

## Reference # 97

### Topic # 1

#### **The Portuguese system of music education: Teacher training challenges**

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The fact that the study of music in the public educational system in Portugal takes place within three official branches (vocational - at conservatories and music academies -, general - in the public school system -, and professional - at professional schools) is a consequence of an historical process of fragmentation of the conservatory system. This system had a small social impact in terms of numbers of students involved, and its expansion occurred within the broader process of educational democratization during the 1970's. The three most important dates for the ramification of the public system of music education, the dates that contributed to the present configuration of that ramification are: the creation of the *Conservatório Nacional* in Lisbon, in 1835, the introduction of the school subject of *Educação Musical* at the then called *Ciclo Preparatório*, in 1968, and the emergence of the professional schools in 1989. 1835 marks, therefore, the beginning of the *vocational branch* of music teaching as we know it today; 1968 underlines the start of the *general branch* (considering that only then can one find the first official programs for the general school subject of *Educação Musical*, showing musical concerns, goals and objectives); finally, 1989 is the year when the *professional branch* of music education began in Portugal. The designations of "general", "vocational" and "professional" teaching of music can be found in several legislative documents, namely the *decretos-lei* 310/83, 26/89, 344/90 and 70/93.

The existence of this ramification of the Portuguese system of public music education calls, however, for attention and careful evaluation. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to determine, and it is also worth questioning, which educational facts result of governmental intentionality throughout history and which ones might be simply the consequence of successive mistakes or neglect. The study of the phenomenon is needed for the understanding of its meaning, the degree of governmental involvement in its definition and regulation, its advantages and disadvantages, and the possibilities of improvement of the ways in which it has been functioning. Although movement away from a view of music as an educational privilege to the position that music is to be something available to all is clearly manifest in the government's increasingly intricate legislation, when it comes to the schools themselves and their practices, the reality shows different outcomes. This is a fundamental issue, because the identity of the educational branches and of the schools themselves within the broader educational system is at stake.

### ***Questioning the status quo***

The main focus of this study is the understanding of the reasons for the existence of the curricular ramification of public music education. The advantages and disadvantages of its existence, and the ways by which the system can be improved are also important research goals.

The project is built upon a qualitative paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and it consists of a brief historical and legislative study (Blanc, 2005; Dias Costa, 1989; Fischer, 1970), and of an intrinsic case study (Yin, 2003; Feagin *et al.*, 1991; Stake, 1995, 2000) of the phenomenon of

the curricular ramification of music education in Portugal. The latter involves semi-structured interviews (Keeves, 1997; Seidman, 1998; Wodack & Meyer, 2001; Wooffitt, 2005) to twelve music education national specialists. The participants were asked questions concerning teacher training, student training, aptitudes detection and vocational counselling, integrative and specialized teaching of the arts, and curricular goals and contents. All questions were framed by the broader problem of the ramification of the system and also focused on the impact of that ramification on each specific issue at stake in each branch. The interviews were subject to transcription and content analysis procedures in order to identify emergent categories of meaning (Wodack & Meyer, 2001; Wooffitt, 2005). The analysis of the results has allowed for a phenomenological consensus (Husserl, 1959; Denzin, 1989; Gadamer, 1997). That consensus was also confronted and correlated with the brief historical and legislative study (Phelps, 1992), as well as with the literature on the subject.

### ***Origins of the ramification of the music education system***

Hargreaves and North (2001, p. 224) sustain that each society has a certain way of looking at music and of assigning it different functions and values. Although they refer that the ramification of music education in *general* and *specialized* branches exists in many cultures, they also underline that a clear distinction can be made, in those cultures, between the different forms of articulation of the branches and between the different social values attributed to each branch.

These differences can be seen in past or present cultures, and in different regions of the world. A few can serve as an example. The Jewish communities described in the Old Testament (1 Cron. 6: 16-17; 1 Cron. 15: 16, 19-22, 24) appear to have emphasized a highly selective training of musicians for the Temple service. However, the selection was based primarily on family tradition, music teaching being assigned mostly to the Levites. The ancient Greeks, after a period of highly developed music teaching in the public school about 500 a.C., saw a decline of the system. Aristotle actually rejected professional education in the instruments and in performance (Strunk, 1965, pp. 21-22), thus contributing to a surprising new division between music “specialists” and music “amateurs”. After Greece became a province of the Roman Empire in 146 a. C. many of the Greek cultural traditions were absorbed by the Romans, including the idea that instrumental and vocal performances were more suitable activities for slaves than for “free-men” (Mark, 1982, p.58). Music teaching in the Western world during the Middle Ages reflected this division between *musica teorica* and *musica prattica*, the former being more highly regarded than the latter. Under the influence of St. Augustin’s ideas in *Confessions* and *De Musica*, other authors, such as Boetius, contributed to a compartmentalized perspective of music education and activities. In fact, Boetius *De Institutione Musica* was selected as a music manual in many anglo-saxon Universities up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This may be the reason why *musica prattica* was one of the last subjects entering university curricula all over the world, despite the fact that *musica teorica* had been part of those same curricula since the medieval *Quadrivium*. During the Renaissance, with the development of polyphony and of musical notation, music acquired a much broader audience. Nevertheless, the teaching of instrumental music, vocal music or composition remained mostly confined to cathedral schools or to the training of the nobility, whereas *musica teorica* (encompassing theory, history and philosophy) was still seen as more reputable field of knowledge worth of being taught at universities.

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The changes that occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the reformed European churches contributed to a new perspective on music education. Luther defended that the singing of spiritual songs was “not to be hidden from any Christian” (Strunk, 1998, p.83) and that the young should “be trained in music and other proper arts” (idem, p.84). His suggestion of the use of German, instead of Latin, led him to the actual translation of Bible passages, and to their incorporation in the singing of hymns and *chorales* in the *Lateinschulen*. The importance given to music teaching and learning in these schools (vocal and instrumental learning, as well as theoretical) represented an important step ahead in Europe in what the democratization of music education is concerned. It also represented a convergence between the world of music “specialists” and the world of “amateurs”, by enabling more amateurs to become potential specialists. Last but not least, it brought about a new perception on the borders of music theory and music practice. When these religious schools were secularized under municipal government, music teaching was by then well established, especially in Germany (Fenlon, 1980, p.10). The teaching manuals and methods in the municipal schools were the same as the ones that were previously used by the religious schools. Northern Europe was, from then on, the leader of the democratization of music education in the Western world.

Southern Europe developed its own process of democratization of music teaching during the Renaissance. Religious schools, following the tradition of receiving and taking care of orphans and poor children, started new music training programs that could serve as a preparation for a job or for the support of the liturgical services. In Italy, the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Ospedali* (hospitals) converted, during the Renaissance, from orphanages into well structured schools in many cities (Arnold, 1980, p.18). These schools, which served the purpose of “conserving” (*conservare*) the youth became known as *Conservatories*. Conservatories are, therefore, at this time, a democratic extension of the music system of education originating in the cathedral schools.

### ***The ramification of the Portuguese music education system today***

The vocational branch of the Portuguese system of music education begins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the Romantic period, with the creation of the first conservatory. Three centuries after Italy. Curiously enough, this educational branch, which is seen today as “vocational” (therefore selective) emerged then as a mere attempt to expand and democratize music teaching, thus far confined to religious schools and cathedrals. Lisbon conservatory was created in 1835, in substitution of the old music school of the seminary of the Patriarchal Cathedral. Music education became accessible to lay people and to women. Porto conservatory opened in 1917. For four decades, and until the 1960’s, no other conservatories appeared. The history of this educational branch is very complex, as it encompasses both monarchy (1835-1910) and republican periods (since 1910). For many years, conservatories were the only public music schools in the country, and their curricula ran concurrent with those of the regular, or general, schools, forcing students to accumulate classes in both systems.

In 1983, an attempt was made to integrate the vocational schools into the general school system. A rigid equivalency plan was formulated for the grade levels of both educational systems that made it possible for a student to receive a high school diploma (12<sup>th</sup> grade) from a conservatory, in the case of the two existing vocational schools with “integrated curricula”, or from a high school having “articulated curricula” with a conservatory. That 1983 document, however, did not address artistic education in general schools (Decreto-Lei 310/83, de 1 de Julho

de 1983). Subsequent legislation in 1990 further regulated students curricular choices: an “integrated curriculum”, consisting of the music subjects and a small group of core curriculum subjects taken at the conservatory; an “articulated curriculum”, where the student takes the core curriculum subjects outside the conservatory, namely at the general school; or a “supplementary curriculum”, where the student takes all the subjects of the curriculum at the general school and the music subjects at the conservatory (Decreto-Lei 344/90, de 2 de Novembro de 1990). The emergence of the integrated and articulated curricula in the 1980’s legislation was directly related to the increasing democratization of music studies and became the government’s solution to handle an increasing number of applicants to the conservatories.

Professional schools are historically the most recent, having been officially created in 1989 (Decreto-Lei 26/89, de 21 de Janeiro de 1989). Their scope and purpose are the preparation of performing musicians much in the same way that conservatoires do. They can, therefore, be seen also as vocational or specialized schools. However, these schools originated as a “professional” counterpart of the regular system of education, and also as one that did not foresee the continuation of studies at the university level. The reason had to do with the fact that these schools emerged under a law that was created for the regulation of the training of electricians, mechanics, and other manual labor activities. However, future would show that the music students of professional schools had a high success rate. Many received scholarships for university level study-abroad programs, and others actually entered Portuguese universities. Therefore, music professional schools became similar to conservatories in the nature of their goals and objectives, but present very different ways of functioning, due to their very recent creation, and due to the special financial support they receive from the European Union (Decreto-Lei 70/93, de 10 de Março de 1993).

The coexistence of three public branches of music education in Portugal, theoretically accessible to all but targeted to different groups of students, is deeply rooted in both the history of Portuguese institutions and the evolution of educational and political goals and legislation. However, the fact that there is a high dropout rate among conservatory students, whether from integrated or articulated curricula (Sousa, 2003, pp. 19-28; Vieira, 2006) calls for investigation. The fact that conservatories have also not been able to accommodate all the candidates trying to enrol also suggests that the administrative balance between the public branches needs some revision, namely the expansion of the vocational system. The identity of the schools and of the branches within the educational system seems to be at stake. These were some of the questions involved in the case study.

### **Case study**

When Stake defines his concept of *intrinsic case study* in his chapter “Case Studies” of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000, p. 437) he underlines the advantages of this type of research for the study of curricular phenomena. The main reason seems to be the fact that intrinsic case studies are usually developed by individuals who are very interested in the problem, in the *case*. The goal is to achieve an “extensive description” of the phenomenon. The choice of the twelve interviewees for the study was based on that same principle of personal and professional interest, and led to the public assumption of the identities of all participants. This is a procedure that has become increasingly common when the interviewees are famous for their professional or even political involvement in the problem being studied (Patton, 2002, pp. 411-

412). The interviewees, whose CV's can not be summarized in the context of this article are very well known music professionals in Portugal, both for their teaching and publications and for their participation in Government's initiatives such as programme reforms, manual editions, curricular development, etc. They are: Maria José Artiaga (Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa), Mário Vieira de Carvalho (Universidade Nova de Lisboa and present Secretary of State of Culture), José Luís Borges Coelho (Escola Superior de Música e Artes do Espectáculo do Porto, retired), Gerhard Doderer (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), Teresa de Macedo (Universidade Católica do Porto), Graça Mota (Escola Superior de Educação do Porto), Fausto Neves (Universidade de Aveiro, Escola Profissional de Música de Espinho), Graça Palheiros (Escola Superior de Educação do Porto), José Alexandre Reis (Escola Profissional de Música ARTAVE), Helena Rodrigues (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), Isabel Rocha (Conservatório de Música do Porto) and António Vasconcelos (Escola Superior de Educação de Setúbal).

The interviews were transcribed and returned to the participants for validation. Then, five main categories of meaning emerged: a) reasons and evaluation of the ramification of the music system of education; b) teacher training and student training; c) types of student attendance to music classes (integrated, articulated or supplementary curricula); d) arts integration *versus* music specialization; e) aptitude detection and vocational counselling. The process of study of the emergent categories was based on phenomenological principles (Husserl, 1959; Gadamer, 1997). The information retrieved from these interviews was immense. However, some conclusions are extraordinarily important, because they were generated by a very strong *consensus* among the participants. This fact makes them highly recommendable for Government policy.

## **Conclusions**

The first conclusion of the study is that all interviewees identified the ramification of the public system of music education in Portugal as an actual curricular problem. All participants see the ramification as the root of many other curricular realities. One participant compared the Portuguese system with the German system, and referred that in the German system "music education is compulsory for all . . . and that is not subject to discussion". (Gerhard Doderer).

### ***a) Reasons and evaluation of the ramification of music education***

1. No theoretical, philosophical, educational, sociological or technical reasons were presented by any interviewee as a justification for the ramification of the system.
2. Ten interviewees pointed out "history" and "tradition" as well as "political decisions at specific moments" as the real reasons for the actual ramification.
3. The majority of the interviewees underlined the fact that there is an overlapping of the "specialized" and "generalist" fields of action, namely in what the teachers qualifications is concerned.
4. All interviewees declared that the ramification of the system is not working well. One interviewee mentioned that, in fact, "the ramification doesn't make any sense at all" (António Vasconcelos)
5. All interviewees said that, according to the present legislation, the different branches are not fulfilling their alleged purposes in the system. The one exception is the professional branch which is seen as highly successful by all participants.

6. All interviewees consider that the general branch is the most inefficient.
7. All interviewees see some influence of the lack of success of the general branch in the lack of success of the vocational branch. They refer that there is an excessive affluence of candidates to the vocational system by students who are only looking for a “general music education” that they can not find in the general system. This fact, the participants point out, is responsible for the decline of the levels of performance and for the high dropout rates at the conservatories and music academies.
8. All participants find the number of public schools in the vocational branch extremely limited (six schools in the whole country).
9. No participant finds real differences in the goals and objectives of the vocational and the professional schools. Differences are found in the modes of functioning, the types of curriculum and the different types of funding.
10. Nine interviewees suggest that conservatories could improve their performance by approaching the modes of functioning of professional schools. This, however, they alert, could only happen through a big investment in the general schools, thus freeing conservatoires from their present task of offering the music education that can not be found in the general schools.
11. All participants advocate a better articulation between the different branches at many levels.

***b) Teacher training and student training***

1. All participants are in favor of compulsory music education for all students, starting at 6 years old, whether or not they will choose a vocational school and become professionals.
2. All interviewees identify scientific and musical lacks of knowledge or preparation in the majority of students in the *Escolas Superiores de Educação* (both in the generalist and in the “variante” – specialized – degree versions).
3. All interviewees call for a better articulation between the different branches and between the different types of schools and study levels. This would allow for a better detection of musical abilities in the students. Many practical suggestions were volunteered: the support of the generalist teacher by a specialized music coadjutant or by a team of music specialist coadjutants; an increase of the exchange of musical experiences between the different schools; the development of academic research on the subject; a stronger cooperation between vocational schools and professional schools, and a stronger cooperation between specialized schools and general schools; the expansion of the training of specialized teachers in order to be able to cover the needs of the country; the creation (by fusion) of a single type of teacher training degree (specialized in music, and not targeted to different branches).
4. Seven participants advocate the teaching of classical instruments in all branches and levels of music education.

***c) Types of student attendance to music classes  
(integrated, articulated or supplementary curricula)***

1. All interviewees see the integrated curriculum as ideal. However, considering the financial difficulties involved in equipping all the schools for that type of student frequency, they consider it more important in the vocational schools.
2. All interviewees point out the integrated system of frequency of the professional schools as a good example for all specialized schools.

3. Seven participants suggest that the articulated system should be expanded, while the integrated system is not available in many schools.
4. Seven other participants recommend the cooperation of schools with other associations outside school: musical bands, town hall departments, a.s.o.

***d) Arts integration versus music specialization***

1. Ten interviewees associate arts integration with the general schools and do not consider it when referring to the specialized schools.
2. Eleven interviewees question the effectiveness of arts integration in education:
  - a. 2.1. Seven refer that integration can only be done after the students have acquired a musical “grammar”, a musical technique and different types of musical trainings.
  - b. 2.2. Six participants question the role of the generalist teacher, not only in what music teaching is concerned, but also in what an *integrated form of arts teaching* is concerned. They sustain that the integration of the arts in education can only be effective when lead by a team of specialized teachers of each of the arts involved.

***e) Aptitude detection and vocational counselling***

3. All participants do not consider aptitude tests as a valid means of selection of students for a certain type of educational branch or school. They consider tests valuable for improving the knowledge about each student and, therefore, improving teaching methods.
4. All participants defend that the vocational choice should be the result of a natural process of education.
5. All interviewees consider that the specialized music teacher is indispensable in helping the student making vocational choices.
6. Early aptitude detection in music is considered a priority by all participants.
7. Eight participants suggest that students should be accompanied by an interdisciplinary arts team, both in their education and in their vocational counselling.

Synthetically, it can be said that both history and the perspectives of the interviewees are in tune with the desirable and true democratization of music education, not only from the legislative standpoint, but, above all, from the point of view of curricular practices. The concept of ramification of the music system of education is seen as a reality that has no educational, philosophical or pedagogical foundation. However, it is believed that its existence may be a necessary evil for the balance of a system that has traditionally neglected the “general branch”. The study has allowed for the conclusion, nevertheless, that there are real possibilities for improvement of this ramified system. These include a better articulation, at several levels, between the educational branches, and a new perspective on them as part of a vertical and coherent structure, instead of a perception of a horizontal structure that can be cause of social fragmentation. The *1º ciclo do ensino básico* (6 to 9 year-olds) has been indicated as the top priority for governmental attention in this study. An adequate articulation between different schools and professionals at this age level in the public system will allow for the development of good music education backgrounds. It will also improve the process of detection of music aptitudes and of talented and motivated students, as well as their vocational counselling. Finally, the research has allowed for the conclusion that there is a need to obviate further differences

between the “general” and the “specialized” branches, particularly in what “listening” and “performing” are concerned.

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