

Promoting personal growth and well-being: The potential of Elemental Music Education

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The power of music

active engagement with music → effects on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and adults

Perceptual and language skills / Literacy skills

Intellectual development and creativity

Personal development

Social development

Physical development, health and well-being

providing an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all participants

→ implications for the **quality of teaching**: how can this be done?



Elemental Music Education

focus on perception, exploration and improvisation related to basic musical phenomena

meanings of Elemental: “easy”, “essential”, “fundamental”

broad concept of “music” and “movement/dance”
embodied, holistic music making

association of music, movement, dance, and speech
pattern-based - short, open and cyclical forms
employs the skills that are immediately available to all participants

importance of creative work in EME
action- and experience-oriented

combining musical and personality-building goals



Target groups and contexts

educational situations as well as **special populations**

rich **variety of groups and contexts**

- babies and caregivers
- youth community groups
- socially and economically disadvantaged children
- vulnerable groups, special needs groups
- inclusive and mixed-ability groups
- music therapy groups
- ...

features of the group / features of the context

flexibility and responsiveness are key!



Basic assumptions

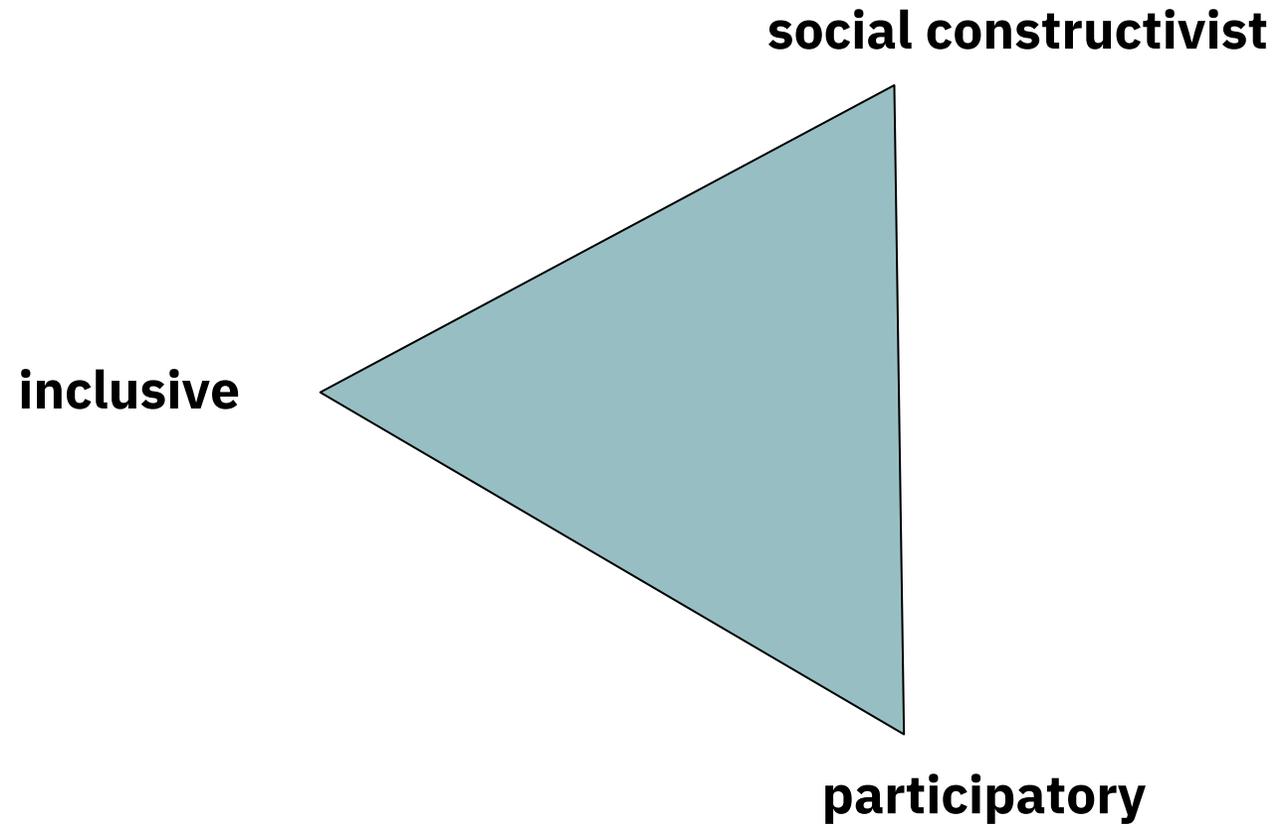
- 1. Everyone has the potential to experience music and movement/dance in ways that are meaningful to them**
- 2. Music and movement/dance can be a powerful educational and therapeutic tool to address physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and/or behavioural needs of the person**

Music and movement/dance activities as

- **a goal in themselves** (→ aesthetic experience)
- **tools to meet broader goals** (→ empowerment of the person)



The pedagogical approach of Elemental Music Education





A social constructivist approach to music and movement/dance

Active learning

Knowledge is actively constructed by learners. The person is the starting point.
The curriculum is learner-centred.

Learning for understanding

Meaningful learning
Reflection, metacognition, and ongoing self-assessment

Learning in the group

In the interaction with significant others, the members of the group mutually scaffold each other's progress and expand their zone of proximal development.

Creative learning

Group creative activities as the essence of this social constructivist approach
Control and ownership over one's own learning processes.



A participatory approach

Perspectives from ethnomusicology and anthropology of music: **music as culture**

Purpose: participation

Emphasis on the sonic, kinaesthetic and social interaction among participants

Roles: no artist-audience distinctions

Everyone is encouraged to participate at their own level of competence

Values: focus on the social relations

the quality of a performance/activity is judged primarily by the degree and intensity of participation

→ social bonding

participatory music making as egalitarian, democratic, non competitive, and non hierarchical



An inclusive approach

"Music for everybody" (learning for all)

Holistic, multi-sensorial approach to music learning:
a variety of activities integrate different modes of expression and communication

Characteristics of tasks and activities for inclusive groups:

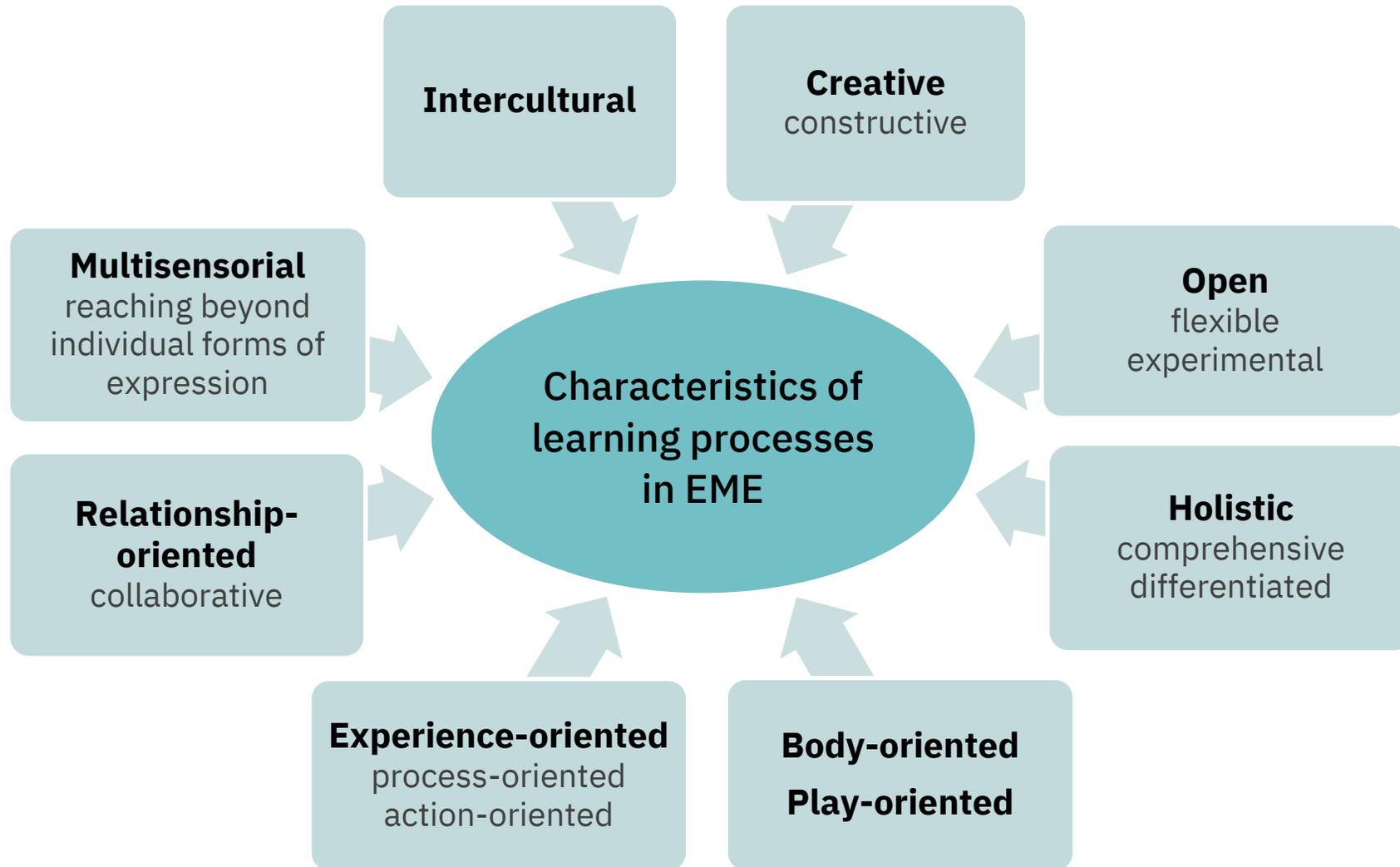
- **sufficiently structured** to provide a clear direction
- **open enough** to be adaptable to individual participants' skills
- **appropriately challenging** for each person

Everybody benefits from inclusion!

Diversity as a strength and an opportunity rather than as a weakness or a problem



Learning processes in Elemental Music practices





Goals and desirable benefits: musical development and personality development

Physical goals/benefits

- feel, understand and physically express music/dance
- enhance integrated body awareness
- increase sensory stimulation
- increase range of motion, flexibility, gross and fine motor skills, coordination
- promote self-expression and communication through the body
- build aesthetic sensitivity

Cognitive goals/benefits

- foster the development of thinking in music and in movement
- heighten overall cognitive abilities
- improve concentration and memory
- enhance problem-solving and decision-making skills
- increase executive function skills such as paying attention, organising and planning, initiating and staying focused on tasks, self-regulating one's own activity



Goals and desirable benefits: musical development and personality development

Emotional and personal goals/benefits

- increase self-expression and the sense of self
- build a sense of agency and ownership
- increase motivation, self-esteem, and coping ability
- provide successful experiences and a sense of purpose
- facilitate positive changes in mood and emotional states
- enhance the overall quality of life of the person

Socio-behavioural goals/benefits

- foster a sense of community while working towards a shared goal (in music/dance)
- develop pro-social skills, increase positive social interaction
- promote discipline, mutual respect, collaboration and cohesion in the group
- foster communication and emotional well-being in the group
- build a stronger sense of belonging
- support the development of the social and cultural identity of participants as music-making and dance-making human beings



The teacher/facilitator

- a culturally sensitive person
- competent in the subject
- well-grounded management skills
- creative, constructive, and emotionally ready to take risks and to experiment within new situations
- interactive, communicative at different levels, using different media and an open and functional teaching style
- kind-hearted and charismatic
- motivated and motivating, highly empathetic
- able to create meaningful social relationships with all participants
- in contact with him/herself and his/her own emotions
- aware of the psychodynamic aspects of group learning and teaching
- model of leadership based on ethics of care



Need for research

Quantitative research

observing an experimental group and comparing it to possible control groups - surveys

Qualitative research

evaluation studies, descriptive case studies, stakeholder focus groups, interviews

Action research and Design-based research studies:

on specific procedures and teaching-learning strategies adopted in specific EME programmes

Research as foundational for the teaching practice

e.g. application of findings from neuroscientific research

Interdisciplinary research approaches

Thanks for your attention!