



Communicating through music: a tool for students' inspirational development

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Abstract

Showing and discussing examples of how people achieve goals can become a great source of inspiration (Piirto, 2011). Young people, especially students of different socio-cultural backgrounds, should be initiated and engaged in authentic projects and ideas. This article gives concrete reasons to K-12 and higher education stakeholders of why and how such projects should become part of curricula. This case study presents the creation of a multicultural disc in three languages (Greek, Corsican, and French) as an attempt to add to the inspirational development of students to aid teachers to achieve overall educational aims.

Keywords: Cross-cultural education; curriculum development; higher education; inspirational development; K-12 education; musical creation.

Introduction

In this paper, I analyze the journey of a musical project creation, with the purpose to show that using real examples of creative projects and producing similar ones in collaboration with students can inspire them. I examine the case of a multilingual music compact disc (CD) creation, using the autobiographical method as it was a project that I was directly involved in, taking into account the five core attitudes creative people possess: (1) the presence of motivation; (2) naïveté, or openness to experience; (3) risk-taking; (4) ambiguity tolerance; (5) and group trust (Piirto, 2011). The purpose of this article is to point out why teachers and other stakeholders of education should aim for students' inspirational development, using a concrete example of such inspirational initiation.

Inspiring people, especially young students, and providing them with positive examples and ideas to creatively imitate, work and improve on, cannot but help the advancement of our society. The role of teachers and the education system, in general, is crucial for students to build their cultural capital and broaden their capabilities and qualifications (Wrench et al., 2013). This is why this paper suggests that teachers should include examples of positive thinking and inspirational

activities in their courses. The educational system can use such examples, proposing them as introductory courses, seminars, activities, and discussions in curricula. Such courses could actually lead to the implementation of a creative, collaborative project that would eventually help the students' inspirational development, creativity and will to collaborate with their classmates, among others.

Perceptions of cultural deficits can be transformed into potential academic strengths by arousing the critical curiosity of students and inspiring self- and social transformation (Camangian, 2015). Discussing and working on inspirational ideas and actions can encourage young people to become creative and learn to collaborate. This process will stimulate the adults of tomorrow in a positive way.

A creative musical trip as an example

It had always been my wish and purpose in life to share hope, inspiration, creativity, and love, believing this to be my destination in this world. This internal need led me, almost 20 years ago, to the idea of creating a musical project. This CD contained songs in three languages (Greek, French, and Corsican) and was recorded in Corsica, France, while I was pursuing my Master and Ph.D. degrees (2002-2006).

This idea started as a need to share my inner thoughts and preoccupations in my efforts to motivate and encourage people around me. After all, music is a communicative tool (Cross, 2009) that we can use to inspire others. As a matter of fact, music is the ultimate model of communication (Kefalaki, 2021), as it is a common language that we can use to share thoughts and feelings, communicate and exchange, irrespective of our language, our culture, or our inner beliefs. Even though creating this multilingual CD was not an easy task to accomplish for a Greek student in a foreign university (I was the only Greek student at the time), my determination would transform this seemingly impossible mission into a concrete and feasible project. In this paper, I describe a multilingual music CD creation with the aim to encourage education stakeholders (teachers, deans, and administrators) to use such projects as tools/examples for students' inspirational development.

Literature review

We need a new model for education in the 21st century, as the world is changing and we need to adapt. This need becomes even more obvious due to our experience of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kefalaki et al., 2021; Bonk et al., 2020). Learning and innovation skills (four C's: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity) are considered life-changing factors that can help cultures mature (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010). Critical thinking, problem-solving, and the rest of the 21st century skills (creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability, leadership and cross-cultural skills) are some of the tools students need to keep learning as content and circumstances change (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010). To increase creative thinkers, we need both inspirational and instructional supports/tools that can assess and support people's creativity (Rahimi & Shute, 2021).

Additionally, it is important that teachers are not afraid to become creative themselves, modeling their students. Teachers who claim not to be creative have not tried to become creative, and teachers who are reluctant and shy about their own creativity are not able to support their students' creativity (Piiro, 2011). Teachers that would like to teach their students to be creative should transform themselves into creators, revealing their own talents and creativity (Piiro, 2011). Teachers can embed the core attitude of self-discipline needed for students' creative processes. Treating work as practice and emphasizing the process of creation are some ways to do so (Piiro, 2011). Showing and discussing examples of how people achieve goals is a way that teachers can embed the core attitude of self-discipline and share projects to inspire their students and demonstrate to them the importance of collaboration and social acceptance.

The DIALLS project (Dialogue and Argumentation for cultural Literacy Learning in Schools: Maine & Vrikki (2021)) is a pan-European project focusing on the development of children and young people's cultural literacy prioritizing intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. This project indicates the importance of interdisciplinarity for an educational future where issues of living together, social responsibility and sustainable development transcend traditional categories of learning. Music making projects can have similar impacts (Hurtado-Soler et al., 2020).

Speaking about the impact of music making projects, Kokotsaki & Hallam's (2007) research examined 78 music students' participation in music creation, which fell within three categories: musical acts, social acts and active music making. Music making as a musical act allowed students to deepen their musical knowledge and understanding. As a social act, students felt that they were active contributors to a group outcome, developed a strong sense of belonging, gained popularity and made friends with likeminded people, enhancing their social skills, and building up a strong sense of self-esteem and satisfaction. Last, active music making influenced the self of the students in terms of personal skill development, empowering their personal identity and encouraging the development of self-achievement, self-confidence and intrinsic motivation.

Lockwood and Shaughnessy (2012) propose that upward comparisons, particularly those made with individuals who have experienced a similar transition, help to reduce uncertainty during adjustments to novel environments and demonstrate that future success is possible. Upward social comparisons are motivating, especially while living in a rapidly changing and increasingly interconnected global environment. We need inspiration and positive things to creatively imitate. The analysis of Sio et al. (2015) revealed that presenting a single and uncommon example may encourage individuals to conduct a deeper search in a specific and remote domain, facilitating the generation of high-quality and novel ideas.

Awad (2021) puts forward programmes involving practical learning experiments to provide students with solid conceptual knowledge. More precisely, the researcher is referring to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) perspective in education which Struyf et al. (2019) consider important for students as it better prepares them for the labour market. Although the creation of a STEM learning environment that fosters students' conceptual understanding is a challenge, a rich curriculum and a student-centered learning environment is key to motivate students. Teachers who provide real examples and applications, and engage students in discussion and co-creation, would accelerate the achievement of learning goals, increase creativity and innovative spirit among students. This is how inspirational development of students can be achieved. As Janning (2012, p. 27) puts it, "*becoming inspired is a way of life*".

Inspiring people and most importantly, students, is for me what education is all about. If we understand and live the principles of an 'inspiration economy', our collective ability to create a stable and sustainable world would be much more realizable (Buheji & Thomas, 2016). One of the underpinnings of such an economy is that "an inspired soul gives life to all its surroundings for a long... time and with deep intensity" (Buheji & Thomas, 2016, p. 12).

Morality plays a key role in our inspirational examples to students. Cai and Xiao (2020) refer to Comenius and explain that moral education is an essential educational content for primary and secondary school teachers to shape students' minds. Comenius was inspired by ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle's moral cultivation and proposed that moral education should achieve good virtues of wisdom, moderation, perseverance, and integrity, improving the frequency and quality of moral practice activities. Cai and Xiao (2020) explain that moral education exposes students to good morality examples early on. Comenius recommended that moral learning should be applied to life practice and that since children imitate things around them unconsciously, excellent role models should be placed around them (teachers, parents, classmates). This is why primary and secondary school teachers should carry out moral education.

The journey of a music CD creation

I am now providing the example of a music CD creation, the creation of a multicultural disc in three languages (Greek, Corsican, and French) named *Anghjulini*, 'Little angels'. I have a dream... I believe that we are on this earth for a simple reason: share love, empathy, good practices and in this way become the best version of ourselves. We came into this world for a higher purpose. We came into this world as secret agents of positive change. We came into this world to give, share, inspire, believe, love, exchange, collaborate. We all have talents to share with the purpose to improve this world: share knowledge, share good practices and paradigms, share love and empathy, in order to inspire people to do the same. The Anghjulini project is an effort to show that collaboration, understanding, empathy, positive energy and love is what we need for this world to become a better place. I still, almost two decades later, do not know if I somehow managed to share some of these high internal values, but at least I certainly tried to do so and I continue trying.

I truly consider Corsica a part of me, a second identity, and a second home. Inhabitants always considered me a part of their own community. I was to them their Greek Ambassador (see Appendices 1 and 2). Nevertheless, this was not enough for a Greek student to undertake the project of a multilingual music CD creation. The initial idea was to include well-known songs that I would translate into different languages (Greek, French, and English). I felt that in this way I could show my respect and admiration for Corsican music and people, and help the island's artists share their talent with people from all around the world. However, though there are many groups and singers (Bithell, 2001), I experienced that they are not very open to collaboration and co-creation.

I first tried to contact a well known Corsican group (I Muvrini), without success. But as I truly believe that everything happens for a reason, I didn't stop trying. Then I contacted a well-known Corsican solo singer that I once listened to and whose voice I loved, Feli Travaglini. Feli gave me permission to use one of his songs, *Quand'è tu balli* ('When you dance'). The Greek version became *όταν χορεύεις*¹. The song speaks of the importance of dance in our life: *When you dance all the world rise up to dance with you*. The Greek part differs from the Corsican version: *Live aside moments of sorrow. Time goes by too quickly. Come and dance with me to fill our life with joy*.

Another song is *Fortunatu*, a traditional Corsican tune. This song became *Τυχερός* in Greek. It is important to note that for the Greek version, I did not merely translate the Corsican version; instead, I switched the gender and imagined the answer of a woman to a man (in the Corsican version, the man claimed to be fortunate to have met the woman). *'I am in love with your beautiful hair, your eyes make me crazy... when I see you I arise and life is full of colors again... Let me put your name to adorn every star in the sky, there is no other beauty in the world like yours, lucky him who is in your life'*. The rest of the CD includes eight of my creations (lyrics,

music and interpretation), with most of them having a Greek, Corsican and French version. The YouTube links to a video and all songs from the CD are shared below (before the Acknowledgements).

Discussion with the wind/ Incontru incù u ventu/ Discussion avec le vent/ Συζήτηση με τον άνεμο

<https://youtu.be/0rqtL5YEjto>

This is a song I created at the age of 13. It is my discussion with the wind that seems to guide me through a difficult situation at the time. The wind says: *Let your mind stay open, let the tear of time guide you, even if it is wrong that leads our life, learn that it is in sorrow that happiness is born*.

Sunlight/ Spirionu /Rayon de soleil/ Ηλιαχτίδα

<https://youtu.be/B4gOcmQ-Kpw>

This is a song speaking of the importance of our language and our country. Retaining our differences and sharing them with others is what creates our identity. Additionally advancing, innovating, and accepting differences is what makes us human and enforces our personal and social identities. *And once again I take my guitar and sing using this language that I like expressing myself*.

Star of my life/Stella di a mio vida/Etoile de ma vie/ Αστέρι της ζωής μου

https://youtu.be/8lphsd_6c3o

This song refers to the importance of love. Love is everywhere. We came in this world to love, first ourselves and then everything in life. We are here for a higher purpose and love is what we are here to share.

Patria/ Homeland/Pays/ Πατρίδα

<https://youtu.be/Ch9pdfcaSkE>

This song speaks of my homeland, of the homeland that each one of us has in their heart. *Homeland you are engraved in my soul. Every sense about you gives me the power to go on*.

Paradise/Paradis/Paradis/ Παράδεισος

<https://youtu.be/rMNBmA9PSRQ>

This song speaks of the different faces of love: *Love can be a paradise and a hell, a sunbeam delusion, a smile, and a tear at the same time*.

¹ This is the ninth song of the disc *Anghjulini*, created in 2005 in Corsica, France. Voice, Lyrics, Music: Margarita Kefalaki/ with the collaboration of Christophe Mac-Daniel, Francois Pesce, Mahir El-Euchi.

Hold me/Abracia mi/Tiens moi/Krata me

https://youtu.be/JK_afdtQNNg

Speaking to my soul (for me to understand) and/or to someone I appreciate and love: *Hold me not to feel fear, hold me to feel you near, hold me as it is with you that my life is covered with colours and becomes a beautiful painting.* The fact that we use two languages in this song signifies that we all, irrespective of our language, our colours, or our beliefs, have the same needs to love and to be loved.

Angels/Anghjuli/Anges/Άγγελοι

https://youtu.be/-NeW9_eMUd4

This is the song that gave the title to this multicultural disc. Even if you live through difficult moments, remember to smile. It is the Angels of your heart that will always be there to enlighten your way and colour your life. Remember that you are not alone, there are many like you, who try to make this world a better place.

My sister/Surella mia/Ma soeur/Αδελφέ μου (My brother)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HBbXr2C09M>

This song has a dual significance. It also contains a video clip that was created with the help of academics and students of the Technological Institute of Corsica (Licence Professionnelle Techniques et Activités de l'Image et du Son). The song Surella mia, translates to 'My sister' for the Corsican version and 'My brother' for the Greek version. It speaks of the pure, unconditional love of a brother to his sister and vice versa. In this case, the brother (Corsican and French lyrics) is the island of Corsica and the sister is Greece (Greek lyrics). Like for the other songs on this disc, I have chosen not to literally translate the Corsican-French parts. Each language reveals its own different, special message. This game of lyrics (using a different language for each part) signifies the importance of keeping our differences as a treasure and at the same time our readiness to advance, innovate, share, exchange, communicate inspire, and get inspired. This disc is meant to become a true example of intercultural communication and can be used as such for educational reasons.

After the creation of this disc, the project was released to the media. In addition to Corsica's *France Bleu RCFM* radio station, local radio stations played some of the disc's songs. Then, the local television station *France 3 Corse* invited me to speak about this music project. Many newspaper articles (see Appendices 2 and 3 for samples) were also written about the project. It was a dream come true and although the effort for its promotion stopped as soon I left Corsica (after the presentation of my thesis), the impact was certainly great for many different people.

These kinds of projects (musical or others) could be used as case studies to inspire students and help them learn via real examples, and to be involved in projects they choose to undertake. This can be a call to action for students not

to stop dreaming and fight for what they wish for. Teachers could promote inspirational actions and ideas as a part of their students' inspirational development. What is also important is that each educational institution understands their students' perceptions of the quality of teaching. Bradley et al. (2015) tried to do so by examining teaching excellence as perceived by students. Their analysis sought to discover what students perceived as being inspirational or transformative in relation to their student experience. Each student explained in 200 words or less how their experience had been transformed by inspirational teaching and by exemplary learning support. Such efforts will not only serve the understanding of what students consider important, but will also inspire teachers to adapt the way they promote information and knowledge.

Conclusion

In this paper, a music CD creation in three languages (Greek, French and Corsican) was provided as an inspirational tool for teachers to use in the classroom. This paper aims to provide teachers from K-12 to universities and their educational institutions with reasons of why they should include actual examples of inspirational activities into their courses and curricula. Ministries of education can provide the necessary means and facilities to promote opportunities of inspirational development to the future generation.

I have presented the disc's songs and the video clip as examples of a collaborative, co-creational effort at the University of Corsica between Corsican and Greek students. I believe this was a unique and positive experience for all involved, especially for the students. Similar activities can be promoted at various educational levels in order to develop students' inspirational development, creativity and understanding of team power.

Additional links to songs

Lucky/Fortunatu/Chanceux/Τυχερός

<https://youtu.be/fmmlcZFgxlA>

When you dance/Quant'è tu balli/Otan Xorevis

<https://youtu.be/DzYoOyYbQB8>

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Une étudiante pour représenter la Corse (A student to represent Corsica). *Corse Matin* (2004, November 12).

N° 20682 CORSE MATIN 12/11/2004
Colloque international sur la danse

Une étudiante pour représenter la Corse



D'origine grecque, Margarita Kefalaki s'est lancée dans une thèse portant sur les relations pouvant s'établir entre la Corse et la Grèce, via la danse.

La Corse était représentée lors de la dix-huitième édition du colloque international de recherche sur la danse, organisée par l'UNESCO du 3 au 7 novembre derniers, à Argos, en Grèce. Margarita Kefalaki, étudiante d'origine grecque à l'Université de Corse, y a en effet présenté une communication portant sur la danse traditionnelle dans l'île.

Actuellement lancée dans la réalisation d'une thèse portant sur les relations qui peuvent s'établir entre la Grèce et la Corse, via la danse, la jeune femme a pu effectuer ce voyage grâce au soutien financier de la collectivité territoriale.

« Tout l'intérêt pour moi était de croiser les données que j'ai recueillies depuis trois ans en Corse avec celles présentées par les nombreux chercheurs internationaux qui avaient fait le déplacement, explique-t-elle. J'ai constaté que beaucoup d'entre eux connaissent mal, voire pas du tout, la Corse. Je crois qu'il serait intéressant qu'une véritable délégation soit un jour constituée pour participer à cet événement et mieux faire connaître la culture de l'île. »

L'an prochain, l'UNESCO a choisi d'organiser ce colloque international à Chypre. Peut-être l'idée de Margarita Kefalaki aura-t-elle fait son chemin d'ici là...

Appendix 2: 'Anghjulini' nouveau CD Greco-Corse ('Anghjulini', a new Greek-Corsican CD). *Corse Matin* (2006, October 17).

CORSE-MATIN Lundi 17 octobre 2006, p.13

CULTURE

« Anghjulini » nouveau CD Gréco-Corse



Margarita Kefalaki étudiante (Photo Mario Grazi)

Le CD bilingue en langue grecque et en langue corse, intitulé « Anghjulini » a été réalisé cette année par l'association Echanges interculturelles Gréco-Corso, en collaboration avec la CTC et l'INSEP.

Cette association a été créée en 2002 par Mlle Margarita Kefalaki, étudiante en Master Communication à l'université de Corte, aujourd'hui doctorante en 3^e année de communication et préparant une thèse sur le thème de l'identité corse en Méditerranée.

Sept compositions

Ce CD est composé de 10 titres dont deux chansons corses, « Furtunatu » et « quand'è tu balli », d'une composition en langue corse « Surella mia », et de 7 autres compositions originales.

L'auteur compositeur a reçu l'aide de Bernard Pazzoni, Petru Mari et Paulu Santu Parigi pour la traduction en langue corse.

Les arrangements musicaux ont été réalisés par Christophe Mc Daniel, ancien musicien du groupe Canta di u Populu Corsu, et François Pesce du groupe I Ghjami Aghjalesi.

Cette création artistique a pour but de faire communiquer les différentes cultures, comme outil d'épanouissement et de paix au niveau international.

Importance de la langue maternelle

« Favoriser l'union des peuples Euro Méditerranéens, en respectant leurs propres expressions culturelles et artistiques, et indiquer l'importance de leur langue maternelle comme partie essentielle est primordiale explique » Margarita.

« La musique, le chant et la danse constituent et constitueront toujours notre langage universel. Ainsi ce disque veut faire connaître et apprécier la diversité de langages, comme facteur important d'identification d'un peuple. »

Le CD est en vente dès aujourd'hui au magasin Musica Vostra et à l'association que vous pouvez contacter par mail : rita-kef@hotmail.com.

Appendix 3: Margarita, trait d'union des cultures. *Corse* *Matin* (2003, January 17).

vendredi 17 Janvier 2003
L'Espresso N° 2002

Corse hebdo Semaine du 17 au 23 Janvier 2003 N° 184
Ca se passe chez nous

Margarita, trait d'union des cultures



Force est de constater que ceux qui œuvrent pour la valorisation de notre identité ne sont pas toujours les plus enracinés. Margarita Kefalaki, jeune grecque de vingt-quatre ans en est la plus parfaite illustration.

Arrivée en Corse en mars 2002 grâce au Réseau international des volontaires européens, elle a pris une part active, en compagnie de deux autres étudiants marocains, à la réalisation d'un projet considérable piloté par l'Office de l'environnement : la mise en valeur des vieilles bergeries de montagne. Six mois durant, Margarita a en effet travaillé sur les entres du Venacoli, rendant la fine aux pouvoirs publics, un document constituant les bases d'un éventuel projet de restauration du patrimoine bâti, et de relance d'une activité au caractère identitaire très fort.

Après ce premier contact fructueux avec l'environnement insulaire, Margarita a souhaité prolonger une expérience qu'elle trouvait encore plus enrichissante. Son inscription à l'Université de Corse, en DESS communication appliquée à la valorisation des ressources régionales, a donné le coup d'envoi d'un nouveau projet qui lui tient à cœur. Dans le domaine purement culturel cette fois.

Car Margarita est une artiste née dont la passion, réajustée sur la communauté cortésienne. Dans le cadre des activités du Centre culturel universitaire et de l'association A Rinasola, elle donne régulièrement des cours de danse grecque. De temps à autre, à l'occasion de soirées conviviales, elle fait également apprécier ses talents de chanteuse. C'est d'ailleurs à ce niveau que se situent ses aspirations : la réalisation d'un CD de douze chansons ; six titres grecs traduits en corse et six titres corse traduits en grec. Un véritable défi, plus encore une opération de rapprochement culturel sans précédent. « Chaque culture mérite de garder tout ce qui fait sa force, considère Margarita, et je crois que la langue est un atout essentiel dans cette perspective. Aussi, j'ai eu envie de mettre en relation ces deux terres méditerranéennes aux identités propres, mais aussi aux multiples points communs ».

Consacrer son stage de fin de diplôme à ce projet, et trouver les financements nécessaires à la production de cet album, tels sont les objectifs immédiats de la jeune étudiante qui travaille d'arrache-pied. Afin de mettre tous les atouts de son côté, elle a créé un support associatif destiné à la promotion des échanges culturels entre la Grèce, la Corse et les pays méditerranéens. Margarita espère, par ailleurs, fédérer les acteurs de la culture corse pour parvenir à ses fins, conclure en apothéose son séjour dans l'île, et donner bien sûr une orientation artistique à sa vie professionnelle.

L'esprit d'ouverture et d'initiation d'ont et déjà démontré conquis, quoi qu'il en soit, le gage d'un avenir prometteur.

Une belle blonde aux cheveux bouclés et aux talents musicaux. Visage sympathique et désormais familier des Cortésiens, Margarita a fait ce qu'il fallait pour s'intégrer à la communauté.

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