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How to teach Schulwerk online: inspiration and motivation

Back to the roots

In 1948 the first Schulwerk program was broadcast on Bavarian radio by Carl Orff for children in Munich Schools. It was – maybe - the first music distance education in the world that came up of an educational need of the post-war period. It was the first time that Schulwerk was addressed to children and this triggered further evolution: Orff ensemble and new means were invented. Let's face today's urgent need with the same will...

Can we teach Schulwerk online?

Nothing can replace experiential education, interaction, cooperation, and life interpersonal relations that are placed in Schulwerk's core though sometimes educational duties need adaptation and creativity that is in the core of Schulwerk too. Let's be inspired by Schulwerk and remain connected with our students supporting them as much as possible using technology.

Nowadays the two main ways to organize online education are the **Asynchronous distance education and the Synchronous online courses**. Each one requires a different way of organization and thinking. However, they can work complementarily increasing the functionality and efficiency of online education. In both cases we could use some main ideas based on Schulwerk. Below are some of the ideas I have used, ways to adapt them to asynchronous and synchronous online education and ways to combine them creating **flipper classrooms** in which students create audios, videos, texts etc. following asynchronous teaching and then we work, develop, combine and reflect on them organizing online meetings.

They can be adapted at any age. However they are mostly addressed to teenagers, University students and parents.

1. Speech

- Prosody of speech for creating rhythms
- Rhythm improvisation and composition based on speech, nonsense, scating etc.
- Verbalization of the rhythm based on various systems including non-western traditional ones
- Music development of rimes, poetry and stories
- Rimes, poets or phrases that describe movement
- Speech and movement connections: locomotion based on prosody, movements that describe the meaning of specific phrases
- ...etc.

2. Sound education
 - The natural qualities of the sound (dynamic, duration, pitch, color) and their exploration in everyday life
 - Sound environments (indoors and outdoors if it is possible).
 - Work with sound scape ideas (acoustic ecology meets Orff-Schulwerk)
 - Sound production: everyday objects
 - Instructions of handmade instruments (simple ones) or motivation for sound exploration and innovations.
 - Instructions of organizing the sound that lead to improvisation and composition.
 - ...etc.
3. Graphic notation
 - Graphic score of the volumes for music making
 - Our graphic scores for teaching natural qualities of the sound, ostinati, music forms
 - Instructions to use graphic score as a motive for improvisation
 - Graphic notation as an active listening of music pieces
 - Graphic notation as a starting point for music composition or a choreography
 - ...etc.
4. Instruments (in case the participants, kids or adults have some instruments in their homes)
 - Use the body as music instrument
 - Explore instruments and use them in deviating way
 - Use instrument in all activities
 - Give instructions for improvisation or composition with two or three pitches or in a pentatonic scale.
 - ...etc.
5. Several other ideas could be included

Asynchronous distance education

1. Upload videos
 - Demonstration of a process: e.g. a) from speech to sound gestures to instruments to composition, b) graphic notation design of music: various forms and styles
 - Interactive videos: any video, even YouTube ones edited by software that allows comments questions or notes in specific parts
 - YouTube videos and reflecting questions on them
 - Demonstrations that help students to develop their skills: e.g. body music, rhythmical or instruments exercises etc.
 - Videos that help our students to travel around the world
 - Animations

- Several other ideas could be included
2. Instructions or ideas for graphic notations
 3. Audio examples with comments for deeper understanding or as a starting point for further creative processing
 4. Instructions for recording, photo shooting, video recording and editing data
 - Recording of sounds inspired by the natural qualities of the sound, the indoor, outdoor soundscape etc.
 - Recording speech of voices
 - Edit recorded data with easy and well known programs (e.g. audacity)
 - Graphic notations using photo shooting
 - Create videos and sound accompaniment (or soundtrack) using easy and well known programs like movie maker.
 5. Applications that help us to improvise or compose using musical forms, graphic notation etc. There are many easy and free ones (e.g. chrome music lab, www.musicplayonline.com).
 - Music making following specific forms
 - Exploration of the sound
 - Ear training
 6. Investigate platforms are provided from Universities or your national educational systems. There many in Greece, so there are everywhere.
 7. Several other ideas could be included

Synchronous online courses

1. Sing together
2. Play music together
3. Improvise
4. Try to use ideas of circle drums and community music ideas
5. Several other ideas could be included

Flipper classrooms

1. Work on students outcomes: recordings, videos, photos, compositions
 - Perform them
 - Reflect on them
 - Exchange them
 - Develop them
 - Compose them
2. Group work. Many platforms provide the function to split the group of participants and allow them to work in groups. Groups edit common or different data and make their own creations. As in every Orff-Schulwerk class we can perform them, exchange them and reflect on them

From my recent experience

Online education takes internet connection for granted and that today it is possible almost everywhere. However, there may be people who - for various reasons - do not have permanent or only temporary access to the internet and in any case a number of equipment and skills are required. It is essential to keep in mind our duty to include as many people as is possible in our online projects. It is also important to insist on the pedagogical dimension avoiding a technocentric approach. This could be manageable if we reflect on our goals and we use tools or applications that meet the needs of creative/reflective work that is connected as much as possible with Schulwerk's ideas. Some thoughts on how could we do this:

- Think about the level of technological skills of the students in your country (e.g. In Greece pupils come in contact with technologies, coding and programming from early childhood according the national curriculum. It would be very helpful to use familiar programs and base my project on acquired skills.)
- Think about platforms that pupils or students have free access to (e.g. In Greece I use platforms that are provided by my University and my students use platforms provided by the Ministry of Education for their practice with pupils. Usually these tools are simple, accessible and give space for interaction even they are not so "trendy". If you don't have access to them explore possibilities are given for platforms like menti.com etc. and teleconferences tools like Skype for Business, Webex, Zoom, etc.
- Try to use organize activities based on accessible equipment: e.g. with smart phones it is possible to record, make photos and videos, etc., and software and programs that everyone can download and are easy to deal with.
- Asynchronous distance education provides opportunities to the students to choose the time of internet connection and this is very important for the family timetable.

What I have found out from the compulsion to use online education

- It is easier for some University students and teenagers to express themselves in this environment and using these means
- Music making become a family affair: parents - especially the younger ones - worked with their kids recording and videotaping with mobile phones, building instruments etc. Parents are grateful because they found ways to keep the kids busy or play with them and share some time together.
- Organizing online teaching reveals expanding the potential of the means
- I missed interaction, touch... I feel tired and I never finished an online course filling as happy as usual.

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