

## The PONTES Approach for a creative and continued education of music teachers

*Alda de Jesus Oliveira, Ph.D., MA (MUSIC), MA in Composition  
Federal University of Bahia, Brazil*

*Vilma Fogaça, Master of Music Education (UFBA)  
the Music School of the Federal University of Bahia*

*Considering that the traditional teaching methodologies that are based mostly on the transmission of knowledge are not adequate to the new socio and cultural demands of the society and that they do not aim to construct a reflexive and creative mind, the authors of this article believe that it is necessary to investigate and test alternative procedures to educate the future music teachers. They considered relevant to emphasize the following principles: quality, creativity, competency, collaboration, citizenship and cultural consciousness. Taking Unesco recommendations for the education of teachers, the main line of research focus on not only the cultural contents, but also in the four basic dimensions of the human being: knowledge, feelings and attitudes, skills and engagement on the tasks to be developed. All of these competencies are planned to be constructed from the experience (praxis) and the investigative processes.*

*Brazilian legislation recommends that the teaching of Arts must be developed in consonance with the students' modes of learning. It also recommends that schools should guarantee information about the historical artistic production and at the same time, promote the freedom to develop imagination and built personal proposals based on authentic and individual intentions. These goals should be developed by integrating the artistic contents to the joyful and recreational aspects of the educational activities. Later (pp. 47-48) it reminds educators that the teacher may choose the modes and the different didactic procedures to present information to the students according to his own preference and familiarity, observing always the need to introduce the artistic forms with art, or teaching music presenting real music. Consequently, Oliveira's research study*

*included pedagogic procedures through the PONTES Approach aiming the whole development of the music teacher in consonance with the Brazilian legislation and the knowledge developed by the masters of traditional music culture (oral and academic) with special emphasis on innovation and creativity.<sup>1</sup>*

The PONTES Approach aims to contribute to a more articulated and creative teacher education. This approach has been developed since 2001, after many observations of masters of music at different socio-cultural contexts in Brazil. One of the few competences that is correlated significantly with pupil's achievements and attitudes is the competence to relate his or her lesson objectives to student interests and needs. Oliveira thinks that this is relevant, especially if this teacher is working with students from different music cultures or different "music tribes"<sup>2</sup> in the regular schools. This model was conceived to inspire and prepare music teachers to develop, build and apply pedagogical cues (theoretical knowledge and practical actions) and specific didactic transitions for improving the musical development of individuals. This approach may be especially helpful to multicultural programs, interdisciplinary projects, special training programs for human resources, and for developing works that deal with the world diversity of cultural contexts. PONTES<sup>3</sup> approach works the didactic skills and pedagogical contents in ways that facilitates, motivates and brings the student teacher into significant learning situations in music.

PONTES Approach emphasizes the following items<sup>4</sup>:

**Positive approach, perseverance, articulation power, and ability to sustain student's motivation, believing in student's potential for learning and development.**

**Observation capacity: carefully observe the student, the context, the daily situations, repertoires, representations;**

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<sup>1</sup> As a supervising professor at EMUS/UFBA for 20 years Oliveira has a reasonable amount of materials developed for the education of teachers. Among the works developed are the investigations by Cristina Tourinho, Marialva Rios, Zuraída Abud Bastião, Brasileira Trindade, Paulo Emílio Parente de Barros, Eduardo Luedy, Cassia Virgínia de Souza, Regina Cajazeira, Rejane Harder, Flavia Candusso, Amélia Dias Santa Rosa, Angelita Schultz, Rejane Harder, Mara Menezes, Harue Sorrentino, Vilma Fogaça which are dedicated to the education of teachers.

<sup>2</sup> Teachers usually have difficulties working with the group of students who have specific and personal rigid musical preferences. Ethnomusicology usually relates this tendency to the term "music tribes".

<sup>3</sup> The following authors served as an inspirational foundation for the development of the PONTES Approach: Paulo Freire, David Hargreaves, Keith Swanwick, Clifford Madsen, Vigotsky, Taebel and Coker, Schon, and the results of studies by the group composed by Liane Hentschke, Jusamara Souza and Alda Oliveira.

<sup>4</sup> PONTES is a term resultant of the first letters of the items promoted by the pedagogic model being applied here. Positivity, Observation, Naturalness, Techniques, Expressivity and Sensibleness.

Naturalness, simplicity on the relationships with the student, the curricular and life contents, with the institutions, the context and the actors; trying to understand what the student is expressing, wants to know and learn;

Techniques fit for each didactic situation; ability to design, develop and create new adequate teaching/learning structures (of different dimensions);

Expression: creativity, hope and faith towards the development, the expressiveness and learning ability of the student;

Sensibleness to the several different musics, to the artistic languages in general, to nature and the environment, to the needs of the students and the different contexts.

The PONTES approach has the purpose to articulate the various factors with custom-oriented procedures to facilitate teaching of music in the different socio-cultural contexts. Its main focus is to educate the music teacher to be able to create and apply efficient pedagogical connections of different designs, dimensions and special components (called PONTES in Portuguese language or “bridges”) to facilitate the learning process of the student, to improve the quality of the musical activities and to promote significant learning experiences for the participants. It promotes a customized teaching design, both for individual or group lessons and it works with the variables or factors involved in the educational process such as:

- the personal characteristics of the student and his level of musical development;
- the elements and the essence of the socio-cultural context;
- the student knowledge and his past experiences;
- the new knowledge to be learned and experienced.

This creativity oriented approach may be applied in combination with other methodologies and has been used as a theoretical foundation for the studies by Harder (2008), Dias Santa Rosa (2008), Bastião (2009), Vander Broock (2009), Menezes (2010) and Tanaka Sorrentino (2010) studies, respectively applied to instrumental music teachers, creation of school musicals, education of under-graduated student-teachers, to young children music teachers, regular school music teachers and traditional Brazilian music group of women. These studies share the objective to contribute to a more reflexive, significant and articulated practice among Brazilian music educators.

Alda Oliveira's study <sup>5</sup> evaluated the effect of the PONTES Approach applied to individuals who are participating of continued music education programs. This study (2009-1010) tested the procedures in an experimental group of music teachers, as compared to a control group. It has used quali-quantitative procedures. This study used the DEPEMUS test, which was created by the author to evaluate the individual development and learning related to the PONTES approach. It has used also field observations during the educational and artistic process of education of teachers. Study aimed also to test the theoretical basis that was applied during the process of teacher's continued education, in the process of helping music teachers to develop and apply their formal and informal knowledge to create new and challenging activities, and also connecting their purposes, the music contents and the curricular objectives to the different actors involved in the learning process.

Results showed that the PONTES approach applied to the experimental group was significantly relevant to develop the pedagogical creativity and articulation of the music teacher's practice and that the PONTES Approach have been a decisive factor to the education of the teachers and for the positive results of the study. Teachers of both groups were submitted to the DEPEMUS test<sup>6</sup>. The study considered only the completed tests for validity purposes. This tailored test inserted questions and classroom problems with pedagogical decisions, which the participants had to choose and name, according to the PONTES approach. It included also questions to check teachers' musical and pedagogical development.

The analysis of the test scores from the teachers who were submitted to the DEPEMUS instrument was done by the statistical test Mann Whitney U. It is adequate for two independent groups, the level of measurement is ordinal, and determines whether these

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<sup>5</sup> Alda Oliveira is developing and testing the PONTES Approach since 2001. Other studies have been developed taking this theoretical approach as a foundation for other topics by Master and Doctoral students participating of the Research Group "MeMuBa" (UFBA). Recently she has concluded (2010) the research study "Masters of music from Bahia: the effect of the PONTES Approach in the continued education of music teachers", with the support of the Brazilian Council for the Technological and Research Development (CNPQ) and the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil.

<sup>6</sup> A special course for teacher education was planned for the experimental group at the Music Department of the Federal University of Brasilia, Federal District, coordinated by Dr. Ricardo Freire. The DEPEMUS test was developed by A. Oliveira. The Doctoral student Angelita Vander Broock (PPGMUS/UFBA) collaborated for the course and the application of the test.

groups have been drawn from the same population. The null hypothesis was: the correct answers to the DEPEMUS test are the same for the teachers of experimental group and control group. Results showed that obtained value of the tests was less than the critical value of U. The statistical decision was to reject the null hypothesis. Application of Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was a statistically significant difference, level 5%, between experimental and control group ( $p=0,000$ ).

In addition to the quantitative analysis of the data, a qualitative analysis was done. The experimental group, in spite of the short amount of time dedicated to the learning of PONTES approach, showed a deeper understanding of the teaching problems presented, demonstrated a more creative and musical performance in the different situations presented, participants applied the concepts correctly and adequately and demonstrated an improvement of their reflexive capacity towards pedagogical decisions in the classroom

This study points out that most of music educators tend to adopt specific methods for music education or specific music repertoires for teaching music without tools to think how to connect the procedures they know and they use to the different types of classrooms they teach. Test results also indicated that music teachers present many difficulties in modulating classroom activities to the different levels of musical development, talents of participants and also to different age needs.

Participants of the experimental group demonstrated a more qualified preparation towards mediation and creative/reflexive thoughts and observed that Brazilian music educators demonstrated talents to develop pedagogic articulations during professional activities, but usually, they do not show academic or methodological interest and information about them. They take them for granted or consider them special moments that occur by chance.

This common sense attitude is questioned by the author, who defend and recommend that the pedagogical articulations in music not only should be systematically studied but also must be included as a subject in the curriculum for the education of music teachers, since music is an art, deals with subjective and emotional feelings, and it is also a creative and performance oriented experience for the individuals. It also deals with cultural

and personal values. Student teachers must be trained to develop creative insights, problem-solving techniques and acquire music/pedagogic repertoires to deal with these different and difficult challenges.

Vilma Fogaça's research study<sup>7</sup> was developed to search for answers to the following question: How did the music student-teacher trained mostly under the PONTES Approach applied his competencies to create pedagogic articulations (bridges) aiming the creative development of the music initiation students? The research used the case study method with one student teacher enrolled in the discipline Teaching Practice (MUS-185) at the Music Education under-graduate course - Music School of the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil.

The author was the supervising professor and built an orientation with emphasis on the PONTES Approach<sup>8</sup> by Alda Oliveira (2001). It was included reading and discussing texts by different authors, practical exercises for the development of the creative mind, class plans development. Supervisor has dedicated a special extra time to give specific pedagogical directions, to analyze pedagogic performance in class, to discuss about the praxis (relationship between theory and practice) being developed. The supervisor/researcher observed all the student teacher's classes in order to collect data for the research study. The analysis of the data was done by crossing the information collected through the class diaries, audio and video recording materials, filled observations forms done by an independent observer, and a semi-structured interview with the student-teacher.

In order to evaluate the pedagogical articulations ("bridges") developed by the student-teacher in the music classroom it was used the items and descriptors used by the PONTES Approach and also some authors-based criteria to evaluate qualitatively the pedagogical connections. Alda Oliveira e Vilma Fogaça (2010) established two different levels

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<sup>7</sup> Vilma Fogaça developed this research study as a Master degree thesis under the academic supervision of Dr. Alda Oliveira at the Post-Graduation Program at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil (2010).

<sup>8</sup> The PONTES Approach deals with pedagogic creativity, with teacher's attitude, fitness and strategic approximation to the students, the institutions and also to the signs that come from previous life experiences of the participants of the educational process, which is understood as praxis, a practical/theoretical dynamic relationship between theory and practice. (OLIVEIRA, 2008, p. 5).

Oliveira affirm that "Every efficient teacher develops bridges, makes pedagogic articulations, but most of them is not conscious or do not have analyzed or thought about these articulations, not valuing them." (2008, p. 22). The "bridges" are intrinsic parts of the successful educational processes.

of pedagogical connections: a) Elementary (Level 1) and b) Advanced (Level 2). The following criteria were established:

### **Level 1 – Elementary**

The “bridges” at the elementary level usually occur at the beginning of the teacher’s work with a pedagogic-articulation focus, or at the beginning of the music teacher career. They are characterized by the fragility of teacher’s actions and by the inconsistency of his thoughts and concepts. The individual do not seem sure of what to do, or how and when to act. He is not able to develop deep and detailed conceptual analytic reflections about his own practice in the classroom. He has difficulties in relating, crossing data and to construct consistent comments about the experiences in class, during the development of the class plans and organizing the music program. He tends to blame others or some other unknown causes for his own problems and negative pedagogic performance. He has difficulties to learn with his own mistakes and difficulties encountered in his professional performance as a teacher. His actions and decisions tend to be ephemeral and inconstant, not presenting a continuous connectivity capacity with the following action, or with the musical repertoire, with the student’s previous experiences, with the contents to be taught, with the general characteristics of the participants. The mental activity of the teacher is not yet sufficiently fast to keep connected for a longer period of time with the whole task (from planning to practice and reflexive analysis about what has been developed in classroom). His observation skills and sensibility for what is happening around him is not well developed. This decreases the effect of the pedagogic articulations in the student’s learning and motivation. The articulations are not so much connected among themselves. In this elementary phase the music teacher develops simple connections, related with traditional and vernacular music repertoire with a few utilization of the creative talents of the participants, presenting inconsistent, elementary and not interesting musical results, without challenges or surprises to stimulate students. Teacher’s performance in class tends to be centered in the class plan, without flexibility in respect to the time allotted to each activity, with no regard to the student’s interests and motivations. In this level, the music teacher has difficulties to evaluate student’s knowledge and general development, or to detect student’s proximal zone of development. A level 1 pedagogic “bridge” is short and do not generate other “bridges”. These “bridges” do not connect to more complex ideas related to the classroom moment, it advances only to a few curricular contents and objectives, or do not explore the creative materials involved in the educational scene. In spite of its fragility, the level 1 “bridges” must receive special attention of the supervisor and the music teacher, since the reflexive process must be constructed upon them. These initial “bridges” are the foundation to help the music teacher develop the competencies in order to develop to the creation, application and development of more advanced pedagogical connections.

### **Level 2- Advanced**

Level 2 pedagogic articulations can be developed at any moment of the teacher professional career, from the initial moment or during more mature stages. In general the more advanced “bridges” occur with more fluency and turn to be more frequent with time. The individual acquires professional confidence and self-esteem through perseverance, maturity and the development of reflexive capacity related to his praxis (theory and practice) and his creative capacities to compose, improvise and structure teaching structures adequate to the different teaching/learning situations. Advanced articulations are developed with spontaneity and flexibility. They are fluent and they last longer in relationship to the students’ ideas and interests. The effects of the advanced “bridges” may be felt until the following activities, the next days or for all life, due to the high level of connectivity to the specific moment or the specific individual characteristics of the student. These articulations are also done with conviction, determination, according to the set of philosophic values and seem to be connected with the foundations expressed in the curriculum and ideals of the music teacher. The teacher develops the bridges not as an experimental action, but he is sure about its effect, even though it may be new for him or the students. The teacher develops the “bridges” knowing its consequences, knowing that the students will benefit from the connections and with all the factors surrounding the teaching actions. The advanced “bridges” mostly try to target the curriculum goals and to project the teacher’s own personality traits (personal profile) to enhance the motivation of the students. In this advanced stage the music teacher is open and apt to develop a creative and articulated work at the classroom and at the socio-cultural context, in relationship to the musical repertoire, the characteristics and identities of the students, to the institutional characteristics, and finally, to the different factors that may be related to target a teaching quality of excellence. When the frequency of making “bridges” is augmented, they become more consistent and firm, since they seem more balanced and connected with other “bridges”. They tend to strengthen the learning of the music teacher, who keeps learning with his pedagogical practice. Advanced bridges motivate the students since they are creative and have surprises. These bridges are developed from original and surprisingly pedagogical-musical actions, bringing novelty to the classroom. The artistic and pedagogical results are very rewarding for the teacher and the students at the advanced level.

Results of Fogaça’s study indicated the efficacy of the PONTES Approach to promote student-teacher’s competencies for developing pedagogic articulations aiming the development of creativity with his 4 students, 8-11 year-old children. The skills for pedagogic articulation were progressively better with time and the student teacher recognized the benefits of it for his development as a music teacher. This approach have been a decisive factor to the education of the student-teacher and for the positive results of the study. The author believes that a creative music teaching inspires creative and musical actions by the students because, in order to develop pedagogic articulations, it is important to develop

several and diversified skills. It was found difficult but very relevant to instigate and develop the reflexive and analytical thoughts about the praxis (theory/practice) and about the creative actions, since the student-music teacher did not demonstrated at the beginning of the study, to be academically trained in these matters.

Of course, some connective skills (pedagogical, artistic and musical) may be innate to the individual. The student-teacher could also have had a positive environment for the development of his creative talents during his life experiences. But in this study it was observed that the student-teacher really developed more pedagogic articulations and creative skills during the training at the real classroom situation. There happened several examples of behavior changes towards an improvement of creative and connective actions.

The children have demonstrated creative skills playing musical improvisations with different music instruments such as piano, electronic keyboard, drums, wooden instruments and the voice. The positive results were observed by the motivation and adequate attitudes of the children to explore the sounds and timbres of the music instruments during the creative moments in the classroom, by the constant demonstrations of aesthetic pleasure when doing and listening their own compositions. They also showed to be concentrated during the creative activities, and with time, they have demonstrated to become more self-confident in the music activities. Students have also explored spontaneously the theoretical and practical elements of music even the ones that were not presented in the classroom, such as: simultaneous musical intervals at the Orff instruments and at the piano, and the use of finger difficult techniques during the creative performances.

It was found that the main variable to influence the teacher's development was the time dedicated to reflect upon the different pedagogic articulations during classroom practice with students. These mental exercises (reflexive thoughts) developed with the supervisor (based on the items of the PONTES Approach) about what the individuals have done during the stages of planning (theory) and real class experiences (practice) turned out to be a real motivation for the development of a new attitude towards teaching music. Younger music teachers have plenty and rich life and musical experiences that may be used to motivate their

students and develop creative insights in the classroom. Frequently they do not know how to take advantage creatively of these experiences.

At the beginning of the study, the student-teacher underestimated the learning of the PONTES Approach. But with time, he did a real effort to understand the theoretical points and started to develop analytical skills about the pedagogical creative experiences and the about how develop connections with his student's ideas. The discussions and analysis of the main items of the theory was of utmost relevance for his own pedagogical and musical development as a music teacher.

The study points out some considerations that should be promoted at the creative education of the music teacher:

- Flexibility: The music teacher must be open to modify a previously written class plan, without missing its original focus (goals and music contents to be taught and developed). He must be prepared to develop ideas and concepts through adequate pedagogic articulations "bridges"). It is necessary to understand that class plan is a map to help the teacher to direct and conduct the class but it is not the final purpose or its final goal.

- Freedom: It is important for the application and the success of the PONTES Approach that the music teacher acts with freedom and deals with naturalness in regard to the organization of the time given for the activities. If he gets too much worried with formats, rigid pedagogic procedures and worried to control the amount of time for each class activity, he will get stressed and tense and will not have the necessary calm and feeling for insights to think creatively, to promote special moments for his students. It is usually very difficult to be creative and articulated, keeping in track with the class plans and the curricular goals and contents. That is why this type of education must be given during the student-teacher course.

- High connectivity: For Fogaça, a teacher who has high connectivity is a teacher with the ability to develop connections between various elements (teacher, students, socio-cultural context, music repertoire, curriculum, among others) and the real time. Being developed well with efficacy, the PONTES Approach has a strong connection with the moment, with the "now" during the classroom moments. A "bridge may be more consistent

if it is developed at the exact moment. It has a timing to get a maximum efficiency. After the special moment, the “bridges” may happen, but, perhaps, something may be lost, something relevant could be achieved only at that specific time. That is why it is recommended that the teacher may dedicate himself to every moment of his class, trying to promote the interaction of the actors involved, selecting the adequate elements (contents, musics, activities and pedagogic actions) in order to connect them in real time. It is recommended the development of pedagogic understanding of the classroom situations, the development and creation of rapid selection of activities and a spirit of connectivity with each class moment (the “now”). This ability must be worked with the music teacher and it is developed gradually, since it carries a great neural/mental activity. It usually involves a large number of neural activity in the brain. In the case the supervisor is not identifying immediate results for the development of high connectivity skills, it is recommended patience and calm with the student-teacher. It is important to analyze all kinds of possibilities (profits and losses), and analyze what could be done in each different case in order to be articulated in each didactic moment. It is important to have a positive attitude in relation to profits and losses, and it is relevant not to regret and avoid frustration. The relationship with the real moment it is complex to be perceived, since it is ephemeral. A moment will be always followed by another new moment and time is the great partner for the development of the articulation skills. Gradually, the music teacher will certainly be more prepared to develop more and better “bridges”, becoming more self-confident and fluent.

Alda Oliveira and members of the research team documented and analyzed examples of pedagogic articulations in music education in different contexts (formal and informal) and considered the presented issues relevant for the development of future research studies on the epistemology of practice. Oliveira and Fogaça suggest that the PONTES can be adequate tools to develop pedagogical connections, creative problem solving skills and verbal fluency for reflexive analysis of classroom praxis in continued music education of teachers. They believe that a creative music education of teachers inspires creative and musical behaviors in the participants and contributes to open minded theoretical and practical productive pedagogic performances.

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