

Empowering Song: a music education approach to marginalized people

Empowering Song: uma abordagem de educação musical para pessoas marginalizadas

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to explore which aspects of the Empowering Song approach have been used in the process of teaching and learning music to marginalized people and how these activities can affect them, changing their attitudes and helping them to understand themselves and others, and how this can help build community. The methods used for data collection were as follows: bibliographical research, a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and observation at meetings of the Race, Prison, Justice, Arts project, the Voices21C choir and the Empowering Song: music with body, mind and heart course. The result of the data analysis was the organization of the activities into four categories: musical-educational, philosophical, psychological, and sociological aspects. The conclusion was that the Empowering Song approach profoundly impacts marginalized people through its interdisciplinarity, functioning as a means of social justice, allowing them to find themselves as artists and express themselves through art.

KEYWORDS: Music education; Music in prisons; Pedagogy; Social inclusion; Social justice.

RESUMO: O objetivo deste estudo é explorar quais aspectos das atividades da abordagem Empowering Song têm sido utilizados no processo de ensino e aprendizagem de música para pessoas marginalizadas e como essas atividades podem afetá-las, fazendo com que modifiquem atitudes, as ajudem a compreender a si mesmas, aos outros, e como isso pode ajudar a construir a comunidade. Os métodos empregados foram pesquisa bibliográfica, questionário, entrevista semiestruturada e observação em reuniões do projeto Race, Prison, Justice, Arts, do coral Voices21C e do curso Empowering Song: music with body, mind and heart. O resultado da análise dos dados obtidos foi a organização das atividades em quatro categorias: aspectos músico-educacionais, filosóficos, psicológicos e sociológicos. A conclusão foi que a abordagem do Empowering Song impacta profundamente as pessoas marginalizadas por meio de sua interdisciplinaridade, funcionando como meio de justiça social, permitindo que elas se encontrem como artistas e se expressem por meio da arte.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação musical; Música em prisões; Pedagogia; Inclusão social; Justiça social.

1. Introduction

This study is part of a larger research project on the Empowering Song approach, formulated by André de Quadros, developed during my post-doctoral internship at Boston University, United States, from March 2023 to February 2024.

André de Quadros, a professor on Boston University, with Emilie Amrein, a professor on University of San Diego, have written the book *Empowering Song: Music Education from the Margins*. That book gives us activities, or rather, approaches that summarize the experience of the two authors who have been utilizing music not only as a way of building musicality, but to heal wounds, restore identities, elevate self-esteem, and many other gains for students. Music is used as a motif and on other arts are applied to it, such as dance, theater, visual arts, poetry writing, and storytelling. André de Quadros tell us:

[...] we developed an approach we called 'Empowering Song' in which the goals allow for a humane repurposing of music education to accommodate healing, consolation, love, personal expression, and community mobilization. In circles and in small groups, we used processes, tasks, and exercises that gave participants an authentic mediation of their realities and lived experiences through music [...]. We explored interdisciplinary connections with poetry, dramatic and visual arts, storytelling, and selfreflection and provided spaces for deep and subversive personal expression. (Howe, de Quadros, Clark and Vu 2020, 114).

The approach was directed at marginalized people, and they can be encountered in a variety of contexts – the sick, the poor, the elderly, people with dementia, the mentally ill, and prisoners – for whom music has been played as an agent of social exclusion (de Quadros 2015a, 187).

Following what he witnessed in Thailand in 2009, André de Quadros was inspired to initiate a choir singing program in prison as part of the Prison Education Program that Boston University was already implementing (de Quadros 2019, 136). The choir singing could provide many advantages for people in prison: "To ignore how their musical lives are affected by incarceration is to ignore a significant portion of the world population. [...] Singers express feelings of strength, solidarity, and purpose in communal song" (de Quadros 2019, 137-138).

A routine was established for the prisoners on a weekly basis.

Every Tuesday for the best part of 3 years from 2012 to 2014, around 20 men from different parts of a Boston prison came together at the appointed time for a 3-hour music session. In similar fashion, every Wednesday a slightly smaller group of women gathered in a Boston women's prison for such an activity. (de Quadros 2015a, 187).

At the beginning of the musical project, André de Quadros understood that would be important to learn how to handle such a particular group of people:

We were hopelessly unprepared for what it might mean to work with people who were systemically brutalized, whose humanity was diminished, and whose access to the arts had been routinely deprived since childhood in almost all cases. [...] My own background teaching in deprived settings in other countries, my radical political views, and my desire

to be anchored in aurally transmitted, broad-spectrum music-making were excellent starting points, but I interrogated what an equity-based process would look like. (de Quadros and Evelyn 2023, 47).

The lack of preparation of teachers to teach in some environments is a factor that we must acknowledge and think about how to solve. Academics need to consider how to prepare music educators to teach beyond conventional school environments, to include not only people in prison, but also the marginalized and destitute population. "The Empowering Song approach is just one attempt at a solution, but educating teachers to break away from normative practice is essential if they are to work effectively in such settings" (Howe, de Quadros, Clark and Vu 2020, 116).

Looking for appropriate methods for teaching music in a social project in Brazil, Arruda examined various pedagogical approaches, including the Empowering Song, and came to the view that a humanizing music education extend far beyond technique and content, but rather suggests a relationship based on respect, love, and dialogue (Arruda 2019, 42). He stresses that "what are humanizing or dehumanizing are the *relationships* that occur in musical practice"¹ (Arruda 2019, 43, author's emphasis, our translation). Therefore, the emphasis is on the relationships made between people, not on the music.

André de Quadros says that "[...] the irrepressible desire to sing, to write, to percuss leads to prison musicking [...]" (2019, 121). But the problems that emerged with the vocal practiced led the teachers to try out new forms of addressing music with the group.

At the outset, we felt that a didactic approach to choral music – simply learning songs with no performance as an outcome – did not quite make sense. Moreover, we were working with a group of adults who could not read music, and where even beat competency and in-tune singing were challenges. We started to experiment with creative work – improvisation, bodywork, poetry writing, visual art, and storytelling – all somehow connected to song. (de Quadros 2019, 136).

In view of the challenges, it was essential to think of an approach that would engage diverse people without excluding them. "As a result of searching and not finding the ideal fit for our community music programme in prisons, the Empowering Song (ES) approach was developed" (de Quadros 2018a, 266). It is grounded in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and closely aligned with Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*. (de Quadros and Evelyn 2023, 47). André de Quadros says:

There are no auditions to enter these groups, making this quotation from Boal's work particularly meaningful; participants are encouraged to find security, identity, and comfort in the sound of their own voices even when these voices are clearly weak or tuneless. My colleagues and I have developed an artistic process in contrast with many prison music programmes in that it combines song with bodywork and various kinds of improvised work in other art forms. (de Quadros 2015a, 188).

¹ "O que são humanizadoras ou desumanizadoras são as relações que vão se dando na prática musical" (Arruda 2019, 43).

André de Quadros noticed that music has seemingly been an agent of social exclusion (de Quadros 2015a, 187). "Why, I have asked myself frequently, is there no music of the oppressed?" (de Quadros 2018a, 266). It is obvious that his aim is to use music as a tool for social inclusion.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this study is qualitative because it gathered and examined words, written or spoken, and textual data. Its nature is exploratory because the study looked at what aspects of the Empowering Song approach activities were employed in the teaching and learning music process to marginalized people, and how these activities could affect them, helping them to change attitudes that add to their understanding of themselves and others, and how this can help to build community (Gil 2008, 27).

Study participants were recruited through e-mail or WhatsApp contact with educators who have or have had experience with the Empowering Song approach. The focus of this study is on educators who have participated or have been participating in communities applying the Empowering Song approach to marginalized people, guided by Professor André de Quadros.

The data collection methods were as follow:

1. bibliographic research to choose texts that show the activities applied by educators in the music teaching and learning process using the Empowering Song approach (Gil 2008, 50-51);
2. questionnaire for educators, without identification data, with mixed responses (open, closed and multiple choice) with questions about the facilities and difficulties in implementing the activities used in the Empowering Song approach (Gil 2008, 121-135);
3. audio/video recorded semi-structured interviews with educators that covered questions about the outcomes of the activities implemented in the Empowering Song approach (Gil 2008, 109-120);
4. observation of the outcomes of the application of the activities utilized in the Empowering Song approach in the music teaching and learning process in the meetings of the Race, Prison, Justice, Arts project, workshops, meetings, and rehearsals of the Voices21C choir, and in the Empowering Song: music with body, mind and heart course (Gil 2008, 100-108).

The method used to analyze the data was content analysis (Gil 2008, 175-180). We analyzed the data collected from texts, questionnaires, and interviews. The data was analyzed inductively (Gil 2008, 10-11).

To protect the identity of the research participants, in this study we will identify them with the first letters of the research title (Empowering Song Approach) and numbers: ESA1, ESA2, etc.

The proposed research was approved by Boston University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) under Protocol # 7172X.

3. Results and discussion

The research into the Empowering Song approach led to four categories: music education – which means music combined with pedagogy –, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. The four categories are linked to aspects of the Empowering Song approach.

"While this approach has emerged from prison teaching and has been particular to the incarcerated context, its transferability to the general music classroom is being explored" (de Quadros 2015b, 509). The Empowering Song approach can therefore be molded to different contexts.

3.1. Music-educational aspects

Music is the core of the Empowering Song approach, although other arts are also covered. "My colleagues and I have developed a distinct interdisciplinary arts approach that is titled the 'EMPOWERING SONG' approach, rooted in improvised song, poetry, bodywork, movement, and imagery for personal and communal transformation" (de Quadros 2015b, 504).

Music is connected to other arts and by means of this interdisciplinary the wishes for expression of all those who have participated in the sessions have been met. "Interdisciplinarity favors a pedagogical action that corresponds to the deepening of the thematic unit, which is unfolded in contents that permeate the epistemic penetration for a political/pedagogical action [...]" (Melo, Almeida and Cruz 2022, 75).

The students can opt to express themselves through other arts besides music. "We have found that the interwoven nature of the arts has been able to provide for multidimensional expressivity. While song is central, it serves as both a channel and springboard to other art forms" (de Quadros 2018a, 271). Therefore, interdisciplinarity, understood here as the integration of different arts, is a pedagogical aspect of the Empowering Song approach employed with the aim of not excluding those who do not have an affinity with music, but who do have an affinity with another art, even though music is present in the classes.

"The Empowering Song approach was developed as a pedagogy of resistance in prisons and later adapted for use within carceral-adjacent sites as well as educational and cultural institutions deeply investing in carceral thinking" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 34). Carceral thinking in educational and cultural institutions can be considered worse than the imprisonment of the body, as it leads us to impose limits on the objectives, content, methodologies, didactic materials, and assessments that can be used in the educational process. So, while the Empowering Song approach was designed with prisons in mind, as a pedagogy of resistance that supports marginalized people to fight for human rights, it can be suited for use in different educational contexts, especially those that preserve a Euro-American educational system.

André de Quadros and Emilie Amrein tell us: "We see coloniality and carcerality as interlocking ways of thinking, pervasive to the modern educational project in music and all other disciplines" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 28). The educational system has been tied to models that were not developed according to different cultural contexts but were imposed by dominant cultures. The authors add: "[...] we position the Empowering Song approach as both a decarceral and decolonial pedagogy of liberation" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 41). As a pedagogy of liberation, we can understand that it can free people from educational issues that bind them. This could mean issues related to systematized educational structure that prevails on schools.

[...] the liminality of Empowering Song in its focus on open-ended work connecting to personal meaning and community mobilization differs from most school-based practices, where the emphasis is primarily on skills and knowledge acquisition framed within defined curricula. (de Quadros and Evelyn 2023, 45).

To the detriment of the skills and knowledge imposed by teachers, the Empowering Song approach values skills and knowledge brought by students. Unlike regular school, the body plays an important role. "[...] the role of the body in Empowering Song – the body as a producer of knowledge and an extension of the narrative self" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 90). All the activities are related to the role of body, such as writing for singing or acting, dancing, painting, or storytelling.

The body becomes a source of thoughts and feelings at the same time as being the instrument that expresses them. "The Empowering Song approach allows us to honor the ways our bodies hold story and memory, trauma, and pleasure, through guided exercises that at times resemble dance, play, meditation, or pantomime" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 49). We can say that the body feeds back on itself. I have observed the application of the Empowering Song approach in different contexts and I have seen that it is not always easy to expose your own body in front of other people. Sometimes it can be embarrassing to express thoughts and feelings with your body through dance, theater, or a simple pantomime. But when people realize that the space is safe, they become confident and liberate their bodies to express themselves.

The Empowering Song approach, paradigmatically, regards the body as a generator of creativity and repository of intergenerational wisdom. Through the process of remembering, we return reverently to the body, as an embodied and liberatory pedagogy [...]. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 54).

As the body features prominently in the Empowering Song approach, space is needed for that same body to express thoughts and feelings through movements. These movements can be related to dance, theater, or improvisation.

At the end of the first semester, we set a task for the students – create mini-performances in groups of three or four using music, movement, and storytelling. All the groups create mini projects of four or five minutes in duration. [...] we were located our work in pedagogies of justice. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 32).

Based on pedagogies of justice, the Empowering Song approach offers space for silenced people to use their voices: "We posit that Empowering Song, with its counter-cultural orientation to the body and commitment to justice, can allow singers to draw on memory and trauma as part of a healing journey." (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 67). The body, as a representative of each student, the circle, as a safe space to express oneself, and the dialogue, as a way of exchanging thoughts and feelings, become essential to the approach.

[...] placing hope and healing as central to education deserves consideration [...]. We ask ourselves how dialogue can be part of musicking and music education environment, particularly when the acquisition of skills and knowledge does not have primacy. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 93).

All students can express themselves through the dialogue, agreeing or disagreeing, stating their ideas and ideals. Through dialogue, the artistic product is developed and completed. "Being in dialogue, listening, and conversing, with words or wordlessly, or by a variety of artistic media is central to our humanness." (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 96).

Dialogue is deeply related to the ability to listen. The attitude of listening becomes a moment in which one person is silent and listen while the other can express oneself. I was able to observe in the meetings of the

Race, Prison, Justice, Art project, the Voices21C choir and the Empowering Song: body, mind and heart course, that in the circles the participants felt comfortable talking about their thoughts and feelings triggered by the activities developed during the classes.

When applied to the musicking process, this expansive listening honors the complexity of multi-dimensional communication and situates the musicking classroom or ensemble as a social place where participants may explore their humanity, respond to collective harm, and invoke hope. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 99-100).

Dialogue and a diversity of means of expressing the self become ways of building community and achieving hope and healing. "In this gathering, we sang and played together, making music, building friendships, and bridging the boundaries that separate us – the physical wall, and the psycho-social walls we construct every day." (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 103). What keeps a dream going is the hope that it will come true. The Empowering Song approach has brought hope to its participants, hope that is renewed with every meeting. And I have been able to witness dreams being realized by seeing former prisoners expressing their art by sharing the stage with other artists.

Anger-based pedagogy is an unusual feature of the Empowering Song approach.

In McLaren and Jandrié's (2020) articulation, we can see a strong connection between Empowering Song and revolutionary critical rage pedagogy [...]. Pedagogy based on anger is an essential dimension of our work; we see rage as moving us toward radical transformation. [...] Our close encounter with anger persuades us to hold on to this emotion as fuel and inspiration for our activist pedagogy. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 107).

This means not conforming with lack of humanity towards marginalized people. As an activist pedagogy, not just not conforming to their situation, but doing something for them. Social responsibility must be everyone's responsibility.

3.2. Philosophical aspects

The philosophy of Empowering Song approach is primarily grounded on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000) and on Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* (1974). The aim was to create an approach to music education that would be applicable to the contexts of marginalized people, that would function as a means of inclusion, and that would achieve social justice. In this way, the approach does not demand any musical skills.

Empowering Song is to music what *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/2000) is to education, and *Theater of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1974) is to drama. Yet each of these share a key element with the others: they subvert the status quo by democratizing the school, the stage, and the studio – spaces too often reserved exclusively for those with special training. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, xi, author's emphasis).

With time, other ideas were added. Thus, the Empowering Song approach is likewise "[...] based largely on *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (Boal and Jackson 2006) and other participatory community arts paradigms [...]" (de Quadros 2017, 21).

A philosophic characteristic of the Empowering Song approach is its flexibility. It allows that it can be adjusted to different contexts.

[...] the Empowering Song approach cannot be formulaically applied across contexts. [...] Empowering Song is broadly conceived, fundamentally responsive, and non-formulaic; the pedagogical implementation of Empowering Song is different in carceral settings, shelters, and schools. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 71).

I was able to observe the application of the Empowering Song approach in three different contexts: in a prison, in a choir and in a teacher training course. The bibliography I researched includes other contexts for its application, such as refugee shelters, university courses and the community in general. Flexibility is linked to Machiavelli's philosophy, as a condition for ensuring success: "It is not the perfection of the order that brings stability, on the contrary, just as in men it is flexibility that guarantees success, in political bodies it is the ability to change over time that allows them to endure"² (Aranovich 2013, 82, our translation).

The Empowering Song approach seeks to create a safe space to students express questions related to personal problems and discover ways of resolving them. Therefore, storytelling is central to this approach. "Storytelling, in countless ways, is central to this approach, as we emphasize that the arts are uniquely positioned as loci for storytelling" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 87). Students can tell their stories not just using music, but through various art forms, using imagination and creativity as a way of expressing themselves. "We led workshops that encouraged the participants to tell their stories through poetry, the body, masking, and more" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 118). The word has become an important means of free expression. "[...] Empowering Song approach positions dialogue both as central and necessary" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 92). Unlike many pedagogies, in the Empowering Song approach decisions are made based on common sense.

This leads us to another philosophical characteristic of the Empowering Song approach, which is the relationship between student and teacher, which assumes a kyriarchal form. "Kyriarchy [...] describes a multi-faceted power structure, and allows us to understand power as a function of multiple axes of identity and privilege rather than focusing on one (e.g. as with gender and patriarchy or race and white supremacy) [...]" (Osborne 2015, 140). In this form of relationship, the students receive privileges they do not usually have. Their participation will define the course the sessions follow.

Our difference with the conventions of music making and teaching also extend to the asymmetrical power relationship inherent in conventional student-teacher transactions. We developed the Empowering Song approach as an approach to create a kyriarchal form of music-making. [...] the trajectory of sessions is determined very much by who is contributing what along the way. (de Quadros 2018b, 190).

I was able to witness changes in the planning of activities, both in the meetings in prison and in the choir rehearsals. These changes were made because the participants' contributions were considered in an attempt to meet the needs that arose. The course of the sessions cannot be defined only by the musical skills the

² "Não é a perfeição da ordenação que traz estabilidade, ao contrário, assim como nos homens é a flexibilidade que garante o sucesso, nos corpos políticos é a capacidade de alterar-se ao longo do tempo que permite a ele perdurar" (Aranovich 2013, 82).

students may have, but first and foremost by the values and knowledge they have gain over the course of their lives.

[...] we came to understand that the musical objectives we had been trained to strive toward and the musical values we had been trained to reproduce could not yield a creative and empowering experience for our students. We needed to focus on nurturing life values linked to lifelong learning, resonating with the recommendation in the UNESCO document that the focus of education should be less about skill acquisition. (Howe, de Quadros, Clark and Vu 2020, 113).

The dominant culture imposes on us musical standards of pitch, rhythmic precision, expressiveness and so on. Often class participants do not meet these musical standards, but the Empowering Song approach offers them the chance to excel in another art. This way, the dominant and reproductive cultural practices that have traditionally been prevalent on music education are discarded and the students' gifts are valued as a form of inclusion.

[...] we sought to engage with the diverse group of people in the class, to understand each student's particular gifts, and to strive to integrate these gifts into a collaborative artistic experience. [...] rejecting cultural hegemonic and reproductive practices. [...] we took on the pedagogical challenge to create conditions for all of our students to bring themselves fully to the experience of musicking in an inclusive environment regardless of prior experience or ability level. (Howe, de Quadros, Clark and Vu 2020, 113-114).

The idea of constructing knowledge based on the student's experiences is an idea we can encounter in Paulo Freire's philosophy: "[...] the educator is no longer the one who only educates, but the one who, while educating, is educated, in dialogue with the student who, in being educated, also educates."³ (Freire 2018, 95-96, our translation). We could call this democratic education.

As flexibility is a philosophical aspect of the Empowering Song approach, it can be applied in different contexts. As it intends to bring hope wherever it is applied, "Empowering Song is an approach that is recreated every time we find ourselves in community [...]" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, xiii). Its recreation has no limits. The activities of the Empowering Song approaches can work to include marginalized people, as I observed in meetings of the Race, Prison, Justice, Arts project and in concerts of the Voices21C choir, which receives the collaboration of ex-prisoner artists, or to prepare teachers to include them, as I observed in the Empowering Song: body, mind and heart course. Considering the different contexts, all participants experience the Empowering Song approach in the same way. The difference I observed in the course that prepared teachers is that the participants acquired a theoretical background before practicing. "If we consider borderlessness in multidimensional ways, we may indeed find a figured world for Empowering Song" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 115-116).

Although the Empowering Song approach can be used in instrumental ensembles, it is easier to work with choirs than with musical instruments because they do not demand a lot of pedagogical materials. The people themselves are the material. Another important factor is that the choir works with words that can carry

³ "[...] o educador já não é o que apenas educa, mas o que, enquanto educa, é educado, em diálogo com o educando que, ao ser educado, também educa" (Freire 2018, 95-96).

important meanings for the participants. As a collective musical activity, it becomes an easy means of applying the Empowering Song approach, where its philosophy can be developed.

While choirs are typically found in educational institutions, in churches and in the community at large, choirs with a different mission are also being organized. This is further evidence that choirs discharge a vital community-mobilizing function, one of compassion and expressive humanity. (de Quadros 2012, 164-165).

Choirs have long been organized in spaces other than churches and schools with the specific mission of giving visibility to marginalized people. In these cases, choral music is used as a means rather than an end. The process becomes more important than the product. "Communities that are marginalized, whether because of sexual orientation, political status, illness, or poverty, are finding opportunities for new expression" (de Quadros 2012, 1).

The Empowering Song approach initially was created to be applied in prisons, but an enlargement of the vision allowed to glimpse other different contexts of marginalized people that needed to be reached by social justice. André de Quadros tells us:

Perhaps to give myself a sense that I was doing something meaningful, I started work in prisons, refugee environments, war zones, and many more dark settings. I seized on the opportunity to dismantle the prevailing domination of Eurowhite-thinking, so pervasive in my field, to create an arts pedagogy that was focused on justice and equity. (de Quadros, Kelman, White, Sonn and Baker 2021, 15).

In this way, this approach, through music and other related art forms, can be developed wherever there is a need to bring social justice to marginalized people. "We have contextualized the Empowering Song approach in environments which there might be multiple ways of teaching music" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 116).

The decolonial focus is another philosophical aspect of the Empowering Song approach. According to Grosfoguel, decoloniality needs to consider three aspects:

1) a decolonial epistemic perspective requires a broader canon of thought than the Western canon [...]; 2) a truly universal decolonial perspective cannot be based on an abstract universal [...], but would have to be the result of a critical dialogue between diverse critical political/ethical/epistemic projects, aimed at a pluriversal world and not a universal world; 3) the decolonization of knowledge would require taking seriously the perspective/cosmologies/visions of critical thinkers from the Global South, who think with and from subalternized ethnic/racial/sexual bodies and places.⁴ (Grosfoguel 2009, 385, our translation).

⁴ "1) uma perspectiva epistémica descolonial exige um cânone de pensamento mais amplo do que o cânone ocidental [...]; 2) uma perspectiva descolonial verdadeiramente universal não pode basear-se num universal abstracto [...], antes teria de ser o resultado de um diálogo crítico entre diversos projetos críticos políticos/éticos/epistémicos, apontados a um mundo pluriversal e não a um mundo universal; 3) a descolonização do conhecimento exigiria levar a sério a perspectiva/cosmologias/visões de pensadores críticos do Sul Global, que pensam com e a partir de corpos e lugares étnico-raciais/sexuais subalternizados" (Grosfoguel 2009, 385).

It can be seen in its resistance to the objectives, methodologies and expected results imposed by Western, white, and Euro-American culture in music education. The world presents a great diversity of realities that cannot be subjected to a single perspective of music education. "The Empowering Song approach is an emergent and decolonial approach to musicking that resists this mythology, as well as many of the prevailing paradigms of music education practice" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, xiv).

As music and other forms of art should be offered to and practiced by everyone equally, regardless of their culture, it becomes necessary to resist the aesthetics imposed by a dominant minority so that marginalized people can achieve the right to express themselves and have their art recognized by society. Thus, we can consider "[...] Empowering Song approach as a paradigm of resistance" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, xvi). This resistance seeks to value the cultural diversities and their idiosyncrasies. "[...] we wish to delink the Eurocentric practices from the idea of the universal" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 5).

The Empowering Song approach defends the philosophy of collective art with a focus on community art rather than individual art. Its aim is to provide inner development and social visibility. "Through collective teaching, Kodály thought that the popularization of music could bring many benefits to society, providing an integral growth of the human being"⁵ (Fernandes 2016, 213-214, our translation). It resists the prevailing idea that defines and classifies musical groups labeled according to the dominant aesthetic to be accepted by society. "Eurocentric ensemble culture arrogates to itself a zone of exclusion and definitions that prevents a multiplicity of group music-making traditions from claiming to be choral or orchestral" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 25).

There is a trend towards specialization in the arts. Musicians who develop a personal art move towards a solo career and, if they do not, they usually join large groups such as choirs and orchestras, as if they belonged to another category. The same happens in other arts, such as dance, theater, and visual arts. Except for a few genres in which the arts are intertwined, such as opera and musicals, we still find the isolation of each art within this large area. "[...] Empowering Song seeks to challenge those epistemological foundations of Eurocentric music pedagogy that confine music and other arts, as well as practitioners, to discrete categories, isolating and separating ideas, and people from one another" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 109).

The sound quality overvalued by the prevailing Western aesthetic is not the focus of the Empowering Song approach. Its goal is to use music and other art forms as a means of being in community, sharing diversity and bringing about social change. One educator wrote in the questionnaire that the Empowering Song approach is a "culturally responsive pedagogy: arts as a tool to learn more about self, others, the broader world and building a critical consciousness of the world" (ESA4, February 3rd, 2024). Relationships are valued not for what people do, but for who they are. "To focus on being good rather than sounding good subverts the nature of relationship in the conventional Euro-American ensemble space [...]" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 23).

The aim of the Empowering Song approach is to offer activities to be together in community, not with individual students, to make music, whether known or created by the group, without privileging some and excluding others, but valuing everyone's participation. "Excellence in conventional ensemble music is often

⁵ "Através do ensino coletivo, Kodály pensou que a popularização da música pudesse trazer muitos benefícios para a sociedade proporcionando um crescimento integral do ser humano" (Fernandes 2016, 213-214).

defined by the production of a specific sonic aesthetic that effectively erases and silences other voices" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 21).

While conventional artists, whether as soloists or in ensembles, aim to prepare and perform works considered great by humanity, valuing excellence according to the prevailing aesthetic, the Empowering Song approach is not preoccupied with the product. One educator interviewed said: "I think the Empowering Song approach values the creative process more than the outcome. It's not working for a specific outcome. [...] a core aspect of the process is not coercion, to be non-coercive, and to be not controlling, but to be empowering" (ESA4, January 26th, 2024). It is preoccupied with the process of building a community, using creative art as a tool for possible social change.

Empowering Song is not a type of musicking practiced in isolation by individuals, rather it is collectivist and communal in nature. Empowering Song is not a type of music that is primarily presentational, though it can be too, in a lesser extent; [...] Empowering Song is not working within the paradigm of the so-called autonomous, apolitical art, moving instead in the company of politically committed art forms [...]. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 5-6).

In this sense, we can quote the response of an educator given in a questionnaire: "Arts as activism is a key focus [of the Empowering Song approach], understanding the why of what we are creating together" (ESA2, January 12th, 2024).

We can say that it aims to free art from the shackles imposed by Euro-American parameters: "We propose the abolition, indeed the liberation, of music from its colonial roots as fundamental to Empowering Song" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 65). For example, I was able to take part in a choral concert that broke away from Euro-American parameters, in which we had a very eclectic repertoire, with a Bach choir alongside an Onix White rap. The Empowering Song approach ruptures dominant aesthetic paradigms and relationship structures that frame conventional music-making, seeking social justice to marginalized people. "[...] social justice is an anchor point in our approach. [...] social justice was an emergent framework for understanding our collective striving for something better" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 115).

The Empowering Song approach intends to reach out to marginalized people in different contexts to build a community in which they can express themselves freely without fear of judgment, where they can find compassion and hope. A community has its own characteristics. Building a community requires a desire to belong to it. If there is an identification with the characteristics of the community, people will develop a feeling of belonging and identity. A community is characterized when all the participants have similar thoughts and feelings and share them.

The Empowering Song approach adopted the philosophy of wholism, trying to involve the wholeness of the students in the process of social change. "[...] the philosophy of wholism, which 'comprises the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains of human development' and 'requires an intimate knowing that brings together heart, mind, body, and spirit' for healing and interconnection" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 52). When Lima compares the understanding of personality approached by psychology and wholism, she says:

Wholism set out to consider individuality, which in man stands out as the construction of the individual *self*. Without losing sight of the fact breakthrough occurs when this *self* can be the center of a sense of order and universal harmony. It is the mind that endows the *self* with this universal reason, this sense of harmony. Reason, in man, transcends individuality and expresses the principle of universal regulation.⁶ (Lima 2008, 7, author's emphasis, our translation).

The Empowering Song approach does not intend to work only with intellectual concepts of social justice, nor does it intend to use art only as therapy to improve behavior, much less does it intend to develop psychomotor skills, but it intends to address all these approaches together. "[...] through the Empowering Song approach, practitioners and participants can reorient themselves toward the integration of body-mind" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, xvii).

A person is not just body or just mind, but both integrated. Even though most conventional courses emphasize the mind, the Empowering Song approach values the body with its features, as the receptacle of the mind, as an individual who occupies a space and who needs to be seen and valued. "By honoring and affirming the body, we may recognize the strength, ingenuity, and creativity of those who move through a world that was not designed for universal access" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 60).

The mind is divided between thoughts and feelings. We can say that it is divided between the cognitive and affective domains. The body does what the mind wants, whether through thoughts or feelings, affecting relationships. The Empowering Song approach works with the integrated body and mind, in other words, with the wholeness of the students.

[...] Empowering Song is the manifestation of Arturo Escobar's (2020) concept of *sentirpensar*, a term currently used by activists in various parts of Latin America, to suggest 'a way of knowing that does not separate thinking from feeling, reason from emotion, knowledge from caring' (p. xxxv). (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 111-112, author's emphasis).

The Empowering Song approach seeks to make marginalized people aware of their situation and to support them in actions that converge towards social change. The process of raising awareness begins with the discussion of themes related to their condition. As mentioned, the Empowering Song approach aims to dismantle existing hierarchies in which the monologue prevails: "We argue that the large, conducted ensemble reproduces a culture that is rooted in monologue rather than dialogue" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 24). Unlike conventional ensembles, the Empowering Song approach aims to establish dialogue as an important tool in the development of awareness.

The role of consciousness-raising in pedagogical and political contexts is well-documented, from Paulo Freire's (1970/2000) use of the term *conscientização*, or conscientization [...].

⁶ "O Holismo se propunha a considerar a individualidade, que no homem destaca-se como a construção do self individual. Sem perder de vista que o grande avanço acontece quando esse self pode ser o centro de um sentido de ordem e de harmonia universal. A mente é que dota o self dessa razão universal, desse sentido de harmonia. A razão, no homem, transcende a individualidade e expressa o princípio de regulação universal" (Lima 2008, 7).

In the music education context, the process of coming to consciousness is also derived from the writings of Paulo Freire (1970/2000, 1974). (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 78, author's emphasis).

Interdisciplinarity, understood here as the diversity of foundations beyond music education, is another philosophical aspect of the Empowering Song approach. As we have seen, some characteristics of conventional music education contexts does not allow for the development of social justice. "[...] we consider interdisciplinarity as a field of epistemological and pedagogical questions (construction and transmission of knowledge) that arises from reflections on the limits of specialization"⁷ (Lima 2017, 136, our translation). Given these difficulties, it was necessary to make some changes to the initial design of the Empowering Song approach to develop the expected process when applied.

Although the Empowering Song approach is anchored in values that are central to community music, including hospitality and welcome, situating Empowering Song as a pedagogical approach committed to social action through music poses challenges when the very foundations of social justice music education remain ambiguous and multivalent. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 116).

So, as music education could not provide all the necessary elements to the Empowering Song approach to achieve its goals, de Quadros and Amrein looked to other sources: "In addition to bringing music education concepts into play, we were digging into literature in cultural studies, anthropology, and more. [...] music education literature had less to offer than external sources." (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 37).

Borrowing from the biological concept of rhizome, as a kind of ramification interconnected at different points, in the Empowering Song approach the various sources that build its philosophy are connected to achieve the goal of social justice. "The metaphor of rhizome provides further inspiration. [...] In conceptualizing the nature of Empowering Song, we take much inspiration from this vision of an interconnected, dynamic and nonhierarchical ecology of knowing" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 109).

The experience that de Quadros and Amrein have had applying the Empowering Song approach have led them to explore the limits of each area researched. The process that they have developed go beyond the limits normally imposed, making it difficult, for example, to establish the limits of pedagogy or philosophy due to the great intertwining between the two areas: "Indeed, when we reflect on Empowering Song's interdisciplinarity, we realize that our pedagogical and artistic explorations have led us into a borderless space, a kind of post-disciplinarity, for interdisciplinarity itself is an acceptance of boundaries and borders" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 115).

The Empowering Song approach does not have a specific methodology to be applied. One educator interviewed said: "[...] I think [...] Empowering Song as a way of being, a way of knowing rather than a set of methodologies." (ESA8, January 31st, 2024). As it has the flexibility to be shaped to different contexts, the diversity of experiences addressing different areas of foundations shows unlimited ways of achieving social justice. "This is music education from the margins, and we have so much more to learn. Empowering Song is

⁷ "[...] consideramos a interdisciplinaridade como um campo de questões epistemológicas e pedagógicas (construção e transmissão do conhecimento) que se coloca a partir das reflexões sobre os limites da especialização" (Lima 2017, 136).

a portal, a place of coming and going where time dances differently, through painful histories, hopeful futures, and miraculous presents" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 127).

Empowering Song is an approach to music education that does not just focus on music because, due to the parameters imposed by Euro-American culture, it fails to achieve the goal of social justice in contexts of marginalized people: "We have struggle to adapt the practices of music education to deprived contexts, because much of conventional music education practice is an inhospitable space for affirming agency [...]" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 75). The Empowering Song approach was conceived in a prison, but it is not meant to be applied only in prisons. All the research into areas outside of music education, all the changes made to the design of a music education approach, were made to achieve social justice.

The Empowering Song approach, born in the oppressive context of American prisons, and possessed of general music education approaches, has developed into a model for community music where social justice, enquiry, personal transformation, and community bonding are sought. Through this approach, I have witnessed numerous acts of personal change, deep, irreversible, and compelling. (de Quadros 2018a, 277).

The authors of the Empowering Song approach were not worried about following the conventional paradigms related to music education approaches. The focus is not on the music. The focus is on the people. In this sense, we can quote the response of an educator given in a questionnaire:

When you make space for participants to respond to an idea/theme/artwork and take the next step to create a bridge and relationship to the idea/theme/artwork without controlling the medium or outcome, there are endless ways to employ these methodologies in the process of discovery and creation. (ESA4, February 3rd, 2024).

Music – and all the activities that involve it, whether listening, performing, or creating, and all the art forms related to it, whether dance, literature, theater, visual art, or storytelling – is a means of leading people to social justice.

In the Empowering Song approach, we are less concerned with conventional models of arts integration where creative and performative disciplines are bridged or linked to other academic disciplines for the purpose of improving outcomes in these other areas of inquiry. Instead, we see music as deeply connected to multiple forms of metaphorical creation, a type of paradigmatic approach to creativity [...] as a unified set of processes rather than categorical objects of creative production. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 107).

The Empowering Song approach imagines relationships without hatred or power struggles, but relationships with love because more important than the music are the relationships established within each music education environment, in each context. This philosophical aspect leads us to a utopia.

The word *utopia* combines two concepts that give it multiple connotations: *ou-topos* – no place, and *eu-tópos* – ideal place, the perfect city. For this reason, the word *utopia* carries

an ambiguity, since it alludes at the same time to the non-existent, impossible city, and to the dreamed city.⁸ (Albornoz 2019, 122, author's emphasis, our translation).

The Empowering Song is a wonderful concept that imagines a different world, a world that accepts the differences between people, creating unity in diversity: "Recognizing both the disquiet and the dreams present in our work, we search for the visions of a yet-to-be world, anchoring Empowering Song in a radical imagining – a utopia" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 109). It aims to use music and other forms of art to change people's condition, to lift them out of marginalization.

3.3. Psychological aspects

It is important to understand that music and other art forms are applied by the Empowering Song approach as a means, not as an end in themselves. The Empowering Song approach shows some psychological aspects linked to the healing of internal problems by means of a therapeutic environment with activities that use music and other art forms to overcome obstacles, lead students to self-discovery and enhance their interaction with themselves and others. "Still on the role of society in the construction of self-knowledge, it is worth pointing out that it has a special context in which self-knowledge takes place in a more systematic and objective way: the therapeutic environment"⁹ (Brandenburg and Weber 2005, 89-90, our translation).

With music, people can find beauty in themselves and express it, even if their art does not match established models.

[...] music can be a universal language. It reaches beyond the walls that divide and the borders we create. It reaches into the heart of everyone who is open. Though we may have things in our past that we wish we could undo, there can be something beautiful down the broken road. (#4459 2020, 67).

The established patterns of beauty in art can be shattered by the activities of the Empowering Song approach: "[...] our pedagogy seeks to displace existing notions of beauty that have frequently been created by the digitization and professionalization of art" (de Quadros 2015a, 188). Students can find their own art without holding themselves to a specific pattern. By finding their own art, they can find themselves.

In our sessions, we follow Boal's principles, '*by discovering their art and, in the act, discovering themselves; to discover the world, by discovering their world and, in the act, discovering themselves*, instead of receiving information from the media, TV, radio' (italics in the original; Boal 2006, p. 39)." (de Quadros 2015a, 188).

The therapeutic environment using art can help people break down barriers and go beyond borders. Making art can build skills, provide knowledge and, most importantly, tap into the deepest feelings.

⁸ Na palavra *utopia* se articulam dois conceitos que lhe dão conotações múltiplas: *òutopos* – não lugar, e *eutópos* – lugar ideal, a cidade perfeita. Por isso, a palavra *utopia* carrega uma ambiguidade, pois alude ao mesmo tempo à cidade inexistente, impossível, e à cidade sonhada.

⁹ "Ainda sobre o papel da sociedade para a construção do autoconhecimento, vale ressaltar que ela dispõe de um contexto especial em que o autoconhecimento se dá de forma mais sistemática e objetiva: o ambiente terapêutico" (Brandenburg and Weber 2005, 89-90).

They [prisoners] have become habituated to listening to music on the radio, to consuming theatre on television, and are losing or have lost the ability, if they ever had it, to make art as part of everyday life, to sing, to dance, to write, to paint, to carve, to tell stories, to build narrative. Therefore, our approach seeks to empower them to make art. Essential to this process is to find voice through singing. Our teaching seeks to unlock these latent capacities, and indeed this is the essential aspect of providing opportunities for self-discovery. (de Quadros 2015a, 188).

Activities that use various forms of art can draw students' attention as a way of personal expression and bring them to a new identity as creators of their own art. The interplay between art and feelings can create self-discovery.

Students may not know how to react to an activity. It can touch deep thoughts and feelings that they have not had a chance to manifest: "We argue that the experimental and end-open process of Empowering Song create distinct opportunities to self-discovery" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 68-69). As the approach is an experimental and end-open process, the activities do not have a right or wrong answer. This way of dealing with activities can lead students to self-discovery.

Fear can be a barrier to self-discovery. If a fraternal atmosphere is created, students can feel free to express themselves without fear of judgement. "[...] Empowering Song approach emphasize community-mobilizing and bonding as central to creating a space for personal meaning-making and expressing vulnerability." (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 69). I witnessed participants afraid to express themselves, not because they lacked skills, but for fear of being judged. From the moment they felt a safe environment through the activities developed by the Empowering Song approach, they had the courage to express themselves and feel accepted. Students need to have the courage and feel confident to express their vulnerability.

Healing can happen when two processes are developed simultaneously. First, students need recognize themselves as individuals with their idiosyncrasies. Secondly, they need to feel respected and valued as such individuals. "Through the Empowering Song approach, we seek to create opportunities for an individual instrumental or singing voice to be articulated and valued, and also for the creative act of the individual to be affirmed." (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 72). The activities applied by the Empowering Song approach, whether creative or performative, allow students to become visible as individuals.

3.4. Sociological aspects

The Empowering Song approach utilizes music and various art forms as a means of inclusion to address sensitive issues related to the visibility of marginalized people in diverse contexts. "[...] the concept of Social Invisibility has generally been applied when referring to socially invisible beings, whether due to indifference or prejudice, which leads us to understand that this phenomenon only affects those who are on the margins of society"¹⁰ (Porto *apud* Barbosa and Gomes 2019, 134, our translation). If the psychological aspects of the

¹⁰ "[...] o conceito de Invisibilidade Social tem sido aplicado, em geral, quando se refere a seres socialmente invisíveis, seja pela indiferença, seja pelo preconceito, o que nos leva a compreender que tal fenômeno atinge tão somente aqueles que estão à margem da sociedade" (Porto *apud* Barbosa and Gomes 2019, 134).

Empowering Song approach attempt to demonstrate how students can view themselves as individuals, the sociological aspects attempt to demonstrate how these individuals can be viewed by society.

[...] those in prison can claim access to music as a right rather than as life-enhancement, or as therapy, or as rehabilitation. That music is not valued in prisons, by and large, reinforces the routine exclusion of several basic needs for certain populations – the sick, the poor, the elderly, those with dementia, the mentally ill, and the imprisoned. Even if one could argue that the imprisoned cannot claim music as a right, in view of their diminished rights, one can scarcely argue the same for other sectors of the population. Music, apparently, is an instrument of social exclusion. (de Quadros 2015a, 187).

The Empowering Song approach seeks ways to render marginalized people visible to society. The process of inclusion via artistic activities and interacting with those who do not belong to their circle of relationships sets out to make society aware of their stories and who they are. This inclusion process, in which hope and humanity are encountered, can bring about a sense of belonging, identity affirmation, and community building. Wayland "X" Coleman told us:

As a cultural approach, Empowering Song should flourish in the prisons because incarcerated people need ways to reconnect to our free society, and to engage in mutual learning. Incarcerated people need ways that will allow society to understand them and to know who they are as fellow human beings. We need space that will promote racial bonding, and bridge cultural and marginal gaps, and overall, we need spaces where we can find hope and humanity. (Coleman *apud* de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 122-123).

The Empowering Song approach has created spaces in which the participants can express themselves freely, with no fear of being judged or rejected, but rather respected and accepted by the leadership and students.

But the Empowering Song approach does not just promote the process of social inclusion within a classroom. I was able to witness former prisoners expressing their art on stage with the Voices21C choir. The choir's concerts feature a mix of music, theater, dance, and poetry. After the concert, there is always a conversation with the audience, bringing up social issues for discussion. This is a unique moment when the art of former prisoners is publicly recognized.

Regardless the context, the Empowering Song approach will work with the social visibility of marginalized people. In this process, it is important to question who they are and define identities. "We have come to understand that the framing and reframing of identity and liberation from imposed identities are integral to the Empowering Song approach" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 68).

Both the music and the multiple arts activities that take place in the Empowering Song approach will provide opportunities for students to discover their affinities with the arts. Through them they can express their individual and community identities. "Affirming identity in practice and through practice is a vital and life-giving aspect of Empowering Song. Through the act of exploration, in a relatively unregulated process, identity can be reframed" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 73).

Social visibility will be explored initially in the circle where all students are equals and have the same opportunity to expose themselves, whether through words or wordlessly. Self-discovery and identity

affirmation can be part of this process, which aims to make visible those who have been silenced and made invisible to society.

[...] a foundational component of the approach is the identity circle, one circle of many employed in Empowering Song. In the circle, participant engage with each other, declaring identity by naming their origins, lifeworlds, desires, aspirations, or histories. As co-architects of this approach, we contend that music-making can be a means by which identity can be expressed, emotions can be found, and even that one's existence can be affirmed, made visible. (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 81).

Dialogue plays an important role in this process. The circle, which means equality, can offer a safe space for one individual to express oneself while everyone else is listening. Thoughts and feelings can be expressed without fear of judgement. Identities can be expressed without fear of rejection. People can feel included rather than excluded. "[...] with a focus on restorative practice, dialogue and expansive listening, we see in the Empowering Song approach a humane and compassionate mechanism for social action, justice, healing, and community care" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 99).

One important area in which we find marginalized people is health, which can be visualized in different levels of physical and mental illness, whether intellectual or emotional. The Empowering Song approach can use music and various art forms as a means of including people with health problems in the same way as with prisoners, displaced people, students, or any other context in which we find marginalized people. "[...] the public health and arts interface, can subvert asymmetrical power dynamics and bring about social change" (de Quadros 2017, 23).

In addition, music and several art forms can be used as a means of making marginalized people aware of the need to cultivate healthy habits, especially poor people who do not have access to good medical care, by showing them ways to improve their health levels.

[...] the arts and health fields might work together to address major health concerns in sites of poverty. [...] collaboration as a confluence, as a meeting point of disciplines, and as a locus for multiple interpretations of an egalitarian interdisciplinarity. (de Quadros, 2017, p. 32).

It is important for the health field to be open to working with the arts field so that together they can achieve the inclusion of individuals and the raising of awareness in communities. In this way, many marginalized people can benefit.

[...] the arts are so essential to people's lives that health initiatives at both the policy and project levels must take a multidimensional and interdisciplinary view of community and individuals to ensure success, a kind of success that is further strengthened by grassroots listening and empowerment. (de Quadros, 2017, p. 32).

The Empowering Song approach already has "a multidimensional and interdisciplinary view of community and individuals". In addition to addressing multiple art forms, such as music, dance, literature, theater, visual art, and storytelling, it addresses multiple aspects, such as music-educational, philosophical, psychological, and sociological. André de Quadros "[...] use the Sanskrit word 'sangam' as a metaphor for collaboration and confluence" (de Quadros 2017, 16). He uses the idea of "sangam" in the Empowering Song approach to strive

for social justice through the multiple aspects that flourish in the multiple arts, but it is not closed, on the contrary, it is open to other areas of action.

[...] social justice is not necessarily central to the arts. Although, in the arts, there has been a long history of involvement in social change, the relationship between the arts and social change does not find its way into policy statements. Sangam, as a metaphor for confluence, should be viewed as a kind of liminal space in which ethnomusicologists, NGOs, public health workers, artists, and social scientists can explore their relative strengths and facilitate genuine and authentic community-based, culturally situated public health projects. (de Quadros 2017, 26).

The flourishing of multiple aspects in multiple art forms is only possible through dialogue. "[...] we recognize dialogue and its potential to transform conflict, repair harm, and build bridges across difference as an essential objective." (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 99). It is at the center of the Empowering Song approach and enables individual and communal transformation in which we can find unity in diversity.

4. Conclusion

After analyzing the data, it was found that the Empowering Song approach provides more than just aspects of musical education. Although music is implied in its name, its reach goes beyond the boundaries imposed by this art form. As it purports to be an interdisciplinary approach, it was noted that six different art forms comprise it: music, dance, literature, theater, visual arts, and storytelling.

In addition to the interdisciplinary described above, five different areas of knowledge were identified: art, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. As music is the main art addressed in the art area and music education, i.e., music combined with pedagogy, is the primary focus in *Empowering Song*, the data from the two areas, art and pedagogy, were analyzed jointly. The areas of knowledge were not addressed in depth, but only certain aspects related to them were pinpointed. Therefore, data that showed aspects related to music education, philosophy, psychology, and sociology were analyzed.

As the Empowering Song approach introduces itself as a kind of pedagogy for teaching music, in the course of the texts I read, I found some different adjectival expressions given to this pedagogy that drew my attention: "pedagogy [that] seeks to displace existing notions of beauty" (de Quadros 2015a, 188), "arts pedagogy that was focused on justice and equity" (de Quadros, Kelman, White, Sonn and Baker 2021, 15), "pedagogy of resistance" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 34), "decarceral and decolonial pedagogy of liberation" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 41), "embodied and liberatory pedagogy" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 54), "pedagogy based on anger" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 107), and "activist pedagogy" (de Quadros and Amrein 2023, 107).

Because of its interdisciplinary nature, it was very difficult to pinpoint the limits of each of them and isolate these aspects from each other. As music is the medium used to link all areas covered by the Empowering Song approach, it was noted that aspects of music education were connected to all of them.

Since the Empowering Song approach is a pedagogy that seeks to displace existing notions of beauty, it relates to the aesthetics of art. It shifts the focus from the search for the beauty of art to a focus on the

search for the inner beauty of the people who produce the art. It presents aspects of music education and philosophy.

As an arts pedagogy focused on justice and equity, its purpose is to use not only music education as a means of fostering social justice, but also other art forms, interspersing many dialogues on the theme addressed. It showcases aspects of music education and sociology.

As a pedagogy of resistance, the Empowering Song approach can be applied in different contexts. In prisons and in places adjacent to prisons, it resists imposed identities by promoting a safe space where people can show who they are through different art forms and resists imposed social injustice by rising awareness through dialogue. In educational and cultural institutions, it resists imposed pedagogies. It shows aspects of music education, psychology, and sociology.

The Empowering Song approach is a decarceral and decolonial pedagogy of liberation that frees from the imposed educational system. It frees teachers and students from the shackles of the educational framework based on the connections between objectives, content, and evaluation, and between methodologies and material resources, approaching different art forms with multiple activities, which are not methodologies, in which the main material used is the students themselves, without the expectation that they show results by learning any content, let alone being evaluated. It frees teachers and students from the educational philosophy imposed by dominant cultures and respect the students' culture, promoting the construction of knowledge based on it. It presents aspects of music education and philosophy.

Because the Empowering Song approach is an embodied and liberatory pedagogy, it values the body, motivating it to generate creativity through different art forms, expressing itself freely and affirming identity. It also values the body as the guardian of wisdom and memory, which can be manifest through dialogue or wordless ways and lead to healing. It features aspects of music education and psychology.

Although pedagogy based on anger and activist pedagogy are linked, we decide to address each separately because they have different characteristics. The Empowering Song approach as a pedagogy based on anger is related to the philosophy of the revolutionary critical rage pedagogy found in McLaren and Jandrié. It aims to use anger as a motivational feeling to think and discuss about radical transformation in social justice. This philosophy leads the Empowering Song approach to move away from a focus on philosophical thoughts and dialogues and towards using anger expressed in different art forms as a fuel and inspiration to the action, thus becoming an activist pedagogy. It brings aspects of music education, philosophy, and sociology.

We concluded that the Empowering Song approach, with its music-educational, philosophical, psychological, and sociological aspects and by using various art forms, can be used in many diverse contexts, and be seen appropriate as "music of the oppressed" to target marginalized people in particular.

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