

## Formation of choral practice from the perspective of human rights and nature

Formación de la práctica coral desde la perspectiva de los derechos humanos y la naturaleza

Formação em prática coral na perspectiva dos direitos humanos e da natureza

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**Abstract:** Since ancient times the ethos of choral music or chorality has had a singular relationship with the human being, through it he has communicated, allied and fought for his rights in dissimilar circumstances. In this case we propose the process of choral work post pandemic of a choral group of elderly women and their rehabilitation of vocal skills, rhythmic, attention, coordination, as well as social relations. This process that is born from the University of the Arts of Ecuador will be closely related to two components such as musical education for vulnerable groups and human rights where our objective will be to create, produce and disseminate their recognition in the construction of methodologies in the visual and sound field deriving in an artistic production.

**Keywords:** Choral education, older adults, human rights, link with society, higher education.

**Resumen:** Desde la antigüedad el ethos de la música coral o coralidad ha guardado singular relación con el ser humano a través de ella se ha comunicado, aliado y luchado por sus derechos en disímiles circunstancias. En este caso se propone el proceso de trabajo coral post pandemia de un grupo coral de adultas mayores y su rehabilitación de habilidades vocales, rítmicas, de atención, coordinación, así como las relaciones sociales. Este proceso que nace desde la Universidad de las Artes de Ecuador estará estrechamente relacionado a dos componentes como son la educación musical para grupos vulnerables y los derechos humanos donde nuestro objetivo será recabar crear, producir y difundir su reconocimiento en la construcción de metodologías en el ámbito visual y sonoro derivando en una producción artística.

**Palabras clave:** Educación coral, adultas mayores, derechos humanos, vinculación con la sociedad, educación superior.

**Resumo:** Desde a antiguidade que o ethos da música coral ou coral tem tido uma relação singular com os seres humanos, através da qual eles têm comunicado, aliado e lutado pelos seus direitos em circunstâncias diferentes. Neste caso, propomos o processo de trabalho coral pós-pandémico de um grupo coral de mulheres idosas e a sua reabilitação de capacidades vocais, rítmicas, de atenção, de coordenação e de relações sociais. Este processo que nasce da Universidade das Artes do Equador estará intimamente relacionado com duas componentes como a educação musical para grupos vulneráveis e os direitos humanos, onde o nosso objectivo será criar, produzir e divulgar o seu reconhecimento na construção de metodologias no campo visual e sonoro decorrentes de uma produção artística.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação coral, adultos idosos, direitos humanos, ligação com a sociedade, ensino superior.

## INTRODUCTION

Our qualitative research established relationships between choral music education and human rights in order to identify methodologies and good practices applicable in the priority territories for the University of the Arts - UArtes to carry out its link with the community. In this regard, we recall that the Ecuadorian Constitution has made reforms to change the focus and offer of public education in the arts and thus be able to contrast with the region: Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico and Cuba, countries where there are still universities of the arts, free of charge.

As an essential human right, education is oriented towards the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, in accordance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This is associated with the San Salvador Protocol, which promotes respect for human rights, ideological pluralism, fundamental freedoms, justice and peace.

The question addressed in our research was related to the responsibility that Higher Education Institutions - HEIs would have to assume for a socialization of actions to achieve collective strategies that allow an implementation and educational strengthening in human rights in Ecuador.

HEIs structure bases for citizenship training by strengthening links between members of the educational community, however, according to what was analyzed by Hernández and De la Cruz Flores (2017) in the Latin American context, teaching methodologies that do not connect with social needs and practices that respond to the conditions experienced in the localities persist.

At the global level, States will ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities based on human rights as expressed in goal 4.7. of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and found in the Guiding Principles for Human Rights Education Activities established by UNESCO in its World Programme for Human Rights Education.

Articles 12 and 71 of the Organic Law of Higher Education of Ecuador speak of ensuring the same possibilities in access, permanence, mobility and graduation from the Higher Education System without discrimination of gender, creed, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, political preference, socioeconomic status, mobility or disability. The above was reinforced by the Higher Education Council - CES with its Regulation to Guarantee Equality of All Actors in the Higher Education System.

Education is a constitutional right based on human rights that promote holistic development, gender equity, justice, peace and interculturality. Since 1998, Ecuador's public policy priorities for the achievement of Sumak Kawsay have had to do with integrating all levels of formal and non-formal education into the National Human Rights Plan.

Specifically, by determining parameters for diagnosis and territorial work, UArtes strengthened networks based on cooperation and solidarity to guarantee knowledge and the exercise of full citizenship. It is important to highlight that by building citizenship, the resilience of the democratic system in contemporary times is being rethought.

As UArtes our intention is reciprocal learning, co-responsibility and dialogue of knowledge to envision collective solutions for social and institutional transformation. These solutions project us as a university that explores artistic practices and pedagogical processes by creating and producing together, not only in the city of Guayaquil but also in the country. For example, the

problems that have been addressed in organizations, educational system, neighborhoods or villages such as the circulation of the arts, environment, food sovereignty, gender, memory, orality, heritage, public space, land conflicts, interculturalism and public policies.

The challenge of our research was to generate an inclusive and face-to-face space with older adults through choral singing that brings together ancestral knowledge to raise aesthetic and learning experiences in accordance with reality and its limitations. Thinking that with inclusion we would improve socio-cultural cohesion in the group, we planned weekly workshops where musicograms would be carried out for the graphic representation of works, as well as to elaborate portraits or soundscapes of the environments of the people involved.

In Ecuador, choral singing has been developed for 50 years in schools, universities, banks, hospitals and companies in such a way that they had a choir to represent them. According to our research, it was in 2008 that community outreach projects on choral singing were studied in higher education institutions. Similarly, 13 years ago the Municipality of Guayaquil implemented studies in gerontological centers to prolong the autonomy, self-esteem and assertiveness of older adults.

Within the framework of the II Higher Education Meeting on Human and Natural Rights. Approaches for its understanding and implementation in contexts of crisis, which will take place in December 2021, we will contribute with a choral intervention called "Sounds of power and popular noises" starring 22 women from Guayaquil who voluntarily responded to a call by the teacher Yanella Duarte. The aforementioned choral intervention is part of the project Toolbox for Non-Formal Education of the Community Network of Human Rights and Nature Defenders of Guayaquil led by the teacher Janina Suárez Pinzón. This project was declared winner of the IV Ibero-American

Prize for Human Rights Education "Oscar Arnulfo Romero" organized in 2021 by the Organization of Ibero-American States, National Office of Ecuador, the Ministry of Education and Editorial SM.

Since September 2021, the women's group has been meeting twice a week to rehearse and train a repertoire that promotes the enforceability of human rights. The choir was assisted by Jhilmar Muñoz and Alexander Morales, UArtes students doing their pre-professional community service internships. Through the choral experience, the women were able to re-establish skills and body rhythmic competencies that tend to be lost over time. Because an adult body marches slower, the rhythmic exercises enhanced selective attention, spontaneous language, coordination and psychomotor relations of social, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. In addition, these musical exercises addressed articulation, phrasing, verbal and non-verbal communication.

Then, at the moment of participating in the musicograms and the assembly of the sound portraits, a remote and operative memory was stimulated through the memory of the lyrics of the songs and of the personal facts that developed a cognitive area. In the socioemotional part, a mood of improvement was maintained in the women with smiles and cooperative attitudes. In the interaction with their classmates, inside and outside the classroom, they felt in a pleasant and accepting environment, since it is no less true that at a certain age indifference and abandonment are common forms of mistreatment of older adults. On the other hand, in the physical motor area, breathing and mobility mechanisms were progressively stimulated, that is, balance, perceptual, motor and rhythmic coordination and dynamic coordination.

Our research contemplates the problems that are experienced every day in the Ecuadorian context, Gentilli (2015) emphasizes that there are large gaps linked to discrimination, conditions that promote poverty and deep

inequalities, scenarios that are lived within the daily life in Latin America. Similarly, another triggering factor that causes a deep rooting of these conditions is due to the fact that various elements entrenched in the culture and prejudices cause phenomena of invisibilization of human rights, as expressed by Daros (2013), it is a problem that causes all kinds of violations of rights whose root is in ignorance, since what is not known, is not practiced, is not disseminated and is not part of the culture in the different territories.

In this sense, another of the barriers that foster deep social inequalities in Latin America is growing: the normalization of discrimination and violence, which according to Flores-Hernández, Espejel-Rodríguez and Martell-Ruíz (2016), represent one of the social evils that are integrated into normalized daily practices in families. The fact of normalizing shouting, connecting authority to permissibility to disrespect, shout and impose, added to stereotyped behaviors with discriminatory bases with respect to gender, social class and situations of vulnerability.

In the face of these daily scenarios, education should be the key to break with discriminatory conceptions, violence and inequalities; however, the problems in Latin American educational environments represent another of the factors that strengthen the problems to develop actions that represent a real social change. Lorente (2019) indicates that education in values has been left in the background, it has been downplayed, first due to the lack of appropriate methodologies for its current teaching, secondly by prioritizing other subjects more linked to the exact sciences, over the social sciences and not reformulating educational curricula to address the real shortcomings that affect harmonious coexistence in society.

An education based mainly on the repetition of models that do not respond to learning needs or to the development of meaningful learning, in addition to profound inequalities of access, relevance and availability of resources for

full learning. In synchrony with Mujica's (2007) questioning of what it means to educate in human rights, the need for values education to regain the importance it deserves is evident; but if educational policies are not directed towards changing their approaches, it is essential to exercise action plans from the communities, with emphasis on collaborative, joint work, to create bridges between formal and non-formal educational scenarios.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand what Giménez Mercado and Valente Adarme have explained, regarding the fact that the only way to achieve these changes is through constant work, by means of strategies that lead to results associated with solving problems related to inequality, discrimination, violence, invisibilization and prejudice. These actions should aim at the development of public policies that accommodate the different voices and needs of the communities through the practice and strengthening of social fabric based on the respect and practice of human rights.

Vásquez, Loza, Analuiza and Espín (2019) emphasize that in order to find feasible solutions to these problems, it is necessary to consolidate actions focused on the trilogy: Social Responsibility, Human Rights and Education for Peace, because the conjunction of these three elements in actions focused on the integral development of citizens in our continent is the only way to enable true sustainable human development.

The structural basis of the project seeks to strengthen the links between society and educational institutions, in this case, to strengthen the shortcomings associated with the essential functions of higher education, that is, to put the social function of the university as a starting point.

Deepening in the method of Jaques-Dalcroze and the importance of musical education, the relationship with rhythm is analyzed in order to establish corporeal bonds using the qualities of music. This close relationship prepares the older adult for better auditory and gestural skills. Also Carl Orff and his

method of emphasis on verbal and corporal expression provides elements for the learning process adapted to the senior choir.

Gackle and Fung (2009: 65-77) choral singing improves aspects of education, medicine, psychology and politics. An example is the research of the Australian Terrence Hays and Fernández Mayo, who state that beyond the time, customs and borders, choral music has the evocative effect or the display of sensitivities of emotions and memories when hearing it; and the fun and sharing in group provoking enjoyment as a tool of preventive medicine.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In the initial evaluation, the call for the choir was launched by the UArtes' social linking direction with the reception of older adults in a registration form and audition of voices to select the types of voices by tessitura. A survey was made at the beginning of the program and later selection of choral arrangement of musical works that promote values and rights. Two of the works to be performed were made by the students of the subject "Cátedra Libre" of the Musical Arts career. Subsequently, we started with the rehearsals for the learning and interpretation of the selected works.

The methodology to be used in the research is descriptive and exploratory where a linear and longitudinal structured follow-up of the cognitive processes and musical skills for the socio-emotional development of older adults will be established in order to shape ideas on human rights and verification of behaviors of the age we are addressing.

The research instruments included semi-structured surveys that included the identification of the respondents in terms of age, sex, occupation, educational level, choral experience, follow-up files, record of musical aptitudes and evolution in the learning of choral works. The voices were

classified into three groups: first, second and third voice. The sample is composed of 20 participants from a female choir mainly because there are only two men.

In the technical training of the choir, different types of exercises were performed, such as: relaxation, breathing, vocalization, concentration, memory, rhythm, expression to develop intonation and expressiveness and integration into the group. The following are some examples of exercises performed with the choir of older adults at the UArtes facilities:

Exercise 1: Procedure aimed at: Muscles of the face and shoulders

Massage the neck with the fingertips.

Rotate the head sideways.

Move the arms forward while breathing in and slowly lower them while breathing out.

Exercise 2: Procedure aimed at: The muscles of the back and abdomen

Rotate arms in circles up and down, bring arms up and down.

Tighten and release the hands.

Moving around the classroom by vocalizing

Exercise 3: Procedure aimed at: Execute rhythmic patterns with the breath.

Hold your breath and slowly exhale in time with crotchet, quaver and sixteenth notes.

Inhale in 4 beats and exhale in 4 beats.

The procedure was then repeated more quickly.

Exercise 4: Procedure aimed at: Relaxation of the face

Make exaggerated grimaces, as if we were chewing gum. Repeatedly.

Exercise 5: Procedure aimed at: The expression

Say a word and relate with gestures its representation with the body.

Examples of words: air, rain, fire, house.

Exercise 6: Procedure aimed at: Classification of intonation pitches

Say a phrase while singing with different intonation. We will go from low tones to high tones. Example: The blouse is green.

Exercise 7: Procedure aimed at: Concentration and rhythm

Make two groups and each one clapped a rhythm, to establish a polyrhythm in the group.

Exercise 8: Procedure aimed at: Group integration

Groups of 5 people are made and each group has to represent an animal only with onomatopoeic sounds and sung melodies.

Exercises 9: Procedure for auditory and rhythmic training

In vocalization, exercises are done for the development or maintenance of skills when we listen to different voices sung at the same time, thus developing the harmonic ear.

## **RESULTS**

From the scope of life projects for the elderly, the analysis of the rehabilitation processes of vocal, rhythmic, attention, coordination skills, as well as social relations, is assumed for the conformation of their individuality. From this consideration, these processes and relationships with society are perpetuated in their personal self-realization project. We were able to verify that there is a presence of 99% of women as for men and the ages oscillate between 65 and 70 years old, with a professional educational level mostly and a very marked previous choral experience.

In the case of post-pandemic rehabilitation of general skills, there is evidence of a progressive improvement in the performance of exercises; at the physical-motor level, sensory stimulation was reinforced and relaxation and stress were promoted. At the socio-emotional level, self-esteem and communication skills were improved.

The cognitive level stimulated short-term memory through the learning of songs, orientation in reality. In the behavioral part, it improved the quality of life in the spiritual and existential sphere leaving as products the recordings of a choral piece made by the student Misael Bacasela of the subject Free Chair of Musical Arts of the UArtes conducted by Professor Rafael Guzmán with a focus on rights through the content of the work, an Ecuadorian song La bocina of the Inca fox genre by the Ecuadorian composer José Rudecindo Inga Vélez and the Latin pop song Somos uno by the singer Axel and Abel Pinto.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The concepts of development and aging have been presenting variations over time. Stereotypes, myths and negative prejudices regarding old age have also changed, however, these populist progressions must change and foster inclusive, equitable and quality education based on human rights and lifelong learning.

The research managed to demonstrate in general terms, that music education for older adults represents the possibility of improving their quality of life, and thus delaying the deterioration of biopsychosocial processes, but at the same time emphasizes that they not only need recreational or leisure activities but also an integral attention of intervention and prevention from the exercise of social responsibility and methodological planning, through a systematic, responsible and integral vision. Although singing in groups is not the solution to all daily problems, it can be an accessible tool to alleviate the social reality in a society that shapes its identity from logical, aesthetic, ethical, metaphysical and vital values.

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