



LEVERAGING THE EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF OVIDE DECROLY AND THE TENETS OF WORLD MUSIC PEDAGOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL VOCABULARY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD. EDUCATIONAL PROPOSALS - OBSERVATIONS - CORRELATIONS - EXPLORATION OF THE CONCEPT OF 'GLOBALISATION - COMMUNITY MUSIC'

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Abstract:

The incorporation of the pedagogical principles and psychological theories of Ovide Decroly, along with the principles of World Music Pedagogy, forms the foundation for the development of musical vocabulary in early childhood. Research has shown that music education should commence as early as possible in a person's life. This work seeks to align Decroly's pedagogical principles with those of World Music Pedagogy, offering pedagogical suggestions for early childhood that relate to Edwin Gordon's concept of audiation. It is noted that community music can influence music teaching.

Keywords: Ovide Decroly, World Music Pedagogy, musical vocabulary, early childhood, community music

1. Introduction

The primary aim of this investigation is to correlate Decroly's "*education method*" principles with those of Global Community Music in fostering musical vocabulary in early childhood. By musical vocabulary, we refer to rhythmic and tonal skills, the execution of rhythmic and melodic phrases, self-expression through improvisation, familiarity with musical instruments, active listening, imitation, and the implementation of musical activities. The necessity to connect Decroly's pedagogy with World Music Pedagogy appears particularly significant due to the multifaceted nature of the Educator

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and the application of World Music Pedagogy processes in community settings. This is particularly pertinent in choral music education, guiding teachers to create a rich cultural context for students, emphasizing listening, movement, and play-based activities as essential experiences of musical creation. The five characteristic levels of World Music Pedagogy are specifically addressed in various intersections of school and community, focusing on the collaboration between teachers and local artists-musicians, and providing pedagogical proposals for the development of musical vocabulary in early childhood.

2. Playing in Music Teaching - Decroly / Swanwick

Jean-Ovide Decroly (1871-1932), a Belgian neuropsychiatrist, psychologist, and educator, was a pioneer of the New Education movement and an innovator in special education. Decroly advocated for the incorporation of play in teaching. Through educational materials, children have the opportunity to develop their activity as they work individually, create logical connections, combine ideas, and engage in associative exercises (Vogiatzi, Dimitriou, 2011).

Keith Swanwick explores the psychological and sociological dimensions of musical experience and their implications for children's development and music education in schools and colleges. Music, along with other arts, is considered to contribute to the development of the mind, rooted deeply in psychological aspects of play. Swanwick examines how children make their own music, confirming that there is a discernible sequence of development. His insights into musical experience aid in compiling and interpreting fragmented psychological work done in the field, enabling more targeted planning of music education in schools (Swanwick, 1998).

3. Basic Principles of the Decroly Method

The French educator Decroly, drawing on the biological concept of "*evolution*" and biogenetic theory, advocates for a simple and natural learning methodology, which he believes should be adopted by educators and educational systems (Karras, 2014:31).

The core principles of his theory are summarized as follows:

- Nature provides all the visual resources necessary for the learning process. Children will always begin with the concrete, from life: what they experience in nature, society, and groups, before moving to an analytical phase.
- Real learning is found outside the classroom.
- Learning becomes significant when the learning activity holds meaning, relevance, and interest for children.
- The psychological and intellectual abilities of children are specific to their age.
- Children must "*learn*" to experience their childhood and be able to solve problematic situations independently.

- The "Decroly method" for reading is based on the "*whole language approach*" (the way a child learns to speak is the same way they can learn to read) (Karras, 2014:32).

As a co-founder of the International Association for New Education, Ovide Decroly advocated for a pedagogy that rests on the following principles: "*all human beings have immense potential, that they are all capable and all creative.*"

- "*Education, as a human endeavor, is inherently flexible and continuously evolving.*"
- "*Every child, regardless of who they are, is unique in their emotionality, their history, and their development, and they cultivate interests based on their needs, desires, abilities, and weaknesses.*"
- The child is an actor in their own learning.
- First, we need to teach the child to understand by observing their surroundings, then relating it to what they already know and record, followed by expressing this learning in a specific way using different techniques.
- The child develops through interaction, because of the group in which they evolve.
- "*Human beings develop through their differences and exchanges.*" Decroly and the supporters of New Education advocated for a new approach to children and schools, one that is more inclusive and respectful of differences, particularly for students with learning difficulties.

The adult is responsible for learning but does not provide knowledge: he encourages, advises on processes, remains attentive to difficulties and interests, and allows for experimentation. "*Countless concepts have penetrated the child without prior conscious analysis, without an intended separation.*" The child perceives the world holistically, similar to how we see recently presented concepts in a global manner. Initially, they recognize objects and beings without identifying their parts. They will analyze them later, gradually and multiple times, depending on their individual needs and interests.

4. The Idea of Globalization, according to Decroly

The method based on the concept of "globalization" is grounded in the biological need of the human organism to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. At this point, we can identify Global Music Pedagogy by examining music as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The musical cultures of the world can be discovered locally and also utilised virtually, both in music teaching and within community contexts (Campbell, Lum, 2019).

5. Community Music - "Globalization"

Teaching and learning music occur in many different contexts, ranging from formal to informal. As an integral part of cultures worldwide, community music is widespread, involving people who make music. For music educators, this term suggests opportunities

for participation and training through a wide range of mediums and musical experiences. Community music activities and programmes are often based on the premise that everyone has the right and ability to create music.

It can be a local orchestra, a church choir, a fair, a festival, a jazz stage, a group of individuals playing percussion at a gathering, a local music school, or anything else that embodies a sense of collective identity and playing music. However, community music should be viewed more as a dynamic and vital force, rather than being confined to any fixed set of factors. Community music involves active participation in creating all forms of music (performance, improvisation, and composition). Music can be presented through cultural events, folk traditions, and other arts. It may reflect the cultural life of a geographical community, a recreated community, or a fictional community.

Individuals have the ability to navigate a variety of roles, such as an observer, participant or shaper and creator, discovering different ways to engage. Community music activities may include a broad range of participants—from early childhood to adulthood, and in some cases, across generations. There is often a belief in the value and utility of music to promote intercultural and interpersonal acceptance and understanding (Colwell & Richardson, 2002).

Music education offers a unique opportunity to realize the goals of dynamic "*globalisation-community music*" by applying a universal perspective to a wide range of global music, thereby creating a musical community of interest distinguished by a dynamism that recycles and enriches concepts and experiences across various musical contexts. Music educators require a philosophy of multicultural music education that is conservative in its concern for maintaining the artistic integrity of musical traditions, yet liberal to the extent that it transcends specific cultural preferences to tackle broader musical ideas, processes, and issues. This naturally encompasses the common concerns of musicians involved in creating new musical cultures.

Building on John Dewey's assertion that a great society must become a great community, Decroly asserts that we must educate children to willingly look beyond individual interests and confront issues as an "*interested community of concern*" (Elliot, 1989).

6. Biological Evolution

Decroly held a deep belief in evolution and was an advocate for its principles. He put biogenetic theory into educational practice, applying his knowledge of a child's development through the study of its psychogenesis. That is, its psychological growth, while also aiming to connect the child with the study of phylogenesis, which addresses the development of cultures within the human species. The foundations of his work were fundamentally biosocial.

A fundamental principle of his pedagogical approach was to place the child in a rich environment to activate their potential. He believed that a child's development is a

result of both their biological growth and active experimentation within their surroundings. His aim was the holistic development of the child, encompassing intellectual, social, emotional, and artistic domains.

6.1 Decroly & Community Music Principles Identification

The expressive spontaneity is respected and encouraged in Decroly's pedagogy. Music serves as a means of knowledge. Considering Decroly's principle that "*real learning takes place outside the classroom*" and the characteristics of community music, which is primarily expressed in open spaces without barriers, we discover that improvisation and creativity are key elements of identity.

Another important point in Decroly's principles is that "*the child is an actor in their learning*," which means that whatever they learn becomes their own through their self-assertion, and "*nature provides all the visual aids for the learning process*." Community music has a profound connection and influence with nature, as many artistic concerts are held outdoors, where artists become the leading figures—conductors of their own creations.

7. Development of Musical Vocabulary in Early Childhood, According to Edwin Gordon

Focusing on the musical life of children in early childhood, through the application of multimodal approaches that include singing, listening, movement, storytelling, and orchestral performance, we progressively develop children's musical vocabulary. As young children grow within their families and neighbourhood environments, they can also evolve into increasingly expanding concentric circles of cultural communities through child-centred gatherings in music and related arts, which can serve as a vehicle for children to explore themselves and each other more deeply.

Focusing on playful engagement framed by the principles of informal and formal teaching, children develop their musical receptiveness and prepare acoustically, rhythmically, and melodically for learning a musical instrument. Gordon compares learning music to learning a language, describing it as a progressively evolving process that ranges from perceiving and reacting to sounds to more complex levels that require problem-solving and understanding intricate concepts. Children develop essential discrimination skills through auditory and verbal techniques, learning to read and write music notes only after extensive auditory experiences of various kinds.

Creating music is as fundamental a life skill as walking or speaking. Peery and Peery (1987) suggest that it is desirable for children to be exposed to, trained in, and nurtured by music for its own sake. In other words, it is an inherent right for all people to be able to sing in tune and move to rhythm (Levinowitz and Guilmartin, 1989, 1992, 1996).

Edwin Gordon has identified early childhood as the period of developmental musical aptitude (1988). Research has shown that the earlier an individual is exposed to

a musically rich environment, the greater the impact of that environment on the development of their musical aptitude; conversely, as a person grows older, the influence of the environment diminishes (Gordon, 1979, 1986, 1987, 1990). An individual's musical aptitude sets a ceiling, a barrier, on what they can achieve musically.

By leveraging the pedagogical principles of Decroly and World Music Pedagogy for developing musical vocabulary in early childhood, we rely on identical principles: the joy of play, improvisation, creation, the influence of nature, expression, interaction, and the concept of the actor – protagonist in the learning process.

Audiation is to music what thinking is to language. Listening while playing music is akin to someone thinking while speaking, and listening while hearing music is similar to considering what has been said and what is being said during a conversation. Audiation is the foundation of musical receptiveness. Children can imitate or hear musical sounds without audiation. Unlike imitation, audiation is a process that leads to the understanding of music; imitation alone does not accomplish this. Children rarely forget what they have audibly engaged with, recalling it later by associating characteristics with specific and fundamental musical meanings (Sotiriou, 2022).

The sooner young children immerse themselves in musical exposure, particularly before musical development becomes so pressing that music seems of secondary importance, the better. By the age of three, it is too late to begin engaging with musical exposure, and for children with exceptionally low developing musical receptiveness, age five is nearly excessively late. In this exposure, children encounter music from their own culture, thus basing the sounds and movements of babbling on what they hear in their environment. The greater the variety of music these children listen to, the more plentiful their environment is in tonalities, harmonies, and metres. Also, the more they are encouraged to interact with what they hear through both systematic and non-systematic informal guidance, the more they benefit.

Young children need time to absorb the language spoken in their environment before they learn to speak; similarly, they require time to absorb the music around them before they learn to sing, recite rhythmically, and move (Gordon, 2013).

8. Pedagogical Suggestions - Discussion

Methods of music education cannot remain the same as those of the last century. The 21st century is characterized by vast amounts of knowledge, rapid advancements in new technologies and the internet, and high competitiveness across all countries, as neoliberalism has strengthened its influence in every aspect of human life. Alternative approaches and best practice theories in early childhood education are being evaluated for a rapidly changing and globalized society (Yulindrasari, Adriany, Rahmawati, Hutagalung, Gálvez, Abdullah 2019).

Competitive cultural dynamics are revealed through "*micro-musics in large systems*." Slobin describes "*micro-musics*" or "*subcultural sounds*" as the smallest units that

affirm cultural identity within a dominant musical superculture. These groups include communities linked with artists or educators and personal networks of contact. He suggests that: "*Their nature—personal, dynamic, and interactive—can secure their continued existence.*" There is a relative perception that each individual constructs their own musical world. Crafts, Cavicchi, and Keil (1993) and Campbell (1998).

Similarly, we see many connections between community music programmes and traditional music education, as well as implications for each. For instance, community music practitioners advocate for lifelong learning prospects and a broader definition of "*teaching frameworks.*" Community music offers a more expansive way to examine how music is used in a variety of settings, involving a wider range of participants, and through a broader medium than has been previously studied. In this emerging field, music creation and the development of musical vocabulary can serve therapeutic or social purposes.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Christina Sotiriou is a graduate of the Department of Music Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and was awarded a doctorate by the Department of Early Childhood Education of the University of Ioannina with an excellent grade. She studied Musicology at the University of Pavia at the School of Paleography and Musicology in Northern Italy based in Cremona for three years. She is a qualified piano soloist and a graduate of Harmony, Piano and Counterpoint. She teaches as a member of the Laboratory Teaching Staff of Music Pedagogy at the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care of the University of West Attica. She was appointed to Secondary Education and served for 22 years. She has taught at Universities in Greece and Cyprus, Technological Educational Institutions, Regional Educational Centers of Ionian and Corfu, Public Educational Training Institutes, General and Music Schools, Conservatories and other educational structures. Her authorship includes publications in prestigious journals and conference proceedings. She has participated in research projects and has presented Announcements at scientific conferences while at the same time he has organized lectures on Music Pedagogy and seminars as he actively participates in European ERASMUS mobility programs. She also has a rich artistic activity, participating in choirs in many countries. She is a member of world associations for music education.

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