

The curious case of the disappearance of music from education

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I have often expressed my surprise about it. In my opinion, music is among the greatest gifts that humanity has yielded. At the same time, it is less and less a serious part of our education. Musicality, or musical responsiveness, is not part of any intelligence test. However, music and brain development are strongly interconnected. In his book *The Sense of Music* Leo Samama states that because of her high abstraction, music sharpens our cognition.

Music contributes to human cognition and memory by developing and sharpening our imagination and our associative ability. Professor Henkjan Honing shows in his book *Everyone is Musical* that the ability to generate and "process" music - musicality - is a general human ability that most other animals do not have in a similar way. In psychological research the relationship between musical development and general cognitive functioning (and in particular executive power and memory) has been repeatedly demonstrated.

Precisely because musical development plays a potentially important role in the development of abstraction and memory (eg remembering by a verse), music is often used in therapies, commercials and

films. Consider, for example, music to deal with mourning, or more generally to channel and process emotions. Or music to literally and/or figuratively move (dance), or to coordinate the movements (from marching music to negro spirituals). In expressions such as "march to the beat of your own drum", "it rings a bell" and "change your tune" the connection between musical and cognitive harmony is hidden. Music can be extremely suggestive and encourage reflection. Think, for example, of hearing slow, sad music with images of excited children playing.

Despite the fact that we are all musical, and almost everyone likes music, both in education and in our explicit psychological (emotional, mental, motor) development, music only plays a very marginal role. In ancient times, music education was an essential part of mathematics education: in the Quadrivium mathematics, geometry, music and astronomy formed a four-unit whole. In China, among others, Confucius emphasized the importance of music education and the connection between poetry, law and music.

Through technology, our current time offers great access to countless styles of music, from old to new, in very different performance practices, from ethnic to rock, from baroque to contemporary. It is precisely because of this that it is so surprising that we are dealing with music so aloof (school/education) and one-sided (all hip-hop on the social media: accent on uniform tunes and beats). Major technological possibilities have led to inertia in freedom of choice. And we leave development potential unused at three levels: individual relationships, group relations, our society as a whole.

Music is a "language" without words. As a cognitive abstraction, it generates intra- and intercultural identity, reference and "understanding". Its wordless components contribute to our tacit knowledge (the implicit knowledge, which often promotes social communication between people). Music can confirm us as humans on an individual level, on a group level, and as humanity. In short, it is high time that music education returns to (primary) education.

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