Music education programmes in Mexico[1]

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ᴱᴺᴳ **Abstract:** Community music education programmes that seek to promote musical, personal, and social skills among children, teenagers, and youths have expanded considerably in Mexico in recent years. Some of these programmes were inspired by Venezuela's National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs, but others were based on different educational and community models. Official information available on these programmes tends to emphasize the number of participants or events performed, without further analysis of their pedagogical practices and the perceived benefits for their participants. For this reason, we conducted a systematic review of studies that included empirical data on community music education programmes in Mexico. The search for information yielded 25 documents associated with 20 investigations. In these studies, it was found that community music education programmes adapted their objectives in response to the needs of their context. In addition, some of them promoted traditional musical genres and ensembles from their communities. The students in the programmes were children and youth from different socioeconomic backgrounds and, although the participation of parents was fundamental, very few centres incorporated them into musical activities. The teachers' involvement was key to the development of their students, but they had limited psychological or pedagogical training. Researchers reported several benefits in musical skills, personal, social and emotional well-being of the participants, but some were cautious and did not overestimate the impact of the programmes. A considerable part of the research included in this review was associated with undergraduate academic work and was carried out by people working in these programmes. Because of their potential to contribute to the development of children and youth in Mexico, more research is needed on community music education programmes to document their practices, as well as to strengthen them through teacher training and community development.
Keywords: community music; music education; el sistema; systematic review; socio-emotional learning.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Systematic review of studies on CMEPs in Mexico. 3. Discussion and conclusions. 4. References.

1. Introduction

Currently, there is a considerable number of community-based music education programmes (CMEPs) in Mexico that aim to promote the musical, personal, and social development of their participants and communities. Many of these were inspired by Venezuela's National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs, commonly known as "El Sistema", and can therefore be regarded as programmes of Social Action through Music (SATM) (Baker, 2021, p. 5). Baker (2021) situates SATM programmes within the realm of collective, community-based, and socially-oriented music education, identifying several common characteristics: (1) they aim for social action and inclusion, and are therefore free or low-cost; (2) classical or academic music forms the core of their repertoire; and (3) large ensembles (orchestras, bands, choirs) are the main means of learning. Pedagogically, SATM programmes are linked to European music education traditions and the Suzuki method (Baker, 2021). However, in Mexico, these programmes have developed characteristics that have allowed them to adapt to national and local contexts (González-Moreno & Carrillo, 2023; Morales Petersen, 2015; Pérez Camacho *et al.*, 2016)

According to Baker (2014), the pedagogical practices in programmes inspired by *El Sistema* are teacher-centred, with a strong emphasis on repetition and discipline, and offer limited opportunities for collaboration, dialogue, and creativity. However, some community programmes in various geographical contexts have

sought greater flexibility, innovation, and critical reflection (Creech *et al.*, 2016). To achieve this, prior training and ongoing professional development for teachers are essential (Creech *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, it is necessary for those involved in the programmes to engage in critical analysis of their educational-musical practices and the challenges that hinder the achievement of their social objectives (Baker, 2021).

To date, there are only two global literature reviews on *El Sistema* in Venezuela and programmes inspired by it. The first was carried out by Creech *et al.* (2013, 2016) and consists of two editions. The 2013 edition included 85 studies and evaluations in various languages, including Spanish. Of all the works examined, only one master's thesis included orchestras in Mexico (Peterson, 2010, cited by Creech *et al.*, 2013); however, this document could not be located for the present systematic review. In the second edition, 33 studies in English were added (Creech *et al.*, 2016), none of which were based in the Mexican context. Later, the review by Bolden *et al.* (2021) included 30 peer-reviewed articles in English, published between 2010 and 2020, but also excluded programmes in Mexico.

According to Bolden *et al.* (2021), programmes inspired by *El Sistema* must be adapted to the social and cultural context in which they are implemented in order to have a positive impact on their students. For this reason, the authors recommend that those involved in pedagogical, curricular, and community design consult research from programmes in similar contexts. However, as mentioned previously, the global literature reviews included only one study conducted in Mexico; therefore, there is currently no source that compiles and analyses the main findings from community-based music education programmes (CMEPs) in the country.

At the national level in Mexico, two major initiatives currently exemplify this approach: the Creative Seedbeds (*Semilleros Creativos de Música*) of the National System for the Promotion of Music (Sistema Nacional de Fomento Musical [SNFM], n.d.), and the Esperanza Azteca Orchestras and Choirs Programme (*Orquestas Sinfónicas y Coros Esperanza Azteca*) of Grupo Salinas (Fundación Azteca, 2022). Although both institutions were established over 25 years ago, their socially and musically oriented programmes have experienced periods of inactivity. In addition, each offers other models of selective ensemble training and professional music education (SNFM, n.d.; Fundación Azteca, 2022). Beyond these national programmes, numerous independent CMEPs also operate at the state and local levels across various communities.

Despite the growth of CMEPs, the official information available often focuses on basic data or statistics, such as the number of events or participants (González-Moreno & Carrillo, 2023), without offering deeper analysis of the programmes' impact on students and their communities. In light of this gap, and following Tight's (2019) assertion that systematic reviews can serve to locate all publications on a given research topic, a systematic review was undertaken with the general aim of identifying empirical studies on CMEPs in Mexico and synthesising their main findings.

2. Systematic review of studies on CMEPs in Mexico

A literature search was conducted via Google Scholar and Dimensions between August 2023 and March 2024. The keywords used in both Spanish and English were: (orchestra OR band OR choir) AND Mexico AND music AND community. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Texts whose programmes aligned with the previously established definition of CMEPs. In some cases, it was difficult to distinguish between programmes with social aims and those that prioritised musical training. Some studies involving multiple centres or programmes encompassed both approaches.
2. Peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and grey literature (theses and reports) were included, without setting a time limit on their publication.
3. Studies that presented empirical data and specified the instruments used for data collection. As such, documents offering suggestions or opinions on teaching were excluded. Two essays (Herrerías Guerra, 2019; López Guadarrama, 2019) and one conference proceedings (Ochoa Tinoco, 2013) describing the functioning of CMEPs were identified, but the authors did not specify their methodological processes or data collection instruments, and were therefore excluded.

Based on these criteria, the systematic review included 25 documents corresponding to 20 individual studies. A content analysis was conducted using open coding—that is, the main themes and findings presented by the authors were used as the starting point (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Each text was coded individually, after which broader thematic categories were generated. In addition, the methodological characteristics of the studies and the researchers' relationships with the CMEPs under analysis were examined, to identify potential biases and underexplored aspects in the literature. To this end, data available in the publications as well as authors' institutional and professional profiles (e.g. Google Scholar) were consulted.

2.1. Findings

Table 1 presents the type of publication, methodology, CMEPs, geographical location, and participants. As shown, most studies are qualitative in nature and written in Spanish. The most relevant findings were grouped into five thematic categories: (1) aims and structure of the CMEPs, (2) CMEPs participants, (3) CMEPs teachers, (4) pedagogical practices, and (5) benefits regarding participants' musical, personal, social, and emotional wellbeing. An additional section was dedicated to (6) the methodological characteristics of the studies. To aid readability—and because several studies were published both as theses and as peer-reviewed articles or book chapters—a code was used to identify each study, which is shown in Table 1 before the name of each author.

Tabla 1 Research studies on CMEPs in Mexico

STUDY	PUBLICATION TYPE	CMEPs	STATE	METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS	PARTICIPANTS
i1. Aguilar Meza (2017)	Master's thesis	*'Lomas del Paraíso'* Children's and Youth Orchestra, Da Vinci Chamber Orchestra (A. C.)	Jalisco	Qualitative: interviews, documentary analysis	An orchestra conductor, administrative staff, three general coordinators, and one production and management coordinator
i2. Bautista Cupul (2016)	Peer-reviewed article	A centre of the Yucatán Youth Musical Bands Programme	Yucatán	Qualitative: observations, interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis	A director, three band directors, five teachers, 13 students, and six parents
i3. Bautista Cupul & Cisneros-Cohernour (2023)	Peer-reviewed article	Yucatán Youth Symphony Orchestra	Yucatán	Qualitative: interviews, participant observation, documentary analysis	Two orchestra conductors, one assistant, a coordinator, and 15 musicians
i4. Becerril Gutiérrez (2019)	Peer-reviewed book chapter	Two Esperanza Azteca Symphony Orchestras (OSEA)	Quintana Roo and Nayarit	Qualitative (Ethnography): observation and participatory workshops, structured and unstructured interviews	Teachers and students*
i5. Bernal Olvera (2018)	Undergraduate dissertation	*'Renacimiento'* Academy and *'Imagina'*	Guanajuato	Qualitative: semi-structured interviews	Two directors, two students, and a co-founder
i6. Carrera Robles (2014)	Peer-reviewed article Doctoral thesis (2015)	Twenty *'UMBRAL'* centres	Chihuahua	Mixed methods: surveys (longitudinal with three administrations), observations, individual and group interviews, life histories, written testimonies	Students (surveys, $n=199, 228, 198$). Qualitative information from workshop leaders, educators, supervisors, parents, and students*
i7. Díaz Íñigo (2019)	Peer-reviewed book chapter Undergraduate dissertation (2016)	Three OSEA	Chiapas	Qualitative (Ethnography): interviews, observations, life maps	Coordinators, general staff, teachers, and students*
i8. García Toral (2020)	Master's thesis	Zacapoaxtla Youth Symphonic Band	Puebla	Mixed methods: questionnaires, focus groups, interviews	Two teachers and 22 parents
i9. Garza de Lira (2023)	Master's thesis	El Sistema Mexico at the Women's Educational Centre of *'Ciudad de los Niños'*	Nuevo León	Qualitative: semi-structured interviews, participant observation	A coordinator, an orchestra director, five students, two former students, four mothers, and two high school teachers
i10. González-Moreno & Carrillo (2023)	Peer-reviewed book chapter	*'Núcleo Comunitario de Aprendizaje Musical NUCAM Quinta Carolina'* and two *'UMBRAL'* centres	Chihuahua	Qualitative (Ethnography): observations, interviews	Two coordinators, two community educators, eight teachers, 19 students, and 14 family members
i11. Morales Petersen (2015)	Doctoral thesis	Mexico Children's and Youth Symphonic Band (BANDIM) and seven NUCAM centres of the SNFM: Quinta Carolina, Lomas del Paraíso, Rey Poeta, Tepoztlán, Colibrí, Yucatán and Playas de Tijuana	Chihuahua, Jalisco, CDMX, Morelos, Yucatán, and Baja California	Mixed methods: interviews, observations, questionnaires	The national coordinator and the executive secretary of the SNFM. Seven directors, teachers of the BANDIM*

STUDY	PUBLICATION TYPE	CMEPs	STATE	METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS	PARTICIPANTS
i12. Ojeda Gutiérrez (2016)	Master's thesis Peer-reviewed article (Ojeda-Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2021)	Youth Philharmonic Orchestra	Oaxaca	Qualitative: in-depth interviews, life stories	Two founders, two teachers, a Municipal Councillor for Education, and seven former members of the orchestra
i13. Ortiz-Cortés & Carbajal-Vaca (2022)	Peer-reviewed article Doctoral thesis (Ortiz Cortés, 2023)	Two children's and youth orchestras programmes	Unspecified	Qualitative: semi-structured and in-depth interviews, identity drawings, self-portraits, psychogeomaps.	Two coordinators, 18 teachers and musical directors, seven students, and six mothers
i14. Pérez Camacho *et al.* (2016)	Research report commissioned by the SFNM	Orchestras and Choirs of the National Movement of Community Music Groups (in centres across 11 communities)	Michoacán	Qualitative: observations, interviews	95 interviews with students, parents, coordinators, community teachers, and other community members
i15. Prieto Astudillo (2014)	Master's thesis	*'NUCAM Playas de Tijuana'* and Tijuana Youth Symphony Orchestra (SNFM)	Baja California	Qualitative: participant observation, focus groups, semi-structured interviews	12 students, two former students, seven teachers, the director of both programmes, and 23 parents
i16. Quiroz Rodríguez (2019)	Peer-reviewed book chapter	OSEA Tepito, OSEA Juárez and OSEA Revolución-UACJ	CDMX and Chihuahua	Qualitative (Ethnography): interviews, participant and non-participant observation, approach questionnaire	Coordinators, staff, teachers, students, and parents*
i17.Ramírez Sánchez & Díaz Íñigo (2020)	Peer-reviewed article	One OSEA and four *´Casas de la Cultura'* (cultural centres)	Chiapas	Qualitative (Ethnography): observations, life maps, and formal & informal interviews	Teachers and students*
i18. Reyes Sosa (2020)	Master's thesis	*'Casa de Música de Jesús María'* (house of music)	Aguascalientes	Qualitative: interviews	Teachers*
i19. Rodríguez Pérez (2019)	Peer-reviewed book chapter Undergraduate dissertation (2016)	OSEA CDMX Norte	CDMX	Qualitative (Ethnography): participant observation, interviews, life maps	Coordinators, teachers, and students*
i20. Salgado Salinas (2022)	Peer-reviewed article	Love for Learning Children's & Youth Wind Band and San Juan Lachao Nuevo Wind Band	Oaxaca	Qualitative (Ethnography): observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups	Two teachers and principals, a coordinator, and 21 students

*Note. The number of participants is not specified

Table created by the author

2.1.1. Aims and structure of CMEPs

The CMEPs analysed in the studies were established by government bodies (i11), civil associations (i6), or private companies (i5; i9). Other programmes emerged from initiatives led by groups such as young musicians (i3), returning migrants[1] (i12), or migrant assemblies[2] (i17). In one CMEP, the founders initially supported the programme with their own resources until they obtained funding from other sources (i12). Some CMEPs were inspired by El Sistema (i3; i5; i9), while others aimed to strengthen basic education (i1) or develop community intervention models using various artistic disciplines (i6).

The CMEPs aimed to foster various musical, personal, and social aspects among their participants. A frequently used term was the construction, reconstruction, or strengthening of the social fabric. In contexts affected by violence, this included preventing violence (i13), promoting a culture of peace (i10), and reclaiming public spaces through artistic practice (i6). Other CMEPs sought to distance participants from violent environments or those conducive to harmful behaviours (i10; i11; i13; i18).

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1   Migrants who return home after living abroad for several years (Izquierdo Escribano, 2011).
2   Mexican migrants residing in the United States (i17)

Socially, the programmes aimed to reduce inequality (i12) and promote inclusion and integration among their participants. A couple of CMEPs actively supported the inclusion of girls in traditionally male musical ensembles, such as brass bands (i12; i14). To this end, strategies such as personally inviting girls and forming support committees to accompany them to events were employed (i12). Other CMEPs aimed to provide equitable access to music education for those who otherwise would not have it, without necessarily focusing on specific social outcomes (i13).

Several CMEPs also sought to improve cultural consumption among participants, their families, and communities (i6; i11; i13), to cultivate an appreciation for music (i13; i18), to support general learning (i1; i5), to educate through the arts (i10), to develop personal skills (i18), or to offer an accessible extracurricular activity (i2; i16). However, some researchers noted that when students and parents viewed the programmes merely as hobbies, they did not dedicate sufficient time and effort to musical activities (i2; i8). In contrast, students from other CMEPs perceived music as more than a pastime and, therefore, aimed to become competent in their chosen instrument (i10).

Regarding musical objectives, several CMEPs promoted traditional band music found in different regions of Mexico (i8; i12; i13; i14; i17). To do this, they encouraged participation in community assemblies and the employment of musicians from the same communities (i14). Some of these programmes struggled to maintain their funding sources (i8), which led them to deprioritise the dissemination of traditional band music (i13), or, in some cases, to cease operations entirely (i12).

Other CMEPs prioritised musical excellence. In the NUCAMs, several directors (i11) and parents (i15) believed that musical quality was the primary goal of the centres, even though official discourse emphasised social objectives. In addition, some CMEPs hoped that participants would go on to form their own ensembles or work as music teachers (i1; i14). However, several studies noted that the programmes had modified their original aims in response to the social needs of their local context (i6) or the priorities of their funding bodies (i3).

2.1.2. Participants in the CMEPs

Students in the CMEPs came from a range of social backgrounds (i7; i11; i14). In some centres, the majority had their basic needs met (i13), belonged to nuclear or extended families (i6), and were from middle or upper social classes (i4; i11). In others, they came from non-traditional family structures (i4) or experienced domestic violence (i7). Researchers reported high dropout rates among students living in difficult family environments (i10). According to other sources, a significant number of students had witnessed acts of violence (i6), and some had even lost family members as a result (i10).

Most programmes did not require prior knowledge of instrumental performance or classical music for admission, although some students already had experience in these areas (i4; i9; i13). Certain CMEPs held admission tests (i2; i9; i11) involving auditory memory and coordination exercises (i7; i17), though these did not constitute rigid assessment processes (i17). Almost all CMEPs focused their efforts on children, adolescents and young people under 18, with only a few accepting students up to 30 years old (i5; i13; i15). Regarding inclusion, some centres enrolled students with disabilities (i4; i17; i19) or special educational needs such as attention deficit, hyperactivity, or autism (i10). In only two programmes were parents or family members allowed to participate in musical activities, either in the children's band (i6) or in choirs and guitar ensembles designed for them (i6; i10).

Communication and mutual support among parents, teachers, and coordinators were essential. Parents contributed by helping to finance and acquire materials (i1; i10; i11), prepare and manage physical spaces (i14), organise and provide transport for concerts (i6; i13; i15), make clothing for performances (i10; i15), purchase and maintain musical instruments (i13), and assist in cleaning or reforestation activities (i10). Some parents also attended their children's classes (i8) and supported their daily practice, which was particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic (i13). Mothers were typically the most involved in these programmes (i13; i14).

Some programmes had management boards or committees composed of parents, directors, administrative staff and/or teachers, responsible for academic and administrative decisions (i8; i15). Others offered courses or workshops for parents (i6). Through these mechanisms, CMEPs became spaces for social interaction and learning (i8), particularly in centres where musical ensembles for parents and relatives were included (i10). However, certain centres reported limited participation and communication between teachers, coordinators and parents (i6; i8; i11). Furthermore, some parents considered cultural and musical activities unproductive for their children (i10; i17), especially in communities where CMEPs focused on brass band music, often associated with negative behaviours such as alcohol consumption (i12; i14).

Beyond the direct beneficiaries of the CMEPs, some communities where the programmes were based also took part in fundraising activities, cleaning efforts (i20), or public space recovery projects (i6). In return, programmes offered concerts by their ensembles (i6; i11; i14) and other artistic activities (i6). Finally, other CMEPs aimed to establish links between different communities by encouraging interaction among centres and ensembles (i14).

2.1.3. Teachers in the CMEPs

Many CMEPs lacked enough teachers (i1; i8; i11; i13; i17), and some had no specialists for particular instruments (i11; i13). In addition to teaching, teachers often took on responsibilities such as musical direction, academic or staff coordination, event management, and instrument care (i2; i11; i13; i19). Other duties included transporting students, covering material costs, cleaning and maintenance (i2; i5; i11; i13; i17).

It was common for advanced students to support the learning of beginners, either by occasionally substituting for teachers (i17) or becoming the main teaching figures themselves (i8; i11). Frequently, former students of the same programmes worked as teachers—either as graduates (i13; i15; i17) or as students of professional music degrees (i2; i10). Some teachers had learned music informally (i17; i13). Overall, most teachers had limited pedagogical training for working in CMEPs, even if they held degrees in music performance (i11; i13; i18) or were alumni of the programmes (i2).

The teacher-student relationship was fundamental to the programmes. Teachers provided emotional and psychological support to students, influencing their self-esteem, self-concept, identity, and sense of security (i8; i9; i10; i13; i15; i16). However, when teacher-student relationships became too informal or friendly, students could become undisciplined in class (i1; i8). Several studies reported that teachers were not sufficiently trained to provide emotional or psychological support (i8; i10; i13). To date, the literature has focused on pedagogical and psychological preparation, but little attention has been paid to community development. Although one study addressed community management, it did so only in relation to resource management (i1).

To support both teachers and students, some CMEPs implemented continuing professional development courses (i14). One programme tailored these courses to address specific needs (i13), while another covered topics such as administration, monitoring, and evaluation (i6). Conversely, some teachers had to undertake training on their own initiative (i13). Employment conditions were a crucial issue. Many teachers held additional jobs in cultural management (i17) or as performers (i5), taught in several centres across one or more localities (i11; i13; i20), and were typically contracted as service providers, without formal employment benefits (i1; i13; i17). Consequently, some teachers experienced payment delays, reductions or suspensions due to funding issues (i2), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (i13). Despite these challenges, some teachers considered CMEPs to offer stable employment (i13), which reflects the precarious working conditions faced by musicians in Mexico.

2.1.4. Pedagogical practices

In several CMEPs, researchers reported a lack of systematic planning and assessment in music teaching (i1; i11; i18). In most cases, teaching activities were organised around the repertoire and scheduled concerts (i4; i7; i11; i16; i19). One programme, however, had a complete music education curriculum (i15). Some instrumental teaching methods used in CMEPs included Essential Elements and Suzuki, as well as technique books (i11; i15; i18); however, it was rare for teachers to adapt content to students' individual needs (i18). A few programmes followed teaching practices aligned with the conservatoire tradition (i13; i15), while only one relied on oral tradition for instruction (i20).

In nearly all CMEPs, instrumental lessons were group-based, although some also included individual lessons (i11; i15; i17). Approaches to music reading and writing varied considerably. Several centres taught solfège to all students (i4; i11; i13; i15; i17), while others used it merely as an introduction to instrumental performance (i8; i9). One programme integrated repertoire work with reading and writing (i20). Other musical subjects included music initiation prior to instrumental learning (i7; i17), choral singing for instrumental students (i11), music appreciation, and harmony (i15).

CMEPs frequently organised ensembles based on different instrumental proficiency levels (i1; i7; i17), as well as select groups for outstanding students (i9; i13). Some programmes encouraged competition as a means of enhancing musical development (i15) but also recognised the value of teamwork and social interaction (i9). Others aimed to minimise competition through practices promoting collaboration and mutual respect (i10). One strategy was allowing students to participate in repertoire selection (i12).

Repertoire and musical genres promoted in CMEPs often depended on the local context, ensemble type, or funding institutions. Several programmes focused on classical or academic music (i4; i7; i11; i15; i16; i19), while others included traditional genres such as mariachi (i10). In bands, traditional and popular music was more common; in some groups, it formed the basis of instruction (i12; i17; i20). Still, in one band funded by migrant contributions, academic music formed the core repertoire rather than traditional Mexican music (i17).

Various CMEPs also offered activities such as sports (i5), museum and art exhibition visits (i6; i8), personal development workshops (i7), citizenship education (i11), ecological preservation, and community development tasks (i6; i10). Moreover, CMEPs encouraged good academic performance, and in some cases, students' continued participation was conditional on school results (i2; i5). Two CMEPs were part of broader community projects (i5; i6); one of these, featured in two studies (i6; i10), initially incorporated multiple art forms but later focused solely on music. Finally, some CMEPs had support staff such as psychologists (i7; i13; i17) or community educators (i6).

2.1.5. Benefits in Musical, Personal, Social Abilities and Emotional Wellbeing of Participants

Students in the CMEPs developed a variety of musical skills and aptitudes. Several improved their listening abilities and aspired to high standards of performance (i15), and they also broadened their knowledge of different musical genres (i2; i15) and artistic expressions (i6). Regarding professionalisation, some students chose to pursue university-level music studies (i11; i13; i15), while others who did not wish to pursue this path (i13) continued to participate in musical activities as amateurs (i15). The skills acquired in the CMEPs enabled some students to financially support their families through musical activities (i10; i12).

Many participants emphasised the importance of musical creativity (i8; i15), despite their programmes not including activities such as composition or improvisation (i5; i15). Some directors admitted that orchestral practice offered little scope for freedom and creativity but considered this tradition essential for teaching

(i5). Enjoyment in musical learning and participation in public performances were factors that motivated students to stay involved in the programmes (i2; i10; i15). Students could increase their sense of competence by enhancing their musical abilities, particularly those in selective ensembles or adult participants (i10). One researcher suggested that achieving a high level of instrumental performance encouraged the development of other personal, emotional, and creative skills (i15).

Social interaction was one of the main motivations for many students to engage in the CMEPs, even more so than developing musical skills (i6; i9; i13). Researchers reported strengthened bonds among participants (i6; i8; i10; i11), among families (especially in programmes that included parents in musical activities) (i10), and within communities (i6; i14). However, in some centres, the strong connection among existing students made it difficult for newcomers to integrate (i2), there was little interaction between students from different ensembles (i9), and bullying was reported in only one CMEP (i9). Additionally, some students attributed greater value to playing certain musical instruments, resulting in hierarchical structures within ensembles (i4).

In the academic sphere, several primary school teachers (i14) and parents (i1; i2) observed that CMEP students improved academically, although few parents in another programme noticed such improvements (i10). Researchers also reported personal benefits such as discipline, punctuality, responsibility, and teamwork or collaboration skills (i9; i10; i11; i12; i14; i15). In one centre, students even held votes to make decisions without teacher intervention (i9). Moreover, students benefited in terms of personal expression, relaxation, resilience, independence, confidence, self-esteem, and a reinforced sense of identity and belonging (i5; i6; i8; i9; i10; i12; i15). Specifically, participants with attention deficit, hyperactivity, autism (i10), or reading difficulties (i8) experienced notable physical and psychological benefits.

In CMEPs based in challenging environments, some leaders observed a reduction in gang-related activities, criminal bands, and other forms of violence (i5). Additionally, students previously engaged in risky behaviours found CMEPs to be a source of support for social reintegration (i10) or addiction recovery (i1). Finally, CMEPs provided support for students who had lost close family members due to violence (i10).

Despite these positive outcomes, several participants and researchers cautioned against overestimating the benefits of CMEPs. Some coordinators and teachers did not fully attribute the transformation of violent environments or personal and emotional growth of students to the programmes (i10). Other parents and students could not clearly articulate the positive effects (i8). Different coordinators and teachers valued simply having positive experiences through music (i11), while some students believed that being good musicians made them better people (i4). The reported impact of CMEPs on students—and summarised here—mainly derives from observations and interviews, which require careful analysis. Interviews can be subject to social desirability bias; therefore, further research using quantitative (descriptive, experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational), qualitative (action research, arts-based inquiry, etc.), and mixed methods is needed to support the findings to date.

2.1.6. Methodological Characteristics of the Research Studies

Twelve peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on CMEPs in Mexico were identified, eight of which were derived from undergraduate and master's theses, or doctoral dissertations included in this review, except for three theses that could not be located (i4; i16; i20). One additional project was conducted during the author's doctoral training but was not part of their thesis (i2). Two studies were promoted by institutions supporting CMEPs: the SNFM in the state of Michoacán (i14), and OSEA in various parts of the country, the latter documented in four undergraduate theses and corresponding book chapters (i4; i7; i16; i19). A potential issue was the lack of clarity regarding the role of the SNFM and Fundación Azteca in editing, reviewing, or authorising these documents.

Another significant aspect was the relationship between the authors and the CMEPs: some were active members (i3) or teachers (i9; i15). One author was the president of the civil association managing the CMEP, but did not disclose this in their publications (i6; see Hernández, 2013). In study i18, it is inferred that the researcher worked in the CMEP analysed, though this was not explicitly stated. Another author (i11) served as a coordinator of the SNFM (see Pastor, 2018), though it is unclear whether this role was held before, during, or after the doctoral research.

Several authors mentioned family ties with the musical communities in which they conducted their research (i20) or were involved in CMEPs different from those they studied (i2). In one study, the researcher did not provide the name or location of the CMEPs, although in the doctoral dissertation the author reported extensive experience as a teacher in CMEPs (i13). Only five studies showed no direct connections between the authors and CMEPs (i1; i5; i8; i10; i12), of which only one was independent of a thesis and had undergone peer review (i10). While it is encouraging that those involved in CMEPs are analysing these programmes, more external, peer-reviewed studies are needed.

A wide range of disciplinary approaches was identified. Some studies were grounded in anthropology (i4; i6; i7; i14; i16; i17; i19), while others approached CMEPs from the fields of cultural management (i1; i5), rural development (i12), communication (i9), general education (i15; i20), and music education (i2; i3; i10; i11; i13; i18). While research on CMEPs from diverse viewpoints is desirable, more work from music education or interdisciplinary perspectives appears necessary.

Not all studies specified the number of participants, and the roles they played within the programmes varied significantly. For instance, study i11 is often cited as illustrating the benefits of CMEPs for students, yet it only included opinions from managers and coordinators of the NUCAMs. As Baker (2021) suggests, these participants may conflate the aspirations of the programmes with their actual achievements. While several

researchers engaged in participant observation (i3; i4; i9; i15; i16; i19), none employed the participatory action research methodology proposed by Bolden *et al.* (2021), which would allow those involved in the programmes to develop their own research questions and instruments.

3. Discussion and conclusions

This systematic review did not establish a time frame for the publication of the research studies. The earliest documents found were from 2014 (i6; i15). Considering that some CMEPs have operated in Mexico for over 25 years, this suggests a relatively recent research interest in this educational context. Nonetheless, the existence of other theses or research reports held only in physical form in university libraries cannot be ruled out.

In some CMEPs, the goals of personal and social development conflicted with objectives of musical excellence, yet no evidence of critical reflection on pedagogical practices was identified to address such conflicts (Baker, 2021). Furthermore, some programmes did not clearly define their aims, leading to varied interpretations of student learning outcomes and the role of teachers (i2). It is therefore necessary for CMEPs to articulate their objectives, train their teachers accordingly, and share these aims with students, families, and communities upon their integration into the programmes.

CMEP students in Mexico came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including rural communities (i8; i12; i14; i17; i20) and urban environments (i1; i3; i4; i6; i9; i15; i16; i18; i20). Consequently, the programmes varied greatly in terms of size, organisation, funding, ensembles, and musical genres. These differences complicate comparisons and generalisations about programme design and impact, as highlighted by Bolden *et al.* (2021) in their literature review of eight countries.

Baker (2021) warned that much research on CMEPs has focused on successful students. Similarly, this review found little attention given to average students or those who drop out. Longitudinal studies are needed to identify the factors leading to dropout and help CMEPs reach more participants. Additionally, children, adolescents and young people (NNAJ) have been the primary beneficiaries, with few programmes incorporating parents into musical ensembles (i10; i6). Similarly, in Creech *et al.*'s (2016) review of 118 documents, only two programmes (Harmony Liverpool and Big Noise) offered musical activities for adults. For these participants, more investigation into their experiences, challenges, and benefits is needed to expand music education to more adults and family members within CMEPs.

Although teachers fulfilled various roles in CMEPs, little information was found regarding their pedagogical training or their preparation to foster personal, community, and emotional development in students. While teaching materials and repertoire have been explored, teaching practices and procedures—particularly in programmes focused on traditional music—have not been sufficiently examined. As in other contexts (Creech *et al.*, 2016), teachers' employment conditions were precarious, yet the impact of this on their professional and personal lives remains unknown (i2; i13). Long-standing programmes such as the SNFM appear not to have taken significant steps to improve teachers' working conditions.

The analysis indicates that CMEPs in Mexico have supported the development of musical, personal, social, and emotional wellbeing skills in their participants, consistent with findings from other contexts (Bolden *et al.*, 2021). However, these conclusions must be interpreted with caution, as most researchers did not specify how they defined or measured complex constructs such as motivation, resilience, and self-esteem (Creech *et al.*, 2016). More studies employing diverse methodological approaches and set in varied contexts are necessary to reach more robust conclusions regarding the impact of CMEPs.

Most authors were connected to the CMEP context, reflecting either a genuine interest in documenting their practices or limited openness to external researchers. In study i11, although the researcher had authorisation from the SNFM, some NUCAM directors declined to participate in the study. It is possible that, under constant pressure to secure resources, programme leaders may view external scrutiny as a threat to funding.

It is important to acknowledge this review's limitations. Although an exhaustive search of digital documents was conducted, no exploration of physical libraries took place, as noted previously. Moreover, with 25 documents reviewed and coded, including 12 theses, it was difficult to include all findings in detail in a single article. Lastly, while the inclusion criteria required studies to specify their methodology and data collection instruments, no assessment was made regarding their validation procedures. Despite this, the review represents an important starting point for the systematisation and synthesis of research on CMEPs in Mexico.

Finally, this systematic review demonstrates increasing interest in analysing the practices and benefits of CMEPs in Mexico. However, the research remains limited in quantity, rigour, methodological richness, and depth, particularly when compared to the rapid expansion of these programmes in terms of centres, ensembles, participants, and operational years. Given that CMEPs in Mexico have become a vital source of education and development for children and young people, it is the responsibility of researchers not only to document their practices but to contribute to their improvement through active engagement and collaboration.

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5. Appendix

Key to abbreviations:
- BANDIM: Mexico Children's and Youth Symphonic Band
- NNAJ: Children, adolescents and young people
- NUCAM: Community Centre of Music Learning
- OSEA: Esperanza Azteca Symphony Orchestras
- CMEPs: Community Music Education Programmes
- SATM: Social Action through Music (Baker, 2021)
- SNFM: National System of Music Promotion

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