Check for updates

*Article*

ISME INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

International Journal of Music Education
2020, Vol. 38(1) 113–125
© The Author(s) 2019
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/0255761419877576
journals.sagepub.com/home/ijm
SAGE

# The impact of school music education: The experiences of four Catalan citizens

**Jessica Pérez-Moreno**
Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain

**Carmen Carrillo**
International University of Catalonia, Spain

## Abstract

This study examines the impact made by music education on a sample of Catalan citizens who studied this subject during their compulsory schooling. A biographical narrative methodology was used to investigate a broad spectrum of the participants' school musical experiences and to analyze the impact that music education has had on different aspects of their lives. Their perceptions and experiences, collected and expressed through life stories, show a correlation between the theoretical approach to learning music adopted by teachers and its little impact on the participants' lives. Their stories also bring to light the difficulties involved in identifying and distinguishing the existing impact between both in-school and extracurricular music education but identify emotional impact as the most relevant one overall. Based on the evidence provided, this article aims to contribute to the debate on the role of music education on the school curriculum.

## Keywords

Compulsory education, impact, life stories, music education

## Introduction

Music education (ME) is included as a subject in a large part of school curricula in Western countries. In Spain, in 1990, the General Organic Law of Organization of the Educational (LOGSE) introduced music for the first time as a core subject on the curricula of the different educational stages, making it compulsory in each grade (Jefatura del Estado, 1990). In the case of primary

**Corresponding author:**
Jessica Pérez-Moreno, Faculty of Education, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Campus UAB, 08193 Barcelona, Spain.
Email: Jessica.perez@uab.cat

education, ME was included within a broader category referred to as artistic education, and its teaching was entrusted to ME specialist teachers. The Department of Education of the Government of Catalonia drew on this law to prepare and publish its own curricular proposal (Departament d'Ensenyament, 1992a). It organized the conceptual contents of ME into five blocks: (1) song and voice; (2) listening education; (3) music, movement, and dance; (4) music notation and reading; and (5) audition.

Music in compulsory secondary education (ESO in Spain) was considered a field of knowledge belonging among the core subjects. The teaching staff responsible had to have a bachelor's degree (a degree from a music conservatory or similar degree) and completed a pedagogical aptitude course in music. In the curriculum of this educational stage (Departament d'Ensenyament, 1992b), the conceptual contents of ME were organized into three blocks: (1) music language; (2) aesthetics, styles, genres, forms, and instruments; and (3) the vehicles of musical expression: technique and performance aspects.

Ultimately, the general introduction of this subject in Spanish schools meant, from our point of view, the recognition of the intrinsic value of music learning for the overall development of students and their contribution to society. However, after more than 25 years of music normalization as part of the Spanish compulsory school curriculum, the role of music in the current educational environment is marked by the role that the LOMCE (Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality, passed in 2013) has allocated it within the current curricular framework (Jefatura del Estado, 2013). LOMCE's main goals are to reduce school dropout, to improve school achievement in relation to international criterion, to improve employability, and to stimulate entrepreneurial attitudes toward students. In line with its technical, pragmatic character, the LOMCE established music as an optional subject in both primary and secondary education, which in practice means that students may well complete their compulsory education without having received any type of ME.

Given the current panorama of reforms in educational policies, not only in Spain but also internationally (Aróstegui, Louro, & Teixeira, 2015), empirical evidence may shed light on the impact that ME in schools has on society since its general introduction in compulsory education in the 1990s. With this in mind, the IMPACTMUS project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness sets out to examine retrospectively the impact that school ME has had on Spanish citizens.

The aim of the study presented in this article is to examine the impact that ME has had on a sample of four individuals who studied this subject during compulsory education in the Spanish context. The results presented here facilitate a reflection on the role that music may play in the Spanish education system within the current context of reforms.

## The impact of musical education: a closer look

The retrospective approach presented in this article includes the set of possible effects on people derived from the musical activities carried out in primary and secondary school classrooms, in accordance with what the curriculum establishes for this subject in compulsory education. This approach differs from previous research on the impact after students carried out musical activities that go beyond the subject taught in the classroom, either because these studies contemplate the implementation of a specific music project (Hallam, Creech, & McQueen, 2017; Portowitz, Peppler, & Downton, 2014), an intensified curricular program (Andreu & Godall, 2012; Eerola & Eerola, 2014), or because they consider the set of musical activities under study in relation to the contents of both the primary and secondary school curriculums and other material of an extracurricular nature (Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2007; Pitts, 2009).

Regarding the different kinds of ME impact, a detailed analysis of a sample of studies carried out over the last decade (Carrillo, Viladot, Pérez-Moreno, 2017) revealed the existence of two major typologies. There are studies that examine the impact of ME on the discipline itself, while others consider its effects beyond the discipline. In general, the studies in the former category examine the influence exerted by different aspects of school music subject matter on different musical abilities, such as musical performance and/or listening (Abril & Gault, 2008; Campbell, Connell, & Beegle, 2007), comprehension (Hallam et al., 2017; Portowitz et al., 2014), and musical creation (Hogenes, van Oers, Diekstra, & Sklad, 2016). Similarly, Hogenes et al. (2016) found that students become more deeply involved in music learning as activities that require music production—and not reproduction—increase.

In regard to the impact beyond the discipline itself, Carrillo et al. (2017) distinguish three areas of influence: (1) the personal, (2) the intellectual, and (3) the social. In regard to the first area of influence, the personal, an important number of studies focus on topics dealing with the effect of music on the psychological well-being of students (Osborne, McPherson, Faulkner, Davidson, & Barrett, 2016; Rickard et al., 2013), while others focus on the expression and management of emotions (Campbell et al., 2007; Seifried, 2006) and identity formation among those who received ME (Cabedo-Mas & Díaz-Gómez, 2013; Seifried, 2006).

Within the intellectual area of influence, the literature refers to both the impact of ME on academic aspects—for example, its contribution to the acquisition of competences and/or improved academic results in different subjects (Andreu & Godall, 2012; Miksza, 2010)—and on various cognitive functions. In this latter sense, studies such as those by Osborne et al. (2016) and Portowitz et al. (2014) underscore the influence of instrument training on non-musical cognitive functions such as verbal memory, short-term working memory, and learning self-regulation.

Finally, in regard to the social area of influence of the impact of ME, the results of a number of studies highlight the positive impact of ME on coexistence and satisfaction at school (Eerola & Eerola, 2014; Marsh, 2012), teamwork (Abril & Gault, 2008; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2007), and social responsibility (Odena, 2014; Osborne et al., 2016). This research seeks to explore the impact of compulsory ME from a global perspective. It is expected to receive feedback from the participants regarding aspects from either the discipline itself or from outside it, especially enquiries about its impact on personal, social, and intellectual sides.

## Methodology

We adopted a biographical narrative methodology with the aim to examine the impact that ME has had on a sample of individuals who studied this subject during compulsory education in the Spanish context. This methodology serves to study and give meaning to the experiences that people describe through stories and that researchers collect and convert, with the appropriate methodological treatment, into life stories (Bolívar, 2017). Researchers using biographical narrative research reject the idea that the stories told can be generalized to cover a certain sector of the population and emphasize the value of the particular (Chase, 2005). This approach "makes evident to readers the lived experiences of individuals" and, through it, makes these experiences resonate in the experiences of others (Stauffer & Barrett, 2009, p. 20).

### *Participants and instruments used to collect data*

The impact of school ME was examined through the experiences and perceptions of four citizens who studied this subject during their compulsory schooling in Catalonia. In order to proceed with the selection of the participating sample, the researchers contacted a total of 60 candidates from

their personal and/or professional environment through email. The participation in the study of individuals with whom the researchers had a prior relationship was considered likely to have a positive impact on the quantity and quality of the data generated (Kelchtermans, 1999). Only participants born after 1985 (to ensure that they had attended ME classes at school after the implementation of the LOGSE in 1990) and with a willingness to share and reflect on their experiences and perceptions of ME and its impact on different aspects of their lives were emailed in this first stage of the sampling.

In a second stage, the candidates who expressed an interest in participating in the study were interviewed to find out, in broad terms, what kind of impact school ME had had on them. Taking into account maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002), four individuals with diverse experiences of ME impact (according to the categories discussed above [point 2]) were selected. Before initiating the study, the participants signed a consent form where they were informed of their right to leave the study if desired. The use of pseudonyms guarantees their anonymity.

Four participants (three female and one male) born between 1985 and 1997 in Catalonia participated in the study. At the time of the fieldwork, three of them were pursuing undergraduate studies in the field of social sciences (Sandra, in early childhood education; Andrea, in primary education; and Alfonso, in economics), while Laura was working as a university lecturer in the field of health sciences. With the exception of Andrea, who had never studied music at an extracurricular level, the participants had been involved in musical activities apart from those in compulsory education, although with very different levels of dedication.

### *Procedure and data analysis*

For the purposes of recording the participants' experiences and perceptions, three individual interviews were conducted according to the three-step interview protocol developed by Seidman (2012). Following this procedure, the participants described the context of their experiences, reconstructed the details of these experiences, and reflected on their meaning. Semi-structured interviews were based on pre-established questions that were flexible enough to allow for modification (Hatch, 2002). These questions revolved around two themes: on one hand, the participants' experience of ME at school (primary and secondary) and also at preschool and extracurricular level to distinguish any lived experience beyond compulsory schooling; on the other hand, the impact of these experiences on different aspects of their person, although without specifying types of impact to avoid influencing the participants' responses (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of the questions that were addressed during the first interview).

A cumulative research procedure was used (Kelchtermans, 1993) whereby each individual interview was built on the previous one and was based on an interpretative analysis of the data gleaned from the previous one. This way the researchers were able to reflect on the data collected and prepare new questions. These were emailed to the participants before the subsequent interview so as to give them enough time to think about them. These questions were intended to clarify specific aspects of the previous interview(s) and also to explore in greater detail other aspects that might be relevant for a deeper understanding of the participants' musical experiences and their impact on different aspects of their characters.

The verbatim transcription and narrative analysis of the interviews (Polkinghorne, 1995) led to the construction of semi-definitive life stories covering the broad spectrum of musical experiences received during compulsory education as well as their impact on each participant. The participants were asked to confirm the veracity and accuracy of the data in the texts (Stake, 1995), and any comments and/or corrections were included in the final life stories.

Two researchers completed a paradigmatic data analysis independently, which resulted in the identification of themes appearing in the stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). These themes provided a starting point for the construction of the final reports, in which each participant's data were contrasted with the others'.

## Results

The results summarize the most relevant ideas concerning musical experiences in compulsory education in each of the participants' stories (section "Musical experiences during compulsory education"), where we describe musical experiences at both primary and secondary school. In section "Impact of school ME", we go on explaining the different types of impact the previously described musical experiences had on the participants. We incorporate written excerpts from the interviews (in italics) that illustrate the participants' experiences and perceptions in relation to the proffered ideas, a technique also used by other researchers in biographical studies (Cox, 1999; Odena & Welch, 2009).

### *Musical experiences during compulsory education*

*Sandra.* When she was at primary school, Sandra was immersed in a school environment where music *was really not very highly valued*. The rhythm of the classes was marked by a textbook that the teachers almost always used to follow. They also sang with assiduity, although Sandra recalls that the repertoire was very childish. In addition to singing, at primary school, she took part in various activities such as dance and percussion and recorder practice, of which she has better, fonder memories owing to their practical nature. However, the experience that made the greatest impact on her during this stage was the preparation and performance of a musical for the families. She thinks it is because of the joint effort and interest it implied among the class group.

When Sandra moved on to secondary school, the music classes improved both for her and her classmates:

> *In secondary school, when we changed teachers, it was when I felt they had a little more value. But the reason was the teacher's attitude because I believe that what the teacher thinks, the interest she shows in her subject, is also transmitted to the students. And I saw her giving everything in her subject.*

In secondary school, the classes became more practical and incorporated activities that required more active musical practice. Sandra attributes special value to all these experiences because the work they did was presented later in a concert at the end of the school year. *I guess that's the key, to find meaning in what you're doing.* Furthermore, Sandra underscores the fact that activities like these generated a lot of group cohesion.

*Andrea.* She does not have good memories of her musical experiences in primary school and, in part, she blames her teacher, *who knew a lot but didn't know how to teach*. Moreover, Andrea insists that

> *he took far greater interest in those who knew more about music, and the rest of us were afraid of making mistakes, because he used to make disparaging remarks about us, in a loud voice in front of our classmates.*

Regarding the musical activities that took place in the classroom, Andrea recalls that they were very theoretical and not very meaningful: *We used the book a lot, there was a lot of theory but it*

*wasn't related to anything. It wasn't meaningful learning*. They did dancing, listening, and singing, but in general these were one-off activities. Among the classroom activities, the one that had the greatest impact on her was recorder practice. *At first, because it was a novelty, [. . .] it attracted a lot of attention and we really wanted to learn to play it*. However, this experience became increasingly negative over time, in particular because of the pressure of the weekly exams when they had to perform different pieces individually and in front of the whole class. On the contrary, Andrea has good memories of the festivals and the musicals performed before the parents, because of the joint effort they entailed and their practical nature.

Later, in secondary school, her experiences did not improve much compared to the previous stage. While there was less pressure around recorder practice and exams, the overall dynamics of the classes changed a lot in comparison to primary school, with a theoretical and conceptual approach increasingly focused on the study of the history of music. This was an approach that, in Andrea's words, prioritized *memorization* over *comprehension*.

*Laura.* Laura's musical experiences at primary school were not a source of enrichment for her:

> *[. . .] there were things that . . . well, I didn't like that much or I found boring, because, as I said, I was attending extracurricular music lessons and the majority of the things we did were pretty basic, and I knew them already.*

Music classes were mainly focused on music theory and, in general, none of the basic musical skills such as listening, performance, or creating were brought into play. *What we did were notes, rhythms . . . I wouldn't say they taught us to understand music. Rather they taught us music in a technical way.*

Later, at secondary school, Laura was immersed in an educational environment where *music was not particularly highly valued. It certainly wasn't considered one of the important subjects; rather it was a recreational subject [. . .], because mathematics, Spanish, Catalan . . . didn't have the same status as music.* However, her musical experiences were considerably more positive in secondary than in primary school, especially as far as music practice is concerned. The approach was more varied and, although the academic aspect of music theory was still present, they also worked on other aspects that brought music practice more into play. Even so, this part was still of somewhat secondary value.

Among all her musical experiences during that stage, Laura especially remembers the preparation of several songs by the whole class and her performance at a choir festival. In her opinion, when the musical activities carried out in the classroom had a clear goal, this gave the whole process meaning. *When we were preparing this festival we really had a sense of continuity, that it made a point, that there was a goal*. She also mentions that the performance of songs in front of a large audience and together with choral groups from other schools *makes you take it more seriously, doesn't it? Because when you do something in front of the others, you want to do it well and it probably helped that everyone was really committed to making it work.*

*Alfonso.* Alfonso's memories of his musical experiences at primary school are rather vague, although positive. *I particularly remember preparing to sing for the typical Christmas school concert. It's what I remember best*. In parallel, they played percussion instruments in class. *It was fun, especially the disconnection from the usual routine, doing something a little different*. Furthermore, he explains that the subject matter was dynamic and participatory and that, in general, both he and his classmates looked forward to music class.

On the contrary, Alfonso expresses little enthusiasm when discussing his memories of his experiences in secondary school. In particular, he underscores the sense of unproductivity, both as regards the subject matter—focused on the history of music and recorder practice and the way these materials were taught (theory classes and purely technical aspects of performance, respectively):

> *At secondary education . . . I would say straight no [impact]. To be honest it did not contribute in any way to me, not helping to develop muscal taste, not personaly, I guess. There were very few hours of music during secondary education and music was left as a background subject. Therefore, I think they were more focused on other subjects from where maybe I can get more impact but not so much from music.*

However, Alfonso believes that his negative perception of the subject can also be blamed on the teacher's attitude to the subject. *Apart from all this* [methodology used], *if you add the teacher's approach and his scant—or rather non—existent—enthusiasm when giving classes, a maximum degree of disinterest was the result, at least from my point of view.* For these reasons, Alfonso acknowledges that he was not attentive and that there was also a general feeling of indifference to the subject among all the students.

## *Impact of school ME*

*Sandra.* Sandra affirms that the most relevant impact of ME was its influence on her decision to train as a music teacher. Even though she already knew she wanted to be a teacher from a very young age, maybe influenced by the fact of having been grown up in a family of teachers, it was her musical experiences during compulsory education, and especially the positive influence exerted by her music teacher, which encouraged her to choose music as a specialty:

> *Then . . . she [the music teacher], I guess she also made me see that . . . ok, yes, here in Spain everything about music is very difficult. It can be that they say no because . . . , that they say no, in a way of talking to your parents that when you tell them you want to study music they say –"Do you want to end up living under a bridge?!!" You know?—Just like that. It is literally how it works. I found out plenty of people saying: -"how come you want to graduate in Music?" She was just the opposite: -"I graduated in Music and look where I am." So it was like: I can do it, of course I can. She encouraged me to ignore what others said.*

Furthermore, Sandra affirms that her musical experiences at school have also had a very positive impact on the kind of person she is today. Thanks to music, Sandra has found a way to channel her emotions:

> *How can I put it, for me it was therapeutic and it continues to be a therapeutic [. . .]. Nowadays, it's where I channel things. If I'm angry, I play the piano. If I'm tired, I play the piano. [. . .] Listening too. It's when I disconnect because I stop thinking.*

On the contrary, Sandra remarks that her extracurricular musical experiences in parallel have contributed in this regard.

When describing her musical experiences, she draws attention to the impact of discipline and organization. However, she points out that her extracurricular musical experiences had greater impact in this respect:

> *The fact of devoting so much time to extracurricular music studies taught me to organize myself. Because, naturally, when you have music rehearsals, you still have to do your schoolwork . . . I think it made me more disciplined.*

*Andrea.* Over time, Andrea has grown to love music, thanks to the direct experience lived in her family environment, where *there has always been music playing*. On the contrary, she notes that her musical experiences during the compulsory stage did not contribute in any way to this fondness for music. She very sadly points, *I remember that we all constantly complained to ourselves: why are we attending music class if we do not learn anything?*

She values positively having had the opportunity to learn the recorder, because she still plays it even now. However, her memories are generally rather negative and she thinks that the impact on her person was non-existent. In hindsight, she also regrets not having mastered musical language in the same way as other languages:

> *The fact that I remember a lot about other subjects* [the content taught in the classroom] *and I learned a lot, while in the case of music, although I love it, I can't remember anything . . . Dammit! It's frustrating, isn't it?*

Nonetheless, Andrea explains that her experience of the musical they staged in fourth year of primary school impacted her positively. *We had a lot of responsibility and we got very involved*. Furthermore, thanks to her experience of taking an active part in a musical, she derives greater enjoyment from the musicals she occasionally attends.

*Laura.* Laura admits that the impact of music at school level *is attenuated by the fact that it played a very minor role compared to everything else she was doing in the field of music.* It is from a broader perspective that she notes an effect on different aspects of her character, which includes school musical experiences and especially extracurricular activities—whose impact, in hindsight, Laura is not always able to tell apart.

In her story, Laura explains that music has favored the development of both cognitive and emotional skills and abilities in her case. *Thanks to music I've been able to develop skills such as thinking about complex things and everything linked to discipline, effort, thoroughness* [. . .], *things that I suppose have rubbed off on aspects of my personal life*. In this respect, Laura thinks that discipline and thoroughness have been reflected later at an academic level, since they have allowed her to take *a more complex approach to learning. Music has many nuances, hasn't it? You can look at it from many angles and this is something that you can apply later.*

From a different perspective, Laura tells us that music has served as an *emotional escape valve* during her life, *a channel to express emotions*. It is precisely this more emotional and sensitive side, developed through music, which she has better been able to draw on while pursuing her current career. *I have the feeling that there is another kind of sensitivity. And that when I transmit things I always highlight these nuances*. For example, Laura uses music in her work when she conducts food workshops at schools, especially when it is *important to connect with emotions.*

*Alfonso.* Alfonso doubts that the ME he received has had any significance for his personal growth. As far as primary school is concerned, he remarks little doubtfully that perhaps the fact of having participated in concerts, knowing what it is like to feel nervous, helps him to cope better in certain situations that cause tension, especially in the work environment.

However, as regards his experience of ME in secondary school, he is convinced that the impact on his person has been non-existent. Moreover, he thinks that he would have grown up in the same way at all levels if he had not attended music classes at school. In this respect, Alfonso thinks that the teacher he had at secondary school is, in good part, responsible for this. *At secondary school, I don't think music gave me anything directly, like in questions of taste, personality, I think that . . . the teacher had a lot to do with a good part of this negative experience.*

What Alfonso is convinced of is that his experience of extracurricular music, given the commitment it demanded, has undoubtedly had an impact on his person. *I believe that making music unlocks your mental potential and then you can learn the other concepts more easily, not only in music but in general.*

## Discussion and conclusion

In this study, we describe four Catalan citizens' experiences and perceptions of compulsory school ME and take a retrospective look at its impact on their lives. The results illustrate the singularities of four individuals and, as such, cannot be extrapolated to the whole of Spanish society. Here, we discuss the most relevant results and present ideas about the role of ME in the framework of the compulsory school curriculum.

With regard to the impact on the discipline itself, the life stories of the four participants project a mostly negative image of ME, largely steeped in a methodology strongly focused on the expository method: transmissive classes with a significant presence and use of text books. Sandra remembers,

> *so before we got hands on with the recorder, the instruction [from the teacher] was: -We will wait until you learn to read music to start. And I remember the purple book we had. Most of my memories, since I have visual memory, are kept in that book: musical notes, pentagrames, and digitations.*

Andrea very sadly states,

> *we took the book on page whatever and started to read Music Theory. Maybe it was about intensity and length, but, you know what? Maybe because I did not attend music lessons outside school I did not understood anything out of that.*

As the participants' testimonies show, there was little space for meaningful music learning focused on practice and reflection (Casals, Carrillo, Valls, Vilar, & Ferrer, 2014). A relationship is also observed between the methodology used by teachers and the students' perception of the type of experience, with the participants having more positive memories of those occasions when making music in the classroom prevailing over acquiring theoretical knowledge of music—mainly from following a textbook. In addition, the stories of three of the participants (Sandra, Andrea, and Alfonso) highlight the role of teachers' attitudes as a driver for meaningful (Sandra and Andrea) or unsubstantial experiences (Alfonso). The most significant experiences for the four participants were those when music practice meant combining individual efforts to achieve a common goal and meant sharing what was learned at school before a wider audience outside the class group itself. For Sandra, the higher impact experience consisted in participating as a musician in a musical in fifth year of primary school; for Andrea, being part of the musical they staged in fourth year of primary school; for Alfonso, performing Christmas school concerts for parents and other school mates; and for Laura, singing in the Coral festival in fourth year of secondary education. This finding is in line with the results from previous studies where it is found that ME has a positive impact on coexistence and satisfaction at school (Eerola & Eerola, 2014; Marsh, 2012) and on teamwork (Abril & Gault, 2008; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2007).

In general, the social nature of these activities (group music practice) and the achievement of a common goal as a result of the work done in the classroom gave these experiences greater meaning and significance, and the students also derived greater enjoyment from them. This evidence suggests a need to lay the emphasis in school ME on activities that involve the students in active,

significant music practice. This could also include creative activities that, although not mentioned in the four participants' life stories, are those that, according to the study by Hogenes et al. (2016), exert a more positive influence on students.

In this study, the described connections in terms of methodology and attitude show therefore the importance of the figure of the music teacher as the responsible person to lead to experiences that can exert some kind of impact. In this sense, we agree with Hallam (2010) when she states that

> the quality of the teaching, the extent to which individuals experience success, whether engaging with a particular type of music can be integrated with existing self-perceptions, and whether overall it is a positive experience will all contribute to whether there is a positive impact on social and personal development. (p. 20)

Although there are studies that point out that the different models of music teacher education in primary and secondary education in the Spanish context may lead to different music practices in the classroom (e.g., Carrillo & Vilar, 2012)—with a focus on music-making in primary education and an emphasis on the transmission of theoretical concepts secondary education—this relationship is not evident in this study. Our participants report either positive or negative experiences derived from the practice of their teachers in both educational stages. Beyond, it is the teachers' attitudes what seem to make the difference in leading to experiences that can be meaningful and have an impact on the participants' lives. In this sense, this study provides additional evidence that the personal dimension of the teacher is essential in achieving effective practice (Carrillo, Baguley, & Vilar, 2015; Day, 2002) and therefore should be acknowledged and addressed in teacher education programs.

As far as the impact of school musical experiences within the discipline itself is concerned, their negligible effect is remarkable in the four cases studied. Contrariwise, the life stories provide examples of impact beyond the mere learning of the subject itself, especially on the person. Perhaps, the most noteworthy is the impact on an emotional level, understanding music as a resource for the expression and management of one's own emotions (Sandra and Laura) and, in the case of Laura, other people's as well. The participants also noted other effects at a personal level, with particular mention made of better work discipline (Sandra and Laura) and, at an intellectual level, the development of complex thinking (Laura). However, both expressed their difficulties in distinguishing the impact of school ME from that of extracurricular musical activities, although they underscored the predominance of the latter in the aforementioned areas of influence. Among these participants, we can see, therefore, a type of hybrid impact that impedes a more precise description of the effects derived exclusively from what they did in primary and secondary school music classrooms. This should be taken into account in future studies in order to assess the real impact of school ME without bias.

Another notable finding is the fact that Andrea and Alfonso reported no impact; they claim that the music studied during compulsory education has had no effect on them. This finding is surprising because it is not mentioned in previous research (Carrillo et al., 2017; Hallam, 2010). As Susan Hallam (2010) points out, the impact at a personal level has received less attention than the intellectual one. Studies on the personal area of influence are based on interviews or questionaries to relative small samples of individuals. Future studies, therefore, should include larger samples of individuals to also investigate this possibility of no impact so as to describe it in greater detail. This might also include the exploration of musical experiences likely to produce no impact.

This study offers a retrospective view of the impact of ME as established in the compulsory curriculum for this subject, in spite of the difficulty encountered in dissociating the said impact from that of extracurricular musical experiences. This work also looks at impact from the standpoint of empirical evidence, collected directly from individuals who attended and experienced music classes

in Catalonia during the primary and secondary school stages. This study of impact is based on the participants' experiences, as well as their own perceptions, collected and recorded through life stories. Thanks to these tools, evidence of a personal nature in particular was gathered (e.g., the expression and management of emotions or the development of work discipline), difficult to measure and, consequently, difficult to record through other tools of quantitative nature.

Although much remains to be explored to understand what role ME should play in the compulsory school curriculum, this study provides evidence that can contribute to the debate. It becomes clear that the impact derived from this subject, given its artistic and aesthetic nature, cannot be governed by the same quantitative, deterministic and, ultimately, neoliberal criteria of educational reform policies (Aróstegui et al., 2015). Using a small sample of Spanish citizens, the evidence in this study of the impact of school ME underscores its effects on a personal level, especially as regards the expression and management of emotions, aspects related to the soft skills increasingly required to deal with the challenges posed by society. This contributes to the existing evidence (see Jauset-Berrocal, Martínez, & Añaños, 2017) that suggests that, beyond its intrinsic value, the inclusion of music in the school curriculum may need to be justified on the basis of its benefits in several cognitive and psychological areas, with particular reference to the emotional level of human development.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Spanish Government (grant no. EDU2014-58066-P).

## ORCID iD

Jessica Pérez-Moreno https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1685-8859

## References

Abril, C. R., & Gault, B. M. (2008). The state of music in secondary schools. The principal's perspective. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *56*, 68–81.

Andreu, M., & Godall, C. (2012). La importancia de la educación artística en la enseñanza obligatoria: la adquisición de las competencias básicas de Primaria en un centro integrado de música [Exploratory Study of the Role of Musical Education in the Acquisition of Basic Skills at Primary School Level]. *Revista de Educación*, *357*, 179–202.

Aróstegui, J. L., Louro, A. L., & Teixeira, Z. L. (2015). Las políticas educativas de reforma y su impacto en la Educación Musical Escolar. De dónde venimos y hacia dónde podemos ir [Educational Policy Reforms and their Impact on Music Education. Where we come from and what we can move on to]. *Revista Da ABEM*, *23*, 24–34.

Bolívar, A. (2017). Prólogo. In A. Moriña (Ed.), *Investigar con historias de vida. Metodología biográfico-narrativa* [Resarching with life stories. Biographic-narrative methodology] (pp. 9–11). Madrid, Spain: Narcea.

Cabedo-Mas, A., & Díaz-Gómez, M. (2013). Positive musical experiences in education: Music as a social praxis. *Music Education Research*, *15*, 455–470.

Campbell, P., Connell, C., & Beegle, A. (2007). Adolescents' expressed meanings of music in and out of school. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *55*, 220–236.

Carrillo, C., Baguley, M., & Vilar, M. (2015). The influence of professional identity on teaching practice: Experiences of four music educators. *International Journal of Music Education*, *33*, 451–462.

Carrillo, C., Viladot, L., & Pérez-Moreno, J. (2017). Impacto de la educación musical: una revisión de la literatura científica. *Revista electrónica complutense de investigación en educación musical* [Impact of Music Education: a Review of the Scientific Literatura], *14*, 61–74.

Carrillo, C., & Vilar, M. (2012). Las competencias profesionales del profesorado de música: opiniones de una muestra de docentes [Music teachers' professional competences: Opinions of a sample of teachers]. *Cultura y Educación*, *24*, 319–335.

Casals, A., Carrillo, C., Valls, A., Vilar, M., & Ferrer, R. (2014). La concreción de un enfoque didáctico para la educación musical en Primaria [A didactic perspective for Primary Music Education]. In *Proceedings of III Congreso de Educación e Investigación Musical* (CEIMUS) (pp. 586–594). Barcelona, Spain: Enclave Creativa.

Chase, S. (2005). Narrative inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 651–679). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Cox, G. (1999). Secondary school music teachers talking. *Music Education Research*, *1*, 37–45.

Day, C. (2002). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Education Research*, *37*, 677–692.

Departament d'Ensenyament. (1992a). *DECRET 95/1992, de 28 d'abril, pel qual s'estableix l'ordenació curricular de l'educació primària*. Barcelona, Spain: Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya [Education Department) legislative decree 96/1992 28th April, from which Primary Education Curricula is Ordinanced. Barcelona, Spain: Official Journal of the Catalan Government].

Departament d'Ensenyament. (1992b). *DECRET 96/1992, de 28 d'abril, pel qual s'estableix l'ordenació dels ensenyaments de l'educació secundària obligatòria*. Barcelona, Spain: Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Education Department) legislative decree 96/1992 28th April, from which Secondary Education Curricula is Ordinanced. Barcelona, Spain: Official Journal of the Catalan Government].

Eerola, P. S., & Eerola, T. (2014). Extended music education enhances the quality of school life. *Music Education Research*, *16*, 88–104.

Hallam, S. (2010). The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people. *International Journal of Music Education*, *28*, 269–289.

Hallam, S., Creech, A., & McQueen, H. (2017). Teachers' perceptions of the impact on students of the musical futures approach. *Music Education Research*, *19*, 263–275.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hogenes, M., van Oers, B., Diekstra, R. F. W., & Sklad, M. (2016). The effects of music composition as a classroom activity on engagement in music education and academic and music achievement: A quasi-experimental study. *International Journal of Music Education*, *34*, 32–48.

Jauset-Berrocal, J. A., Martínez, I., & Añaños, E. (2017). Music learning and education: Contributions from neuroscience. *Cultura y Educación*, *29*, 833–847.

Jefatura del Estado. (1990). *Ley Orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE)*. Madrid, Spain: Boletín Oficial del Estado. Gobierno de España [State central office: Organic Law 1/1990, 3rd October, of General Organization of the Educational System (LOGSE). Madrid: Spain: State Official Bulletin. Spanish Government].

Jefatura del Estado. (2013). *Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa (LOMCE)*. Madrid, Spain: Boletín Oficial del Estado. Gobierno de España [State central office: Organic Law 8/2013, 9th December, for the improvement of the educational quality (LOMCE). Madrid: Spain: State Official Bulletin. Spanish Government].

Kelchtermans, G. (1993). Getting the story, understanding the lives: From career stories to teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *9*, 443–456.

Kelchtermans, G. (1999, April). *Narrative-biographical research on teachers' professional development: Exemplifying a methodological research procedure*. Communication presented at AERA, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Kokotsaki, D., & Hallam, S. (2007). Higher Education music students' perceptions of the benefits of participative music making. *Music Education Research*, *9*, 93–109.

Marsh, C. (2012). The beat will make you be courage: The role of a secondary school music program in supporting young refugees and newly arrived immigrants in Australia. *Research Studies in Music Education*, *34*, 93–111.

Miksza, P. (2010). Investigating relationships between participation in high school music ensembles and extra-musical outcomes: An analysis of the Education longitudinal study of 2002 using bio-ecological development model. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, *186*, 7–25.

Odena, O. (2014) Musical creativity as a tool for inclusion. In E. Shiu, (Ed.), *Routledge Studies in Innovation, Organizations and Technology. Creativity research: An inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research handbook* (pp. 247–270). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Odena, O., & Welch, G. (2009). A generative model of teachers' thinking on musical creativity. *Psychology of Music*, *37*, 416–442.

Osborne, M. S., McPherson, G. E., Faulkner, R., Davidson, J. W., & Barrett, M. S. (2016). Exploring the academic and psychosocial impact of El Sistema-inspired music programs within two low socio-economic schools. *Music Education Research*, *18*, 156–175.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Pitts, S. (2009). Roots and routes in adult musical participation: Investigating the impact of home and school on lifelong musical interest and involvement. *British Journal of Music Education*, *26*, 241–256.

Polkinghorne, D. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5–23). London, England: The Falmer Press.

Portowitz, A., Peppler, K. A., & Downton, M. (2014). In harmony: A technology-based music education model to enhance musical understanding and general learning skills. *International Journal of Music Education*, *32*, 242–260.

Rickard, N. S., Appelman, P., James, R., Murphy, F., Gill, A., & Bambrick, C. (2013). Orchestrating life skills: The effect of increased school-based music classes on children's social competence and self-esteem. *International Journal of Music Education*, *31*, 292–309.

Seidman, I. (2012). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Seifried, S. (2006). Exploring the outcomes of rock and popular music instruction in high school guitar class: A case study. *International Journal of Music Education*, *24*, 168–177.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Stauffer, S. L., & Barrett, M. S. (2009). Narrative inquiry in music education: Toward resonant work. In M. S. Barrett & S. L. Stauffer (Eds.), *Narrative inquiry in music education. Troubling certainty* (pp. 19–29). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

## Appendix 1

1. Could you describe your first musical experiences (prior to primary education)?
2. How will you describe your musical experiences during primary education? How about high school? (focus on the experiences/situations, as well as in the role of teachers, classmates, the school context . . . and any other aspect that may arise).
3. What did you like the most? What did you like about music lessons? (both in primary and secondary education—you can ask as they describe the experiences in question 2).
4. How was music valued at both educational stages?
5. What experiences/people in the context of musical education of both educational stages impacted most decisively in you? Why?
6. Also, what other musical experiences did you have out of school? Could you describe them?
7. What impact has school musical experiences have on you in a personal, academic, and professional level? (it can be left open in case there is some other type of impact in other dimensions).
8. What are your future goals in relation to music?
9. Do you wish to share other ideas or memories about your musical experience?