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Bridging the gap. A participatory music project as an inspiration for meaningful music education through improvisation in schools

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Bridging the Gap

A Participatory Music Project as an Inspiration for Meaningful Music Education through Improvisation in Schools

Introduction

There is a growing academic interest in the social and democratic benefits of making music together and the use of improvisation in participatory music projects (Sloboda, Baker, De bisschop, Karttunnen, Mazzola, Rojas, Van Zijl, Westerlund & Zapata Restrepo, 2020). Many studies have examined the outcomes of such projects from the perspective of the participants (e. g. Schiavio, Van der Schyff, Gande & Kruse-Weber, 2019; Vougioukalou et al., 2019). Recent research (Dylan Smith & Silverman, 2020; Verneert, Nijs & De Baets, 2021) links these findings to the concept of well-being. This growing academic interest can be summarized in the idea that improvisation and active participation in music may have great power to promote a sense of competence, meaning, social connectedness, and self-expression. Many, if not all participatory music projects foster an educational approach that emphasizes the individual growth, community development and personal meaning of music for the participants by creating a learning environment which is democratic and inclusive.

In this chapter, we argue that the artistic-pedagogical strategies adopted by the facilitators in such participatory music projects may have the potential to enrich music education in schools, especially if it comes to the challenge for music education to avoid what Wright calls 'causing harm by excluding' and how to foster pedagogies that encourage individuality, diversity and pupil agency (Wright, 2019). Why do we make this link? Many common, organized, musical leisure activities in Belgium (e. g. attending music schools, singing or playing in a group or ensemble) face a strong underrepresentation of children with low socio-economic status and ethnocultural minorities (Bamford, 2007). It is therefore important to see how music lessons in compulsory education can maximize

their inclusive potential, by learning from participatory music projects using improvisation as a tool for meaningful and inclusive music education. Recent developments in education policy are moving in the direction of a more competence-based approach and collaboration with cultural partners. In this contribution, we will elaborate on the possibilities for students and teachers to create bridges between music in schools and participatory music projects using (free) improvisation. In order to do so, we conducted two studies. Study 1 is field research that draws on findings from a participatory music project, The Ostend Street Orkestra (TOSO) is an adult ensemble-based musical project in Belgium. It is an inclusive orchestra, working with homeless people and everyone who wants to join and is strongly rooted in the local context. The aim of this study was to examine the role of the facilitators in TOSO, mostly trained musicians working with a very diverse group of participants, using free improvisation as a central musical focus. Study 2 is a mixed method study of the lived experience of students (n = 1282) and teachers (n = 14) in secondary schools with collective free improvisation. We wanted to explore if the strategies and the use of free improvisation in the TOSO project (with adults) could be transferred to children in the classroom. Based on the findings from Study 1, we prepared a lesson sheet with free improvisation exercises that was administered by teachers in general music classrooms. Teachers were briefed in using the artistic-pedagogical strategies that we found in the TOSO project. The lived experience of the students was measured using a flow-scale and the experiences of the teachers were mapped through a semi-structured questionnaire.

The need for more creative and open artistic-pedagogical strategies for musical improvisation in general education has been emphasized by many researchers (Edmund & Keller, 2020; Larsson & Georgii-Hemming, 2019; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010) and the facilitators in the TOSO project. This is required to reach a very diverse group of people and succeed in finding a way of working with music that is 'relevant to the musical self'. We believe that teachers in general (music) education can benefit from the merging of the well-known pedagogical practices and the pedagogical-artistic strategies we found in the TOSO project to implement meaningful improvisation in their lessons. We asked ourselves the following questions: How can pedagogical-artistic practices in participatory music projects and music education in schools be reconciled? Can the use of free improvisation facilitate a meaningful musical process for children in schools? How can we highlight the social relevance of improvisation in music, as well as critically consider how improvisation can be shaped in schools? In the background section of this chapter, we will discuss the field of participatory music and music education in Flanders (Belgium). Next, we will elaborate on musical improvisation, give an overview of our two studies and conclude.

Background

Participatory Music Projects in Flanders (Belgium)

The field of participatory music projects, community music and socially engaged musicians is growing rapidly worldwide (Bartleet & Higgings, 2018; Veblen, 2007). This growing interest can be explained from diverse perspectives and aims, making music education more inclusive and contribute towards accessibility of the arts, in an attempt to link – rather than separate -music practices with the fight against social injustices, etc. However, the practice itself is not new at all, but is in line with the rich history of community music in the UK and all over the world that links music making to social activism, critical pedagogy and inclusive concepts such as cultural democracy (Higgins, 2007; Matarasso, 1998). In the last decade, more attention in the scientific discourse thematizing this field of practice is focused on the 'social impact' of making music with diverse groups (Bartleet & Pairon, 2021). Participatory music projects do not only intend to achieve aesthetically valued outcomes but, at the same time, include the "indivisible intention to facilitate some significant personal or group effect beyond the achievement of a musically satisfying activity" (Sloboda et al., 2020, p. 116). In this article, we won't elaborate on what this social impact exactly is or can be – because this is a nuanced debate in its own terms – but the combined aim of striving for an artistic valuable outcome as well as for social goals, is deeply rooted in the history of this field of practice in Flanders (and Belgium).

In Belgium, the interest in social music projects has gradually grown since the early 1990s, when it became clear that large groups of people – people living in poverty, refugees, immigrants, people with a disability – were barely reached by any artistic or cultural activity funded by the government. In Belgium, an annual poverty report (1994) was published that for the first time focused on cultural participation as a human right, a human right which people living in poverty were excluded from. In response to this report, a whole series of societal organizations worked together to develop possibilities for so called social-artistic projects: "projects that link an artistic dimension to a process of social integration" (Leye & Janssens, 2005, p. 7). The whole range of art forms was tapped into, including music. This field of very diverse, bottom-up initiatives grew rapidly, with lots of projects initiated by smaller societal partners in the cultural, immigration, social, and educational sectors (Janssens, 2001). At this time, a target group-oriented approach was a guiding principle, as projects were focused either on individuals and groups facing social deprivation or on disadvantaged neighbourhoods and districts, or both (Leye & Janssens, 2005). The main rationale for these social-artistic projects was to give people living in difficult circumstances the possibility of cultural expression, and to contribute to more nuanced public opinion. This new field of practice soon found resonance in cultural policy and, since 2000, these social-artistic projects became part of the regular cultural policy framework in Flanders, first as a separate category within the cultural policy field (Leye, 2004) and later

as a category within the Arts Decree (De bisschop, 2011). Nowadays, they are completely integrated in the Arts funding framework, with its function 'participation' – which most of the former social-artistic projects relate to.

Today, almost 30 years later, the field of participatory music projects in Belgium is more professionalized and includes a wide range of practices, from grassroots projects to more institutionalized practices as part of small or bigger arts organizations. To capture some characteristics of the present state of the field of participatory music projects in Belgium, we draw on the findings of a recent survey research that focusses on the musicians' perspectives of musicians being active in this field in Belgium (Sloboda, De bisschop & Van Zijl, 2022). The vast majority of Belgian musicians (57.4 %) is active in small participatory music organisations, and 62 % indicate that the projects they are active in lasted for longer than 4 years. It is interesting that the perceived importance of the work by musicians in Belgium is very high, 45 % said this work is 'essential' to them, 50 % said the work is 'important' to them. But, when it comes to the perceived feeling of being adequately equipped for the work, only 20 % of the musicians say they feel totally prepared for working as a musician in a participatory music project. Compared internationally, Belgian musicians feel less equipped than Colombian, Finnish and UK musicians in the same field (Van Zijl & De bisschop, 2022). When compared to these other three countries, Belgium also has the highest rate of musicians who didn't receive any specific training for this work. These recent survey results that we include show that, although the field of participatory music projects in Belgium has grown rapidly and has professionalized to some extent, it is still to be seen as a 'developing' – rather than a 'mature' – field of practice. Progress in the field is still possible; for example, when it comes to educating musicians suitably for the field, ensuring support for projects that work with specific social groups, and also development of a more diverse policy framework outside the arts sector, etc.

Music Education in Flanders (Belgium)

Secondary education (age 12–18) in Flanders is currently (2022) undergoing a major reform. The structure of study areas is being thoroughly redrawn, and the government is setting new minimum learning goals. Sixteen key competencies have now been formulated that form the basis for the new learning goals (Kwalificatie & Curriculum, n. d.). One of the sixteen key competencies is 'cultural awareness and cultural expression', with a focus on aesthetic experience, experimentation and personal creativity. The explicit integration of *art* in the minimum goals is a major step forward as, previously, artistic education in secondary education was non-mandatory. With the inclusion of *art* as a key competence in general education, the government aims to develop competencies such as understanding and respect for the way ideas and meaning are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures; thus contributing to personal, social and mental development.

Formal music education in Flanders (Belgium) is organized in a separate structure of part-time arts education. These formal music schools reside outside general education as a form of additional (voluntary) education for children and adults. They offer instrument tuition, solfège and ensemble playing (Stijnen, Nijs & Van Peteghem, 2022). Despite the strong growth of these formal music schools, the number of students reached is still on the low side. In 2020–2021, approximately 16 % of Flemish youth registered in music schools (De Baets & Vanvolsem, 2021).

Concerning the cross-disciplinary character of many participatory music projects, it is remarkable that the almost-natural link between 'arts' and 'arts education' is hardly developed in this field. The analysis by Anne Bamford (2007) of the Flemish arts education critiqued that children with backgrounds with a lower socio-economic status and with non-Western cultural roots are hardly reached by the so-called music schools (part-time music education), and that this unexplored link with arts education is even more remarkable. There are many reasons for the lack of inclusion in music education in Flanders but one of them certainly has to do with the principles of formal learning to which schools adhere (Wright, 2015). In order to address this problem, it is necessary to reflect on pedagogical choices and working methods. In this respect, participatory music projects often demonstrate what a more inclusive music education could look like, modelling alternative ways of learning, teaching and creating music with highly diverse groups. Recently, a new Decree for part-time music education in Flanders (Flemish Government, 2018) shows some changes in this direction, stimulating group musicianship, creative musicianship and collaborations between music schools and cultural partners in local neighbourhoods. As such, collaborations between participatory music projects and music schools are gradually emerging. For many children, general education is the only place where they encounter art, music and culture (Verneert, 2021). Conversely, as every child takes music classes in general education – and not at all by the part-time music schools – we think it is important to reflect on this question: what can music education in schools learn from participatory music projects?

Musical Improvisation

Musical improvisation has great potential in achieving the above-mentioned competencies in general education. For many scholars, improvisation has become an important part of music education & music performance, and is seen as a feature of most musical practices (Beegle, 2010; Burnard, 2002; Chandler, 2018; Kanellopoulos & Wright, 2012). In a review of the literature, Larsson and Georgii-Hemming (2019) show that there are still two distinct conceptualizations of improvisation that go back to what Bailey (1992) described as *idiomatic* and *non-idiomatic* improvisation. These conceptualizations can be seen as

a continuum, where 'idiomatic' improvisation is more structured, with a focus on individual mastery and control. In most learning environments, this view on improvisation is seen as a skill that is acquired through a number of sequential steps within a strict framework of traditional western musical parameters (tonality, harmony, melody, structure) (Siljamäki & Kanellopoulos, 2019; Huovinen, Tenkanen & Kuusinen, 2011). Idiomatic improvisation is often associated with (traditional) jazz music and jazz learning. In non-idiomatic or free improvisation, the focus is more on the exploratory process, experimentation and social interaction (Hickey, 2009; MacDonald, Wilson & Miell, 2012). In learning environments and performances, emphasis is placed on concepts such as imagination, collective interventions, the power of silence, improper use of instruments and dynamics (Corbett, 2016; Nachmanovitch, 1990).

In our opinion, musical improvisation might benefit from a perspective that goes beyond a strict polarization between *free* and *structured*. More and more improvisation is seen as a contemporary musical practice that goes far beyond jazz music and which is situated "within wider cultural, educational and political contexts, viewing improvisation as a creative process that can facilitate group communication and personal growth" (MacDonald et al., 2011, p. 245). In their literature review, Larsson and Georgii-Hemming (2019) conclude that "improvisation generally is fairly neglected in general music education. It seems especially difficult to accomplish activities where improvisation is treated as an end in itself, in contrast to benefitting specific knowledge and skills" (p. 64). The recent demand for more open, innovative and creative approaches to instruction in general music education in Belgium and internationally (Wright, 2019) offers a potential way to a more inclusive and egalitarian form of music making. Improvisation – as a process which can facilitate creativity and collaboration – needs to prioritize experimentation and freedom above the idiomatic expectations of Western art music (Hickey, 2009). The use of free improvisation in the classroom can lead to positive social outcomes and learning experiences, such as risk-taking, exploration, agency and participation (Higgins & Mantie, 2013; Edmund & Keller, 2020; Hickey, 2009; Sawyer, 2011) as well as the development of abilities for thinking *out-of-the-box* and adaptation to our changing society (Biasutti, 2017).

Research Studies

Next, we address the question of which teaching strategies facilitators employ to make (free improvised) music with social and musical diverse groups, and how this can be used in general education. In order to do so, we briefly present the outcomes of two studies. Study 1 looks at the role of the facilitators in a participatory music project with free improvisation. Study 2 looks at the lived experience of students and teachers in general education with free improvisation in the classroom.

Study 1: The Artistic-Pedagogical Strategies of the Facilitators in a Participatory Music Project Using Free Improvisation.

In our study we looked at the role of the facilitators in a participatory music project, The Ostend Street Orkestra (TOSO), a project by kleinVerhaal vzw, an inclusive, grassroots orchestra strongly rooted in local community of Ostend – a small city on the sea coast in Flanders. KleinVerhaal is one of the pioneering social-artistic organisations that have existed since the '90's in Flanders; they have a strong social commitment to the people and the neigbourhoods they work in. TOSO work with homeless people and everyone else who wants to join, which results in a very diverse group of musicians, from those without any formal musical education to semi-professional musicians (n = 25). TOSO shows how musical encounters can give resilience and hope to a highly diverse mix of people; it plays an exemplary role in integrating musicians from very different backgrounds, both musically and socially (Verneert et. al, 2021). The orchestra is led by three coaches who simultaneously use free improvisation as a collective process of making music. Coach 1(C1) is a trumpet player and composer with a background in free improvisation, Coach 2 (C2) is a jazz-singer with a degree in social sciences, and Coach 3 (C3) is a drummer with a lot of experience in free improvisation. Data collection included transcripts from (in-depth) semi-structured interviews in 2017 and 2021 with the three TOSO coaches and video stimulated recall, when small fragments of video recorded rehearsals were discussed with the coaches. The interview data was analysed following a grounded theory approach. After a close reading, the data was analysed in ATLAS.ti using an open coding. A second coding, looking for the emergence of major themes, was performed by two researchers separately, allowing for more inter-rater reliability. Comparison between the data of the two researchers led to the alignment of seven themes (Fig. 1) that were relevant for the purpose of this study. Next, we present the results of Study 1.

Inclusion as Pedagogical Foundation

Pedagogical foundation refers to the worldviews, beliefs, perspectives, and biases about teaching and learning that underpin our specific educational practices. These values and beliefs affect the way the coaches carry out their work and are the basis upon which to evaluate and improve its effectiveness. These pedagogical values may play a crucial role, not only in enhancing a *sense of belonging*, but also in facilitating the musical process and outcomes. Many of the activities are explicitly described as all-inclusive: everyone is welcome to participate. Inclusion is a pedagogical foundation, a mindset to start-out with, having implications for the method of working, rather than something to aspire to while all the rest remains untouched.

Taking inclusion as a pedagogical foundation reflects on the artistic-pedagogical choices the coaches make. *How exactly* the coaches lead the group and the creation process is inspired by this pedagogical foundation, as well as the position they take. The last quote

indicates that the coach feels that he changed himself, and actually allowing this change to happen is a crucial aspect of an 'inclusion' mindset. The coaches position themselves here as co-practitioners rather than teachers.

> *'Adjusting your own prejudices as a coach rather than looking at people from these prejudices.'* (C1)

> *'One of the most beautiful projects for me, one of the hardest but the most sincere. It changed me.'* (C2)

Artistic-Pedagogical Strategies

The artistic-pedagogical strategies used by the coaches are, on the one hand informed by the needs of the participants; on the other hand, they stem from the coaches' pedagogical values and musical training. Five artistic-pedagogical strategies emerged from the data:

Re-thinking musical parameters is used as a strategy for initiating and sustaining the musical process. Coaches express the need to move beyond general musical parameters (e.g. structure, tempo, tonality), as well as the importance of accepting 'mistakes' and 'chaos' as part of the artistic process.

> *'The liberation from the idea that you have to abide by certain rules, creates an explosion of energy.'* (C3)

> *'Artistic approach (!), don't aim for perfection in terms of technique, standards and other fixed rules.'* (C1)

Embodied Interaction refers to the frequent use of non-verbal cues, dancing while playing and facial expressions that ensuring the musicians were encouraged and that an energetic and positive atmosphere was created during the music making.

> *'We don't stop the music, creating a flow in the group, looking at them, by moving and dancing, the groove gets better, and they see I'm enthusiastic.'* (C2)

Personal musical knowledge refers to the coaches' statements concerning their individual techniques they could use on the spot, derived from their personal experience as musicians and teachers. This personal musical knowledge is the type of musical expertise that makes each coach 'unique', in the sense that it may consist of techniques they have mastered very well and can apply easily, or it may consist of local stories they know or a dialect they speak, which allows for a bond with the group.

> *'I try to trigger them, using a few notes end expanding that, or I start from a story they know.'* (C2)

Co-coaching means that in TOSO three coaches worked simultaneously with the orchestra. This is a very specific strategy applied in this participatory music project, but for the coaches

it was an essential part of the way they worked. For the coaches, it meant that they learnt from each other, and that – as well as being teachers – they allowed themselves to search together for the best way to work with the group.

> *'We don't always agree but we learn from each other, we seek and learn also.'* (C1)
>
> *'Working together as teachers strengthens the process.'* (C3)

Collaboration, as found in other similar studies (Schiavio et. al, 2019), refers to authentic collaboration between facilitators and participants. The starting point was often an idea from the participants:

> *'Start from their input, to find their qualities. Don't be a conductor, be yourself and play with them.'* (C2)

Ideology of Learning

The ideology of learning refers to the type of learning that is put into practice at TOSO, resulting from the interaction between the pedagogical-artistic strategies. We refer to this type of learning as an 'ideology', because the type of learning that is put into practice implicitly contains a worldview: it is value-loaded, deals with the power aspect in the pedagogical relation and implies beliefs about social justice in the broader social context and how, consequently, learning in pedagogical settings should be understood and practiced if it wants to contribute to these beliefs of social justice.

In the TOSO project, learning takes place at the level of experience; it is situated in the moment of making music together and is a two-directional process: the participants and the coaches are learning at the same time. The type of learning is 'free', in the sense that what exactly will be learned is not clear before the process of making music starts. It is process-driven learning, and making music together is the process that defines what the learning outcomes will be, for both participants and coaches.

> *"No 'drill', no 'boxes', no fixed formats. There is a freedom to question everything"* (C1)
>
> *"Music is used as a medium instead of music as a result"* (C3)

To a great extent, this ideology of learning relates to critical pedagogical frameworks, that also thematize the dialogical way of learning (Freire, 1972) and the importance of structuring pedagogical relations with the awareness of how they relate to the real world (outside the classroom) with its power imbalances (Giroux, 1982). The 'process' is central here and, in this sense, this type of learning can also be linked to informal learning as defined by Costes-Onishi (2016, p. 2): "there is a focus on learning through music making rather than learning how to play music". Also, because an ideology of learning refers to much more

than learning alone, a link can also be seen with what Coté, Day and de Peuter (2007) called an utopian pedagogy, an "ethos of experimentation that is oriented toward carving out spaces for resistance and reconstruction in the here and now" (Costes-Onishi, 2016, p. 317)

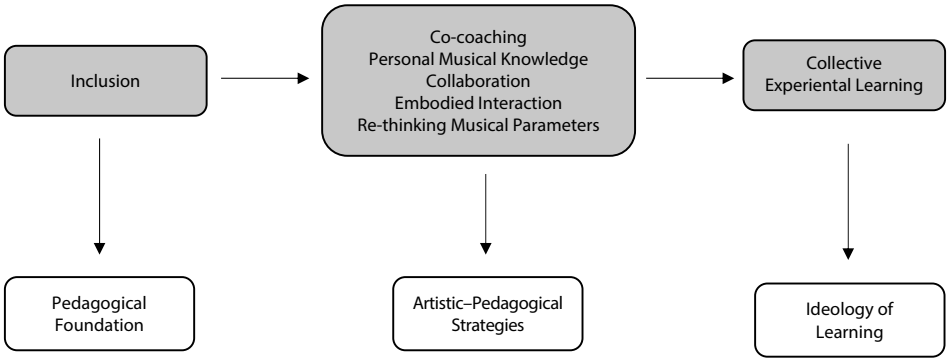

Fig. 1: Themes, resulting from our analysis of the data

Study 2: The Lived Experience of Students in General Education with Collective Free Improvisation.

As stated earlier, we believe that the educational-artistic approach used in the TOSO project can enrich general music education. What are the experiences of students and teachers in general education with free improvisation and the artistic-pedagogical strategies used in a CM project? We discuss the results of a research study into the lived experience of students in general education with a lesson in collective free improvisation (Verneert & Verbeeck, 2022). In preparation, a short explanatory video was made to brief the teachers, explain the artistic-pedagogical strategies we found in the TOSO study and clarify collective free improvisation.

1282 first grade students in secondary general education participated in our study. A lesson sheet about collective free improvisation was administered by 14 music teachers in 69 classes (Verneert & Verbeeck, 2022). The lesson design is based on the principles of *constraint-led pedagogy* (Bremmer & Nijs, 2020) and refers to the constraints imposed on the learners or the learning content. In particular, the lesson sheet "Making a lot of weird noise" (Verneert & Verbeeck, 2022) was written out in detail. It outlines the class situation, the material, the lesson planning and possible instructions for the teacher. In preparation, a short explanatory video was made to brief teachers and clarify the set-up and pedagogical strategies. The musical process starts by freely and collectively experimenting and improvising around a text or painting. Single musical parameters are then introduced and used as *constraints* for the collective free improvisation such as improvising with a fixed rhythm, the use of dynamics and alternating between individual-collective playing.

The lived experience of the students was measured using a Dutch version of the Flow State Scale for Occupational Tasks (Yoshida, Asakawa, Yamauchi, Sakuraba, Sawamura, Murakami & Sakai, 2013). The scale reflects the (individual) degree of flow on three dimensions: Sense of Control (e.g., I was aware of how well I was performing the exercise), Absorption by Concentration (e.g., I was completely absorbed in the exercise) and Potential Emotional Experience (e.g., the exercise was very enjoyable). Lessons were audio and video recorded. Additionally, teachers participating in the study were asked about their views, using an online survey with seven open-ended questions. We believe that the data between the classes are comparable, due to the large sample of participants and the fact that they are all in the same educational system. Of course, the demographic differences and the personality of the teachers will play a role. This is a limitation of the study. Conversely, we deemed it valid for an exploratory study, as our research was not set up as an experimental design.

The results show positive results both for the students involved and for the teachers. Overall scores on the three dimensions of the flow scale averaged greater than or equal to 5 (based on a 7-point Likert scale). Little difference is seen among the three dimensions. We found no difference in flow perception between the group of students who play an instrument and those who do not. Although we expected that the students who already play an instrument would score higher, this is not the case. This shows that it is suitable to carry out this work model with instrumentalists as well as non-instrumentalists and that playing an instrument has no influence on the students' flow perception. In our opinion, this means that this form of work is suitable for use in general education where there will always be a mixed group of pupils who play an instrument and follow music lessons and those who do not. We can say that working with free improvisation allows a personal musical expression, regardless of the level of technical and musical skills.

The survey for teachers showed a very positive picture. The group of teachers is relatively small (n = 14) and voluntarily chose to participate in this research. We can therefore assume that this group already had a positive attitude towards the research and the working method (collective free improvisation). Nevertheless, the results are important. This is a group of experienced teachers with a classical training. Improvisation – and certainly collective free improvisation – was a new experience for most of them. The observation that all teachers involved in the study would continue to use this form of work in the future, and experiment themselves, shows that it was an enjoyable and positive experience for them.

How Can this Further Inspire Music Education in Schools?

The artistic-pedagogical strategies we found in our participatory music project can inspire music teachers by providing a hands-on and experiential approach to learning, and provide opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation; this allows music teachers to develop their own teaching style and methods (Tab. 1). The use of collective free improvisation allows teachers to observe and participate in the creative process, which can give them new ideas and techniques to use in their own classrooms.

In general, participatory music projects can also provide opportunities for ongoing professional development, as teachers can continue to reflect on their own practice. It can also expose teachers to different cultural and community music practices and help them understand the importance of music as a tool for social change and empowerment.

1) expanding repertoire: make the curriculum more flexible and inclusive by including a variety of musical styles and genres, both in general schools and in music schools; letting students to bring their own music in the classroom (especially important for popular and traditional music).

2) enhancing intercultural competences of students and teachers by learning from other cultures (who is in my classroom and what can we learn from his/her music about his/her culture?); inviting local musicians from various cultural and musical backgrounds as guest-experts to share their music in classrooms.

3) learning by ear/aural learning: within the music school context it is important that students and teachers experience both approaches – aural learning and learning by reading sheet music – and to acknowledge how can they use them as complementary approaches.

4) ensemble-based teaching and learning: putting more focus on ensembles, both in general education classrooms, as well as in music schools; fostering peer to peer learning and peer to peer leadership within the ensembles; collaborative facilitation of the ensemble (more than one conductor, co-coaching); moving from classical conducting to the techniques such as *soundpainting* and *rhythm with signs*.

5) developing improvisational skills: improvising embodies the exploration of different sounds, and experimenting with rhythmical, melodic and harmonic material. Through playing, discovering and engaging in collective play, improvisational skills will improve.

6) exploring new possibilities of playing your instrument and *new vocal techniques*

7) embodied interaction: implementing dance & movement in teaching and learning traditional music (useful especially for introducing rhythm and meter both in general and music schools).

8) teacher training and professional development: introducing music teachers to the artistic-pedagogical strategies used in participatory music projects; making special trainings for teachers to present them pedagogical principles used in TOSO, so that they can use them in classrooms.

Tab. 1: Inspiration list for developing teaching styles and methods towards an experiental approach

Conclusion

In recent years, improvisation has been increasingly used and practised in music education (formal and non-formal). Improvisation has become an important educational tool to promote musical learning without hindering the spontaneity of the students. Working with free collective improvisation is suitable for music lessons within general education, on account of its inclusive and democratic nature. What can be learned from the artistic-pedagogical strategies in a participatory music project such as TOSO is that there is the possibility for learners and music teachers to go beyond the well-known pedagogical practices established in the general music education system and create bridges between formal and non-formal learning contexts. In that sense, they can create a diverse music education landscape, focusing more attention on the diversity of groups of learners and how to work with this diversity in an inclusive way.

Collective free improvisation has the potential to strengthen inclusive musical and social interaction in the classroom and thus lead to a comprehensive and meaningful music education that nurtures children's creativity. Playing together interactively and collectively can lead to a higher sense of control over what you are doing, enjoyment, and concentration. We hope that teachers will look at improvisation as a way to establish interaction and musical communication and activate musical imagination. After all, it is not about whether something is right or wrong, it is an "arena without right or wrong answers" (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013, p. 265). It is about establishing a musical dialogue together. We believe that, in an increasingly result driven general school system, the use of collective free improvisation and pedagogical strategies from participatory music projects can play a role in balancing structure and freedom, work and play, individual and social.

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