MONOGRAPH

Analysis of an intergenerational music education project in initial teacher training: a case study

Análisis de un proyecto de educación musical intergeneracional en la formación inicial del profesorado: un estudio de caso

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Abstract

This article analyses the experience of an intergenerational music education project aimed at a group of dependent elderly people, with the participation of primary school pupils and led by a group of university students, future music teachers. Numerous studies reveal the positive impact of music on physical, cognitive, and emotional abilities in old age. This is a stage of life in which an increasing percentage of the population find themselves in a situation of vulnerability and social exclusion. Employing qualitative methodology, a triangulation of sources has been carried out through the use of various data collection techniques and instruments: logs, interviews, a research diary, and document analysis. The results reveal that the project, through the mediation of music, has favoured the elderly participants' (re)cognition, an improvement in their well-being and their social inclusion as a group. It has also fostered the emergence of civic values in children and preservice teachers, elements necessary for a fairer and more egalitarian society. Finally, the encounter between generations made it possible to create a space for dialogue, encounter, and community participation.

Keywords: Intergenerational Programs; Music Education; Elderly; Preservice Teachers.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la experiencia de un proyecto de educación musical intergeneracional destinado a un grupo de personas mayores dependientes, donde participa alumnado de Educación Primaria, y dirigido por un grupo de estudiantado universitario, futuros maestros y futuras maestras de Música. Numerosos estudios revelan el impacto positivo de la música en las capacidades físicas, cognitivas y emocionales en la etapa de la vejez. Una etapa donde cada vez se concentra un mayor porcentaje de población en situación de vulnerabilidad y exclusión social. A través de una metodología cualitativa, se ha realizado una triangulación de fuentes mediante el empleo de diversas técnicas e instrumentos de recogida de datos: bitácoras, entrevistas, diario de investigación y análisis de documentos. Los resultados revelan que el proyecto, a través de la mediación de la música, ha favorecido el (re)conocimiento de las personas mayores, la mejora de su bienestar y su inclusión social como colectivo. También ha permitido aflorar valores cívicos en los niños y las niñas y en docentes en formación, necesarios para una sociedad más justa e igualitaria. Finalmente, el encuentro entre generaciones ha posibilitado la creación de un espacio para el diálogo, el encuentro y la participación comunitaria.

Palabras claves: Programas intergeneracionales; educación musical; personas mayores; formación del profesorado.

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1. Introduction

The population of the European Union (EU) is undergoing a considerable demographic aging over the coming decades. The age pyramid is being inverted by consistently low birth rates and increasing life expectancy. Forecasts indicate that the percentage of people aged 80 and over in the EU population will multiply by a factor of 2.5 between 2019 and 2100, going from 5.8% to 14.6% (Eurostat, 2021a). The population aged 65 and over, which currently makes up 20.1% of the total population in Spain, will reach a peak of 30.4% around 2050 (INE, 2022). Consequently, the proportion of elderly people in the total population will increase significantly over coming decades. The forecast for this growth highlights the importance of active and healthy aging to ensure that people live longer in good health and can continue to live independently (Eurostat, 2021b). When life expectancy goes beyond 65 years of age, a higher number of the elderly live alone, isolated or suffering from depression (Cabañero-Martínez, *et al.*, 2007).

Numerous studies confirm the benefits that music provides to the cognitive, physical, affective-emotional, and social spheres of human beings in their development process (Hallam, & Creech, 2010, 2016). Of all life's phases, old age is the least studied in this respect despite the fact that music can be a source of social cohesion, pleasure, personal development, self-regard, positive health and empowerment (Cohen, 2009; Cohen, *et al.*, 2006; Southcott, 2009; Taylor, & Hallam, 2008). Active participation in group musical activities can offer this age group numerous benefits in terms of memory and attention (Creech, *et al.*, 2013a; Perkins, & Williamon, 2014) as well as linguistic skills (Halam, 2017), among others. At the psychological level it can particularly improve their independence, vitality, empowerment, resilience, and feelings of fulfilment and validation (Chené, & Sigouin, 1995; Sixsmith, & Gibson, 2007), as well as combating loneliness, isolation, and depression (Creech, *et al.*, 2013a; Clift, *et al.*, 2010; Daykin, *et al.,* 2018; Varvarigou, *et al*., 2012), favouring a more positive and pleasant mindset (MacDonald, 2013). On a physical (Clift, *et al.*, 2010; Skingley, & Bungay, 2010; Varvarigou, *et al.*, 2012) and social level benefits derive from the interaction that collective music involves (Costa, & Ockelford, 2018; Tymoszuk *et al.*, 2020), improving cultural identity (Joseph, 2009) and interpersonal relationships (Paolantonio, *et al*., 2023). Staying active is of the utmost importance during aging, carrying out activities and having routines that ensure psychological, cognitive, and physical well-being (WHO, 2002; Rowe, & Kahn 1997). Musical activities can provide learning opportunities and novel elements capable of improving the quality of life and well-being in older people (Creech, *et al*., 2013a; Lo, 2015; Rohwer, & Coffman, 2006; Hallam, & Creech, 2016). Thus, aging can be slowed (Hays, & Minichiello, 2005), be both positive and productive (Anetzberger, 2002; King, *et al.*, 2016), and be lived with dignity and independence (Hallam, *et al.*, 2014).

However, rather than seeing the elderly as being merely dependent, the later stages of life could be thought of as a time for developing interdependence, as they can be an enriching resource of knowledge and skills that can be developed in intergenerational exchanges (Findsen, 2005), such encounters could, through the mediation of music, benefit both the old and the young. Such encounters could improve the well-being and quality of life of the former (Creech, *et al*., 2014), by providing them with pleasure, joy, relief, and an escape from feelings of isolation and depression associated with these ages (Brownie, *et al*., 2014; Ellis, & Rawson, 2015). For the latter, when it comes to future music teachers, an opportunity is offered to both learn and hone their professional skills, with the consequent positive effects on employability (Paolantonio, *et*

al., 2023). Furthermore, as it involves participation in significant community initiatives, it can promote transformative learning in university students (Berbel Gómez, *et al*., 2020; Perkins *et al*., 2015), in terms of identity, interpersonal relationships and construction of civic and social citizenship (Paolantonio, *et al*., 2023), added to intercultural understanding and intergenerational solidarity (Corrigan, *et al*., 2013). There are numerous international examples in universities that approach music education from a socio-community perspective, by providing students with opportunities to develop their civic and social skills (Feen-Calligan, & Matthews, 2016; Bartolome, 2013; Burton, & Reynolds, 2009). There have also been examples in Spain (Chiva-Bartoll, *et al.*, 2019; Parejo, & Cortón, 2018). Furthermore, when these intergenerational encounters involve not only university students but primary school children as well, the experience allows the latter to participate as citizens and enjoy a new context of relationship with other social actors, especially those with greater vulnerability such as the elderly, developing a common agenda together (Esteban, 2023).

The research presented in this paper seeks to understand how intergenerational music projects can help improve the quality of life of groups of dependent older people. Furthermore, it seeks, firstly, to know how such projects may contribute to the deontological training of university students, future teachers of Musical Education, and secondly, how they contribute to primary school pupils' learning of civic and ethical values. Finally, it proposes to analyse the mediating role of music in the life experience of the participating groups.

2. Methodology

A qualitative paradigm was decided upon for the research, as it is the ideal epistemological approach to both learn about and address the complexity of a reality present in certain behaviours in a holistic and in-depth way (Antwi, & Hamza, 2015; Denzin, & Lincoln, 2008).

2.1. Research design

Given the nature of the study and its objectives/questions, a case study was felt to be the most suitable design. Analysis and interpretation were sought, employing different perspectives and methods, of an "example of action" in its true, proper context (Simons, 2014; Yin, 2009). In line with Stake (1995), this is an instrumental case, developed from an intergenerational musical project, aimed at going deeper hermeneutically into any knowledge gained from the experience by the participating groups. It is, therefore, about evaluating the implications of said project through a detailed description and explanation of the results with a view to making judgments about the reality under study (Pérez Serrano, 2007).

2.2. Context and participants

This study is the result of the research of a project which aims to train future teachers who, in addition to having the appropriate musical and methodological skills (Berrón-Ruiz, & Monreal-Guerrero, 2020), also have the transversal skills, those of a deontological nature, that demonstrate their commitment and involvement in the search for a more just and equal society

(Feen-Calligan, & Matthews, 2016; Westheimer, & Kahne, 2004). The project was developed within the subject of *Didactics of Musical Expression,* part of the 4th year of the degree in Primary Education in the major of Music 1. Following a previous experience (Parejo, & Cortón, 2018), it began in the 2019-20 academic year and continued until 2020-21, when it was suspended in accordance with the restrictive measures imposed by COVID.

This is a Musical Education project that was carried out with two groups of university students from the Primary Education degree (Majoring in Musical Education): the first, composed of 11 men and 21 women, and the second made up of 4 men and 29 women. The project was aimed at a group of 25 elderly people, 8 men and 17 women, aged between 80 and 98, in a situation of dependency, with mild cognitive deficiencies typical of age (loss of memory, attention, verbal comprehension, learning, etc.), living in the same residence (in an urban, charitable setting), who participated on a voluntary basis in both academic years. Also taking part in the project were a group of 14 boys and 11 girls (in the first edition) and 18 boys and 7 girls (the second edition) from the 6th year of Primary at an urban state school. The project used music as a tool to, firstly, promote physical and emotional well-being and help maintain cognitive function in the elderly, as well as assisting their social and community inclusion; and secondly, to develop social, ethical, and democratic values in the group of primary school children and among the group of university students, these values arising as a result of the intergenerational meeting.

2.3 Procedure

The repertoire of musical activities was designed, directed, and implemented by the university students, under the supervision of the two professors responsible for the subject as well as members of the research team, in line with the cognitive, psychological, and motor capabilities of the elderly. The activities took place following previous sessions to meet, familiarize everyone, diagnose, and consider the interests of all participating groups. Each academic year, a total of 8 one-hour sessions of musical activities were organized, coordinated by a group of 5 university students, while the rest of the groups observed and offered support. The activities focused on the three blocks of content present in musical education: listening, musical interpretation, and music —movement— dance, with the aim that the activities, in addition to contributing to the musical enrichment of all participants, fostered awareness and relationships between the various generations (Table 1). Following Morales-Fernández *et al.* (2017), the main musical methodological strategies employed focused on sound exploration and discrimination, imitation (simultaneous/echo), sound games, improvisation-creation, literacy (non-conventional), the creation of graphics, cooperative learning, etc.

Table 1. Programming of musical activities

Content blocks of music education	Description of the contents to be worked on in the activities	Examples of activities
Listening	o Auditory discrimination and recognition of distinctive features of sound	o Domino game with differentiation between several instruments with variations in intensity, duration, and pitch
	o Identification and recognition of a selection of music from different genres	o Musical bingo to identify rock, classical, hip hop, and zarzuela music

	o and styles, and the feelings and emotions evoked	o Creation of a physical artistic work that shows the emotions and feelings generated by different music
	o Evocation and recognition of songs and dances from shared cultural heritage	o Recognition of traditional songs and dances such as *La chica segoviana* or *Jota segoviana*, etc.
	o Active listening to some musical pieces with the differentiation of their parts through a musicogram	o Active listening to Strauss's *Radetzky March*
	o Taste and pleasure in listening to music	o Relaxation through music
Musical interpretation	o Interpretation and vocal creation of songs from one's own and other people's cultural heritage, with or without instrumental accompaniment, to achieve an intergenerational exchange of and dialogue about songs between the elderly, students, and children	o Singing of various songs such as *La tarara*, *Yo soy aquel* (Raphael), *La, la, la* (Massiel), *Malamente* (Rosalía) with the creation of new versions accompanied by small traditional percussion instruments (scrapers, tambourines, wooden spoons, reed flutes, a pestle and mortar, nutshells, bones, cowbells...)
	o Creation and/or repetition of basic rhythms with body percussion and/or minor percussion instruments	o "Orchestra Conductor" game with the creation of basic rhythms with body percussion (clapping, thigh-slapping, and whistling) o Collective improvisation with body percussion of different types
	o Making of instruments from odds and ends	o Instrument-building workshop (cotidiáfonos[3])
	o Collective improvisation	o Collective improvisation game with the instruments made and everyday objects (metal and wooden spoons and forks, combs, liqueur bottles, glasses, water flutes, whistles, drinking straws, etc.)
Music, movement, and dance	o Simple body movements, spontaneous or not, with or without displacement, depending on the motor functions of the elderly and primary students	o Musical puppet game where the participants make various movements in response to the instrument played
	o Performance of traditional and non-traditional dances	o Mirror image game in pairs with movements typical of the jota, hip-hop, waltz, sevillanas...
	o Preparation and performance of dialogues, songs, movement, and dances	o Musical theatre with black light

2.4. Techniques and instruments for data collection

The aim of this study is to evaluate the subjective traits of the groups of participating people, their experience, and their interactions (Flick, 2018; Guba, & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, the following data collection techniques and instruments were used during the two academic years studied:

- Logs of the 55 university students: written reflections in which they analyse individually their experiences in the sessions. Length: 2,500 words. Total number of documents: 440. Structure of the topics derived from the musical activities in the project: a) development of the musicality of primary school pupils; b) physical,

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[3] A "cotidiáfono" is a musical instrument made from typical household objects, for example, a yogurt carton with seeds inside.

cognitive, socio-emotional improvement, and well-being of the elderly; c) professional and deontological development —civic and social— of future Musical Education teachers.

• Essay-writing by the 50 children in the 6th year of primary schooling: a written piece where they reflect individually on their participation in the sessions. Length: 500 words. Total number of documents: 200. Structure of the topics arising from the musical activities in the project: a) satisfaction with the musical activities; b) observed social, ethical, and civic values; and c) learning acquired from experience with the elderly and university students.

• Semi-structured interviews with the elderly: each academic year and at the end of the project. Total number: 50. The topics revolved around their satisfaction with the musical activities offered, their relationship with the university students and primary pupils and, finally, the well-being experienced.

• Research Journal: employing an open format, this document presented the technical procedures for data collection, an assessment of the sessions programmed and carried out, and, finally, a follow-up of the ethical criteria, following the stipulations of the *American Educational Research Association* in February 2011 and, particularly, the case study design proposed by Simons (1989).

• Didactic designs: technical documents of the project's sessions and musical activities.

Triangulation of the research was carried out by means of several sources, techniques, and participants, guaranteeing, through confirmation of the data, the reliability and validity of the information (Creswell, 2011). The units of analysis were selected and subsequently associated with the emerging categories (Figure 1), with the support of Atlas.ti software (version 23).
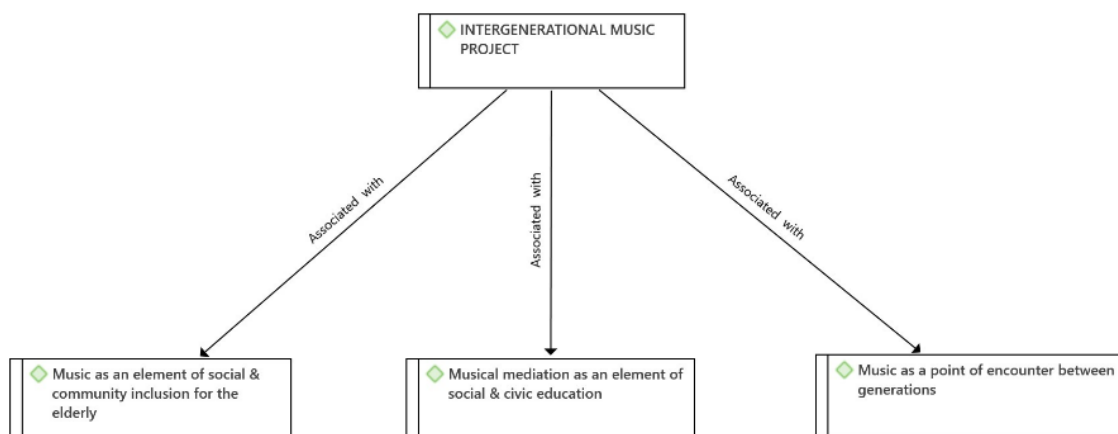

Figure 1. Tree of analysis categories

Table 2 shows the coding system used. To carry out this research, informed consent was obtained from all the participants, adapted to each group, always ensuring the confidentiality of the data and origin of the sources (Sales, & Folkman, 2000).

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Table 2. Example of coding of units of analysis

Document #	# of citation in document	Subject	Academic year
7	5	Teachers (P 1) *	18-19**

* Teachers [P1- P2]; university students [U2-U58]; primary schoolers [A59-A83]; elderly people [M84-M103].
**19-20.

3. Results

3.1. Music as an element of social and community inclusion of the elderly

Improving the quality of life and the well-being of elderly people, in addition to their inclusion, is essential for the development of a more equitable and cohesive society. This was the reasoning behind the work done to improve their cognitive and physical well-being: "in many of the sessions we have influenced auditory memory, attention, concentration, language, general coordination and certain motor skills, through various programmed musical activities such as songs and dances" (17:5, in U4, 18-19)[4]. All of this with the purpose of minimizing, as far as possible, the cognitive and physical deterioration of the group. On a psychological level, the starting point was the elderly participants' erroneous and pessimistic initial feelings, such as: "I don't know how to sing anymore, but I used to" (265:3, in M86, 18-19), or: "I like hearing others sing, but I've never sung because I could never hold a tune, although when I was young, I hummed when I was alone" (266:5, in M91, 18-19), "… I'm no longer any good for this or for anything else." (270:7, in M91, 19-20). Moreover, the primary school pupils and university students also recognize their prejudices towards this group: "I thought that old people didn't know how to do anything" (243:3, in A65, 19-20), "although people say that they are useless, it doesn't matter to me, I have a great time with them, singing and playing..." (247:2, in A69, 19-20). "At first, the design of the sessions was very difficult because the pensioners presented great diversity and varying degrees of cognitive and motor abilities, and even of self-confidence" (86:7, in U21, 18-19). However, self-esteem, self-concept and feelings of social affirmation were strengthened after the progressive overcoming of many of these initial limitations: "we have made them see that we were all capable of remembering, singing and drumming" (26:3, in U6, 18-19) or "I was surprised to see that the oldies knew a lot of songs and even some dances" (25:7, in A78, 19-20). However, as one of the university students said:

> After finishing the sessions with the old people, they told me they had enjoyed it, they had been excited and had learned a lot, but not only about music but also to be more positive about themselves, believing they could achieve what they set out to do, despite some limitations (195:9, in U48, 19-20).

An atmosphere of warmth, trust and affection came about through music. Moreover, emotions and attitudes emerged in the participating group of elderly people, such as happiness, joy, positivity, satisfaction, and enjoyment. Feelings capable of combating negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, social exclusion, loneliness, and isolation. "Music brightens our days, it's good for the heart and soul" (278:5, in M99, 18-19), "having young people around makes us happy" (273:6, in M94, 18-19), "listening to music gives me life, it encourages me" (275:2, in M96, 19-20). The children could see it too: "they had as much fun singing with us as we did with them" (250:4, in A72, 19-20), "all the old people treated us like our own grandparents do, and we

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[4] 17 refers to the document number; 5 to the number of the citation in the document; in U4 to university student number 4; 18-19 academic year.

love them too" (275:5, in A77, 19-20), "what I liked most about the whole thing was the songs they sang to us, but, above all, how happy they were to have us close." (240:3, in A62, 19-20), "the old people enjoy it because we help them so that they aren't alone and don't feel lonely" (245:5, in A67, 19-20), because "loneliness is very sad" (250: 3, in A72, 19-20), "when you give them a smile and talk to them, you have fun, they have fun and we have fun together" (252:1, in A74, 19-20). This was also perceived by the university students and the teaching staff-researchers: "seeing how the elderly are really entertained, socializing and enjoying themselves is as positive for them as it is for us" (46:3, in U11, 18-19).

On a social level, the socio-community integration of the elderly has benefited from the development of cooperative musical activities that required respect, listening and help from all participants (2:7, in P2, 19-20). Shared spaces were created able to promote interpersonal relationships between the elderly themselves: "today I spoke with one resident of the home for the first time thanks to the young woman (student)" (268:3, in M89, 18 -19), the same occurred between the pensioners and the university students, the primary schoolers, and even the teachers-researchers.

> With the musical instrument-making activity, I consider that, along with the development of fine motor skills, the level of attention and the development of creativity, the fact of doing it in pairs, each pensioner with a child, caused interpersonal relationships to be established. in a pleasant and trusting environment. This generated in everyone a feeling of belonging to the group, since everyone participated, taking part to the best of their ability, and improving the self-esteem of the dependent elderly people (199:5, in U49, 19-20).

3.2. Musical mediation as an element of social and civic education

Music can also be a tool of great value in developing the social and civic citizenship of the elderly, university students and primary education students. All the musical sessions were designed to enhance the development of social responsibility in university students, as well as in the young children, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly through the commitment of time, dedication, and effort (4:7, in P1, 19-20). "I really like these young people coming here because they listen to me carefully when I tell them about my life, when I tell them what life was like when I was young like them (…). I feel loved." (270:3, in M91, 18-19). "Now I understand better the lives of our pensioners, we have to care for them, respect them and give them loads of love" (238:3, in A60, 19-20). The project has fostered the development of values such as respect, empathy, listening, social recognition, dignity, patience, and social inclusion. Fundamental values, all of them, for the creation of social and ethical citizenship. This being something essential for a future teacher, as a trainer of citizens, even above academic training. "Music has made it easier for me to acquire values that every teacher should have, such as respect, empathy, listening, and social inclusion, principles that are a far higher priority than the contents of the curriculum" (96:4, in U23, 18-19).

> We've been able to acquire certain values we had forgotten and improve our social and civic commitment, by getting to know the old people and treating them with respect and affection; since they are at an age where loneliness prevails and they need to be listened to and cared for, to exchange experiences, stories, and songs among the entire group... Once again, they have shown me that they are role models. I hope the children left with the same feeling (76:4, in U18,18-19).

> Together we've built a wonderful group because we all got along so well. They've made us see things that we didn't know through their stories, and we've shared experiences from the old days and now. I'd have liked to

spend more time with them, to know how I'll feel when I'm like them. This is how we should all work together, helping older people, because that way, we'll get that help tomorrow too (256:5, in A78, 19-20).

Music has been an element of mediation of important values in the participants: "It's helped me to overcome my fears and realize that I'm truly capable of overcoming anything when I set my mind to it" (95:7, in U23, 18-19). Particularly, collective musical participation has been key in the shaping of an "inclusive citizenship", given that it has fostered the generation of fundamental life skills for 21st century teachers: "music is present throughout our lives, it accompanies us from beginning to end and provides everybody with fundamental values, learning, and strategies for comprehensive development, not just educational" (99:6, in U24, 18-19). "Music gives us sensitivity and enrichment as social beings, and as active and committed citizens" (123:6, in U30, 19-20). "Today we have seen clear gestures of empathy and acceptance with the elderly, showing them understanding, affection and active listening, essential skills as future teachers and as socially committed citizens" (7:4, in P2, 19-20).

> We must learn to build a better society. Between young people, adults... It doesn't matter how old we are, but we all need to help each other and collaborate to become a "big family." We need to be supportive, respectful, and kind, especially, with the elderly" (255:3, in A77, 19-20). Singing together with them makes us feel that we all have something in common (237:4, in A59, 19-20).

3.3. Music as a point of encounter between generations

The intergenerational encounter has been a space for learning, development, and well-being for all those involved, the elderly, the primary schoolers, and the future teachers. In the case of the children, they have changed their minds about what the elderly "are good for": "At first I thought it'd be boring, that the old people wouldn't know how to do anything, but in the end, they did everything, we even had fun together" (257:3, in A79, 19-20). It worked both ways around: "The elderly people were surprised at the things that we [the children] knew how to do and what we didn't (…)" (241:1, in A63, 19-20).

> This experience has enriched me personally, the pensioners are very wise, they've been around for a long time and the experience of being at their side is very enriching. You can learn a lot of things by listening to them. What's more, they're eager for us to pay them attention. They're often very lonely, and loneliness is a very sad thing. (…) We'll all be old one day. We mustn't forget that (256:3, in A78, 19-20).

Furthermore, primary students are advocates for a more inclusive society: "We must create a more supportive society, where we all have the hope of putting smiles on other people's faces" (251:5, in A73, 19-20). This is because the elderly are the ones who built the society we live in, and any progress made is down to their effort and commitment. The university students recognize that: "working with the elderly and the kids is something that has given us much more than we could ever have imagined, as people and as teachers" (97:3, in U24, 18-19). The coming together of several generations under the mediation of music made it possible to create a space of equality among the diversity of interests and needs, combating existing social prejudices: "Thanks to this subject, there have been greater feelings of affection and admiration towards the group of elderly people" (28:2, in U6, 18-19), because they are "capable of doing great things if they are motivated and given the necessary help and opportunities" (196:4, in U48, 19-20).

> At the end of the session, the teacher of the 6th grade students told me that one of the children who had participated the most, singing and cooperating with the old people, had serious behavioural problems at school. This has made me reflect and take on some important ideas for my personal and professional life. Firstly, the activities that involve our innermost human part (such as music) are the ones that invite us to bring out the best

in ourselves. Secondly, a student who presents disruptive behaviour should never be considered a "lost cause", a path must always be found for and with him/her, and this is one of the key responsibilities of a "good teacher" (12:2, in U30, 19-20).

The elderly also sees intergenerational encounters as spaces for learning, development, and socio-emotional well-being: "it's very nice to talk to children because I can tell them about my life, and they can tell me about theirs, and… we learn from each other" (272:2, in M93, 18-19). "I've been dreaming of Mondays these last months' so I can see these youngsters who bring so much joy to my life, which is always the same, and I've learned lots of new things" (281:4, in M102, 19-20). "When young people and little children come, they make me very happy because I feel that they're already like family" (274:5, in M95, 19-20). "I love young people coming here. I think it's like having my grandchildren closer, I rarely get a chance to see them" (272:3, in M93, 18-19). For this reason, at the end of the experience they always invite both the university students and the primary students to come back and not to forget them: "come visit us whenever you want, we loved meeting you... Remember us" (264:2, in M85, 19-20).

Music has been presented as a vehicle of connection and communication between the three generations participating in the project, because it facilitates the expression of feelings and emotions, creating a climate of affection, respect and listening to the elderly. It has also become a way to evoke the past: "I've enjoyed music since I was a child (…). Now that I'm older, I've been able to remember and reconnect with my childhood, with my youth, with my loved ones, who I remember so well and I miss so much" (273:4, in M94, 19-20). Moreover, through collective musical participation, the socio-emotional well-being of the group of pensioners has been improved: "We've really enjoyed all the things we've done, especially the songs that we all sang. I loved it!" (255:6, in A77, 19-20).

> I knew the power of music to ease pain, anxiety or stress, depression, or isolation; to improve motor skills, respiratory capacity, and short- or long-term memory. But over these weeks, I've been able to experience and understand even more the value of music as a fundamental tool for social inclusion, above all, with this generational exchange by carrying out activities where music is present with people of different ages (80:3, in U19, 18-19).

> What I'm taking away from this is seeing that music is the best vehicle for connecting with people, the best way to generate environments of calm and harmony. As I've said before, music is magic and every day I use it I learn a new trick. What personally caught my attention was that songs from childhood are the ones that old people remember best, instead of the *pasodobles*, couplets or songs that they learned in their youth. Therefore, music contributed to the development of memory and feelings that were dormant (147:4, in U36, 19-20).

4. Discussion

The WHO recognized in 2002 the need for older people in a situation of dependency or who could not take care of themselves to have the most favourable quality of life possible. Making music in an active and creative group form fulfils that objective. It serves both to improve the cognitive, psychological, and social state generated by collective and emotional music and it generates positive emotions and benefits physical and mental health, as music is a recognized and valued art form (Creech, *et al.*, 2013a).

Participation in musical activities has a positive impact on the brain functions of older people (Merrett, *et al.*, 2013). Costa and Ockelford's studies (2018) reveal that listening to or making music stimulates attention and imagination. If motivated, participants can maintain cognitive function and even learn new skills (Boulton-Lewis, *et al.*, 2006). The elderly

participants in the project under consideration acknowledge having acquired several musical skills (singing, listening, instrumental practice, rhythm, movement...) and non-musical learning (improved self-esteem, cooperative work...), overcoming initial stereotyped approaches about their own abilities.

Creech *et al*. (2013a) and Perkins and Williamon (2014) find that collective singing can improve memory, concentration, communication, attention, etc. It can bring out memories and links of identity with one's personal biography. For example, listening to certain melodies evoked personal memories in the elderly participants in the project. Similarly, music can have a positive impact on linguistic skills (Hallam, 2017), being a complement and not a substitute for language (Cross, 2009). The singing of traditional folk songs particularly, tunes such as *La Chica Segoviana* or *La Tarara*, fostered the linguistic competence of the elderly by working on articulation, breathing, verbal fluency, verbal comprehension, and expression, as well as vocabulary. Furthermore, the physical benefits that music can provide for this group are related to improvements in corporal, endocrinal and immunological condition (Fancourt, *et al.*, 2014; Kang, *et al*., 2018; Livesey, *et al*., 2012).

Musical activity can contribute to enhancing the hedonic and eudemonic aspects of older people's well-being (Giraldez-Hayes, 2022; Hallam, & Creech, 2016; Perkins, *et al*., 2020). Group singing raises levels of happiness, enjoyment, and self-esteem (Creech, *et al*., 2013b; Daykin, *et al*., 2018). At the same time, and regardless of musical abilities and background, it minimizes negative emotions, such as loneliness, depression, anxiety or the feeling of isolation or social exclusion (Costa, & Ockelford, 2018; Escuder-Mollón, 2012; Skingley, & Bungay, 2010), encouraging feelings of positive affection and meaning in life. The results of the project reveal that both the elderly and the university and primary school students experienced a climate of affection and trust where joy and shared pleasure prevailed. Examples of this are found in the performance of musical activities such as musical bingo, singing melodies that all the participants knew such as *La, la, la* or *Yo soy aquel*, something that contributes to slowing the aging process (Hays, & Minichiello, 2005). Thus, ongoing education, mediated by music, can be an effective resource for older people to acquire personal confidence that promotes active, productive, and independent aging (Meeks, & Murrell, 2001; King, *et al*., 2016*)*. Music has also served to improve their socio-community integration, strengthening interpersonal relationships between them thanks to the development of group activities that required the use of communicative competence, as is the case of the instrument (cotidiáfonos) construction workshop, musical theatre with black light, etc.

The musical activities of the project analysed were presented following Elliot's (2013) terms of "social practices", serving as a vehicle for the shaping of artistic citizenship. Empathic feelings arose among the participants as a result of musical interaction during the activities, especially those that required imitation, synchronization and shared affective experiences (Laird, 2015), such as the game "Orchestra Conductor" or "The mirror image", recognition, and evocation of traditional songs and dances, among others. Tolerance and respect were also manifested during the intergenerational musical activities, such as working with popular music that allowed the understanding and acceptance of one's own and other people's values (Muldma, & Kiilu, 2012), as well as an understanding of the differences between the generational groups present (Nethsinghe, 2012). It also meant the university and primary school groups, with the help of the elderly, reconnecting with their common sociocultural heritage, something that coincides

with the research of Dobrota (2014). From cooperative and/or collaborative musical activities, the social skills of the three groups were identified (Di Natale, & Russell, 2015) and, deriving from empathetic understanding between them, greater active listening came about (Rogers, & Farson, 2021), as for example in the active musical listening of the "Radetzky March", in the terms of Wuytack and Boal-Palheiros (2009).

According to Darrow *et al*. (2001), projects such as the one analysed in this paper contribute to overcoming the gap between generations, combating isolation and the disconnection between them. Through music, interpersonal ties and mutual care can be created and, thereby, prejudices about different age groups can be combatted (Kaplan, *et al*., 1998). The attitudes of the primary schoolers towards the elderly and vice versa improved after participating in the project, as we could see in the final musical theatre performance where all the groups involved participated collaboratively in a "family" environment of affection, respect, and trust. Something endorsed in the work of Belgrave (2011) and in the *Art for Ages (A4A)* project, which consists of exploring the experiences and mutual benefits perceived by pensioners residing in old people's homes and by music students, in terms of improved positive emotions, interpersonal relationships and, for the latter, professional development (Paolantonio, *et al.,* 2020, 2023). It is precisely participation in this type of projects which enables future teachers to transform learning (Perkins, *et al*., 2015), learning based on observation, imitation, and modelling, which changes attitudes and encourages solidarity and dialogue between generations (Corrigan, *et al*., 2013; Moinolmolki, & Broughton, 2020).

5. Conclusions

This study, of an exploratory, descriptive, and interpretive nature, has analysed the design and implementation of an intergenerational musical education project involving a group of dependent elderly citizens, a group of future teachers of Musical Education and a group of 6th grade primary school pupils. For the first group, it has been an experience that has helped them maintain their cognitive and motor abilities, while improving their socio-emotional well-being. For the second group, it has meant a practical development of their professional skills, by programming, managing, and assessing musical sessions for two groups of people with diverse interests and needs, while they have worked on a deontological level on values such as empathy, respect, solidarity, commitment, and social recognition for the elderly. And for the third group, in addition to the ethical and civic values previously mentioned, the experience of intergenerational encounters made it possible to overcome stereotypical visions about the elderly, in addition to providing added motivation at school.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge some of the limitations of this research. The results of the pensioners' participation in the activities of vocal creation, rhythm and dance were not as expected, compared to the other musical and collective activities. On the organizational level, the project timetable was largely adapted to suit the availability of the university students and primary school pupils. Another notable aspect is that the participation of these latter two groups in the project was academically conditioned, given that it was the central element of the subjects they were studying, while the pensioners attended the sessions without pressure of any kind. This fact meant that the attendees among the elderly were those who showed a prior predisposition towards music and were in better physical and cognitive condition. Also worthy of

mention is the potential bias of the teaching-research team that, on the one hand, advised the project on a musical and pedagogical level and, on the other hand, applied the instruments of data collection and analysis. An attempt has been made to minimize this bias through the triangulation of several sources, techniques, and opinions.

The findings presented in this work, though done in a reflective and comprehensive manner, must be read with caution whilst bearing in mind the context in which they were obtained, as well as the limitations mentioned above. Looking to the future, we consider it of interest to take a deeper scientific look into this project, incorporating methodological designs of a positivist nature, providing a mixed character of research (Greene, 2007). The aim would be to carry out a psychometric measurement of the impact of musical activities on the abilities and well-being of elderly people, and on the ethical and civic learning of primary and university students, employing validated instruments. Similarly, it would be ideal to expand the project both in number of sessions and to other areas such as rural zones, in addition to the participation of other groups such as elderly people with senile dementia, students of other ages and conservatory students.

As a final coda, we agree with Susan Hallam and Andrea Creech (2016), noting that while music is not the only social activity that has a positive impact on the health and well-being of older people, it appears to have a greater impact than other group activities. Moreover, music opens a new horizon for the construction of a more socially just and inclusive citizenship, especially with the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly.

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