

Music, synergies and interculturality in school in Loures

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The pilot project Mussi integrated into a wider research project¹ on performative practices and education, has been energised into three separate editions, in 2007 and 2008 at EB1 n^o4 de S. João da Talha, in Loures. It promoted collaboration at many levels namely migrant integration into the School through the articulation of artistic knowledge, especially music, dance and drama, in the curricular activity. It increased the educational success and tolerance in the school community and laid the foundation for the construction of quality learning in public schools, in an ethical, humanistic dimension of intercultural and multimodal dialogue.

The many participants involved made it possible to build a new collaborative network in the school's experience: the coordinator of the school was directly responsible for the management of space, time and resources; the other teachers, for the integration of themes and activities in the curriculum, providing support and collaboration for the performative agents in the course of performing their respective workshops; the educational assistants for help regarding arising, often completely new needs; the pupils and families for their enthusiastic participation. Outside of the School, the institutional and individual partners were many, establishing a collaborative network with representatives of Primary Education, Higher Education and Arts Education, as well as of the local Municipality and Commercial Industry. Coordinated in an educational/ethnomusicological research perspective at the Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa and then at the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, promoted scientific and educational rigor, manifested, among other things, in the selection of the performative agents² and in the supervision of their work in School, preferring those that, collaborating with the municipality of Loures or in schools of music, dance or theater in the Lisbon region, showed their interest in the pedagogical experience of this innovative proposal.

The Educational Division of the Municipality of Loures supported the logistics of the pilot project, in the performing public presentations, providing transport facilities and giving exposure throughout the municipality. Sonae Sierra, through the commercial center LoureShopping, funded the costs relating to musical instruments (flutes, bass drums [bombos], guitars and violins) that the project offered to the children and the school respectively, as well as the costs related to the work of the performative agents, composer and the public performances' infrastructural facilities such as t-shirts, flyers, light meals, security, sound.

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The pilot project *Mussi*, an original scientific-pedagogical Portuguese conception, aimed to contribute to the optimisation of the existing curriculum, for the promotion of an innovative public school of quality and dialogue within the community in the 1st cycle of Primary Education, a learning organisation where everyone works together, collaborates, learns to reflect and reflects to learn, where music and its transcultural synergies are the starting point for learning in a new cultural and educational dimension. Its goals are promoting the development of education for citizenship, reducing the handicap of cultural relationships of pupils and educational agents of migrant and other origin, and further disseminating innovative educational experiences from Portugal to the world. The project was considered as an example of *Best Practice* by Evens Foundation, in 2008. Its evaluation and discussion takes place in articles (Côte-Real 2008) as well as in public presentations in national and international meetings. It proposes to stimulate the development of citizenship education, diminishing the limitations of cultural relationships among migrant and other students and educational agents.

Its dynamics increased educational success and decreased socio-cultural distances by softening the problems as a result thereof in the School. It promoted and tested the access to quality education, starting from the inclusion of performative practices (music, dance and drama) in the curriculum of the 1st Cycle of Primary Education. It reinforced the affective relationships between pupils, teachers, performative agents and families, thus contributing to capacity building and intercultural strategies in a public school, using references from several cultural areas as diverse as: European art culture (violins, with reference to practices of the Suzuki Method), traditional Portuguese culture (traditional dance, drums), globalizing popular culture (hip-hop), collaborative Portuguese (invention of texts), world music and dances (Indian and Mozambican).

Including 19 teachers, about 300 pupils (6-12), with great ethnic diversity, some pupils with special educational needs, 7 performative agents and 7 educational assistants, it was an excellent opportunity to test the use of different communicative modes, through performative processes and products, involving pupils, performing agents and teachers. It represented a great opportunity for personal development, ethics and citizenship to all. It implied a new management of time, of space, of pupil groups and of teaching-learning methods. It was a project that innovated the school. There was more time to learn together, respecting ethnic and cultural diversity. It was set to find a new way of working together, building on the professionalism and competence of human resources involved. It was an innovative and creative project, particularly notable by the joy and happiness in the school: the brightness in the eyes of children and families reflected it! To great sadness of all we were unable to sustain its integration into the curriculum, due to lack of financial support and little recognition of the entities of the macro system on local, regional and national levels, on which a public school depends. One can conclude with an excerpt from a poem by Sebastião

da Gama: *We go by the dream/moved and silent. / Do we arrive? Don't we arrive? (...)*
/We leave. We go. We are.

Notes

¹ The research project 'Performative Practices and Education for Citizenship in the Basic Education' was developed as part of a post-doctoral grant funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia.

² In the selection of the performative agents, attention was given to the academic training. Much of them are graduate students, with a master's degree or doing their master's studies in education or in performing arts, particularly at the Academia Nacional Superior de Orquestra (OML), Northwestern University (USA), Escola Superior de Dança, Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema e Escola Superior de Educação (IPL), Faculdade de Motricidade Humana (UTL), Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (UNL), Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação (UL).

References

Côrte-Real, M.S.J. (2008), "Music, Synergies and Interculturality: 'Mussi at School' Project", *Intercultural Education*, vol.19, no.1, pp.79-81.