**Francisca’s story**

**Francisca** was born and raised in Brazil and worked as a teacher in Brazil for 20 years. Francisca believes that ‘education is in [her] blood’, although was not qualified for teaching when she moved to England. Francisca is now studying for her Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at a university in the Northwest of England. Francisca studied for a four-year undergraduate degree in Physical Education (PE) and was able to teach PE from early years to secondary in Brazil as a PE specialist. Also taught PE education in a Brazilian University. Francisca was drawn to the imagination of children in primary, motivating her to study for her PGCE in England – which now requires her to teach primary generalist music. Francisca believes that music aligns with PE, particularly through the strand of dance. Regarding her PGCE, she comments that ‘it’s hard, but [she]’ll keep going. [She] won’t give up’.

Francisca reflects upon music teaching in Brazil - sometimes there is music taught in schools in Brazil, sometimes there is not. She always wanted to learn to play piano but it was too expensive. Francisca learnt flute when she was young in school, as part of a group, and learnt notation in these lessons. Francisca is now learning to play the piano in England alongside own two children. Francisca used to go to church in Brazil and sang as part of the congregation and a choir, ‘just singing together’. The choir had someone to guide them, but she was ‘not a proper music teacher’ (not qualified). Lyrics had to be memorised. Also learnt guitar and theory in the church. Preferred playing and singing rather than theory, as Francisca believes it’s ‘more enjoyable when you can play’.

Francisca reflects upon one of her recent PGCE school placements, where music was delivered by a covering teacher, rather that the class teacher. The covering teacher taught music during Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time throughout the school – ‘because they are not confident to teach music’, ‘they think they have to play some music instrument and have a beautiful voice’. According to Francisca, ‘to be a real music teacher, you don’t need to play any instrument, you just need to give children the opportunity to enjoy the music, to listen, to know the rhythm, to know they can use their bodies [for percussion]’. There are also possibilities for children to make their own instruments out of recycled materials. Francisca has observed use of a popular music teaching and learning platform, but feels that the children ‘don’t realise what they were doing’, ‘they don’t realise it’s music’, ‘they didn’t have a chance to build by themselves, they didn’t have any freedom’. There was a lot of repetition in the lesson, ‘I didn’t see any progression’, ‘always the same thing’. ‘We used African song one day, but they children weren’t able to express themselves … they couldn’t move their bodies or dance. The music is asking ‘come on follow me’, but the teacher was worried it would be messy in the classroom’. ‘I think it’s important that they can express themselves through the music, it doesn’t matter if they have a beautiful voice or not’. Also, for Francisca, there is no ‘right or wrong’ in musical taste, no hierarchy, diversity is important, and to connect with children’s lives outside of the classroom. In class, children ‘don’t need to play any instrument’ – Francisca believes lessons can be adaptable and musical, regardless of resources available.

Francisca appears determined to deliver her own practical music lessons when she becomes a qualified primary school teacher. ‘I know I don’t have to be a musician to deliver a music lesson’. ‘You can use [children’s] knowledge too to show to the rest of the class’. However, her attitude has changed over time and she hadn’t always held this belief. Francisca realised that you don’t have to be a ‘musician’ to teach music during her taught PGCE sessions, where singing and body percussion were facilitated. Francisca acknowledges that being able to read music is also important.

When Francisca reflections upon the attitudes of her peers, she says that ‘here, in my group, some students don’t feel confident to deliver music lessons, they just say ‘in my music lessons, I’ll take my PPA’. ‘I think it is wrong … we have to try it’. ‘They think you need a background in music to deliver those sessions.’ She attributes this to the visibility of music making. ‘If you make some mistake, everyone can hear and see you. You can’t hide your mistakes. In maths or English, you can rub your mistakes out. Music is more exposed. It’s okay to make mistakes. It’s okay to show children that you’re human like they are. You know more than them because you have a degree, but you don’t know everything. It’s okay to make mistakes. Sometimes we think the teacher knows everything but they don’t, and that’s okay.’

Francisca’s most rewarding experiences of music teaching has occurred when she has seen children express themselves, ‘even if they are shy’. However, her musical experiences have not always been positive. Francisca says that when she was in the church choir in Brazil, ‘just those who have a beautiful voice can sing in front of others. I think it is wrong. I am a Protestant, and I believe that when we sing, it’s not to show everyone ‘look, how amazing I am’ … but we are telling them how good is God. Even though I was very young, who doesn’t have a good voice was never selected to sing. Just those who have a beautiful voice could do a solo. It was very painful, not just for me, but for everyone around me’. Francisca confirms that it was the teacher who made the choice about who would perform solos and stand at the front. ‘I kept it to myself. It wasn’t a show, but to God’. ‘We are not in Britain’s Got Talent’. It’s the same with PE. ‘In school, everybody [should have a] chance [in a classroom lesson]’.

Francisca’s hopes for the future of music education in England is for ‘everyone [to have an] opportunity to play an instrument’. Francisca is currently paying for Zoom online music lessons from a teacher in Brazil for her own children based in England. It is too expensive to pay for music lessons in school for her own children. Francisca advocates ‘music for everybody, not just those who can pay’. ‘They know it’s because ‘they have money and I don’t’’ when children see others having music lessons in school. Francisca is positive that funding could be available in the future to pay for such an affordance. ‘I think the county has money for this’, but ‘I know it’s not a magical thing’. ‘Maths, science and English are the most important subjects, but not for me. I think it’s wrong to have core subjects’ – thus, more equal funding distribution could unlock possibilities for increased opportunities for children to learn musical instruments in schools, free of charge.