BOOK *Integrated music education: Challenges of teaching and teacher training*

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There is growing acknowledgment of the long-term academic and cognitive, socio-cultural and economic, and physical and mental health benefits that can arise from active engagement in the arts. Nevertheless, music and the arts are still among the first subjects that schools cut so they can balance their budgets, especially during a politico-cultural swing towards a «back-to-basics» education that focuses on «core» academic subjects. Against this challenge, educators and researchers have long tried to keep the creative arts in the curriculum, for example through initiatives such as STEAM, which aims to teach concepts in science, technology, engineering and mathematics through integrated arts and creative problem-solving activities.

The scope of this thought-provoking edited collection goes beyond typical initiatives, providing clearer definitions of key concepts as well as practical suggestions to improve understanding and advance the field. The book arose out of Markus Cslovjecsek’s 2006 launch of *Practice and Research in Integrated Music Education* (PRIME) – now a special interest group and part of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) – which has held several conferences, symposia, and other events. Co-edited by expert researcher-pedagogues Markus Cslovjecsek and Madeleine Zulauf, they and the contributors within this volume have extensive experience in an interdisciplinary range of subject areas including music, education and teacher training. Drawing on a wide range of philosophical, theoretical and practical perspectives, one valuable goal of this volume is to help educators to better appreciate and apply some of the far-reaching benefits of integrating...
creative musical activities into their «normal»
classroom’s learning and teaching practices. As
a result, the text is bound to appeal to teach-
ers, teacher-trainers and researchers who are
interested in keeping arts and music education
alive – both for its own sake and because of the
common learning processes that can lead to
applied benefits in other domains.

The book itself takes a process ap-
proach, with a Starting Point that then develops
through five steps:

Step 1: Approaching Integrated Music
Education by Exploring Distant
Horizons

Step 2: Encountering Integrated Music
Education: Where School Meets
Life

Step 3: Uncovering School Models in In-
tegrated Music Education

Step 4: Becoming Familiar With Inte-
grated Music Education Activities
in the Classroom

Step 5: Being Invited Into The Minds
of People Engaged in Integrated
Music Education

Each «step» or section begins with a short
introduction from the co-editors, providing
useful background information about the per-
spectives and processes taken, and some of the
key questions explored by or arising from the
authors’ contributions in each chapter. The
book then concludes with Lessons Taken From
the Journey: Where Next? where the co-editors
explore new questions and offer suggestions of
important questions that the field of integrated
music education might explore in future.

In my view, three chapters in partic-
ular stand out against the overall high stan-
dard set by the volume as a whole. This list was
challenging to whittle down due to the many
thought-provoking ideas and perspectives put
forward in each chapter.

Chapter 7 was of particular interest to
me, given its focus on adolescents’ French-lan-
guage learning through music and the visual
arts. Anne Lowe and Monique Richard de-
scribe the outcomes of an interdisciplinary
music/arts/French language intervention-collab-
oration for students in a francophone mi-
nority community in New Brunswick, Canada.
The intervention’s rationale, as explained by
the authors following Deveau and colleagues
(2005), was partly based on the fact that «ar-
tistic education satisfies students’ need for
autonomy, competence, and relatedness by al-
lowing self-assertion, exposure to new ideas,
the development of tolerance, and a sense of
belonging to a culture. This not only contrib-
utes to the enculturating experience but also
to the empowering experience» (p. 160). The
project involved the creation of new musical
or visual artworks that required the students to
use French (e.g., when researching to discover
more about the local francophone artist they
had chosen) and formed part of the learners’
evaluations in French-language, music and vi-
sual arts. This chapter provides evidence for the
linguistic, artistic and cultural benefits that can
arise from taking part in an interdisciplinary
project, even within the confines of a «typical»
school and even led to visits with francophone

teaching and teacher training. Didacticae, 8, 213-216.
artists in the region. The authors conclude, in part, that «the teaching strategies employed by the teachers revealed that a pedagogy of discovery and personal creation centred on the student can contribute to the success of a music/arts/language interdisciplinary project» (p. 165) and highlight the importance of communication and collaboration and subject-specialist teachers’ (and learners’) willingness to try new teaching and learning approaches and activities.

In chapter 9, Dagmar Widorski’s contribution is both philosophically and pedagogically useful, focusing first on why school is organised into academic ‘disciplines’ and then describing how working outside of or across those disciplinary boundaries can provide students with educational experiences that can enhance and deepen literacy, rational judgment and aesthetic experiences. Sections 4 and 5 may be of particular interest to educators, with a list on page 207 of how interdisciplinary education can enhance learning through considering how these approaches can be applied to their own teaching, and then provides a concrete example – an «aural pictures» activity (Wermke, 2011) to illustrate the manner in which classroom activities can be organised.

Chapter 14 (and indeed the other contributions in Step 4) may be of particular interest to educators. The practical, didactic focus has become yet more prominent, and authors Anke Böttcher, Frits Evelein and Diana Harris describe step-by-step activity ideas that, through cooperative, social learning activities, can lead to self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000), by engaging learners in three rather different, but all embodied, structured yet creative activities in which each individual has an important role to play, within a more teacher-directed framework. With echoes from previous chapters in the volume (such as Jonathan Barnes’ observation that music may have pre-dated language), the authors of chapter 14 believe that we are all inherently musical and that our musical skills and understandings can help us reflect on and express ourselves, support our wellbeing and social development – particularly when we make music together, with the feelings of belonging that this can engender.

And as Zulauf & Cslovjecsek conclude in Chapter 2, quoting Russell and Zembylas’ (2007) valuable suggestion to move away from old conceptions of integrated music (and arts) education:

«if we stop thinking in dualisms and move beyond the either (disciplines) / or (handmaidens) dichotomy, we may begin to examine arts integration on a totally different level of thinking – that is, as multi-layered and symbiotic with other learning» (2007, p. 288).

«To stop thinking in dichotomies is, in our view, the major process that will enable us to achieve a better result: optimising the integration of music and therefore improving the quality of students’ education.» (p. 62)

Overall, Integrated music education makes an important contribution to this emerging field – both in terms of theory and practice to help educators and researchers reflect on and promote the possibilities of integrated learning in
and through music within varied 21st century school systems – and the book’s publication is one that all contributors can feel proud of having achieved.

References


