

ESPRiT-Holistic Learning Through Drama in Education and Rhythm

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Abstract: Drama and music pedagogy methods represent a valuable holistic and collaborative opportunity to actively and participatively involve students in learning content. This enables cognitive and emotional, creative and analytical, social and linguistic learning processes. Existing educational structures often no longer meet current and future socially relevant requirements for young people. The holistic teaching concept eSPRiT uses a drama and music-pedagogical approach to put the personality of young people at the center of school work. Thus, it achieves the goals required by the OECD in the Learning Compass 2030, because the approaches to the teaching content are holistic and can be experienced collaboratively. Using the teaching example Macbeth, it is made clear how working with the teaching concept eSPRiT can be carried out successfully.

Key words: drama/theatre in education, rhythm, holistic learning, collaborative, music education, Macbeth, body percussion, creativity, empathy, self-confidence, personality, reflection, individuality, teamwork

1. Introduction: Theatre in Education in the School Context

1.1 Theatre in Education (TiE)

In general, the term Theatre in Education means working with amateur actors using theatrical methods. Theatre in Education today covers a variety of fields such as economic (business, industry), social (youth and civic centres, museum theatres, churches etc.) and therapeutic (hospitals, rehabilitation, prevention etc.); it also includes applied theatre (seniors, migrants, people with special needs, environmental activists, etc.), so-called independent theatre and amateur theatre. Last but not least, the pedagogical professional field is also part of this, from kindergarten through primary and secondary school to university and other cultural educational institutions.

Created in the 1970s and originally intended to make people think politically and come of age, Theatre in Education is now being provided with multiple attempts at explanation by science, with the current focus being on the importance of theatre and pedagogy not to be divided apart in this composition, but to be regarded as equivalent.

A key feature of Theatre in Education (TiE) is often product-oriented work with the aim of performing the content developed.

1.2 Drama in Education (DiE)

Drama in Education (process drama, drama in the classroom, drama teaching etc.) has its beginnings in the 1960s and has since become established in many countries around the world. In contrast to TiE, which is

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characterized by product orientated work, the focus here is on the process. With DiE, situations in different contexts can be tested and simulated in a protected space within a group or class. In this way, the understanding of other forms of life, individuals, etc. can be deepened and a change of perspective can be made.

Drama in Education can find its way into every subject and places the acting students at the center of the action: “It is not uncommon for the players to use playful methods to deal with themselves, their self-perception of their appearance or communication and interaction on the level of togetherness” (Felder et al., 2013, p. 11).

1.2.1 Drama in Education as a Holistic Approach

In its form as a holistic and collaborative method, Drama in Education proves to be an opportunity not only to impart knowledge intensively and efficiently to learners, but also to promote their motivation, arouse curiosity and set different activity offers as well as to let students try out other perspectives and behaviors in a playful way. To this extent, complex circumstances can be dramatized in the individual subjects. This dramatization of problems helps the students to solve them in a more differentiated way. Learning content can be more easily grasped and memorized through holistic approaches, which also addresses affects and emotions, than through purely cognitive methods.

In contrast to traditional teaching, which is often dominated by one or two methods and thus does not address different types of learners in a balanced way, the diverse repertoire of methods in DiE offers the opportunity to set in motion a wide variety of thought processes, such as critical thinking, creative problem-solving, individual and collective thinking (Baldwin, 2009, p. 35). According to Gardner, an American psychologist, every human being has several ranges of intelligences (logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, etc.). Due to the diverse approaches in drama-based teaching, it is precisely those areas of the brain that can be addressed and promoted (Baldwin, 2009, p. 28).

In addition, some problem areas that young people can hardly cope with in reality can be tried out and processed in a playful way in a protected classroom setting and then reflected on together. DiE is based on the principle of pretend-as-if, which students often master at a high level due to their experience in children’s play. This is characterized by fantasy, imagination and imitations of the real world as a form of childhood activity and is of great importance for the context of drama. The “ability to pretend starts young but stays with us throughout life and can be kept active through drama” (Baldwin, 2009, p. 14).

Besides that, communication and language acquisition are promoted with the help of various drama-pedagogical exercises, including the use of facial expressions, gestures and voice. “Drama can also provide the sort of motivation and engagement that is necessary for language development to occur at a deep level. Use of language is rarely just a matter of cognition, and the teaching of language requires a holistic approach that recognizes the role of feeling” (Fleming, 2017, p. 37).

Lastly, children and young people also make aesthetic experiences; not in the immediacy of a finished theatre production, but with the help of different theatrical methods and processes. In this way, the young people also gain art experiences through the pedagogy: “These lessons open up and initiate artistic processes as well as social and aesthetic action. This means learning with all the senses, learning in motion, creativity is required and there is a reason for authentic communication” (Even, 2003, p. 190).

1.2.2 Role of the Teacher

As far as the role of the teacher is concerned, he acts as a game leader, as a co-participant, as a mediator, in which he guides drama-supported exercises, often getting involved on an equal footing or perhaps even actively participating, as in the method “teacher in role” where he slips into the role of another character to convey content.

This requires certain attitudes on the part of the teacher that seem less important in other forms of teaching.

“Supporting theatrical learning processes always means keeping an eye on the whole process, taking on the “direction” of the entire process, so to speak. This includes the professional preparation of the “dramaturgical process” under the condition that you do not necessarily insist on the strict process of planning during the lesson” (Köhler, 2017, p. 155).

1.3 DICE Study

The so-called DICE study (Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competence in Education), a wide-ranging, international, 2-year EU project, dealt with the connection between the acquisition of key competences and the associated teaching concerning DiE and TiE. Five out of eight of the so-called Lisbon Key Competences (communication in the mother tongue, learning to learn, interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence, entrepreneurship, cultural expression) were the focus of the research project.

Among other things, it was researched that both intellectual and emotional learning experiences are made with the help of DiE: “In educational theatre and drama our engagement is both intellectual and emotional, making learning affective. We cannot ‘give’ someone our understanding, real understanding is felt. Only if the understanding is felt can it be integrated into our minds and shape our values” (Cziboly et al., 2010, p. 22).

2. Music Education in the School Context

2.1 Music Education and Music Pedagogy

Music pedagogy and music education — both terms are used as synonyms — include practical action, e.g., by the instrumental pedagogue, as well as theoretical reflection on music, e.g., on the methodology of singing lessons (Noltensmeier et al., 1996, p. 385). “The tasks of music pedagogy focus on ability, knowledge, experience, understanding, and interpretation in all areas of music. As such music pedagogy includes the related concepts of music education, didactics, teaching, and instruction in music, although their distinctions are neither clear nor consensual”¹.

The emergence of the term music education at the beginning of the 20th century corresponded with various reform ideas and methodological concepts, such as those of Kodály, Orff, Jaques-Dalcroze or Suzuki. In the 1960s, greater efforts were made to reflect and theoretically substantiate this. The development of science becomes visible on the basis of the term “music pedagogy”. In addition to kindergarten, school and university, music is also taught in many individual and social contexts. “All share the goal to educate people how to produce organized sound, make and transmit music, and do it well.”²

Due to the music education, which sometimes begins early, children are musically shaped as early as kindergarten age. Because of the differences in type and intensity, however, the requirements for school music lessons are great. Differences are noticeable both in practical activities and in knowledge about music. On the one hand, this is a great challenge, but on the other hand, it also offers the opportunity to reduce the differences in performance, especially through learning together. Thus, there are two general areas of activity that can be incorporated into musical work: making music in the classroom, which focuses on doing and developing basic skills together, and individual support, which particularly awakens the students’ spirit of exploration. Improvisation in

¹ <https://www.ebsco.com/blogs/ebscopost/what-music-pedagogy-universality-education-sound-and-sound-education>, 15.01. 2022

² <https://www.ebsco.com/blogs/ebscopost/what-music-pedagogy-universality-education-sound-and-sound-education>, 15.01. 2022

particular offers space to discover sounds and noises in free play and to bring them into connection with each other. “Necessary qualities and skills that must be acquired here are: openness to the unusual, alertness, the willingness to listen, to experiment, to interact. This creates the ability to create music” (Gagel et al., 2013, p. 9).

The interplay of different social forms supports the diverse transfer of (musical) experiences and knowledge and lays the important foundation for the acquisition of musical knowledge. Only when situations have been experienced enough and often enough, associations formed, movements made, pictures seen, is it possible to internalize theoretical aspects, i.e., to build up implicit knowledge.

2.2 Rhythm and Movement

Rhythm pervades all areas of human life as a primal phenomenon. As one of the first music teachers at the beginning of the 20th century, Émile Jacques-Dalcroze assigned primary importance to rhythm and placed the connection between music and movement, between body and mind, between the audible and the visible, at the center of his didactic considerations (Zwiener, Daniel, 2019, p. 30).

Enriched by neuroscientific findings, we now know whether movement is important in connection with learning: “Experiences of body and movement form the basis of self-development, but they also represent the foundation for further educational processes, for the development of abilities, they form the basis of learning and the acquisition of complex relationships” (Minimayr, 2012, p. 159).

2.3 Body Percussion

Being aware of your own body, feeling your pulse, consciously taking steps, moving together — body percussion can function as an essential instrument, especially in musical work with groups. Based on the principle of “repetition and variation”, it starts with simple rhythm sequences that are changed. Basically, the group works according to the call-and-response principle, i.e., learning through imitation — with or without a beat. The teacher provides elements for the group to imitate, increasing in intensity and difficulty over the course of a sequence. More complex patterns or movement sequences that the group struggles with are repeated, broken down piece by piece or worked out in slow motion. The group essentially sets the pace of learning, in the sense of a child-centred approach: “[you try] to work out ‘where the children are at’ rhythmically and help them move forward” (Bremmer, 2021, p. 124).

The possibilities to work rhythmically with the body are diverse and can be used at any time without additional material expenditure. Furthermore, the transfer of rhythms to instruments is much easier than without prior body percussion training. “Movement is a prerequisite for the development of motor skills and the sensory systems [...] As the basis of all stimulus processing, perception influences our thinking, feeling and acting in a variety of ways” (Minimayr, 2012, p. 141).

When making music in a group, the effects described are intensified because positive experiences are made and social relationships are intensified. “This mechanism is essential for learning [...], whereby it must be clear that the positive experience for people consists in positive social contacts” (Spitzer, 2006, p. 181).

3. The Austrian Education System

3.1 General Requirements

After a 4-year primary level, in which the children from 6 to 10 are taught together by one teacher, the Austrian school system provides for a dual path: performance in the 4th class is decisive for whether secondary level I at

good grades in a grammar school, so-called AHS (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule³) or a secondary school can be attended⁴.

It must be noted here that in the last two decades in Austria — especially in the urban areas — there has been an increase in admissions to the AHS⁵. The heterogeneity among the students is therefore greater, especially in urban areas, because due to the better opportunities for advancement parents increasingly want to place their children in the AHS. However, the structures of AHS are from a time when only a small percentage of top-performing students attended AHS. However, grammar schools are no longer reserved for high-performing students. Children with language deficits from socially disadvantaged homes also attend the AHS. This fact, which is welcome in itself, of offering children from educationally disadvantaged families a chance for advancement, entails many problems in terms of heterogeneity and diversity. Although an attempt is being made to meet the new challenges by expanding the range of support within the framework of school autonomy, there are no urgent major structural changes. AHS teachers usually teach two subjects, which are divided into 50-minute units throughout the week and take place 1 to 4 times a week. This leaves little scope for interdisciplinary or project-oriented teaching, because of a tight time schedule and a very differentiated range of subjects.

While the general part of the Austrian curricula also refers, among other things, to the educational area of creativity and design, this aspect is addressed particularly clearly in the basic decree “Holistic-creative learning culture in schools”:

“Creativity is an interdisciplinary guiding principle of education and is not tied to specific subjects. School should be a place of curiosity, questioning and learning for both teachers and learners.”⁶

There are no concrete concepts for the implementation of this very general educational goal. The sole indication that creativity plays a major role in various areas of life and thus the “development and promotion of creative abilities [are] essential factors for the competent management of future questions” does not contribute to the realization of that⁷.

Furthermore, the Austrian school organization law stipulates those students are to be encouraged in their entire personality. This includes originality as well as flexibility, technical, evaluation and decision-making skills, and holistic, creative education should be implemented in all types of schools and subjects⁸.

“Creativity is therefore also a basic skill for interaction and communication within heterogeneous groups. A creative potential is required in dealing with one another in order to be able to respond to the most various diversities. A creative approach can enable an inclusive pedagogy — in relation to the differences between the students (e.g., in terms of gender, ethnic origin, religion and world view, disability, age, family situation or sexuality)”⁹.

On the other hand, the individual subjects are based on subject curricula, which are often rich in detail and densely filled with content to be worked on for the lesson. The freedom for teachers to give their own impetus varies from subject to subject, but is usually limited. An essential characteristic of the teaching work is the processing of content and competencies in a rigid and tight time frame. Cross-curricular exchange and the promotion of

³ The term “Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule” denotes both grammar or secondary and comprehensive schools.

⁴ Available online at: <https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/>, accessed on 06.01.2022.

⁵ Available online at: https://www.statistic.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung/schulen/schulbesuch/index.html, accessed on 06.01.2022.

⁶ Available online at: https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulrecht/rs/1997-2017/2009_15.html, accessed on 19.01.2022.

⁷ Available online at: https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulrecht/rs/1997-2017/2009_15.html, accessed on 19.01.2022.

⁸ Available online at: https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulrecht/rs/1997-2017/2009_15.html, accessed on 19.01.2022.

⁹ Available online at: https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulrecht/rs/1997-2017/2009_15.html, accessed on 19.01.2022.

sustainable learning success are left behind, although — as already mentioned — the overriding, general part of the curriculum applies to all subjects.

3.2 The General Part of the Curriculum

The general part of the curriculum defines overarching educational goals to be pursued when acquiring knowledge and imparting competencies. “The students are to be supported in their development process towards a socially oriented and positive way of life [...], whereby the willingness to think independently and to critically reflect [is] to be particularly encouraged”¹⁰.

Thus, the individual curricula do not have a focus on interdisciplinarity and make interdisciplinary projects, such as the one that is to be presented in this article, extremely difficult.

3.3 PISA

As far as education and knowledge acquisition or knowledge increase is concerned, these are currently being linked at Austrian schools through the so-called PISA discourse, above all with skills related to the labor market and economy, which are to be checked and internationally comparable, as the OECD has been doing since 2000 on the basis of the regular taking place PISA study can be measured. The sensual-aesthetic area of experience, holistic learning concepts that focus on the individual personality, learning about oneself, about others and about society, often are neglected.

3.4 Learning Compass 2030

The Learning Compass 2030 — also published by the OECD — makes it clear that work — or business-related (and also digital!) skills alone are not sufficient for future-oriented learning to train responsible, reflected and critically thinking people. In this, competencies were defined that focus on the personal responsibility and intrinsic motivation of young people. It emphasizes, among other things, that “students today have to learn to navigate independently through unfamiliar territory and to find their own way in a meaningful and responsible way, instead of following the instructions and instructions of their teachers without thinking”¹¹.

The proposed components, with the help of which the required goals are to be achieved, also include the areas of “attitudes and values” and “anticipation” in addition to the aspects “student agency”, “transformation skills”, “learning foundations”, “knowledge” and “skills”. The areas of “attitudes and values” as well as the “anticipation-action-reflection cycle” undoubtedly represent demands that can be promoted in holistic and collaborative forms of learning, provided that they are carried out regularly¹².

4. eSPRiT – A Holistic and Collaborative Learning Concept

4.1 General Remarks

The focus on drama and music education presented below was developed for a Viennese grammar school with the awareness of counteracting the outdated rigid structures of the school system and at the same time being feasible with the existing school conditions (curriculum, timetable, etc.).

¹⁰ Available online at: <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10008568>, accessed on 27.11.2021.

¹¹ Available online at: https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/OECD_Lernkompass_2030.pdf, accessed on 22.01. 2022.

¹² Available online at: https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/OECD_Lernkompass_2030.pdf, accessed on 22.01. 2022.



Figure 1 Logo of the eSPRiT Learning Concept

4.2 eSPRiT — A Definition of Terms

eSPRiT is made up of the following words and elements as the cornerstones of this teaching concept: empathy - self-confidence - personality - reflection - individuality - teamwork. The word “esprit” comes from French and means spirit, wit, intellect, acumen, soul, essence, peculiarity. A meaningful name for a holistic concept.

Empathy is the first pillar of eSPRiT. Because this competence is indispensable for a considerate, responsible cooperation, in which one respects the other person with their unique personality traits. With the help of various theatre pedagogical techniques, it is therefore the aim of eSPRiT to put oneself into others, to feel and explore other behavior and ways of life by accepting roles and situational contexts.

Self-confidence is another core competency that is expected of young people today more than ever. School as a place of preparation for life has the task of strengthening young people’s self-confidence. In traditional forms of teaching, in which selective performance, often deficit-oriented, predominates, there is little scope for strengthening self-confidence. The central concern of eSPRiT is therefore to promote the individual strengths and abilities of young people using many different methods and approaches.

With the concept of personality, the holistic approach is emphasized in the eSPRiT teaching concept. The focus is on people, the personality of young people with their character traits and special features in their experience and behavior. “Theatre serves the holistic personality development of young people by promoting rational as well as emotional, intellectual as well as creative, psychological as musical, individual as well as social skills” (Liebau, 2007, p. 5).

Reflection is central to personal development. If you actively deal with situations, experiences, emotions, etc., you can increase your awareness of yourself and others and thus expand your scope of action. Reflection is therefore an essential part of every eSPRiT unit. The focus is on articulating perceptions and emotions, giving appreciative feedback, and questioning perspectives and behavior. With the help of a reflection diary, which is kept by each student, learning experiences and impressions are also recorded in writing.

Individuality is the fifth pillar of the eSPRiT teaching concept. The uniqueness of each student is central to this element. The holistic approach of eSPRiT allows you to get to know and try out different contexts. Your own strengths and weaknesses can be explored and used in a targeted manner. It is also important to take responsibility for your own actions.

The ability to work in a team is a prerequisite in all areas of life. The school has a great responsibility in enabling and promoting collaborative processes. Doing things together using rhythmic and scenic elements, working together and taking responsibility for each other in different contexts aims to strengthen consensual decisions and

thus a democratic structure. The pillars of eSPRiT therefore relate to soft skills, to the “how” of teaching content. There is no question that the “what”, i.e., the teaching content itself, forms the focus of every lesson and is therefore of primary importance.

EMPATHIE SELBSTBEWUSSTSEIN PERSÖNLICHKEIT REFLEXION INDIVIDUALITÄT TEAMFÄHIGKEIT

Figure 2 Elements of eSPRiT

4.3 The Conception of eSPRiT

The concept of eSPRiT aims at the general teaching and educational goals of the curriculum as they apply to all subjects. Holistic learning should be a central element in every subject taught. Rather, it is about creating or taking into account certain preconditions that enable the teaching concept eSPRiT and that relate to theatre and music pedagogical techniques. The following graphic should illustrate this (Höhn, 2015, p. 15):

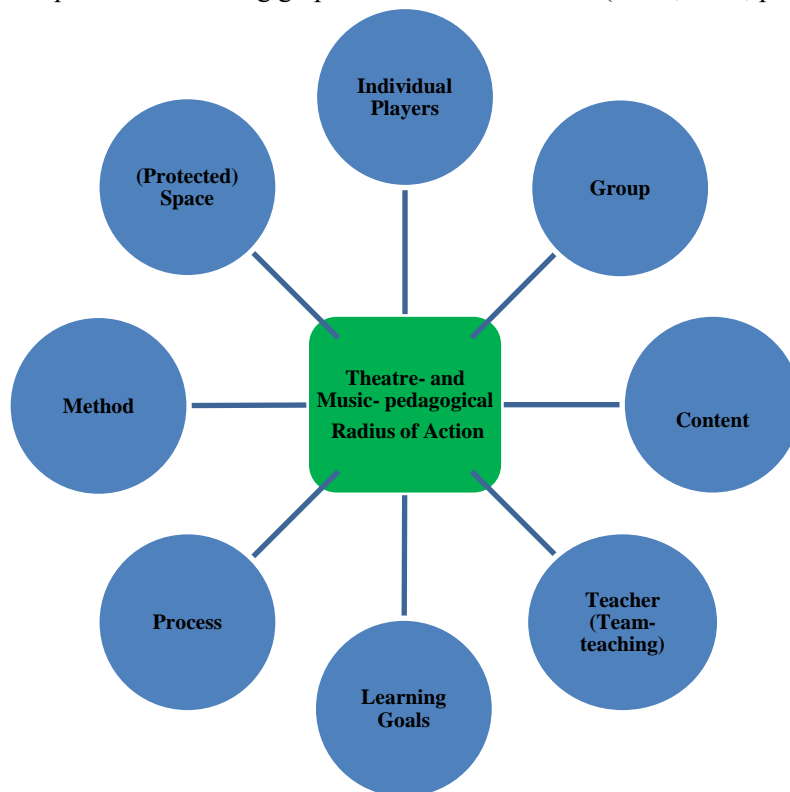


Figure 3 Theatre and Music Pedagogical Radius of Action

So if theatrical and music-pedagogical teaching methods are used holistically in a certain subject, many sub-areas of the teaching process must first be taken into account.

4.4 The Role of Teachers as Team Teaching in eSPRiT

An essential part of the teaching concept of eSPRiT is that it is taught in a team. Team teaching requires many skills and abilities that underlie the pillars of eSPRiT. Mutual trust, reliability, responsibility for each other, appreciation of being different, knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of yourself and the other person, regular reflection on what has been experienced, etc. require successful cooperation and an atmosphere conducive to learning for the students.

In addition to the willingness to engage in team teaching, the professional competence of the teachers is of great significance. A special training for Drama/Theatre in Education with the necessary know-how of subject-specific methods and procedures should therefore be a prerequisite for the use of eSPRiT. “To learn effectively through drama, children and teachers first need a knowledge and an understanding of drama, along with skills of drama. Nobody would realistically expect ICT to be embedded across a curriculum with no ICT training available but all too often there is an unreasonable expectation that drama will just happens without significant Continuing Professional Development for staff and a strategic approach” (Baldwin, 2009, p. 69).

Among other things to methodological competence, the attitude of the teachers is also of crucial importance. In addition to treating students with respect, acting in a positive manner, seeing yourself as an enabler, being authentic and knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, the willingness of the teachers to (self-)reflect is a key competence. “Reflection helps to recognize that one’s own actions are embedded in structures” (Christof et. al., 2018, p. 60). The basic aim is therefore to create a radius of action and a learning environment in which all participants can enter a learning process, or rather their learning process, which has to do with one’s own self. Because learning usually happens out of the past and reflects it.

In his Theory U, Otto Scharmer also describes the need for a transformation process in the field of education towards a system where both learners and teachers are self-aware and creatively help shape the learning process. He describes four stages, so-called “operating systems” (OS):

- OS 1.0 is input-centric, students receive passively and teachers act as authoritarian experts.
- OS 2.0 puts the output in the foreground (output-centric), with standardized curricula and teaching for testing (i.e., bulimia learning — fast in, fast out), students become active memorizers.
- OS 3.0, is learner-centric, “which puts the experience of the student at the center of reshaping learning environments”. Students become autonomous explorers; teachers become friendly facilitators. Performative forms of learning operate at the highest level.
- OS 4.0.: Everyone involved in the learning process becomes a (cooperative) co-creator. Teacher becomes creator or coach “[to] connect[ing] learners with the sources of creativity and the deepest essence of our humanity, while teaching them to co-sense emerging future possibilities and bring them to fruition” (Scharmer, 2018, p. 106).

4.5 Organisational Framework of eSPRiT

The eSPRiT teaching concept has been in use since 2019 in grades 5 and 6 (for 10- to 12-year-olds) in a class at a grammar school in Vienna. The lessons take place almost exclusively in the assembly hall, which can be used and played flexibly due to its structure. The students have a double lesson eSPRiT in team teaching twice a week. A German lesson and a Music lesson are used for this. The teaching content to be taught is based on the German and Music curricula; the didactic approach is based on the pillars of eSPRiT, teaching content is to be achieved with the help of drama and music pedagogical methods.

From the 7th grade, drama club and/or school orchestra can be attended where theatrical performances are planned and created. From the 10th grade it is additionally possible to attend the compulsory elective subject *Kulturwerkstatt*¹³, which is also conceptually based on eSPRiT and in which cultural content from music, literature, performing and fine arts is to be worked out theoretically and practically. It can be chosen for A-level-exams.

¹³ Elective subject for cultural concerns.

4.6 Procedure of an eSPRiT Unit

A typical eSPRiT unit, which takes place as a double lesson consisting of German and Music in the assembly hall, contains certain rituals that are taught to the students from the first unit and thus offer a stable framework for a flexible space for interaction.

Every lesson begins in a circle and ends in a circle again. The warm-up is the beginning of each unit. Activation and impulse exercises, which have both a rhythmic and an improvisational character, are intended to support the students in getting involved in the upcoming double lesson. This is followed by an introduction to the planned topic.

From the first unit, the students get to know certain basic techniques based on theatre and music pedagogical principles, such as “hot seating”, in which one person sits on an armchair assuming a certain role and questions from the other according to the assumed role character answered.

Another basic technique is building “statues”, in which students freeze to a sculpture on a specific topic. The others can carefully walk around the resulting sculpture, similar to a museum, and look at it. Thoughts can be heard by tapping; questions can also be directed to individual elements of the sculpture.

There are also certain signals or signal words that have a clear meaning. For example, to start a presentation, the signal word “curtain up” is used in combination with drumming and clapping, which provides attention and focus for the upcoming contribution.

At the end of an eSPRiT unit, it is important for the children to ‘shake off’ their roles again. This can be achieved quickly and easily using a cool-down exercise such as stripping, tapping, etc.

The most important rules of conduct are recorded in writing in a so-called drama contract (usually on a poster that is then hung up in the class) and signed by all students. This contract aims to “[...] protect students and teachers and provide an explicit regulated public domain where, like in a game, the participants and their teachers are clear about what is and is not allowed” (Neelands, 2001, p. 15).

It is also important that the actors “[...] learn to recognize and accept the limits of their fellow players. If problems nevertheless arise, be it that the young people deviate too much from the topic while playing, exceed the specified times or experience emotional shocks that can no longer be managed in the situation, the teacher should [...] bring about a kind of time-out, in which the participants can “shake off” their feelings and the role they are currently in and thus find their way back to everyday life” (Schopf-Suchy, 2016, p. 36).

4.7 Teaching Shakespeare — Using Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* as an Example

4.7.1 General Remarks

For better illustration, a typical eSPRiT unit will be shown below using the famous tragedy *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare as an example, as it actually took place.

4.7.2 Teaching Shakespeare

In his publication *Starting Drama Teaching*, Mike Fleming states that for many years the focus in teaching Shakespearean drama was not to understand the text in its core as a dramatic text, but rather as material for analysis and interpretation Literature in general, without clarifying typical features, in particular the performance aspect of the drama (Fleming, 2017, p. 108). However, this performance aspect is of great importance for the empathy and deeper understanding of the content and the characters contained therein. Drama pedagogy can make a valuable contribution to this.

“Getting a group to stage a Shakespeare play is an excellent way of teaching it as long as it involves participants in active decision-making and does not rely on the teacher as authoritarian director” (Fleming, 2017, p. 108).

Although Fleming admits that the participatory involvement of students is a complex process, he also notes that the approach using a variety of active exercises, in contrast to the classic question-and-answer game in the classroom, is not only an innovative method, but that this also significantly increases understanding of the content and intention of Shakespeare's texts (Fleming, 2017, p. 108).

4.7.3 eSPRiT Unit on Macbeth

In order to concretise the concept of eSPRiT presented so far, a 100-minute sequence will now be outlined, which was implemented as an introduction to Shakespeare's drama Macbeth. A suitable group size is 20 to 25 young people. A continuation of the participatory development could take place in the following double unit.

The weird sisters and their prophecies have an important meaning for Macbeth's later actions, which is why they act as an introduction to the story. In addition, the somber and mysterious mood makes it possible to quickly enter the atmosphere of the drama.

1) Warm up: Weird Sisters Canon

The group stands in a circle and warms up under the guidance of the teacher. The body is sensitized and activated by stretching the limbs, circling the shoulders and facial muscles through grimacing. The important thing is the intensity, not the speed.

In addition, a rhythmic four-beat starts with spherical sounds, to which short body percussion sequences (e.g., rubbing hands, snapping, clapping, ...) are made in the call-and-response principle. The degree of difficulty increases constantly, processes are repeated, but it is not about perfecting the rhythms in the group. From the body percussion there is a fluent transition to vocal sequences, on the one hand to warm up the voice and on the other hand to immerse oneself in the gloomy atmosphere. This creates sibilants (on s), glissandi (on m, brr).

The teacher then introduces 2 lines of text, which he repeats frequently so that the group can soon recite them by heart:

Schön ist hässlich, hässlich schön! Schwebt durch Dunst und Nebelhöhn!¹⁴

Fair is foul and foul is fair, hover through the fog and filthy air!

2) Introduction to the Content of Macbeth

Each student is assigned a number by counting (1, 2, 1, ...). The group does not yet know what Shakespeare's Macbeth is about, so a scene is briefly described for the students to imagine (destined witches appear in a misty landscape, it is gloomy, cold and wet...)

Now the whole group creates dark and mysterious sounds with their body and voice (the sounds already practiced in the warm-up should be used, but new ideas are also welcome). The volume and intensity are determined by the hand movements of the teacher. As soon as an exciting soundscape has been created, all 1s speak their text (the teacher's fingers show 1). If the teacher shows 2, the 2s say their sentence, etc. It is up to the teacher to increase or decrease this with hand signals. Depending on the practice of the group, a very intensive sound scene can develop here.

3) Macbeth — The Initial Situation

After the atmospheric introduction, everyone sits down in a circle and closes their eyes. A first part of the story of the play is told freely (it is also possible to use an abridged reading version). Key points here are: Macbeth, as a victorious Scottish general, meets three witches (weird sisters) together with his friend Banquo — these prophesy

¹⁴ German translation of "Fair is foul and foul is fair, hover through the fog and filthy air".

Macbeth and Duncan’s descendants will become kings — King Duncan is a guest in Macbeth’s house — Macbeth’s wife sees her time come strengthened by the prophecies — Macbeth is supposed to kill Duncan

4) Characteristics of Macbeth (A) and Lady Macbeth (B)

Groups of three are formed who either play the role of Macbeth (A) or Lady Macbeth (B). Each group works out the typical character traits of their figure and makes their attitude visible. For this purpose, a sculpture, a so-called “freeze frame” should be formed, paying particular attention to facial expressions and gestures.

Each group then presents their sculpture in front of the others. It should only be observed. In addition, any thoughts can be made audible by tapping on the people in the picture.



Figure 4 Freeze Frame



Figure 5 Freeze Frame

5) Confrontation between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

The scene before Duncan's killing is told in more detail by the teacher: Lady Macbeth urges her husband to murder, who turns them to king and queen, but he is not ready to take this step and hesitates.

Work continues in groups of three in the same role (A or B). Now the all-important sentence that decides about murder or non-murder should be found. The groups practice this sentence among themselves so that they can then say it together. It is also important to pay attention to posture and tone of voice.

Confrontation of A and B: Before the groups meet, the situation is described in more detail: They are in front of the room where their guest, King Duncan, is sleeping. It's night and everyone else is sleeping too. Lady Macbeth sedated the servants/guards with sleeping pills. Now they are at the door to kill Duncan.

Tips for the confrontation of A and B: two groups meet each other and face each other; the sentence is spoken alternately (3 to 5 times) with the aim of convincing the other.

Possible extension: all small groups from A and B work out one sentence together (quickly!) → a choral encounter can be created, which should be increased as much as possible, 2 to 3 rounds

6) Feedback Regarding the Confrontation Between A and B

Feedback is given using a sociometric exercise: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are named as the two poles. The students line up along an imaginary line to the question "Who acted more convincingly for me?".



Figure 6 Sociometric Exercise

7) What Happens Next Between the Macbeths?

Duncan is dead. A short scene is developed in small groups, which takes place after Duncan's murder and shows whether or what has changed in the relationship between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. After a short preparation time, the performance takes place.

8) Final Reflection

The students think independently about what they have experienced and formulate their thoughts on it in their

reflection book.

Possible questions can be:

- How did it feel to slip into the role of Macbeth or Lady Macbeth?
- What difference did it make on me to embody Macbeth or Lady Macbeth alone or as a group?
- Which behavior do you find more forgivable?
- Macbeth's or Lady Macbeth's? Why?

4.8 Theatre Production MACKieBETH

4.8.1 General Remarks

The roots of the genesis of eSPRiT lie in the ever-increasing cooperation between the drama club and the school orchestra, both of which are part of the non-binding support offer of the school. While working with eSPRiT in compulsory classes is mainly process-oriented, the cooperative theatre projects are about a finished product: the performances — in the spirit of Theatre in Education. In conclusion to the teaching example for Macbeth, which follows the methodical principles of Drama in Education, among other things, the last production by the two authors, MACKieBETH, which was performed five times in autumn 2021, is presented.

4.8.2 Dramaturgical Conception of MACKieBETH

The artistic aim of the project was to link Shakespeare's Macbeth with elements of Bert Brecht's Macheath from The Threepenny Opera and to implement Brecht's theses on an epic form of theatre as a theatrical performance with musical elements.

The dramaturgical concept was based on important narrative key themes from Macbeth, with the plot being interrupted again and again. The balladeer acted as a commentator, observer or pseudo-moral authority in his ballads and pointed out parallels to current (social) political events.

Although situated in the 17th century, the Shakespeare stage shows striking parallels with Brecht's idea of an epic theatre. In contrast to the baroque picture frame stage, the stage in Shakespeare protrudes far into the audience and is thus similar to Brecht's requirement of breaking through the "invisible fourth wall" in order to be able to come into direct contact with the audience.

It was also typical of Shakespeare — as well as of Brecht — to interrupt or comment on plot lines. Against this background, parallels in content between Shakespeare's Macbeth and Brecht's Macheath were made visible: both protagonists are considered unpredictable, both run immoral businesses, both commit murders that cannot be proven — in contrast to Macbeth, however, Macheath is pardoned at the end of the story and even raised to the nobility. In addition to the character of Macbeth, the witches had an outstanding importance in the production. They embody the fateful character, are forward-looking and judgmental at the same time. No one can escape their prophecies. The knowledge of Macbeth's weakness affects them more than their supernatural powers. "They play upon Macbeth's ambition like puppeteers"¹⁵.

¹⁵ Available online at: <https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/macbeth/character/the-three-witches/>, accessed on 20.1. 2022.



Figure 7 Breaking the 4th Wall

Lady Macbeth, a driving force behind her husband's fatal quest, also recognizes the strength of the weird sisters and calls on them for support.



Figure 8 Lady Macbeth Conjures up the Weird Sisters

4.8.3 Musical Ideas

Guilt, fatality, hopelessness, murder. These sombre and negative themes call for musically dark, slanted and powerful sound worlds. The music should help to let the experience resonate, but also to anticipate certain moments. In this sense, a short triplet motif appears again and again, which is intensified in the course and in the end of the tragedy, after Macbeth's death, also signals a certain end point. Another element that is reinforced by the music is that of artificiality: synthesized sounds and noises complete the soundscape. The music spans an arc with quotations from works by Mahler's 5th Symphony, Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* and Shostakovich's Cello Sonata in D

minor; plus modern sounds from Billie Eilish's album *When we fall asleep*, among others.

On the other hand, there are the interjections of the balladeer, who in his ballads takes a look at the story from the outside and makes the audience part of it. Musically, songs from the Threepenny Opera (e.g., *Mack the knife*) were used for this.

4.8.4 The Ensemble

Around 100 children and young people between the ages of 10 and 20 were involved in the entire production. The individual roles were acted by students and graduates who, as part of the theatre club, spent almost a year working on themes and characters and subsequently rehearsed them.



Figure 9 Group Picture of the Theatre Production MACKieBETH

The mass scenes (especially the armed conflicts) were presented by the students from the eSPRiT classes, whereby the work here was largely rhythmic and performative. The music was played entirely live by the school orchestra (approx. 20 students).

As with the assignment of roles and assignment of texts, the arrangement was tailored to the skills and playing ability of the individual students in order to offer sufficient development opportunities. In order to implement the close interlocking of these elements, there were repeated rehearsals with the entire ensemble over the course of the year working on the piece. A lasting change was noticeable in all participants, both students and teachers.

In addition to the individual artistic successes, there was great personal development: children who had previously hardly been visible now presented themselves self-confidently and verbosely in front of others. Young people who had been primarily occupied with themselves suddenly took an interest in the needs of others. Elder students took care of younger students, younger students took over organizational tasks themselves, etc.

In the course of the project, processes were set in motion because a deep connection to the drama of Macbeth could be established. The work touched everyone inside, each in their own way: with the whole body, mind and soul. In the spirit of eSPRiT, development steps could be taken here to help the students bring out their true nature — “their authentic selves” (Kim, 2017, p. 103).



Figure 10 Enthronement of Macbeth



Figure 11 Weir Sisters

5. Summarising

Traditional forms of teaching, rigid school systems and rigid canons of subjects no longer meet the requirements of the future. In order to prepare young people for life in the best possible way, to strengthen their personality, and to raise them to critically thinking, responsible citizens, holistic and collaborative teaching concepts are required that enable topic- and project-oriented, interdisciplinary work. eSPRiT represents a feasible way of meeting this requirement.

“As society, work and the world generally change from an individualistic approach that still dominates our schooling, we are faced with a society that is profoundly disconnecting with the needs of students. Drama education and arts education generally is a pedagogy with a heritage that has the potential to modernize schooling” (Anderson, 2012, p. 10).

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