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Enquiring Research Issues on Music Education in Adolescence

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Abstract

The present study, acknowledging the importance of music education in adolescence, comments on research issues that may assist the interested researchers in designing and implementing relevant research projects. The issues covered include the nature and topics of adolescence, a description of the notion of self-esteem, a commentary on the identity confusion of adolescents and the role of social factors that influence them, a proposed theoretical framework for the designing of related research projects and finally a suggested research methodology for implementing such a research.

Keywords: Music education, school choir, adolescents, high-school, secondary education.

Introduction

According to Kodály's fundamental philosophy (namely, "music is for everyone" and "all children can be taught to sing"), the need for a systematic teaching of song in school is emphasized (in Broeker, 2006). It is recognized that there are children who cannot sing, but there is no one who cannot be taught to sing (Skelton, 2005), so that the teaching of song is possible when it begins from the first grades of primary school, for all pupils. In secondary education, the participation of adolescents in a choir contains elements of experiential learning and contributes to the improvement of their self-esteem and in general to the formation of elements of their personality (Elorriaga, 2011). Indicatively, it has been highlighted

for the USA that "... extramusical values have always provided the social foundations for music participation in American schools" (Gates, 1991, p.8).

Adolescents are a special age group, which has its own characteristics and peculiarities (Christodoulou, 2014). These peculiarities that arise through social, moral and economic stereotypes, determine the basis for the definition of adolescence from a biological, social and psychological point of view. According to the biological approach and due to the serious biological and hormonal changes that characterize adolescence, the adolescents' life is at a critical stage, which is often manifested by

extreme behaviors that push them to want to confront with their parents, to manifest emotional instability, and finally, to engage in risky behaviors that are harmful either to them or to others (Arnett, 1999).

According to the sociological approaches of adolescence, this is a special period during which a peculiar “youth culture” is formed (Parsons, 1964). Its characteristics are governed by contradictions, since adolescents, while adopting a lifestyle profile based on consumerism, irresponsibility, avoiding any form of productive work and disobeying the rules that make up adult life, however, they are extremely receptive to the effects of peers (Herbert, 1999), because of their need for acceptance and inclusion in a specific group with special characteristics, through which adolescents express their differentiation, on the one hand, towards adults and, on the other hand, towards other groups (Coleman, 1961).

Finally, the psychological approach of adolescence is based on the principle that in the course of life a person goes through a series of developmental stages (Erikson, 1995). During his/her stay in one of them he/she must fulfill a developmental task. After completing this task, they can proceed to the next stage. Based on this principle, it was argued that the adolescents try to answer questions that are crucial for finding their identity (e.g., “who am I?”, “What do I want to be?”, etc.). The successful finding of answers ensures a smooth transition to the next stage. Otherwise, there is an identity crisis, which can create problems in its subsequent development course. The adolescents’ possible desire for independence and not to have others involved in their private life also interprets psychologically the conflicting relationship with their parents, as well as their desire not to submit to the principles of youth culture, yet without moving away from it (Christodoulou, 2014).

The present study aims at enquiring certain issues of music education to the mentality of adolescents, by defining terms, conditions and methods in researching this topic.

On the History of Music Education

In ancient Egypt, music was cultivated in the temples but also in the palaces of the Pharaohs, in the strata of the urban population and by the farmers (Giannou, 1995). Iconographic documents and texts on papyrus provide information about the existence of music schools and provide several names of musicians of both sexes (Giannou, 1995). However, only high art and good music were allowed for the education of young people (Athanasiadis, 1991).

According to the philosophical conceptions of the Persians and Indians, the universe was created by the sound that came out of the abyss and became light (Papadopoulos, 2000). In India, music held an exceptional place in the cultural framework and its study aimed at maintaining a link with philosophy and religion (Athanasiadis, 1991). On a physical level, the whole of human society was based on sound under the following dependence: the letters are formed with sounds, the syllables with the letters, the words with the syllables, the details of life with the words (Athanasiadis, 1991).

In ancient China, music had a prominent place in social, religious and spiritual life, and was often imputed with magical powers (Athanasiadis, 1991). The teaching of the philosopher Confucius deals a lot with music, developing a theory of ethics and attaching special importance to the role of music in education (Giannou, 1995). At the same time, a distinction is made between scholarly and folk music in correspondence with the social hierarchy. Folk music is criticized and considered inappropriate for proper education (Giannou, 1995).

The peoples of Mesopotamia and especially the Assyrians and the Babylonians are credited with developing the theory of music in combination with mathematics and astronomy (Giannou, 1995). The oldest known lyres and harps, which are dated to about 2750 BCE (Lazos, 1983), have been found in the Sumerian city of Ur, while the seven-tone musical scale had been also devised at the large cities of Sumer, around 3000-2500 BCE (Clough & Rapp, 1979). The most common type of Sumerian harp was depicted as a writing sign (Davis, 2011), while both the writing sign and the musical instrument had been “exported” to Minoan Crete (Papakitsos, 2020). This particular type of harp was called “ta(b)” in Archaic Sumerian, with the pronunciation of the last consonant (“b”) often omitted (Kenanidis, 2013). The same pronunciation (“ta”) had the equivalent sign in the writing systems of Minoan Crete (Papakitsos & Kenanidis, 2015). Another interesting musical instrument was excavated from Archanes, Crete (Pagkalou-Zervou, 1988). It was a rattle that was also found as a writing sign (“ba”) in Minoan Crete (Papakitsos, 2020), called “bal-tag”, “balaṇ” or “ba(l)” in Sumerian (Kenanidis, 2013).

In ancient Greece, music rises to the level of a free art and is a necessary experience in educating young people (Athanasiadis, 1991). Solon was the first to introduce the teaching of music in the education of Athens, at the beginning of the 6th century BCE, while the young Spartans were taught and practiced music until their thirties. Musical and poetic competitions were also held in the Olympics in parallel with sports (Psaltopoulou, 2005). The founder of the theory of music and the science of acoustics is Pythagoras, who in the 6th century BCE developed the theory of the harmony of spheres. According to the great philosopher and mathematician of antiquity, there is a mathematical analogy between musical sounds and planetary motions. Rotating planets produce musical sounds that, because of their frequencies, are not perceived. Pythagoras used the distances of the planets to represent the musical spaces (Athanasiadis, 1991). A key element in his calculations was the adoption of a two-tone musical interval, which was determined by the mathematical ratio 9/8 and was the model of the division of the octave (Athanasiadis, 1991). Thus, Pythagoras and his successors created a blur between the boundaries of music, astronomy and mathematics (Athanasiadis, 1991). Subsequently, Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers delved into the aesthetics and psychology of music and formed the theory of morality, which negotiates the effect of music on the emotional and psychic sphere of people (Athanasiadis, 1991). Specifically, Plato judged the melodies as endowed with their own ethos and with special possibilities of influence on the soul. He argued that music should be used for education, cleansing, entertainment and relaxation after tension. A follower of the Pythagorean school and a musician himself, he believed that music has high purposes and is therefore a means of education (Papadopoulos, 2000). In his texts, he placed special emphasis on the necessity of music in education, considering it as an important factor for the preservation of traditional values and the development and shaping of the ideal citizen. But also according to Aristotle, music should be taught to young people for three main reasons: it serves as entertainment, for proper “conduct” and aesthetic cultivation, it has the special value of being able to influence the ethos and the formation of character (Psaltopoulou, 2005). During the Roman era, Plutarch in his work “On music” typically states that the ancient Greeks justifiably paid more attention to music education, because they believed that they had to shape and regulate the souls of young people in a proper

morality with music, because music is beneficial any time and for every moral act.

In the Middle Ages, Harmonica (i.e., music) was one of the Seven Free Arts ("Septem Artes Liberales"), while together with the courses of Arithmetic, Geometry and Astronomy it was the Quadrivium of education (Giannou, 1995). The Renaissance was a time of conquests of philosophy, art and science that renewed music. Music was liberated from its exclusive relationship with worship and acquired a human experiential status and an ability to express oneself (Psaltopoulou, 2005). Nevertheless, music remains mainly an occupation of the upper social classes, music education is a privilege of only a few and the necessity of its existence in the education of all children has not been established (Moustarda & Penekelis, 2010). At this point it should be emphasized that music, as an objective process, is not only a European but a global cultural phenomenon. However, music historiography in most relevant works is European, i.e., there is a distance/gap between the history of music and music historiography. Nevertheless, addressing this particular issue goes beyond the scope of the present work.

Indicatively in modern times, music education acquired national standards in the United States, during the 1980s and 1990s, as part of a more general "back to basics" policy trend. One factor, however, that inevitably influenced music education was the fact that at the same time it began to develop in the parents' trend for the home education of their children, mainly in England, Australia and Canada. Walker finds that the word "choice" is what defined the form of education in those decades ('80 – '90), as the parents worldwide gained more and more freedom to choose the form of education that their children would receive (Koulourioutou, 2021).

Adolescence

According to Coleman (2013), adolescence is both a period of change and stabilization regarding the concept of self. During adolescence: physical changes occur that make a teenager feel uncomfortable and contribute to modifying the physical concept of self (Coleman, 2013); sexual changes that pose questions of sexuality, sexual desire and sexual identity, but also emotional changes that cause resulting changes in the psycho-synthesis, attitudes, beliefs and the way teenagers perceive themselves (Geldard et al., 2017). At the same time, during adolescence, the young persons develop vital skills for their successful transition to adulthood (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). The teenagers develop a more elaborated and complex image of themselves because of their mental development and increasing autonomy (Eftimie & Ionescu, 2010). In the sense of "self", Coleman understands the perceptions and experiences that make up our existence (Coleman, 2013).

The concept of "self" has been systematically considered in research since the 1980s. It has several difficulties in accurately determining its content. These difficulties are based not only on the different perspective from which each researcher tries to approach it (e.g. psychological, cognitive, sociological) but also on the fact that it is a complex concept that includes many parameters. This situation is further complicated as these parameters relate to relevant concepts, whose relationship is equally difficult to define (Lolakas, 2010), as they are often used as synonyms. However, everyone accepts the view that the "self" is a reality that cannot be ignored (Tsigka-Nasaina, 2011).

Attempting to give an outline of this concept, it is argued that a person consists of an external reality and an internal one. The first is the result of his/her interaction with other people and his/her

behavior. The second results from the involvement of each one with him/herself, through introspection (Tsigka-Nasaina, 2011). The elements of external behavior constitute the objective image of the self, while the elements of internal introspection form the subjective image. The internal subjective image is formed through the experiences collected from the environment. These experiences are divided into internal, that is, experiences related to our existence, and external. Therefore, the self is the set of experiences that concern our "being", have arisen from our reactions to external stimuli and shape our attitude towards ourselves (Lolakas, 2010). In particular, this attitude is formed on the basis of three elements: the cognitive, the emotional and the praxial. The cognitive element is related to the perception of ourselves which, because it is not necessarily correct, is distinguished by subjectivity. The emotional element is the way each person evaluates him/herself. Finally, the praxial element corresponds to the behavior that one manifests in relation to how one evaluates oneself (Lolakas, 2010). The way in which these three elements are combined can be understood if we accept, for example, that someone involved in music is quite satisfied with his/her performance and considers that he/she is good at it (cognitive element). This perception concerns the way in which he/she evaluates him/herself and further strengthens his/her belief in his/her musical abilities (emotional element). The environment (educators, friends and family) also contributes to the formation of this positive image. Positive evaluation leads to the continuation of efforts to further improve the self-perception of performance (praxial element) (Lolakas, 2010). All three elements correspond to the underlying concepts of the self. Thus, the cognitive element corresponds to the self-perception of the individual, while the emotional and the praxial correspond to self-esteem and its strengthening (Makri-Botsari, 2001).

The concepts of self-perception, self-esteem and self-confidence are three aspects of the self. The first is defined as the way in which each person understands him/herself. It is a knowledge that can be objective, if it is based on objectively accepted information, but it can also be subjective, if it is based on the sense of the person that is not accepted as such by others (Varfi, 2005). That is, self-perception is the way in which everyone describes him/herself. Self-esteem is each person's own appreciation of his or her worth, which defines his or her attitude toward himself or herself, and shows whether one considers oneself worthy of praise, either in relation to other people or independently. This means that self-esteem is also shaped by external factors or situations and changes according to them (Argyle, 2002). Self-esteem also depends a lot on the degree of deviation between the "ideal" and the real self, and for this reason many scholars consider it to be a criterion for determining a person's mental balance and physical health. Therefore, a positive evaluation contributes to mental well-being, while a low one can act as a factor of misery. As argued, the onset of any problem stems from low self-esteem, unless natural causes are involved (Turner, 1993). Self-esteem is built slowly and has wider consequences in one's life, positively or negatively. Self-confidence focuses more on actions, works, achievements and their results. It is formed more directly and faster. However, the two latter concepts share common elements: they are developed in relation to specific areas (e.g., general self-esteem/self-confidence v.s. specific self-esteem/self-confidence) (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995), while they do not appear to be positively or negatively affected by performance in areas that a person does not consider important (Harter, 1999).

Self-esteem

The study of self-esteem holds an important place in the international literature, as it is associated with the development and cultivation of a variety of skills. The central role of self-esteem is evident from the attempt to create quantitative scales of measurement in relation to specific skills. In particular, self-esteem, in relation to the formation of critical thinking, may contribute significantly to the school performance of pupils (Laird, 2005), while the close relationship between self-esteem/confidence and problem-solving skills is pointed out (Otacıoğlu, 2008). The contribution of self-esteem to the development of pupils' communication skills in their attempt to communicate in a language other than their mother tongue is highlighted (Park & Lee, 2005). Finally, the contribution of self-esteem/confidence to sports and the athlete's psychology is particularly important (Beilock & Gray, 2007).

Factors that affect self-esteem are (Dubrin, 2017):

- one's actual experience or achievements;
- the experiences of others;
- the social environment as one compares oneself with others;
- social persuasion;
- how persons feel about what is happening around them and how they handle their emotions.

Assessing the above factors as a whole, we focus first on one's experiences and achievements and then on the comparisons he/she makes, both in relation to those around him/her and to him/herself. Experiences function as a point of reference for a person's life and action, while the social environment serves as a basis for comparison. Therefore, the social environment is a key factor in evaluative judgements.

The formation of self-esteem is achieved through a series of complex processes that depend a lot on the way we give meaning to our past actions (both successful and unsuccessful), but also on the way we give content to the assessment of our social environment (Guennif, 2002). The combination of these two elements constitutes the basis of how we evaluate ourselves, and helps us shape our expectations for our future performance (Earle, 2009). Thus, the way in which each of us experiences self-esteem follows two directions (Benabou & Tirole, 2002). The first concerns general self-esteem, in which the individual believes that he/she can succeed in all areas of work in which he/she has been trained. It is developed very early, from the very first years of our life, remains stable and is not easily subject to change, because it is strongly influenced by the attitude of the environment towards us and concerns all the assessments about ourselves, on which our personality is formed (Matthews et al., 2003). The second direction is specific self-esteem, which is expressed through self-evaluations such as: "I can conduct research but I cannot present it in front of an audience" (Asimidou, 2020). It is about belief and our personal feelings about our ability to cope with specific actions. That is why it is subject to change, since the perceptions behind these specific evaluations can also easily change (for better or worse), depending on our recent experiences (Demo, 1992).

Both of the above directions interact with each other. It has been argued that people with a high overall self-esteem show greater adaptability and ease of engaging in new actions, than people with

low self-esteem feel (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). However, this happens in a first stage, in which the individual is tested. At the end of this probationary period, both those with low general self-esteem and those with high self-esteem feel equally capable of coping with the demands of their new duties (Kanazawa, 2010). In fact, this situation can create a positive attitude towards their abilities in terms of the future, compared to the possible assessments they may have had about themselves based only on their sense of general self-esteem. Also, many researchers argue that specific self-esteem contributes to the formation of the general one, in the sense that the latter is a synthesis of the individual areas of the former (Chen et al., 2004). Thus, it is established: (a) that the measurement of self-esteem can be carried out in parts, in relation to specific areas of human action and (b) that it is possible to change the sense that a person has of his/her abilities in specific areas and, possibly in some degree, for his general self-esteem/confidence (Asimidou, 2020).

According to Shrauger & Schohn (1995), the factors that can affect the degree of self-esteem (/confidence) are the following:

- The objective abilities, where people differ accordingly in one or more areas. The way they evaluate themselves reflects these differences, especially in skills for which they receive regular feedback or when the criteria by which they are evaluated are clear and obvious. However, despite the fact that judgments about one's abilities vary, the correlation between one's self-esteem and one's actual performance is usually positive.
- The selective praise is a factor that can distort rather than reveal the image that a person has formed of his/her self-esteem. Although this happens subconsciously and unintentionally, many people may distort the objective picture of their self-image by modifying the external criteria by which they compare their actions. This may lead to overestimation but also to underestimation of both their general and specific self-esteem.
- The effect of self-presentation, that is, the way in which one seeks to present oneself, can work in a distorting way, as well. In many cases, people may deliberately give a distorted description of themselves, especially when trying to project a certain image of themselves to others, possibly in order to create the impression that they are more confident than they really are. In this way, however, it is ignored what they really feel about themselves, their abilities and potentials.
- The last factor that may affect the sense of self-esteem is time (Guennif, 2002). Many people try not to consider the changes that take place over time and thus insist on assessments of themselves that are identical with the overall image they have of themselves. Yet, such assessments take them away from reality, distorting the objective image of their self-esteem.

The interest of the international scientific community in measuring self-esteem has led to the creation of quantitative assessment scales of self-esteem. This category includes works that deal with the quantitative evaluation of self-esteem:

1. More specifically, the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Koulourioutou, 2021) assesses adolescents' self-esteem. Its popularity is due to the small number of questions that

it contains (only 10), the high internal relevance of its data, but also to its high degree of reliability, with a Cronbach's α index ranging from .77 to .88.

2. The Social Self-Esteem Scale by Ziller et al. (1969) measures self-esteem as it emerges through social interaction. The self-esteem index on this scale is determined based on the position in which each respondent places him/herself in relation to other types of people that are considered important (e.g., doctor, father, friend, etc.). The reliability of the test ranges from .80 to .85.
3. The Self-Esteem Inventory scale (Coopersmith, 1975) is designed for children and is presented in two versions. The first includes 50 affirmative statements, which examine self-esteem in relation to four parameters: parents, school, peers and personal interests. The reliability of this test (Cronbach's α) is .90. The second version contains 25 queries and there are no parameters. This scale reliability index (Cronbach's α) ranges from .75 to .83.
4. The scale of H. K. Jones (2001) is classified in the special scales of measuring self-esteem/confidence, in terms of school performance. The Jones' scale attempts a quantification associated with school performance in three areas: the lesson, grades, and school situation. In total, the scale consists of 22 questions. The relevance coefficient of the queries has been calculated at .43, while the reliability coefficient of the scale (Cronbach's α) is .90.
5. The Mani's scale (2017) is another one measuring self-esteem/confidence, in terms of school performance, which includes 36 questions and aims to measure the pupils' self-esteem/confidence, regarding their school performance in the last grades of secondary education. The questions are categorized into 12 sub-areas (i.e., persistence, setting realistic goals, desire for distinction, leadership tendencies, etc.). This scale has a high relevance index between the questions and the areas in which they are allocated, while the reliability index (Cronbach's α) is .61.

The Identity Confusion of Adolescents

The goal that adolescents are supposed to meet is twofold: On the one hand, to redefine their identity in new terms, since they have now left childhood (Erikson, 1993); on the other hand, to determine their occupational identity (Erikson, 1995). In this endeavor, they have to face additional difficulties. The first one has to do with the intense biological changes that take place in their body, which are marked by serious hormonal changes, but also radical transformations in the proportions of the body (O'Toole et al., 2004). The second difficulty concerns serious emotional changes that are signaled by the intimacy with the opposite sex, but also by the intense concerns caused by the pressure from the often-conflicting possibilities and choices that are offered to them in the immediate future, which cause uncertainties about the roles that they will need to take on as adults (Erikson, 1995). The third difficulty lies in the fact that the adolescents are confronted with society, which has nothing to do with the limited environment of childhood, as they try to integrate in the new context of adolescence the achievements of the previous age-period. This

problem becomes specific as follows: while adolescents are looking for support on which to base their desires and aspirations, at the same time they feel the need to decide for themselves about the path they want to follow. Therefore, they fear that they will be forced to make choices that will make them ridiculous or make them doubt themselves (Erikson, 1995). Thus, they inevitably come into conflict with the world of adults, representing the new reality they enter (Cole & Cole, 2002).

The essence of this conflict lies in the fact that, although they want the adults to give them a perspective on their expectations, they disagree when they realize the existence of limitations in the self-image they have created. Therefore, they act aggressively in order to cover the guilt they feel for their excessive ambitions (Erikson, 1995). This aggression is perceived as an attempt of survival, in the sense that they feel that the social environment is trying to deprive them of the identity that they have imagined for themselves. This prospect is extremely negative, as it deprives adolescents of the opportunity to take on a role in their adult life as at least they have shaped it in their imagination, despite the fact that what is offered can be just as creative as it is productive. This failure to determine their role for the next stage and the imposition by the system of a role that they cannot take on leads to the "identity confusion" of adolescents, which often leads to delinquent behaviors, e.g., lack of stability, abandonment of school and work, moving away from home, etc. (Elliot et al., 2008). To compensate for this crisis and the failure to meet their goal, adolescents try to interact for determining their identity. This can be done through the approach of the opposite sex, without erotic mood, rather than aiming at projecting their self-image to the others, to determine its content more clearly (Erikson, 1993). The conflicting context of adolescence decisively influences the way in which the adolescents perceives the meaning of "self" and therefore, the way in which they shape their self-perception and especially their self-esteem (Asimidou, 2020).

The key element that characterizes adolescence as a whole is the adolescents' attempt to self-identify, through the formation of their self-image or in relation to it. However, self-image shaping is a process that takes place slowly, lasts throughout adolescence and is constantly changing. The main reason for this change is the fact that the adolescents feel intense instability, because of the many and different changes that they experience. These changes are, as mentioned, primarily biological (physical and hormonal) and emotional. To these, changes must be added in the cognitive and social level, while a role, although not so decisive, seems to be played by the factors of age and gender (Asimidou, 2020).

Starting from the cognitive changes, the adolescents move from the concrete to the abstract thinking, since they can comprehend concepts, understand symbols and assimilate principles. they also now have the ability to recall previous knowledge and combine it with the new elements that they are learning. Finally, it is very important that adolescents develop self-awareness, i.e., thinking about themselves and their qualities, the way they think, the way they get experiences that come from their environment and finally the way they externalize their self-image. In addition, the ability to alternate the way of thinking is developed, according to the requirements of a situation, i.e., the ability to use specific thinking in one situation and abstract in another (Benekou, 2008).

At the social level, the adolescents are still under the influence of their family, in terms of their choices in key issues of life, e.g., in studies and career (Epstein, 1987). At the same time, they try to

join a group of peers, who have the same characteristics as them (Brown, 1990). Also, they often experience the fear of exclusion and marginalization from this specific group, in case they do not have the ability to comply with its choices and peculiarities. Finally, they learn to adopt attitudes regarding social norms.

The effect of age on self-formation is confirmed by several studies (Crain, 1996). Specifically, it is reported that upon entering adolescence, the young person shows a decrease in the general image of him/herself. The recovery period begins in the middle of adolescence to end with an increase in self-image towards the end (Athanasopoulos, 2008). In fact, when the adaptation to the new situation that the adolescent experiences with his/her entry into secondary education is achieved, stability occurs. Finally, the role of gender in shaping self-esteem does not seem particularly important. This concerns the general image of the self and not the individual aspects, in which changes are observed. Thus, for example, boys are definitely presented certain for their image in areas such as sports, appearance, mathematics, while girls are superior in areas such as reading, music, etc. (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). The stereotypes and the way of socialization of the two sexes seem to play an important role in these differences (Crain, 1996).

The Role of Social Factors

Research has shown that positive interpersonal relations are factors that enhance self-esteem (Botou et al., 2019). The group of friends therefore covers emotional needs for emotional support and social acceptance (Kokkevi et al., 2015) and the ease, which teenagers make friends with, is related to the trust they have in themselves (Botou et al., 2019). Moreover, the experience of positive feelings acts as an upward spiral of new positive emotions and together with the sense of meaning for life are key-ingredients of prosperity (Pezirkianidis et al., 2016).

The type of parental practice during adolescence (Coleman, 2013) is a significant variable that substantially affects teenagers' self-perception and self-esteem and the maternal and paternal emotional support promote the best self-esteem in adolescents (Boudreault-Bouchard et al., 2013). According to the related bibliography, adolescents need parents that support them, without being intrusive or compulsive, help them to develop their individuality and autonomy (Botou et al., 2019) and pursue a democratic style of parental influence (McKinney et al., 2011).

Another crucial factor that contributes to enhancing pupils' self-esteem is the teacher (Tavani & Losh, 2003). Given that supporting and encouraging adolescents is important for their future development, the role of the teacher often ends up being more important than the role of the parents (McInerney et al., 2010). This is also due to the fact that the family has undergone significant changes in recent decades which have respectively imposed changes in the role that the teacher must now play. In particular, the influence of teachers is a function of their personality, but also of the kind of relationship they form with their pupils in the school environment. When teachers follow an understanding attitude towards the pupils' behaviors and peculiarities, when they encourage initiatives, and when they fully accept the pupils for what they are, then they crucially contribute to the development of the pupils' self-esteem/confidence (Burnet & Howard, 2002). The role of the teacher is considered to be equally important in creating a balanced and stable psychological climate in the classroom, since this shapes the conditions that will lead the pupils to discover themselves. The creation of this climate is based

on the teachers' expectations for the abilities of their pupils, but also on the way in which they support the learning process.

Theoretical Framework

Since there is a general interest in determining the value of music education (Cheimona, 2008; Hatzilamprou, 2016; Kaminioti, 2011; Kteniadaki, 2008), the related research may follow a most appropriate for the occasion theoretical framework, which, besides Post-positivism and Phenomenology, relates pedagogical practice and Experiential Learning. A comprehensive tool of Experiential Learning is participating in the school choir (Koulouriotou & Papakitsos, 2023).

Experiential Learning Theory is "... a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perceptions, cognition, and behavior" (Kolb, 1984, p. 21). Experiential learning has been used to teach specific cognitive subjects (Weinberg et al., 2011), as well as to cultivate empathy (Malti et al., 2016). According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning is a process and not a result, based on learners' inexperience. Learning is a transaction between an individual and the environment, a process of knowledge creation. Respectively, pedagogically the process followed in a choir programme does not focus on performance as a product, but on the learning process. In particular, pupils participating in a choir can reap musical, academic, psychological, and social benefits. They attach special value to the recognition they gain from their social environment. Also, their participation can contribute to the formation of their identity; e.g., adolescent boys may realize that their vocal identity is an important element in constructing their male identity (Elorriaga, 2011).

In general, support from parents, peers and teachers can further contribute to their musical development, as well as their self-esteem/confidence. This is why the catalytic role of the choir for pupils, who are at risk and isolated, has been researched, where their participation in the choir has contributed to improving their self-esteem. In practice, a social climate of communication and closeness develops between pupils, which helps them to successfully negotiate their often-turbulent adolescence (Shields, 2001)

Undoubtedly important is the role of the instructor and the skills he/she must develop in order to highlight the vocal talents of the pupils participating in the choir. Examples include (Spurgeon, 2004):

1. An understanding of the basic physiological aspects of tone production: breathing, phonation and resonance.
2. Diagnostic skills to listen and look for vocal problems and devise solutions.
3. The ability to model suitable tone quality.
4. Knowledge of the male and female adolescent voice—tonal expectations, ranges, and healthy tessitura.
5. Realize that an understanding of vocal pedagogy is critical to the undergraduate's future success and should be studied in depth.
6. Supplement the choral methods text with materials that deal specifically with singing and vocal pedagogy.

Equipped with the knowledge of how voices work, young choral directors will have a better chance for success in their chosen profession (Spurgeon, 2004).

Post-positivism is a main philosophical paradigm of scientific inquiry (Bergman, 2016), particularly popular in social sciences. It emphasizes the possible influence of the researcher to the observed phenomenon, due to existing values, hypotheses, background knowledge and theories (Robson, 2002). A fundamental argument of post-positivism is that human knowledge is based on human conjectures and not on a-priori objective assessments (Taylor & Lindlof, 2011). In this respect, reality can be revealed only imperfectly (Miller, 2007) and probabilistically (Robson, 2002), while the objectivity of the research is ensured by discovering the effects of undesired yet inevitable biases (Miller, 2007). Towards the notion of objective truth, the assertion of human conjectures can be justified by a set of warrants, modifiable after further inquiry. Therefore, the researcher attempts to approach his/her work in a manner that his/her conjectures will potentially not influence the research and avoid choosing definitions, questions, populations and measures that may have a subjective effect on the research (Miller, 2007). According to Robert Dubin (Miller, 2007), the basic components of post-positivism are the units (ideas and topics of interest), the laws of interactions, the theoretical boundaries and the empirical indicators. The latter link the observable phenomena and testable hypotheses to the theory, through the scientific methodology. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research are considered to be valid (Taylor & Lindlof, 2011).

Phenomenology is not a unified philosophical school or doctrine, but rather an open method that may have different results, according to the individual practitioner (Farina, 2014). It is the inquiry of how consciousness and human experience are structured, through systematic reflection, which was initiated with the work of Edmund Husserl, in the early 20th century, at the German universities of Munich and Göttingen (Zahavi, 2003). The main scope of phenomenology is the study of usually subjective topics, like emotions, perceptions and judgments, in a more objective manner (Menon et al., 2014). The theoretical foundations of phenomenology include (Orbe, 2009):

- The rejection of objective research as a concept, preferring instead a grouping of assumptions;
- the analysis of daily human behavior, for providing a better understanding of nature and society;
- the substitution of traditional data by the recording of conscious experience;
- the usage of less restrictive research methods than in other sciences.

Phenomenology has three main historical contexts, regarding its definition:

- The *dialectical phenomenology*, based on the work of G. W. F. Hegel (Wallach Bologh, 2009);
- the *transcendental phenomenology*, based on the work of Edmund Husserl (Sandmeyer, 2009);
- the *hermeneutical phenomenology*, based on the work of Martin Heidegger (Tymieniecka, 2014).

The contemporary classification of phenomenology includes seven types (Encyclopedia of Phenomenology, 1997):

- The *transcendental constitutive phenomenology* that enquires how objects are constituted in transcendental consciousness, without relating the natural world;
- the *naturalistic constitutive phenomenology* that enquires

how things are constituted in the natural world by consciousness;

- the *existential phenomenology* that enquires the concrete human existence;
- the *generative historicist phenomenology* that enquires how the historical processes of collective experience generate meaning;
- the *genetic phenomenology* that enquires how the meanings of things emerge within personal experience;
- the *post-phenomenology* (see hermeneutical phenomenology, previously) that enquires the interpretive structures of experience (Waelbers, 2011);
- the *realistic phenomenology* that enquires the structure of consciousness and intentionality, which occurs in a real world external to consciousness.

Research Methodology

The actual research can be conducted within the mixed methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches with non-probability sampling that is semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2009) with the participating pupils and validated scaled questionnaires (Likert, 1932), both with the participating parents/guardians and the participating pupils. The conduction of the interviews with the pupils can be either audio or video recorded (Johnson et al., 2019). The reliability and validity of data can be justified through *triangulation* (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006), where three data collection methods can be used: interview, questionnaires and *documentary* (Macdonald & Tipton, 1993). The documentary technique can be applied through collecting relevant research results from similar international studies. Finally, all the relevant ethical issues (Jindal-Snape et al., 2012) should be considered and the corresponding standards ensured, as labeled herein (Koulourioutou, 2021):

- *Issues of Voluntary Participation:* All participants should be fully informed why a project is conducted and what their participation would involve. This information should be given before a project begin to all participants, who have capacity to make their own decisions and understand the risks. In this respect, every participant should be asked to give written consent to participation. All participants should be fully informed about what data would be collected, where and for how long they will be stored, and their rights under data protection legislation. All participants should be informed who would have access to their data during the time it will be stored. There should be no audio, video or photographic recording of participants. All participants should understand their right not to take part or to withdraw themselves and their data from a project without giving a reason and without penalty. In addition, they should be fully informed about the potential reuse of their data by other researchers. A project should not involve any deception or covert observation of participants, while permission should be obtained from the local educational authorities, as part of a recruitment process.
- *Issues of Potential Risk:* A project should not lead to any physical discomfort or pain for the participants, emotional or psychological distress to them, or any psychological intervention. Also, there should be no

discussion of sensitive or potentially sensitive topics (e.g., sexual activity or drug use). There should be no risk that a research would lead participants to disclose evidence of previous criminal offences, or their intention to commit criminal offences. There should be no risk that a project would lead participants to disclose evidence that children or vulnerable adults have been or will be harmed, or will be at risk of harm. Finally, regarding participants, there should be no risk that a project would lead participants to disclose evidence of serious risk of other types of harm.

- *Issues of Recruitment:* Interviews should be conducted after the end of the teacher-pupil relationship that has ended, namely, when the grades are finally submitted to the school database Registrar's Office. Participation in a research should not have any academic implications for the pupils participating and should have no impact on them or their relationship with the instructor. The parents/guardians and the choristers should be properly informed, and consent forms should be signed and returned.
- *Implementation of the Informed Consent Scheme:* All physical data, including the researcher's own notes, should be anonymous and should be stored for three months in a secure-locked cabinet in the headmaster's office, protected by the scrutiny of others and accessed only by the lead researcher (Thompson, 1982). The electronic data should be also stored for ten years in a protected cloud storage system, giving the researcher's supervisor access. All participants should be informed accordingly, and all procedures should be accurately followed. A project should not involve deception or covert observation of participants. All participants, i.e., pupils and parents/guardians, should be explained thoroughly and assured that there is no penalty whatsoever upon denial of participation, that withdrawal is possible at any time without justification and that there is anonymity at all stages of a research.

Considering the research instruments, the interview can be chosen in order to discuss with the participants their views on choral participation and detect their beliefs according to the subject. Individual interview is preferred over using group interviews, as there are certain concerns regarding the use of the latter within qualitative research context. For instance, when individuals can listen to other speakers' opinions, it is very possible that certain statements may strongly influence and alter their original views and perspectives, and thus, individual voices may not be heard (Panyan et al., 1997). Also, Panyan et al. (1997) state that it is participants who primarily hold control of the direction the interview takes. In this case, as questions of privacy and confidentiality may arise in group interviewing, the avoidance of bringing up such questions cannot be guaranteed and as such, the interviewer is preferred to guide the flow of the interview. Therefore, it is preferred that the researcher is enabled to control the theme and flow of the interview, as well as intervene at crucial points of the discussion (Kahn & Cannell, 1983) through voice-only (telephone) semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaires should be pre-tested remotely with non-probability sample, using the technique of convenience (accidental) sampling (Sarantakos, 2005), and the responses determined if there are any

problems that required attention. A pilot questionnaire should be administered to a small number of parents of the participants, so that the pilot sample be similar to the participants one (Babbie, 2003). Both primary and secondary analysis of the quantitative data can be conducted manually, while the statistical processing can be conducted electronically (Sarantakos, 2005). The interviews may last approximately up to 30 minutes each.

The data that will be collected are the hand-written transcripts of the interviews, which will be analyzed with qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) can be selected, as it is widely used for the analysis of interviews and generally oral information. In this case, the system of the categories may be derived from the data and be also formulated, according to the research questions. The unit of the analysis will be the theme, being an idea or a claim that is related to the subject to be examined (Berelson, 1984). All physical data, including own notes, should be anonymized and stored for three months in a secure-locked cabinet in the headmaster's office, protected from the scrutiny of others and accessed only by the lead researcher (Thompson, 1982).

Conclusion

According to the curriculum for the music course in the Greek educational system (Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of the Music Studies Program, 2018), music is primarily an aesthetic experience and an artistic process, with the aim of aesthetic enjoyment while engaging in music. It aims at the cultivation of musical skills and the acquisition of musical knowledge, through an organized environment, as well as at the development of the personality and the emotional development of children. That is why the music course must be connected to the wider environment - social, natural, etc. - and be approached holistically and in an experiential way. To achieve this, techniques such as improvisation are employed. Through improvisation, the acquired knowledge "comes to life", but we are also led to the acquirement of new ones (Hornbrook, 2002). Listening is the most basic function for any musical experience, so the educator must carefully choose the musical examples that he/she uses, in order to develop pupils' active listening (Walton, 1990).

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