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University music education in Colombia

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University music education in Colombia

The multidimensionality of teaching and training

Luz Dalila Rivas Caicedo

Introduction

The following arguments outline some dichotomies behind higher music education in Colombia, based on the curricular construction of training programmes for teachers. On the one hand, I consider society’s educational needs; on the other I focus on the great diversity of actions and dynamics behind the music field. I am using the concept of ‘field’ as defined by Norbert Elías in figurative sociology (2006), for it allows an understanding of the social framework around individuals and collectivities, the correlational link between them and the different levels of social organization. It also allows us to place the individual by recognizing the ‘other’, and to understand individuals from a cultural perspective, where culture has an influence on the individual who, in turn, responds to the pressure exerted by culture (see also Barrett, 2011). Elías defines the term ‘figuration’ to designate the structure of interdependent people, whether as groups or as individuals. Figurations end up being constructions of intersubjectivity on both individual and collective levels, thus shaping the ‘social’ outcome. This framework reflects aspects of Colombian higher education in music, because most university music programmes educate music teachers; however, both teaching and music majors graduate and face the job market as performers, conductors, cultural entrepreneurs, arrangers and composers, among other profiles. Higher education in music and teacher training is therefore facing conceptual, theoretical, epistemological and methodological difficulties; the discussion in this chapter leads, below, to an analysis of new approaches and perspectives.
Teachers, training and labour conditions

As the Research Committee Coordinator at my institution, my discussions with music colleagues and teachers have focused on the multiple concerns, fears and dissatisfaction that lead to frustration as musicians and teachers. This frustration oscillates between their own educational background as artists and creative individuals, and their self-consciousness as teachers in their working environment. This was evident during the National Colloquium: Music as a Profession, which took place in Bogotá in April 2015.1 Researchers, teachers, producers and others involved with the music field gathered at this event to express their perceptions of an urgent necessity for new paths in higher music education in the country. Finding academic excellence, settling labour needs imposed by society and facing the local and international competitive market are all concerns that demand renovation and reformation of higher education, including in music (Casas, 2015; Niño, 2015; Rivas Caicedo, 2015). Bennett (2010) analyzes and reflects upon these issues in detail in an Australian context, but her work remains largely unknown in Colombia despite its relevance to the field. Transformations are required in the epistemic and academic structures of institutionalized university programmes – public or private, technical or technological.

Music and music education face difficulties vis-à-vis such transformation. According to Bennett (2010), success relies on the achievement of a sustainable career, in which the musician is able to apply several dimensions of music; in other words, an occupation that requires specialized knowledge, thus allowing a response to social needs with an economic return. This implies an understanding of music as an academic, scientific, inter- and trans-disciplinary area, whose study and reconfiguration can create and re-create labour conditions around its own professional paths.

The emergence of new ways to organize music production, education and work – where technological innovation play such an important role – is recognizable within the configuration of the job market, which also determines the restructuring of employment. This is of course related to current social and cultural conditions, and the search for educational and labour flexibility. Hiring requirements for young people in the current market for music employment illustrate the growing complexity of school-university-labour transitions.2

According to the Labour Observatory for Education from The National Ministry of Education in Colombia (MEN; Republic of Colombia, 2015), the arts only represent 1.9% of the active offering from higher education programmes. Of

1 Organized by the Ministry of Culture, the Centre for Music Documentation, the Social and Human Sciences Faculty from the Externado University of Colombia, the Arts Faculty from the District University ‘Francisco José de Caldas’ and the Colombian Association of Music Researchers (ACIMUS). The minutes and memoirs will be published in the 25th A Contratiempo review (July-December 2015), edited by the Centre for Music Documentation.

2 For related international perspectives, see Jones, chapter 27, this volume, McLaughlin, chapter 10, this volume; Morrow, chapter 26, this volume; Wong, chapter 9, this volume.
315 registered programmes in the arts, 101 are currently not active, and they are mostly offered in the three main cities of the country: Bogotá, Cali and Medellín. When it comes to music, programmes are offered in 23 higher education institutions, from which 3278 students graduated between 2001 and 2013. One-hundred seventy of them were trained in technical and technological programmes. As for students of music teaching, the total number of graduates between 2001 and 2013 was 2628. This number of graduates is important, keeping in mind that there is a strong proposal from the National Government to highlight the role of education as a contribution to reaching “justice, sustainability and solidarity in human development, in order to improve the life quality of Colombians and achieve peace, reconciliation and thus fight poverty and exclusion” (Decennial Plan of Education 2006–2016, p. 13). It is necessary to recognize the diversity of the music field and its corresponding work venues, which cannot be ignored by higher music education.

On the other hand, concern regarding the challenges of reinforcing teacher training has been expressed by international organizations such as UNESCO, the Regional Platform for Music Education in Latin America (PREAL, 2004), the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI, 2008), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR, 2010), the Organization of American States (OEA, 2012), the Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC) (2012), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2011) and the World Bank, among others. This can be seen in reports from each of these organizations since 2001, where they agree with the idea that teacher training should seek to graduate professionals with wide disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, who can be independent, responsible, thoughtful, critical, innovative, effective and socially involved (OREALC / UNESCO, 2012). Therefore, these organizations argue, those institutions offering this type of training must guarantee a high-quality introduction in how to perform professionally in diverse circumstances, and a clear outline of labour conditions under a living wage with dignifying opportunities for further training and professional development.

In response, the Colombian National Ministry of Education proposed a reformulation of the guidelines for teacher-training and related programmes in 2014 (Republic of Colombia, 2014b). One reason for this was the visible disarticulation between epistemological and disciplinary knowledge and the pedagogic/didactic nature of the discipline of music education (OECD for Colombia, 2012). In this context of change and transformation, it is complicated for higher music education to meet the labour needs of the music field, given that most graduates are music teachers and that non-teaching musicians have no clarity as to how to proceed professionally, apart from in music performance.  

3 Translation: Luis Gabriel Mesa Martínez.

4 See how related concerns are addressed in other contexts, in, for example, Jones (chapter 27, this volume), Lebler and Hodges (chapter 22, this volume), Morrow et al. (chapter 26, this volume) and Wong (chapter 9, this volume).
Professional practice and the labour market for music teachers in Colombia

In Colombia, as mentioned previously, most higher music education programmes are based on teacher training. A great number of music performance and composition programmes, on the other hand, are offered in private institutions (Labour Observatory for Education from the National Ministry of Education, MEN / Colombian Association for Faculties of Arts [ACOFARTES] 2014). Additionally, the National Service of Learning (SENA) is the only public institution in the country with an exclusively technical/technological approach, which is known in Colombia as education for labour and human development. This latter institution is regulated by the Ministry of Labour, unlike universities and other higher education providers, which are supervised by the Ministry of Education. According to Law 1064 (2006) and Decree 4904 (Republic of Colombia, 2009):

Educational process in technical training for labor and expertise in arts and crafts seeks to prepare people in different areas of the productive sector, as well as developing specific work skills related the performance areas listed on the National Classification of Occupations,5 which will allow them to work on productive activities as independent or dependent entrepreneurs.

Graduates of this institution earn occupational skill certificates. In 2006, SENA sought a normative definition of labour skills, and to categorize the labour market and the field of music, musicians, arts and culture in general, resulting in the definition of “Occupations whose main purpose relies on offering entertainment, relaxation and communication, which are related to art, culture, theatre arts, journalism, literature, creative design. The occupations in this area result from a creative talent requisite” (Ministry of Education, 2015). This led to the first offering of music in a technical/technological discipline by a public Colombian institution, together with a legitimate approval to award formal degrees and certificates that would be valid in the labour market (SENA, 2006). Nonetheless, teacher-training and music graduates are often perceived as performers, conductors, cultural entrepreneurs, arrangers, composers and researchers, regardless of their college-level specialization in music and music education (technical, technological or bachelor’s).

The situation exposed by Bennett (2010) in an Australian context, is similar in Colombia: the cultural industries and the current job market have transformed the different spheres of action and the demand for music. In spite of this, educational institutions have not managed to respond to this environment, based on their own models of training. Likewise, Zapata Restrepo et al. (2005) explain the musical practices of students who are being educated in teacher-training programmes, including a range of music genres such as rock, jazz and salsa, and participating in local and foreign bands. The authors establish that there is no meaningful relationship between the students’ music education training and their roles as musicians in

5 Translated by Luis Gabriel Mesa Martínez. Refer to the following link to read the National Classification of Occupations; http://observatorio.sena.edu.co/Comportamiento/CnoQueEs
different contexts, and also acknowledge the distance between academic training and musical practice more generally.

Furthermore, the Occupational Characterization for the Field of Music study conducted by historian Diego Felipe Giraldo Serna (SENA, 2006) for the National Service of Learning (SENA), shows the diversity of bands and music practices among itinerant musicians, unstable in the spheres of action where they would mainly work as performers and/or music teachers (Giraldo Serna/SENA, 2006, pp. 105–106); this music performance work is mostly related to the practice of popular and traditional musics. The study also points out that the general pattern for musicians – with no distinction between professional musicians and future music teachers – who seek music education usually corresponds to private lessons (25.5%), followed by those who seek university programmes (24.3%). Informal schools, on the other hand, count up to 23.1%, whereas self-taught education is limited to 16.5%. Finally, conservatories were mentioned by 10.6% of respondents (2006, pp. 97–99). Along the same lines, Beatriz Goubert describes the characteristics of formal education programmes in their State of the Art of Music in Bogotá. The results imply that, although most programmes train their students in performance, conduction, composition and teaching, among other areas, there is a stronger focus on music performance (2009, p. 14).

The musicians’ field of action within Colombia’s cultural policies

It is necessary to transform the model of higher education in music in order to reinforce the future projection for different fields of action, as well as higher levels of creativity, training, employment and quality job offers inside Colombia, which can enhance competition in the labour market for music. In this regard, Colombia’s Ministry of Culture has established the following fields of action to be considered in music training: creation, practice and performance, appreciation, research, documentation, instrument building and maintenance, production and academic development and cultural entrepreneurship (Arts Policy, 2006–2010). The Ministry of Culture – in agreement with the Ministry of Education – also states that different types of music training are required, regardless of the traditional/existing offerings from conservatories or universities.

Local music schools are thus part of an alliance with the governments in each region of the country; this leads to constant updating of procedures for music teachers and assistants, as well as educating of children and teenagers who would have an impact in their local communities, and therefore facilitate social opportunities, generating a strong sense of identity and diversity. The purpose of these schools is to educate about creative and entrepreneurial processes as a way to

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6 According to the 43rd article (Chapter III) in Law 115 de 1994 from Colombia’s National Congress, informal-education schools are those where free knowledge is ‘spontaneously’ or ‘naturally’ acquired, coming from people, organizations, mass media, press, traditions, customs, social behaviour and others (not necessarily part of a specific syllabus).
reinforce productive skills, as well as artistic and educational planning, by means of music production/services and community projects. Other degrees are therefore established, ones different from those offered at the conservatory or the university. They should respond to the institutional normativity of the Colombian Ministry of Education (July 29, 2002), which regulates the public service of higher education at technical, technological and professional levels. This type of learning could include professionalization, technical level training, certification of labour skills and informal education (Arts Policy: 2006–2010, pp. 160–161):

1. **Professionalization** is aimed at musicians with several years of experience in practice, even if they did not pursue formal studies in music. This would give access to graduate school programmes. It is an option for them – and also for those who work in music teaching without a degree – to complete their professional training in approximately 20 months. Universities must offer this type of training.

2. Technical-level education comes from the necessity to fulfil the “elementary music training, as applied in the development of local music schools”. That is to say, formal and informal learning of music, based on popular and traditional music (2006–2010, p. 101). These programmes intend to cover a wider number of schools in all regions of the country.

3. **Certification of labour skills** give a chance to experienced musicians to validate and qualify their labour capacity in a specific musical practice. These certificates are different from professionalization because they do not make teaching official, and they do not grant access to graduate studies.

4. **Informal education** focuses on music practice *per se*, preparing musicians for opportunities to access formal education in the future. It seeks to value musical practice without the need for professional degrees or certificates.

Feeding into this discussion, the policies of the National Ministry of Education describe the teacher as a social mediator, someone who guides the construction of specialized knowledge, a planner who provides educational contexts for teaching and learning, and not merely an operator of processes and procedures (Republic of Colombia, 2014a). Once teacher training became a part of university education – as

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7. For more detailed information about music schools and the Ministry of Culture’s assessments, see: http://www.mincultura.gov.co/areas/arte/musica/escuelas-de-musica/Paginas/default.aspx.

8. This process was generalized in all areas of knowledge with the establishment of the National Pedagogic University in 1955. The Teaching Programme in Educational Sciences – with a particular emphasis on Music Pedagogy – was founded in 1976 (National Pedagogic University, 2009). A similar programme was created at the School of Arts and Crafts in San Juan de Pasto in 1938, and then transferred to the University of Nariño as a bachelor’s Teaching Programme in Music in 1985. The Medellín Conservatory also approved a bachelor’s Degree in Music Education in 1968, in agreement with the Education Faculty from the University of Antioquia. Along the same lines, the National Conservatory of Colombia – founded in 1882 – began to offer Music Pedagogy in 1965 (an option that gradually disappeared in the mid-1990s). These are a few examples of the configuration of music and music teacher training in Colombian higher education.
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well as a part of *escuelas normalistas* (teaching-training schools) – it acquired a professional connotation that suited the context of higher education – research training, teaching, scientific spreading and courses related to disciplinary issues, pedagogy, culture, society, politics, ethics and preparation for the labour market.

**Configuration of music in higher education in Colombia**

In agreement with Law 30 (Republic of Colombia, 1992) and Law 749 (Republic of Colombia, 2002), higher education in Colombia is expected to divide undergraduate programmes into preparatory cycles. These provide a comprehensive education, where each cycle leads to an academic degree, which entitles people to work, according to their level of training. The titles also validate access to the next level.

The cycles are:

1. **Technical Level**: It trains professionals by reinforcing skills for job performance in specific areas, where somebody else’s leadership and collaboration are required.
2. **Technological Level**: It is meant to develop skills related to applied and practical knowledge in more complex activities; the theory contributes to an understanding of the concepts behind the process so that the individual feels capable of an intervention.
3. **University Professional (Bachelor) Level**: It prepares students for an independent, autonomous performance in a specific area of knowledge (Republic of Colombia, 2007). These professionals are capable of proposing original solutions; they participate in innovative and autonomous creation projects, in addition to analyzing and running assessments of their own performance. This training requires theoretical and epistemological depth.

In Colombia, most private and some public universities have welcomed this type of structure in their undergraduate programmes, especially for specialties like engineering, economics, finance and management. However, there is no record of any academic programmes related to music or the arts being constructed along these lines (at least not that I could find for this study), including in relation to teacher training. Keeping in mind that this latter represents the highest coverage by and offering from universities, and that students and graduates perform diverse activities within the music field, music careers offering teacher training should consider changing their academic structures.

**Multidimensionality of music educators**

The following section is based on work undertaken for my doctoral dissertation (Rivas Caicedo, 2011). The study was designed in order to collect information from a population of students, teachers and graduates from three music teaching programmes in Colombia, all offered by public universities. The main purpose was...
to identify whether this population felt the need to include popular and traditional musics within their professional training, together with a critical and analytical position vis-à-vis the improvement of their teaching skills. Thus, the benefits of the study would not only apply to future teachers, but also to future students.

**Methodology: Collection sample**

A study was conducted by means of collecting different points of view, in order to address the research question, following McMillan and Schumacher’s approach (2005). Three groups were selected as representative of the institutional agents, as such: students, graduates and teachers (professors) from the bachelor’s programmes in Music Education. The sample included 200 student subjects, who were registered in teacher-training programmes in music. Ages ranged between 20 and 23 years. It is worth noting that observations throughout the research revealed that many students\(^9\) tend sporadically to withdraw from these programmes. Thirty teachers aged 30–46 were part of this sample. Roughly 80% were male and 20% female. Of 120 graduate subjects aged 26–40, 78% were male and 22% were female. It is important to point out that the population was unbalanced, at least in part because of the difficulties in keeping contact with all of them, especially since the participating universities did not always keep updated records of their graduates.

**Collection tool**

Three surveys were designed, one for each group of the sample.

*Students:* The following items were included: six questions referred to socio-demographic variables, 18 concerned early and continuous music training (with an emphasis on the teacher’s performance and their teaching processes) and 11 were based on instrument performance.

*Teachers:* The following items were included: five questions about socio-demographic data, 26 related to the musical teacher’s activity and years of experience, and 15 in reference to the teaching training in music education.

*Graduates:* The following items were included: five questions about socio-demographic variables, six about academic training, six about professional and teaching activity, 21 about teaching tools and 13 related to the teacher’s training in music education.

**Results and analysis**

Results are based on the group of graduates, where it was demonstrated that both teaching and music graduates tend to work in different activities simultaneously:

\(^9\) According to this study, approximately 50% of students quit the programme, and 25% of this group eventually return and complete it.
Twenty-five per cent of the people who completed the surveys were independent musicians and teachers at the same time, while another 25% worked as teachers and belonged to music bands or projects simultaneously – music for children and symphonic bands were the most common. Fifty per cent claimed to be teachers, band members (rock, pop, traditional music), producers and composers. Graduates worked as teachers in different levels of education: 22% in pre-school, 12% in middle and high school, 33% in informal schools and the remaining 33%, sporadically, at a university level. Fourteen per cent of the survey respondents had less than one year of work experience; 28% had experience ranging between two and four years; 42% had been working between five to seven years and only 14% had above 10 years of professional activity. Findings suggest that the job market for graduates is relatively wide, but also limited and unstable, and that 71% have also taught at a university level; however, a majority (42%) of these experiences lasted less than a year. These numbers confirm the irregularities of labour activity, especially due to the different contexts in the country: armed conflict, social displacement and cultural diversity (Rivas Caicedo, 2011).

As for the question, “Do you think it is necessary for the music teacher to develop knowledge and fundamental skills in traditional Colombian music and/or popular music?”, the general response was an affirmative 100%. The reasons given by respondents were that “it gives context to your job at every level”, “it provides many alternatives to apply in your profession”, “it enhances your appreciation of several types of music” and “it reinforces identity values” (Rivas Caicedo, 2011, pp. 155–157). The music field for teachers in Colombia is wide and diverse, which makes it necessary to consider the diversification of relevant training, according to the different profiles in music and work positions mentioned above. Future teachers must develop skills in order to know, execute, interpret and understand different music spheres, as to confront the job market with stability. Higher education must respond to this professional reality by offering alternatives for future teachers to take, always keeping their own interests in mind.

Teacher training in music programmes in Colombia

I refer here to music programmes at three public universities in Colombia: the University of Antioquia, the University of Valle and the National Pedagogic University. These programmes are organized in five academic years, divided into 10 semesters. The three of them share common goals: to educate with high academic and artistic standards, thus promoting training activities for individuals and collectivities; these should contribute to the reinforcement of the artistic, cultural,
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educational and aesthetic development that the country requires (Rivas Caicedo, 2015, p. 7). Table 25.1 includes the common topics in the curricular programmes of the universities mentioned previously.

These programmes follow a two-cycle structure: a cycle for fundamental training, followed by a deepening cycle. They include three dimensions: music, pedagogy and research (see Table 25.2), from which the first two are taken as theoretical and practical subjects. The music dimension integrates subjects such as music theory (10 semesters), main instrument (eight to 10 semesters), supplementary instrument

Table 25.1 Professional training of current music teachers in Colombia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development needs</th>
<th>Professional training</th>
<th>Training for the development of basic skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Free development of personality.</td>
<td>KNOWLEDGE IN PEDAGOGY: • History and epistemology of pedagogy.</td>
<td>• Training in communication skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education in values.</td>
<td>• Social trends. Ethical, cultural and political dimensions in the reality of education.</td>
<td>• Literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of belonging: identity, culture and multiculturalism.</td>
<td>• Methods and models of music education.</td>
<td>• Telecommunication networks and new technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of belonging: Historical and social reality.</td>
<td>MUSIC KNOWLEDGE: • Composition.</td>
<td>• Foreign/second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regional and national sustainable development.</td>
<td>• Performance.</td>
<td>• Expressive and body language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cultural development.</td>
<td>• Choir and band conduction.</td>
<td>• Education in research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rivas Caicedo (2011, p. 103)

Table 25.2 Structure of teaching-training programmes of music in Colombia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musical Training</td>
<td>Musical Structure</td>
<td>• Music theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• History and aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Musical culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>• Instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Instrumental ensembles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Training</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>• Fundamentals of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Music didactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociocultural</td>
<td>• Assessment and curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Training</td>
<td>Research component</td>
<td>• Music, culture and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Capstone project workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Capstone project seminar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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(four to six semesters), instrumental ensembles (four to six semesters) and musical culture (usually three semesters). The pedagogic dimension includes courses to introduce the epistemology of pedagogy, as well as the teaching and learning of music, academic curriculum and assessment. This dimension is developed throughout 10 semesters. The research dimension refers to those classes whose main purpose is to develop a capstone project, meaning that it takes place within the last two to three semesters.

The study showed that universities, technical/technological institutes and conservatories follow similar academic curricula; their structure and contents tend towards a high (possibly excessive) number of subjects and in situ study hours; they do not seem to be updated and do not respond to the current status of musical practice and education. There is a very high number of subjects, hours and contents, whereas the academic purpose is based on the students’ acquisition of knowledge, skills and capabilities. They emphasize learning over teaching. It is evident that specific areas of music, pedagogy and research are not articulated in a comprehensive manner in the academic curriculum, and therefore in the training process for future teachers. There is hardly a distinction between the different profiles and fields of action resulting from this training.

Organizing the curricular structure in preparatory cycles represents an alternative to reinforce multidimensional training for music teachers in Colombian programmes. These proposed cycles are:

1. A professional technical level that could be completed by the student during the last two years of high school to reinforce work skills in specific areas.
2. A professional technological level for the first two years of a university cycle, which would develop skills related to the application and rather complex performance of knowledge.
3. A professional university level, as the last cycle to complete a professional career. This would prepare the student for an autonomous and thorough performance in music education, being able to propose original solutions and therefore participate, analyze and assess innovative and creative processes. This training requires theoretical and conceptual depth. Those who conclude with this cycle must have completed the previous ones, either as independent preparatory cycles or as a thorough professional career (Rivas Caicedo, 2006, pp. 120–121).

Conclusions: Conceptual basis for the training of music teachers

It is necessary for Colombian institutions offering higher education in music to acknowledge the different professional roles and activities for music teachers in the country. These institutions are responsible for a diverse offering that will lead
graduates closer to the variety of the music field. It is therefore essential for higher education to understand work possibilities and labour markets, and design sufficiently flexible academic curricula in response. In this regard, higher music education must be reconsidered from its epistemic and methodological structures. We can consider education in diverse types of musical thinking, based on expertise, reflection and music practice, in order to understand its different configurations. The learning process of the students who will eventually become music teachers must first acknowledge what they know and what they think. I recall Elías (2006) in support of what I hereby propose about the music field, which results from the interdependent (music) connections that individuals construct in their relation to others. It is possible to build the music field from this (music) network. I support the assumptions in Berger and Luckmann’s approach (1967); they claim that individuals internalize daily reality by means of peer interaction, which confirms the individual’s place and role in society, as well as her/his participation in social processes. This latter represents what Schütz calls “biographical situation”, meaning that common-sense reality is given to us all in historical and cultural forms of universal validity, but the way in which these forms are translated in an individual life depends on the totality of the experience a person builds up in the course of this concrete existence.

(1995, p. 17)

We can talk about a musical biographical situation if we relate this situation with what a student knows and thinks when beginning formal studies in music: their concepts, tastes, musical practices and job background, among other factors. The music field responds to the social/cultural context as well as to the local market, as mentioned above. It is related to the co-dependence and correlation of social groups that determine intersubjectivity constructions in the music field and the labour market. The music biographical situation helps us know and understand the needs of the labour situation – in other words, a world that represents the perspectives of individuals who want to become teachers but who might feel conditioned by the circumstances of their own biographical situation. The biographical situation helps students to confront the challenges of this in becoming music teachers. The value of this biographical situation leads to an exploration process to generate new knowledge, epistemologies and training methods for potential teachers in the academic field, specifically in education research. This is connected to the fact that academic programmes aim at the construction of knowledge through teaching and research for future graduates who will confront the labour market.

Teacher-training programmes must provide theoretical, conceptual and methodological elements in order to reinforce a critical and interdisciplinary approach. Likewise, as long as the specific conditions for each academic area are relevant to the professional domain of education, there will be room for critical thinking around the social validation and construction of educational practices. In
agreement with Habermas (1982), individuals know what they are interested in knowing. It is thus possible to identify three categories of knowledge:

a. Technical knowledge: to know and to master nature. It can be accessed through empirical sciences (technical or analytical).
b. Practical knowledge: linked to the symbolic interaction that seeks to understand the sense of reality.
c. Emancipating knowledge: enabling and empowering to alter or shape reality and therefore society.

From this perspective, academic processes in teacher-training programmes are inclined towards different paradigms. Theoretical, methodological and educational elements are acquired in order to address all fields of action, teaching and learning. Knowledge must be linked with current practices in a constant cultural transit, which questions the validity of what we know and therefore enriches elaboration of the academic curriculum, in addition to people’s participation according to their interests, needs and particular circumstances.

From all this, I suggest three perspectives for the training of teachers:

1. An education based on specialized research.
2. Teaching their own didactics for each area of knowledge.
3. A social and humanistic education that promotes awareness of the political, ideological and social situation of the country.

These perspectives emerge from the spheres of action mentioned above; they are comprehensive and mutually influential. If future professionals manage to learn more than mere curriculum ‘content’ and/or pre-established techniques, focusing on skills and strategies to understand the sociocultural context around their profession – and the labour market – they will know what to do, and how to face challenges, as a musician/teacher.

There are multiple issues that higher music education must resolve when training professionals. Introducing students to a diverse work market and dealing with national requirements of official authorities in order to be suitable for international standards forces and obliges the higher education establishment to offer the skills and tools to achieve. Higher music education in Colombia needs paradigmatic shifts in the institutions involved, keeping in mind the work market as well as the different types of training (as suggested by the Colombian education system). It faces conceptual, theoretical, epistemological and methodological uncertainties, and this is the problem underlying the curricular transformation debate; the great diversity of actions and dynamics within the music field means that new perspectives on the education requirements are required. The academic curriculum should contribute to the education of unified and integral individuals who will manage to face and address the range of challenges in their discipline and field. This will open up possibilities for finding suitable work in the field for music professionals.
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