto de Primaria como de Secundaria. La información se obtuvo a partir de grupos focales con alumnado y con investigadores, diarios docentes de investigación, *playlists* y las conversaciones mantenidas en una red social de intercambio. Tras analizar los datos se incide en: a) qué escucha el estudiantado y cómo esto conforma su identidad; b) las temáticas discutidas tras la escucha; c) los cambios educativos tras la implementación de las tertulias y sus fortalezas; y d) las dificultades encontradas. Esta investigación se muestra en línea con algunos hallazgos de otras investigaciones previas, y puede facilitar a docentes y personal investigador la apertura a escenarios educativo-musicales más democráticos, abiertos, comprometidos y de naturaleza reflexiva y crítica.

Palabras claves: apreciación musical; colaboración docente; investigación cualitativa; grupos focales.

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1. Introduction

Music, understood as art or as a cultural phenomenon, should not be considered neutral or innocent. Cultural, political, and economic interests are woven into its fabric, conditioning the way in which it is produced, distributed, and consumed. Given its impact on human cognitive, emotional, and social spheres, it is crucial to consider music as a prominent educational tool. Its importance transcends mere aesthetics, as it serves as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, ideological currents, and an intrinsic language. In this context, it addresses a variety of issues ranging from musical significance, ideology, identity, and gender in relation to music education, to changes and challenges in music curricula and pedagogy (Green, 2014), especially regarding the integration of informal learning in formal music education settings. This enriches learning experiences, promoting creativity, reflective thinking and collaboration, fundamental elements in all kinds of pedagogies committed to change. These emphasise the need to overcome hierarchical teaching practices and encourage openness to collaborative learning opportunities (Goodrich, & Vu, 2023).

In the 21st century, many scholars are striving to reconfigure music education in pursuit of social justice. Critical pedagogy is leading this process of transformation (Hess, 2017). Reflection on musical experience as a form of educational mediation urges us to analyse the curriculum from a critical perspective. This music education seeks to redefine itself through a broadening of the repertoire that questions the very conception of music and historically standardised concepts, and all of this based on the introduction of democratic practices that promote diversity, participation and critical thinking between music and society. For this reason, current music education, which is trying to shed its past constraints by rethinking itself through new lenses (Grissom-Broughton, 2020), can embrace the diversity, also sonorous, of the students. And the school, as a reflection of society, must overcome the disconnection with the social environment and play a crucial role in the formation of its identity, which is constantly evolving and influenced by diverse references in different fields, preferences, and lifestyles (Folkestad, 2006). From a critical perspective, music education should be understood as a dialogue within the classroom that allows a space for horizontal communication, not only through verbal but also musical language, integrating different musical styles and genres. Based on these logics, music education becomes empowering, transformative, and political (Abrahams, 2015; Steinberg, & Kincheloe, 2010).

Music constructs identities through its narrative and communication. It facilitates the exploration and development of identity in relation to aspects such as social class, politics, religion, ethnicity, and gender (Lamb, 2003). Hargreaves and Marshall (2003) point to the evolution of musical identities at different stages. In childhood, the personal dimension linked to adults of reference prevails. In adolescence, the social component, influenced by peers and information technologies, becomes more important. Consequently, musical identity is understood as a dynamic, complex, and fluid process (North, *et al.,* 2000). It is an intersectional and performative construct that is formed in the tensions between the individual and society, playing a crucial role in young people's psychosocial development and sense of belonging. Its educational relevance, for example in facilitating social integration practices (Crawford, 2020), leads us to examine and rethink enculturation processes and musical preferences during the school stage.

In today's digital age, an amplification of musical interaction has been observed that amalgamates local experiences with a global context, thus leading to an acceleration, sometimes

uncritical, of educational and consumption procedures. This phenomenon has also given rise to critical reactions and expressions of resistance in favour of a more leisurely music education (Varkoy, & Rinholm, 2020). These developments have created a new context for the formation of musical preferences, where trends in the adolescent world tend to follow the patterns of global capitalism or the dynamics of music as a fast-moving consumer product. Faure *et al*. (2020) highlight a mutual influence between consumers and the music industry, creating a self-feeding cycle. The industry shapes sound trends that impact on the identity of youth. Given the implications of music preferences on identity, music education should be critical and responsive to students' sound experiences, encouraging diversity, participation, and critical thinking (Abrahams, 2007).

Numerous studies legitimise the use of this type of repertoire as enriching the democratic, ethical, and inclusive nature of educational processes, as well as its contribution to the development of critical thinking, personal growth, collaborative work skills, motivation, and participation (Cheng, 2020; Rauduvaitė, 2013; Tobias, 2015; Väkevä, 2006). Their use also encourages reflection, discussion and expansion of their tastes and identity (Byo, 2018), promoting meaningful and holistic learning (Gage *et al.,* 2020). However, some research points to challenges, such as changing tastes (Miksza, 2013), rejection of lyrics (Parkinson, 2017), translation of excessive traditional male stereotypes in some musical genres (Díez-Gutiérrez, *et al.*, 2023) and difficulties in applying pedagogical methods to this repertoire (García-Peinazo, 2017). Integrating these preferences requires adapting teaching to avoid contradictions. It is recommended to develop programmes and curricula that train music teachers to use this repertoire from a perspective of democratic participation and recognition of student identities.

This study focuses on investigating the impact of the introduction of a repertoire based on students' musical preferences on educational processes. It seeks to analyse in detail the educational implications of the implementation of dialogical music gatherings (TMD) originating from the choices they make. To guide this research, the following research questions have been formulated and have served as a guideline throughout the process:

1.   What do students listen to and how do they appropriate this music?
2.   What are the predominant themes of the discussions?
3.   What are the educational consequences that emerge from the implementation of these *tertulias*? What strengths are identified?
4.   What obstacles are encountered during the implementation of the discussion sessions?

2. Method

In this research we have opted for an eminently qualitative methodology that has allowed us to understand the development of the pedagogical action studied in each of the contexts in which it has been implemented. Each of these contexts constitutes a specific case that offers answers to the research questions from its uniqueness and singularity. Also, in this study we were interested in carrying out a transversal analysis in order to put these answers into dialogue and identify shared elements, which is why we opted for a collective or multi-case study approach (Stake, 1998). But what is really distinctive about this design is that it is a collaborative research conducted in conjunction with the school (Cloonan, 2019). Teachers not only implement the

pedagogical action under study, but also collaborate in the research design together with external researchers.

2.1. Context and participants

The choice of the context and participants was determined organically, arising from the needs, commitments and objectives shared by the group of Primary and Secondary Education teachers of the Pedagogical Laboratory PedaLAB-UGR (https://sites.google.com/go.ugr.es/pedalab-ugr). Collectively, the group of teachers, in collaboration with the research staff from the university, decided to initiate research on their own practices in primary and secondary classrooms.

The research was carried out in six public schools in Andalusia (Spain) located in rural or semi-urban areas. In three schools, the research was carried out with students in the third cycle of Primary School and in three others with students in the first, second and third years of Secondary Education (Table 1). All primary classes have a proportion of students in the range of 20-25 per class, while in secondary classes the figure ranges between 24 and 28 students. No data concerning the gender of the students have been included in the table, since in all cases a practically homogeneous distribution was observed, with a margin of variation of only 3%. Regarding the extracurricular musical education of the students, information was obtained secondarily through the reports provided by the teachers in their diaries. It could be observed that, in semi-urban environments, which represent the first two cases, 5-8% of the students have musical training outside the school environment, in contrast to the more rural contexts, where this figure is less than 5%. Despite this difference, the only noticeable effects reported by teachers relate to a higher vocabulary specific to purely musical topics among students with extra-curricular musical training. These data have had marginal or no influence on the analyses carried out in the present study and have therefore not been included in the table below.

Table 1. Description of cases in the study

	STAGE	GRADES	INHABITANTS LOCALITY
CASE 1	Secondary	1ST /2ND	More than 10000
CASE 2	Secondary	2ND /3RD	More than 10000
CASE 3	Secondary	2ND	Less than 5000
CASE 4	Primary - Secondary	5TH /6TH - 2ND	Less than 5000
CASE 5	Primary	5TH /6TH	Less than 5000
CASE 6	Primary	5TH /6TH	Less than 5000

In terms of research ethics, the development of the study was communicated to all those involved in the educational community. The management team and families were informed through an informed consent and opt-out document detailing the nature of the research, the participation of the students and the measures of anonymity and confidentiality. Students were informed directly in class after families signed the document. The research team was committed to negotiate the information under study and to provide resulting reports to the participants.

2.2. Instruments and techniques

Different techniques have been used to collect information in line with TMD, the teaching strategy that was the subject of the research.

Each teacher implemented the TMD in three one-hour sessions. In the first, a playlist was created based on the class preferences and the reasons for these choices were discussed. In the second, songs were presented, the three favourites were voted on and the song was chosen democratically by initiating a first listening and discussing the aspects of the lyrics and music that stand out. In the third, the video clip was viewed, and the musical and lyrical themes previously discussed are discussed in depth.

Each session was audio-recorded, this being the strategy that we have identified in the research as "student focus group" and each teacher prepared a research diary to record observations and the most relevant interventions.

Parallel to the classroom discussions, exchange sessions were held between teachers and external researchers, which we call the "research group focus group", which were recorded and provided additional data on the process. In addition, the exchanges were recorded in a Telegram chat, which we call a "social network exchange". Table 2 shows the data collection techniques used in the different phases of the focus group discussions, and Table 3 illustrates the volume of data handled in the study.

Table 2. Techniques for collecting information linked to the teaching of TDM

	ACTIVITIES	DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE
TMD1	Making the playlist Talks on election reasons	Group Playlist GF students (TMD1) Teaching research diary Social exchange network
TMD2	Song selection for TMD2 Listening to chosen song and dialogue on music and lyrics	GF students (TMD2) Teaching research diary Social exchange network
TMD3	Watch the video of the song Dialogue on new topics and deepening of those of the previous session	GF students (TMD3) GF research group Teaching research diary Social exchange network

Table 3. Amount of data collection techniques

	AMOUNT	DETAIL
Group music playlist	6	55 songs
Student focus group	18	9 hours of recording, 162 pages of transcription
Research diary	6	90 pages
Focus group research group	1	2 hours of recording, 35 pages of transcription
Social exchange network	1	373 text and audio messages

2.3. Categorisation

The qualitative data analysis was interactive and iterative, inductively, and collectively constructing a system of categories agreed upon by the working group. Each teacher in their role as researcher, prior to the group category analysis session, identified fragments of text in their diaries to which they assigned an emergent coding. This initial categorisation was used in the research group, where a triangulation process was carried out to reach a consensus on the definition of the analytical categories and the text fragments assigned to them. In this way we

carried out a constant comparative process to avoid a mechanical and formulaic categorisation and remained receptive to emerging dynamics and possible modifications in the different data sources. Following Simons (2011), throughout this process an openness to change was kept in mind as the data were examined and understanding of them grew. The interaction between the researchers and the information analysed has been key in this process, which is understood as both art and science (Strauss, & Corbin, 2002, p.14).

NVivo software is used as a support exclusively to provide structure to the information collected and to access the data in a simpler and more effective way.

Table 4. Category system

MUSICAL PREFERENCES	Access devices
	Reasons for the choice
THEMATIC TALKS	Sexuality
	Gender roles
	Naturalisation of violence and drugs
	Political ideology
	Fictionality
	Consumption
	Aesthetic canon
EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS	Apprenticeships
	Guided participation or methodological strategies
	Participatory ownership
	Impact in the school context
	Strengths
	Weaknesses

3. Results

Based on the system of categories resulting from the manual coding of all the data collected (Table 4), this section provides an orderly response to the different research questions. In order to facilitate understanding and provide a comprehensive analysis, each sub-section presents various categories of analysis and the relationships generated between them in relation to the research questions.

3.1. What do students listen to and how do they appropriate this music?
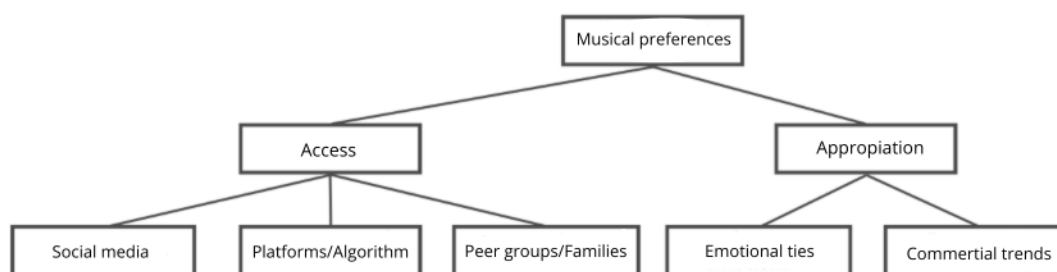
Figure 1. Map of categories of analysis that addresses the first research question

The class playlists reflect the musical diversity present. Although the selection of songs is varied, the most popular music genres among pupils are reggaeton, followed by trap, rap, and

formula radio pop. Most music listening is done via mobile devices, computers, and tablets, with digital platforms being the main sources for discovering and consuming music.

> They pop up on Youtube or Spotify and I leave them. As I don't have premium, I get random songs. Others I know from influencers I follow on Tik Tok (GF TM1. Case 6).

> They tell me that when they search for or play a song, suggestions come up and they discover other songs (Research diary. Case 4).

Some teachers observe changes in how new music is recommended and accessed. In the past, music radio and its critical filters were dominant, but now automated recommendations based on algorithms carry more weight. Still, suggestions from friends and family remain important, and popularity on social media and digital platforms also affects music choice.

> Friends and their recommendations are the main mechanism for music transmission, apart from social networks and platforms such as Tik Tok or Youtube. The radio formula of my generation has passed the baton to algorithms (Research diary. Case 3).

Through social networks such as Tik Tok, viral videos are generated with songs that are known in a fragmented way and that become successful partially and for a limited time.

> When we play a song they have chosen, some people only recognise it when they get to the chorus because they know it from Tik Tok (Research diary. Case 5).

There is a strong emotional attachment to the music, which transcends the musical elements and lyrics, to which they pay little attention. They describe the songs they choose as lively, rhythmic, and associated with moments of joy and fun.

> I asked them if they knew what they were singing and they replied that they didn't care about the meaning, that they liked it because it was catchy and because of the rhythm (Research diary. Case 2).

This disinterest in the meaning of lyrics is more frequent in popular songs that are fashionable at the time. However, some songs are selected because of their provocative language and controversial topics, which are considered taboo at school or in their home environment.

The valuation of musicians focuses less on their musical quality and more on their ability to be popular on social networks. This leads to ephemeral and shifting musical preferences, driven by the speed of the contemporary environment, which is related to the idea of programmed obsolescence in music.

> They comment that the music they chose a couple of weeks ago is no longer their favourite because it is no longer in fashion (Research diary. Case 1).

3.2. What are the predominant themes of the discussions?
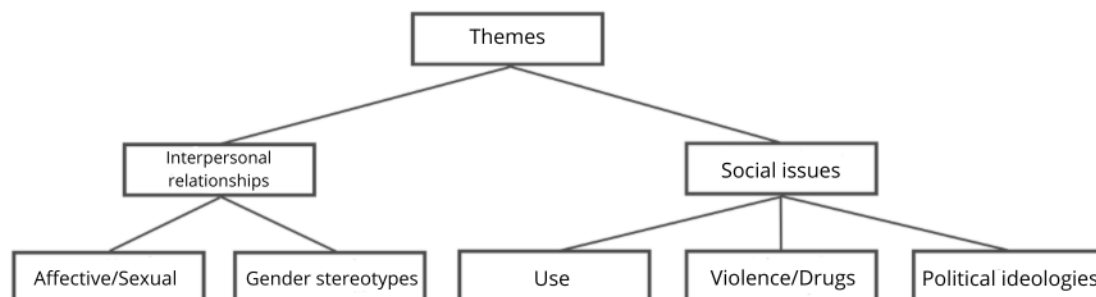
Figure 2. Map of categories of analysis that addresses the second research question

Stereotyping around certain genres of music has been identified, but excluding genres such as pop and rock, even though they could also contain the same themes.

> They are unable to agree on whether it is trap or pop, but they are clear that it is not reggaeton because it does not say "bad" or "sexual" things in the lyrics (Research diary. Case 5).

Attention to extra-musical aspects, such as lyrics and imagery, promotes enriching discussions on issues intrinsically related to identity formation. The representations of gender roles in the songs provide a space to talk about emotional relationships and sexuality.

> These songs can influence how we relate to each other, boys and girls (GF TMD3. Case 3).

> When I have a boyfriend, I stop going out with my friends and I only go out with my boyfriend (GF TMD3. Case 2).

The objectification and submissiveness of women depicted in the songs constitute discussions where pupils show disparate sensitivities about gender roles. Faced with objectification, female pupils are more aware of and uncomfortable with the inert representation of women, while male pupils tend to perceive this role as devoid of any "danger" or negative consequences.

> I am struck by the expression "she is my plant" because it is a way of saying that she is an ornament. I think this song is very sexist and talks about sex with little respect for women. […] But I don't care about the lyrics, I find them funny and I like the music, that's why I'm going to keep listening to it (GF TMD2. Case 6).

In relation to the gender roles represented in the songs and the display of bodies, the presence of a predominant aesthetic canon stands out. Male students tend to identify with a male ideal in terms of attitudes, physical appearance, and style of dress. On the other hand, female students aspire to look like the women portrayed in the video clips. In addition, the aesthetic canon is intrinsically linked to the consumption of a variety of products advertised in the videos.

> I like that song because I like the singer who is "from the street", one who has achieved everything by himself and who has grown up in the street (GF TMD1. Case 2).

> They tell me that it is the latest trend, that everyone listens to it and that what appears in the videos is the clothes that are in the shops (Diary research. Case 4).

There is a process of normalisation of violence and drug use because they are recurrent themes in the songs they listen to, treated in a trivial way and without warning of the risks. The songs provide an opportunity to discuss the "reality" they represent, to reflect on their dangers and to identify what is true and what is fiction.

> One girl says that the videos are not real, that it was probably created by a man and that what comes out of it is false, but it sells. She adds that in real life what appears in the video and what the lyrics say does not happen, because if they said that to her, she would slap him. The other girls support this comment, the boys remain silent (Investigation diary. Case 6).

Some songs are conducive to ideological positioning. In our findings, we have identified a symbolic function in certain songs that are used for the promotion of a specific ideology and for confrontation with those who hold divergent views.

> In my class playlist, the national anthems of Spain and Russia have been playing. I think they use the anthems to confront. They say that one thing is right-wing and another left-wing and I wonder why they are giving them those meanings? When I asked, they said that they were "very polarised since the appearance of the extreme right wing" (GF TMD1. Case 2).

3.3. What are the educational consequences that emerge from the implementation of these *tertulias*? What strengths are identified?
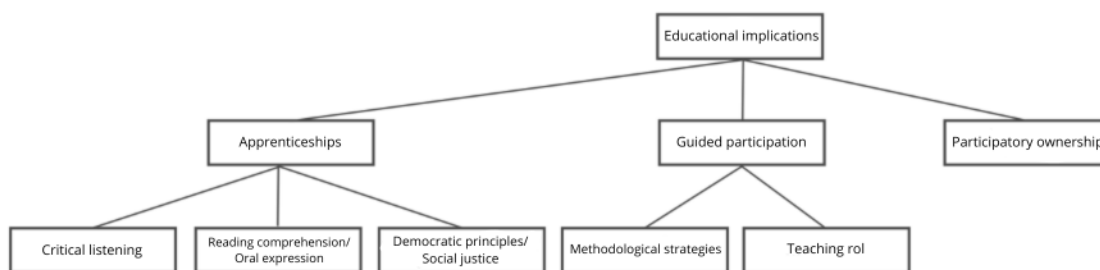

Figure 3. Map of categories of analysis that addresses the third research question

The *tertulias* encourage a form of critical listening that transcends mere sensory or emotional perception. In this sense, pupils now pay more attention to details that previously went unnoticed, thus strengthening the arguments that support their choice of musical preferences.

> They tell me that they had never stopped to listen to a song in this way and that they had learned to pay more attention to the lyrics and the music (Research diary. Case 4).

> Thanks to this activity we have learned to listen differently (GF TMD3. Case 3).

They facilitate the development of skills such as reading comprehension. When analysing the lyrics of songs, pupils sometimes do not know how to identify some metaphors and can misinterpret certain messages.

> When I ask them what the song is about, they tell me that it is about a guy who has been dumped by his girlfriend, which surprises me because, in reality what it explains is that the girl is no longer there because she has died. Their understanding of the lyrics is very limited, they don't understand messages that use metaphors or double meanings (Research diary. Case 2).

In the *tertulias*, there is an emphasis on oral expression which involves skills in communicating ideas clearly. Students learn to structure their thoughts and participate in respectful conversations. During this process, the teaching staff have noticed an increased interest in sharing ideas and an improvement in the observance of rules, thus creating an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.

The choice of songs for TMDs is a challenge due to the variety of titles available on the playlists. Care is taken to ensure that the democratic selection process does not silence minority voices and become a space for exclusion. During the search for consensus, the group makes decisions that lead to reflection on individual preferences and collective identity.

As for the role of the teacher, he/she plays a fundamental role in the dynamics of the discussion group. In this sense, we have summarised the aspects that teachers have highlighted as essential for improving the development of this educational process. Their participation should be on an equal footing with the rest of the group, expressing their opinion at appropriate moments without monopolising the conversation or imposing their perspective. The main role of the teacher is moderation, ensuring compliance with the rules established at the beginning of the discussion. At the same time, it is crucial to pay attention to the ideas that emerge among the students and to raise new questions that allow the same topic to be approached from different perspectives. During the dialogue, you should facilitate the expression of all opinions and act as a defender of democratic principles and social justice in cases where the ideas presented by the students may transgress these limits.

> I tell them that songs like the one they have listened to, which represent the domination of men over women, can lead them to see this way of relating as natural and to see certain macho behaviours as normal. I tell them that at the most dangerous end of this situation is violence against women and that in the same week there have been five murders of women by their partners or ex-partners. I think that introducing this type of commentary is important because it allows them to think about the issue from a different perspective (Research diary. Case 6).

The introduction of TMD has had a positive impact on classroom dynamics. An improvement has been observed in the relationships between students, who show greater respect for individual differences. This positive effect is not limited to relationships between students, but also, and with incidence, extends to the relationship with the teacher.

> Thanks to the implementation of the discussion group activity throughout the year, comments that ridiculed a classmate who liked K-Pop have been eliminated (Research diary. Case 3).

> Not only have I been able to get to know my students better, but I have also established deeper bonds with them as they have opened up and let me see into their souls (Research diary. Case 4).

> Kids stop me in the corridors and say: "teacher, I've heard this song or that one. I'll pass it on to you". It is gratifying to see that they confide in me and share with me things that are important to them (Research diary. Case 3).

> There is interest in the discussions because they are talking about what they know, what they listen to and what they like (Research diary. Case 5).

It is important to note that, although some students were initially reluctant to participate in this activity, teachers subsequently observe that they meet in the courtyard to discuss the topics covered in the discussions. This exemplifies what is known as *participatory ownership*, according to Rogoff's theory (2003), which indicates that learning has been meaningful and has transcended the classroom environment.

> Although in class they tell me that they don't want to talk about these subjects, that they are not interested in making music, that it is a waste of time, then I see them outside talking about what has happened in class, about the subjects we have discussed in the discussion (Research diary. Case 2).

3.4. What are the obstacles encountered during the discussion sessions?
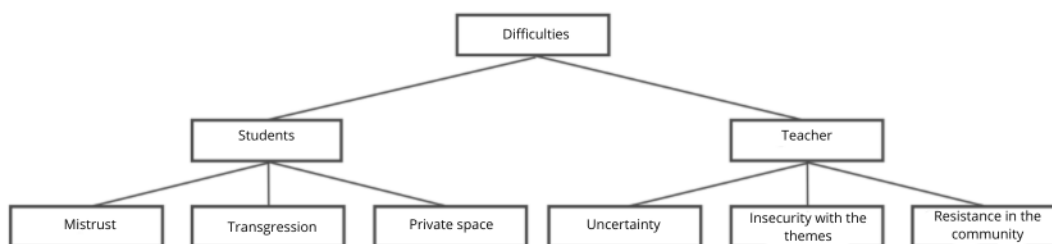
Figure 4. Map of categories of analysis that addresses the fourth research question

The introduction of pupils' preferred music in the classroom is an experience that generates some misgivings among pupils and provokes two types of conflicting reactions. On the one hand, there is a group that is wary of freedom of expression in relation to their musical choices, fearing that teachers may retaliate if they do not consider them appropriate. On the other hand, there is a group that deliberately chooses songs of a provocative nature, taking advantage of the freedom given to them to challenge conventional classroom norms, which is not a common practice in the educational environment.

They also express misgivings that individual musical tastes do not match those of the majority, which has been a challenge and has required different responses depending on the circumstances. Some teachers have implemented private methods of collecting their students' musical preferences, thus providing a confidential space to express their choices without fear of group reaction.

> A Moroccan student was embarrassed to propose her music, I guess for fear of not being accepted. I told her to send it to me privately. The same happened with another student who liked music that was far from the current trends because his tastes came from his father who was a progressive rock fan (Research diary. Case 3).

There are also challenges for teaching as teachers face uncertainty about how students will react, what issues may arise and how best to address them in the classroom.

> We did the audition without watching the video, but I still had a hard time because the song contains pornographic expressions, and I was worried about hurting the sensitivity of the students (Research diary. Case 2).

In addition to the challenges in the classroom, teachers should anticipate possible reactions from families and other school staff. While the need for this activity is recognised in most cases, it may also be perceived as inappropriate due to the use of songs with controversial lyrics and the discussion of topics that some families believe should be discussed privately at home.

> I am writing to inform you that a parent has complained that a song has been played with inappropriate scenes and expressions, requesting that songs be reviewed before they are played. The tutor sent a message to the staff group saying that a mother had complained because a teacher was posting inappropriate content. Worst of all, he knew it was me. He put me down in front of all the classmates without knowing what my pedagogical reasons were (Social network exchange).

TDM requires time for implementation, which is especially challenging in primary classrooms where music is usually only one hour per week. To implement it effectively, it is

necessary to extend it over 3-4 weeks and to maintain continuity of conversations between sessions, even using hours not allocated to music.

> Time is one of the limitations, with the hours of music it is sometimes insufficient, so sometimes I try to get hours if I can with my tutoring (Research diary. Case 4).

Finally, difficulties have been observed in the verbal expression of ideas on the part of students, which led to the consideration of the implementation of other techniques such as musical, plastic, audio-visual or theatrical creation as an alternative for expressing ideas on the topics mentioned above. This would offer them different ways of exercising their freedom of expression and reflection.

4. Discussion and conclusions

This study is in line with previous research indicating that students in the third cycle of Primary School and in Secondary School prefer urban popular music (MPU) (Faure, *et al.,* 2020). Despite easy access to a wide variety of music, thanks to information and communication technologies, there is some diversity in the selected titles but a prevalence of homogeneity in music genres.

Immediate access to music has given rise to a phenomenon of "musical obsolescence", which influences music composition to suit the preferences of youth and benefit the industry. When music becomes a consumer product, the dynamics of production, reproduction, and advertising promotion shape preferences. In addition, algorithms play an important role in generating recommendations based on previous choices, which can limit the exploration of new musical experiences.

In this context of what we can call musical or sound capitalism, the question arises as to whether the preferences that are brought into the classroom are freely chosen and whether the students are really aware of this situation. Here we agree with Montes-Rodríguez *et al*. (2023) that it is the teacher's responsibility to "reveal how these mechanisms work in order to subvert them as far as possible" (p.46) or at least to be aware of this form of invisible manipulation of market structures in order to contribute to true critical listening.

The inclusion of the students' musical preferences in the TMD is what differentiates this study from other similar experiences focused on the canonical repertoire. With this experience, we are moving away from a model of music education that prioritises so-called cultured or classical music and which is often understood as an instrument of exclusion, as it could imply the legitimisation of the cultural power of certain musical manifestations over others.

The practices analysed in the research follow an ecological approach to the curriculum that questions who we are, where we perform and why we perform. We thus address the need for the educational institution to open up to the everyday sound imaginaries of young people and to stop seeing musical experiences inside and outside the educational institution as separate phenomena (Folkestad, 2006). The implementation of TMD allows us to connect with the outside world in which students are forging their civic identity and to create safe environments in the educational institution that allow them to critically analyse their daily lives, fostering processes of emancipation.

To achieve this, moderators must listen to all voices and minimise power relations to build new knowledge that includes all contributions (López de Aguileta, *et al.,* 2020). Thus, the school becomes a shared learning space where different cultures and languages intertwine, transforming the classroom into a place that celebrates diversity and the recognition of everyone (Garcés, 2020) in a 'network of care'.

TMD challenges conventional norms in education by generating disruptive action mediated by music. By transferring power from teachers to students, they can express their opinions and exercise their freedom as citizens, as long as they respect democratic principles and social justice. Moreover, it is a methodology that promotes reflection on their everyday experiences from an ethical perspective and meets the evolving needs of students by enabling them to question surrounding discourses (Tarrant, *et al.,* 2001). Music offers an ethical space for experimentation that is considered safe and socially accepted (MacDonald, & Saarikallio, 2022). In the context of TDM, aspects of this experimentation related to the construction of identity emerge, always within this safe, ethical space where the experiences represented in the songs, which function as an external artefact, are discussed.

We agree with other studies that dialogical conversations about musical preferences allow students to express their values and their influence on their social relationships (Lonsdale, & North, 2017). Music acts as a mediation (Ocaña-Fernández, 2020) that reveals processes of identity construction and inclusion or exclusion in different peer groups. Our research has identified strongly polarised positions among students, especially on issues related to political ideologies, couple relationships and gender roles. Songs often reinforce gender stereotypes and frequently promote patriarchal roles and sexual representations that objectify women and legitimise violent behaviour (Abramo, 2011).

The difficulties that some students encounter in freely expressing their musical preferences in the classroom context can be explained by the close link between certain musical genres and very specific psychological and social characteristics of their listeners (Soares-Quadros, *et al.,* 2023). This attachment through music to a specific peer group that defines their identity means that the choice of favourite music is not trivial and can make it difficult to express true musical preferences in the *playlisting* process. We were able to identify some cases in which adolescents showed different musical tastes in public and in private in order to adapt to the expectations of their peer group.

According to Parkinson (2017), our research also revealed resistance to sharing certain music because it is considered inappropriate in the school environment due to the type of message it conveys. However, we defend the need to address these issues and justify their incorporation as they are aligned with the educational curriculum established in the Spanish context, specifically in the cross-cutting content of all subjects that promote gender equality, peace education, responsible consumption, sustainable development, and affective-social education (article 6, RD 217/2022, 29 March).

The focus of this study is on dialogic learning (López de Aguileta, *et al.,* 2020), which promotes egalitarian dialogue and values arguments according to their validity rather than pre-existing social hierarchies. In this context, diversity is seen as enriching. The classroom reflects the miniature society that is the school, allowing the students' knowledge and experiences to take centre stage. This respects one of the principles of dialogical learning, cultural intelligence. Based on this personal knowledge and experience, the creation of meaning is fostered through

interaction and the demands and needs of the people involved. It is also learning about democratic values and social justice, which foster transformation and emancipation, key elements in a critical pedagogy (Mejía-Delgadillo, 2020).

In the field of music education, we seek to adopt a critical pedagogy that shifts our approach from a primarily practical one to a more reflective and critical one. Through TMD, the doors of the classroom are opened to diverse musical genres previously excluded and the voices of students are prioritised, democratising educational relationships in the classroom (Ocaña, & Reyes, 2011).

In relation to the limitations inherent in this study, it is important to note that these are typical of small-scale qualitative research. This study focused on six specific schools, which implies that the findings cannot be directly extrapolated to a wider population. However, it is relevant to underline that the aim was not to generalise the results, as the main intention was to carry out an in-depth analysis of these contexts and the narratives that emerge in them. This approach is seen as a strength rather than a limitation. However, some biases were detected and recognised by the research and teaching teams, such as, a greater than desirable participation by the teachers in the discussion, who perceived the students' silences as a source of discomfort. Also, insecurity and inexperience in managing the discussion groups could generate various moments in which the students' dispersion was unforeseen, but also typical of this type of qualitative research process.

Furthermore, in the development of this study it was possible to segment the results and organise the findings according to variables such as age, gender, and previous musical training of the students in each case. However, when examining the data collected, it was found that the differences observed were not substantial enough to justify such an analytical structuring. Therefore, a thematic structure focusing on the research questions was chosen to comprehensively understand the participants' experience. Future research could address these issues.

Similarly, it is important to note that long-term monitoring is currently underway to assess the sustained impact of the music *tertulias* in contexts where critical music education pedagogical approaches are being implemented. The project to which this research is linked is still ongoing and, consequently, it will be essential in future research to explore the durability and stability of the changes observed because of the implementation of these practices.

The fact that the teachers are also part of the research team allows us to minimise the subjectivism of the observations, a characteristic feature of social research. The possibility of sharing the analysis carried out with the group and contrasting it with other perspectives allows us to question the initial interpretations that emerge from the observation and analysis of the dialogues in the discussion group. The development of the research from a collaborative perspective force us to question our individual frames of reference in the group in order to build a common frame of reference that guides the analysis of the data and makes us collectively aware of the biases in our own perspective.

This study has allowed us to reflect on power within the music classroom, who makes decisions and how students' interests and experiences are valued. Allowing the inclusion of students' musical preferences is an act of mutual recognition that can be the first step towards a horizontal relationship that supports dialogical learning. The tertulia becomes an essential tool for understanding how music influences the construction of identities in the classroom by connecting

with an ecological approach to learning. By daring to challenge the dynamics that have permeated music pedagogy from a practical approach, we venture to explore new possibilities that bring us closer to a critical, more democratic, engaged, and reflective approach (Hooks, 2022).

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