

Equitable musical-aesthetic practice in elementary school

An explorative approach to mapping a complex phenomenon

Lina Oravec¹ 

Silke Schmid² 

¹ Universität Koblenz

² Pädagogische
Hochschule Freiburg

Teilhabeorientierte musikalisch-ästhetische Praxis in der Grundschule

Explorierende Annäherung an ein komplexes Phänomen

Summary

In the German-speaking disciplinary discourse on music education, there is general consensus regarding the relevance of musical-aesthetic practice as a fundamental characteristic of music education. However, relevant publications of the discipline-specific aesthetic discourse often focus on secondary education, the perspective on elementary school students is currently underrepresented. The emphasis on aesthetic argumentation is particularly in conflict with an inclusive understanding of aesthetic practice in the context of elementary school. Against this backdrop, the article brings together perspectives specific to elementary school and children's music education as well as interdisciplinary approaches that explicitly refer to or can be meaningfully related to the aesthetic paradigm. In doing so, we elaborate on dimensions that complement Schmid's (2016) four dimensions of *embodiment*, *narrativity*, *materiality*, and *sociality* with the dimensions of *play*, *multimodality*, *spatiality*, and *agency*. These dimensions appear particularly worthy of consideration in examining aesthetic practice in elementary education – both in theory formation and educational practice, and potentially in empirical research as well.

Keywords:

elementary school, general music education, aesthetic experience, musical practice, equity

Zusammenfassung

Im Fachdiskurs besteht weitgehend Konsens hinsichtlich der Relevanz einer musikalisch-ästhetischen Praxis als einem wesentlichen fachlichen Spezifikum des Musikunterrichts. Einschlägige Publikationen zum fachspezifischen Ästhetik-Diskurs richten dabei häufig den Blick auf die Sekundarstufe. Im deutschsprachigen Diskurs zu ästhetischer Praxis ist die Perspektive auf Schüler:innen im Grundschulalter demgegenüber bisher unterrepräsentiert. Der Fokus auf verbale Reflexion und Argumentation steht gerade im Grundschulkontext im Spannungsverhältnis zu einem inklusiven Verständnis ästhetischer Praxis. Vor diesem Hintergrund trägt der Artikel grundschul- und kindspezifische Perspektiven der Musikpädagogik und fachübergreifende Ansätze zusammen, die sich explizit auf das ästhetische Paradigma beziehen oder damit sinnvoll in Zusammenhang gebracht werden können. Dabei arbeiten wir Dimensionen heraus, die Schmid's (2016) vier Dimensionen involvierten Musikerlebens von Kindern (*Embodiment*, *Narrativität*, *Materialität* und *Sozialität*) um die Dimensionen *Spiel*, *Multimodalität*, *Raumbezogenheit* und *Agency* ergänzen. Diese Dimensionen scheinen bei einer grundschulbezogenen Betrachtung ästhetischer Praxis besonders berücksichtigungswert – in Theoriebildung, schulischer Praxis und perspektivisch auch in empirischer Forschung.

Schlagwörter:

Grundschule, Musikunterricht, ästhetische Praxis, musikalische Praxis, Teilhabe

1. Introduction

In the German segmented school system, elementary school is the only school form that all children attend¹, and it is also the only school type where music is part of the weekly schedule in every grade. Hence, and since elementary school children are still at an age crucial for learning (Büttner, 2017; Gordon, 1986), one would expect that music educational discourse directs a great deal of attention to elementary music education. That holds some truth regarding some empirical research on extracurricular or cooperative music education projects: there has been an increase in funded research projects, including those within elementary schools, starting in the late 2000s (Kranefeld, 2013). However, when it comes to theory development or empirical basic research, elementary school has been quite neglected. That especially applies to the discourse on musical-aesthetic practice. Musical-aesthetic practice can be regarded as a widely acknowledged, central domain- and subject-specific teaching objective within the German music education discourse (Kranefeld, 2021), and is even referred to as an aesthetic paradigm (ibid., p. 223). As such, musical-aesthetic practice continues to play a central role in subject specification, recently interrelating the philosophically grounded concept with a sociological, praxeological perspective (Eusterbrock & Rolle, 2020).

From an interdisciplinary perspective, elementary school age has been in the focus of publications on aesthetic education/ experience (Matthies et al. 1987; Mattenklott & Rora, 2004). In 2004, an edited interdisciplinary volume (Mattenklott & Rora, 2004) highlighted the potential of aesthetic experience for elementary school children. Moreover, in general education research, there have been attempts to connect the aesthetic paradigm to an equitable, inclusive aim (Dederich et al., 2020; Dietrich & Wullschleger, 2019). However, these publications have so far not received much attention in the German music education discourse. Nevertheless, it has begun a reflection on an equitable way to foster musical-aesthetic experiences for all target groups (Löbber & Ziegenmeyer, 2022). Generally, since the first se-

minial publications on aesthetic experience in music education (Kaiser, 1992; Rolle, 1999; Wallbaum, 2000), the research field exploring aesthetic experience has mainly been developed as a theoretically elaborated approach not explicitly differentiating target groups or age levels. However, potential didactical implications by key authors (like Rolle or Wallbaum) have been nearly exclusively specified for the secondary school level, even primarily focusing on the senior level at grammar schools. Furthermore, although it is widely acknowledged that language cannot fully capture the uniqueness of an aesthetic, sensual experience (e. g. Brandstätter, 2013/2012; Wallbaum, 2013), both the theoretical discourse with its didactical consequences and the growing empirical research in the field have especially paid attention to verbal aspects of aesthetic argumentation (e. g. Rolle & Wallbaum, 2011; Ehninger et al., 2021b).

In this paper, we argue that the attention to middle and upper school settings and music-related argumentative competence (Ehninger et al., 2021a; Rolle et al., 2015) has led to an imbalance in terms of a rather unintentional lack of consideration for learners of diverse ages and abilities in the discourse on this crucial subject-specific area (chapter 2). Löbber and Ziegenmeyer (2022) set out to reflect upon an adaptation of the aesthetic paradigm with respect to inclusive settings. They draw attention to non-speaking, movement-impaired pupils, and the need to expand the discourse on musical-aesthetic practice. We follow a similar track with our paper's stance that the overall aim of an equitable music education² necessitates a pronounced consideration of elementary school specifics. This contribution's objective is to tentatively carve out initial dimensions that seem to be specifically relevant for musical-aesthetic practice in elementary school. We are deliberately not attempting to review the long history of the concept of aesthetics. Nor do we claim to do justice to the rich discourse on terminology impacting diverse approaches to aesthetic education (as *Ästhetische Erziehung*, *Ästhetische Bildung*, *Ästhetisches Lernen*, *Aesthetics* vs. *Aistheis* etc.)³. Just like Löbber and Ziegenmeyer (2022, p. 357), we are convinced that there are significant overlaps between all these

¹ After four years of elementary school, children are divided into Gymnasium (grammar school) and Realschule, based on their performance level. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees every child the right to attend a mainstream elementary school. However, even at the elementary level a special school system still exists in Germany.

² See *Sustainable Development Goal 4*: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>).

³ For aesthetic education as *Ästhetische Bildung* see e. g. Rolle, 1999; as *Ästhetische Erziehung* see e. g. Dietrich, 2013/2012; for *Aistheis* vs *Aesthetics* see e. g. Mattenklott, 2013.

approaches, as they reference the aesthetic paradigm. In line with them, we regard an *aesthetic attitude* ("*ästhetische Einstellung*", p. 357) as central for what we refer to as *aesthetic practice* in this paper.

Therefore, our focus is on primarily outlining an overall shift to the target group of elementary school-aged children, shedding light on potential approaches to that paradigm. Hence, in an explorative endeavor, we will ask: (1) what music educational publications with a focus on elementary school-aged children provide insights concerning a specification of the musical-aesthetic paradigm for elementary school (chapter 3)? (2) What dimensions relevant for fostering musical-aesthetic practice can be identified and tentatively consolidated in a provisional model? Following these questions, the paper will advocate for a refinement emphasizing the significant subject-specific aesthetic approach in the elementary music classroom. The resulting heuristic (see chapter 5) should have the potential to be elaborated for a further conceptual, didactic perspective on fostering musical-aesthetic practice in elementary school. Eventually, the heuristic might be developed further to make empirical research into such a practice more feasible. In our paper, we will take a first step by applying it to a practice example (chapter 6).

2. Discourse on musical-aesthetic practice

We choose the terminology of *music-aesthetical practice* as an already well-established expression (cf. Wallbaum, 2010), which is open enough for our purpose of sifting a highly diverse corpus of literature. When interlinking the aesthetic paradigm with praxeological approaches, *musical-aesthetic practice* refers to socially situated, incorporated modes of action characterized by sensory as well as meaningful experiential qualities (Eusterbrock & Rolle, 2020). Thus, musical practice can potentially encompass *Erfahren* as a reflective experience (Rolle, 1999) as well as *Erleben* in terms of sensual experience (Schmid, 2014; Löbbert & Ziegenmeyer, 2022).

2.1 Musical-aesthetic practice as subject-specific dimension of teaching quality

Defining musical-aesthetic practice as a nexus of music-related practices oriented toward fulfillment in action ("*erfüllte Praxis*") (Wallbaum, 2013, p. 22, cf. also Rolle 2004, p. 208) regards practice as a distinct, unique and transformative mode of experiencing the world and oneself. It is distinguished by self-

referentiality, process orientation, and self-purposefulness. Decisively, enriching musical-aesthetic practice has been referred to as a central domain-specific dimension of teaching quality in the music classroom (Kranefeld, 2021). Hence, merely attending a musical lesson or interacting with sounds in any way without reference to that specific aesthetic mode would not yet constitute musical-aesthetic practice.

It is to be noted that these well acknowledged assumptions have mainly been elaborated on a theoretical level, while an empirical operationalization largely remains pending. In contrast, empirical music educational research, especially qualitative video studies, explicitly refer to generic dimensions of teaching quality – as *cognitive activation*, *classroom management*, *instructional guidance* (Köller & Meyer, 2014) – yet strive for a subject-specific modification (Kranefeld, 2021, p. 221). In that regard, Puffer & Hoffmann (2016; 2022) and in the following Kranefeld (2021) have suggested the term *aesthetic activation* as a domain-specific way to relate to generic dimensions of teaching quality.

For even though the construct of musical-aesthetic practice defies a simple operationalization, empirical researchers acknowledge it as a subject-specific essential objective to offer musical-aesthetic qualities that can be experienced in the classroom (Kranefeld, 2021; Puffer & Hoffman, 2022; Krupp, 2021). Seemingly, engaging in promoting musical-aesthetic practice means deliberately enriching specific dimensions of musical practices. Aiming for equitable education in rich musical practices in this regard may imply the task of consciously promoting musical-aesthetic practices in elementary school. Before exploring how that could be accomplished, it is important to examine the established paradigm concerning musical-aesthetic practice and any potential imbalance in that context.

2.2 Desideratum: What about elementary school?

With his essay on musical experience, H. J. Kaiser (1992) laid the foundation for a vivid discourse on musical-aesthetic experience in German music education. The most influential books on musical-aesthetic experience published in the following years by Rolle (1999) and Wallbaum (2000) address music education in general, but when it comes to practical examples, they focus exclusively on secondary school. Rolle (1999) describes several lessons with 10th graders in grammar school aiming to open spaces for musical-aesthetic experience around the musical genre of techno music. Wallbaum (2000) chooses

three examples of music production with 12th graders at grammar school – e. g. preparing a presentation for the graduation ceremony – assuming that these should also be transferable to “all other grades and ages” (p. 266, translation LO). In follow-up projects and publications alike, both authors and their research groups focus on secondary school students. Ehninger, Knigge and Rolle (2021b) developed an instrument to test musical-aesthetic argumentation skills, validated for 9th to 12th graders and university students. Wallbaum videotaped music lessons at the secondary level from several countries accessible for the public and analyzed some of them from the perspective of aesthetic practice (Wallbaum, 2010).⁴ Research projects on learning processes and aesthetic experiences in app music practice (LEA)⁵ (a. o. Eusterbrock & Rolle, 2020) or musical-aesthetic experiences in the context of production-oriented school projects⁶ (Zill, 2016), shed light on indicators of aesthetic experience but do not target elementary school.

One likely reason for the neglect of elementary school is the authors’ background in secondary education. However, there also seems to be a systematic reason in the concept of aesthetic experience itself that elementary school children cannot be taken into account as straightforward. This is due to the emphasis on aesthetic rationality and the significance of aesthetic argumentation being considered central (cf. Rolle, 2004, p. 210) as individuals deepen their aesthetic experience by negotiating their respective aesthetic judgements. Analyzing the videographed *Thuringia lesson* with sixth graders, Wallbaum laments the scarcity of “verbal utterances on aesthetic quality” (Wallbaum, 2010, p. 96, translation LO). As one potential explanation, he highlights the young age of the students (ibid.), likely alluding to the fact that their overall linguistic and argumentative skills might not have fully matured. This would be even more so with even younger elementary school children, ranging from grade 1 to 4. However, Wallbaum also describes non-verbal ways of supposedly aesthetic communication by the students. In a more recent publication analyzing another secondary school lesson, he even assumes a pre-verbal mode as helpful for musical-aesthetic processes (Wallbaum, 2018), which becomes more difficult to

access with increasing language acquisition. In a similar vein, Stefan Orgass (2018), in his reflections about inclusive music education, focuses on the emergence of musical maturity without the ability to speak, emphasizing the relevance of inter-bodily communication. In the endeavor to establish a musical-aesthetic foundation of inclusive music teaching, he highlights the significance of non-conceptual and/or non-propositional qualities (Orgass, 2018, p. 105). Implications for pre- and elementary school are obvious (cf. Ribke, 2004, p. 26), but still largely pending.

Already in their early writings, both Rolle and Wallbaum emphasize that an aesthetic argument (*“ästhetischer Streit”*) can not only be conducted verbally (Wallbaum, 2000, p. 17; Rolle, 1999, p. 154), but can be shown by non-verbal communication as well as in the medium of music, i. e. showing ones’ own musical interpretation of a piece by performing it a certain way. Nevertheless, verbal aesthetic argumentation has been further elaborated in several following writings, other than the nonverbal ways – again mainly exemplified with senior students at grammar school (e. g. Rolle & Wallbaum, 2011; Rolle et al., 2015; Ehninger et al., 2021a). This is understandable based on research-related reasons, as verbal argumentation is easier to operationalize for empirical research, and supposedly more elaborately found in the secondary classroom. On the other hand, this also implies that theorization, didactic and methodical elaboration, as well as empirical research in a crucial area like musical-aesthetic practice has so far omitted a significant field of school related music education. Hence, if there is still a verbal competency barrier at the 6th grade age (12–13 years), what about elementary school students? What can be said of how to foster their engagement with musical-aesthetic practice?

3. Aesthetic paradigm in elementary music education

Approaching the aesthetic paradigm with the aim of identifying potential ways to foster musical-aesthetic practice in the elementary music classroom, we encounter writings on music teaching in elementary school that explicitly relate to the discourse of

⁴ Interestingly enough, the same applies to videographic studies to some extent: Recently, videographic studies focusing on musical practices in the classroom (e. g. Buchborn et al., 2019) strikingly, so far have also focused on the secondary classroom, refraining from normative positions as to equitable participation. They also do not explicitly refer to the construct of aesthetic experience.

⁵ “Lernprozesse und ästhetischen Erfahrungen in der Appmusikpraxis (LEA)”

⁶ (“Musikalisch-ästhetische Erfahrungen im Kontext produktionsorientierter Schulprojekte”)

aesthetic education ("*ästhetische Erziehung*") (Polzin et al., 1998; Rora, 2005), but largely remain unconnected to the discourse around authors like Rolle and Wallbaum mentioned above. Publications under the label *ästhetische Erziehung* (aesthetic education) focus on fostering the ability to participate in aesthetic experiences, providing a low-threshold sharpening of aesthetic perception⁷. An outlook on potential links to the above-described discourse on aesthetic experience with the capacity to enrich musical-aesthetic practices in the elementary classroom is missing. Motivated by this gap, in the following, we collect potentially relevant aspects, which we then propose to condense in a synoptic overview, gaining a heuristic grasp on the topic step by step. To focus on the young age group of elementary school children, we will first revisit the somewhat older discourse of aesthetic education (*ästhetische Erziehung*) and will then collect thoughts stemming from the field of *Elemental Music Education* ("*EMP*").

3.1 Interdisciplinary aesthetic education

Concerning elementary school, the aesthetic paradigm has been referred to less in terms of subject-specific learning, but as a generic term for bridging the arts (Dietrich et al., 2013), referred to as *ästhetische Erziehung*. Obviously, the elementary school with its classroom teacher principle offers favorable structures for interdisciplinary and multimodal teaching and learning, potentially aligning with the synesthetic nature of aesthetic experience (Brandstätter, 2013/2012). Both class teacher principle and subject-integrated approaches in elementary school correspond with the holistic way of perception as a characteristic of elementary school-aged children (Mattenklott, 2009). With regard to the arts, consequently, only for the elementary school there have been and are study programs where the field of aesthetic education can be elected as an interdisciplinary major study subject (e. g. University of Bremen, University of Cologne) or mandatory study modules on aesthetic education have been implemented (e. g. University of the Arts Berlin, University of Koblenz). Publications specifically focusing on the aesthetic paradigm in elementary school education have often emerged from such study programs. They may range from not giving much attention to the subject of music (Mattenklott, 1997), illuminating

it as one of several subjects (Mattenklott & Rora, 2004; Matthies et al., 1987; Meyer, 2003) or put it into focus (Polzin et al., 1998). Against that background, we will now look into concrete inspiration which may contribute to the enabling of musical-aesthetic practice in the elementary classroom.

The theoretical contributions in the 1987 volume (Matthies et al., 1987) primarily aim to contribute to the theory of aesthetic education by emphasizing the connections between the different arts (e. g. relevance of "movement and emotion", "staging ("*Inszenierung*") as a principle" and "play", Matthies, 1987, pp. 23-29) rather than focusing primarily on "more general aspects of an aesthetic self-world relationship" (Dietrich, 2013, p. 9) of children. Moreover, there is little music-specific elaboration of such theoretical considerations. Instead, in the later music-specific publication (Polzin et al., 1998) one can find several practice examples. Searching for peculiarities of the elementary music classroom, it can be noted that besides the oftentimes multimodal approaches, the connection of music with phenomena like play and movement as well as imaginary settings (e. g. cave, island) and material objects other than classical instruments or pen and paper (e. g. cloth, leaves, stones) are found in several contributions. One chapter focusses on the classroom as performance room (Kretz & Steffen-Wittek, 1998).

Stemming from a Berlin-based interdisciplinary study model, Rora (2005) points out play and engagement with (the language of) things, i. e. their materiality, construction and history, as guiding ideas for interdisciplinary aesthetic teaching in the elementary music classroom. In her interdisciplinary article about theater pedagogies in the elementary music classroom Fritz (2015) empathizes corporality and embodiment as central points of departure for children's involvement in musical aesthetic learning as does Unger-Rudroff in the context of attentive listening through story-telling (Unger-Rudroff, 2022).

We can presume that from the interdisciplinary, elementary school-specific perspective, several aspects seem central on musical-aesthetic practice:

- multimodality/ interdisciplinarity (e. g. Matthies, 1987; Brandstätter, 2013/2012)
- embodiment/ movement (e. g. Fritz, 2015; Matthies, 1987)

⁷ The term *Ästhetische Erziehung* has gone out of fashion. However, it was used for a long time with regard to childhood and school (see Dietrich, 2013/2012). The discourse around Wallbaum and Rolle (see chapter 1.) speaks of aesthetic education, for which verbally reflected experience is necessary (see above). We see a difficulty here with regard to elementary school and equitable musical-aesthetic practice. That is why we chose the more open concept of practice. In aesthetic education, however, a discourse looks at the target group of elementary school children under yet another label, namely the interdisciplinary one.

- staging/ performance room/ imaginary settings (e. g. Kretz & Steffen-Wittek, 1998)
- play (e. g. Matthies, 1987; Rora, 2005)
- material objects (e. g. Rora)

It should not go unmentioned here, however, that the interdisciplinary approach of aesthetic education in elementary school is not uncontroversial. Mechtild Fuchs contrasted her prominent elementary school-specific elaboration of the concept of *Aufbauender Musikunterricht*, focusing on systematic competence development, with the concept of aesthetic education (*Musisch-ästhetische Erziehung*). She fears that "under the label of 'holism' [...] there is often a real neglect of music-specific tasks" (Fuchs, 2010, p. 11-12). Still, with respect to fundamentals for the elementary music classroom, Fuchs strikingly also emphasizes the great importance of embodiment for (musical) learning at elementary school age (ibid., p. 21).

3.2 Elemental Music Education ("Elementare Musikpädagogik, EMP")

With one of its main areas of focus in extracurricular music education for groups of children, the discourse of EMP still proves to be fruitful with regard to the aesthetic paradigm in the context of elementary school. From early childhood on, EMP pursues a personality-building approach and, since the 1990s, has increasingly seen the "aesthetics and experience structures of the children themselves" (Göllner et al., in press, translation LO) as a central orientation. Based on child-oriented aisthesis with its emphasis on sensual perception, the focus lies on bringing in the child's own sensory and emotional perceptions. According to this understanding, education results from highly diverse processes (Dartsch, 2016; S. 58). Paying specific attention to improvisational processes, that discourse also demonstrates an overall orientation towards children's play, spontaneity and children's powers of imagination (Göllner et al., in press).

Thus, the EMP-discourse has offered specified approaches integrating aspects of play and imagination in the music classroom: In an early conceptual paper fundamental to EMP, Ribke (1995), for instance, developed an approach of staging entire lesson progressions with pre-school children as holistic fairytales to activate their aesthetic mode. Being involved in the story, the children will have to contribute to the solution of a problem via musical means. Props to stimulate imagination and the arrangement of the room play an essential role in the lesson designs. Ribke also suggests several games promo-

ting sensory sensitivity, self-perception and distancing from everyday perceptual structures, e. g. listening games or movement games with the eyes closed (Ribke, 2002, p. 22-23).

In the more recently published EMP handbook, Meyer (2020) authored the article on aesthetic experience. Within six rich bullet points, she lists central aspects to be fostered in the EMP music classroom to promote aesthetical experience. In short, they might be summarized as (1) intensifying processes of sensual perception (e. g. scenic, verbal, with drawings), (2) choosing methods, media and material to foster children's own voice, creative skills, but also more formal basic musical skills ("*Gestaltungskompetenz*"), (3) fostering their tolerance as well as reflective and negotiation skills for the group process.

In short, in the discourse on EMP we referred to we have found the following aspects:

- staging/ storytelling/ scenic classroom design/ powers of imagination (e. g. Göllner et al., in press; e. g. Meyer, 2020; Ribke 1995),
- games/ play (e. g. Göllner et al., in press; Ribke, 1995)
- multimodality (e. g. Meyer, 2020; Ribke, 1995)
- negotiation (e. g. Meyer, 2020)
- fostering children's own voices (e. g. Meyer 2020)

3.3 English-speaking discourse

In the English-speaking music education discourse, approaches referring to musical-aesthetic practice have been associated with an exclusionary one related to high culture (e. g. Regelski, 2016) rather than considerate of equitability. Since David Elliott's (1995) critique opposing Bennett Reimer's (1970) conception of Music Education as Aesthetic Education (MEAE) as elitist, in which he argues that it erroneously conceptualizes music as an aesthetic object instead of a practice, the aesthetic paradigm has often been revisited through a critical lens. Hence, in according publications we predominantly find only implicit references to dimensions potentially encompassing musical-aesthetic practice. Still, these implicit references resonate with some crucial aspects we have found to be quite consistently referenced in the German discourse on musical-aesthetic practice of children in the previous chapter. With reference to elementary school-aged or younger children, and comparable to the German EMP-discourse, for instance, it is not by accident that important lines of thought circle around children's musical play (Marsh & Young, 2016; Harwood & Marsh, 2012) or the concern to "give a voice" to children (Barrett, 2016). The according authors also recurrently high-

light the centrality of incorporated practice, which, next to the importance of play, aligns with aspects discussed above.

The need to give children a voice is also formulated in the aforementioned position by Meyer (2020) and is in line with the approach of self-determined music learning in elementary school by Küntzel (2016). That demand seems typical of elementary education, since young children might otherwise easily not be taken as mature enough for active and self-determined participation. Obviously, they need some freedom and space for expressing themselves not only verbally, as necessary for an equitable musical-aesthetic practice.

To sum up, the English discourse we so far looked into draws attention to

- play (e. g. Marsh & Young, 2016; Harwood & Marsh, 2012)
- giving children a voice (e. g. Barrett, 2016)

3.4 Formulating first dimensions

In summary, one can conclude that the presented approaches to music education with children of (pre- and) elementary school age which explicitly address the aesthetic paradigm share several suggestions about how to stage concrete lessons, which may be identified as relevant dimensions for musical-aesthetic practice in that context. Highlighted features are multimodality and/or interdisciplinarity, movement and embodiment, play, imaginative games and storytelling, props and other material objects as well as the conscious, theatrical use of space. Some authors (Meyer, 2004, 2020; Ribke, 2002; Rora, 2005) also name the need for reflection and verbal negotiation. The English-speaking discourse also highlights the importance of giving children “a voice” (e. g. Barrett, 2016). The relevance of most features seems characteristic of the elementary school, as it is typical for children of this age to have specific potentials and needs concerning the joy of movement (Dreher, 2005, p. 153) and play (Marsh & Young, 2016; Harwood & Marsh, 2012) as well as of acting in imaginary settings. At the same time, writings particularly addressing elementary school often take into account institutional circumstances typical of elementary schools, like generalist teachers without special training in music, music lessons taking place in the classroom instead of a well-equipped music room, with a resulting pre-eminence of everyday materials as instruments (e. g. Kretz & Steffen-Witek., 1998; also cf. Oravec, 2016). It is also interesting to see that the English-speaking discourse is not so much preoccupied with a classification of practices

as essentially musical, operating beyond categories of musical “immanence” (Schmid, 2016, p. 107), since pragmatist (Dewey, 2005) and/ or phenomenological perspectives (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997) have been highly influential. “The notion of “music education as praxis”” (Elliott, 1995) had concerns with “music education’s premise that the individual music listener should strive towards a subjective state of musical knowing apart from any practical or “non-musical” influence – be it social, cultural, political, moral, or otherwise” (Lines, 2021, 1st paragraph). As such, multimodal approaches and a focus on holistic processes as in elementary music education and interdisciplinary conceptions of the subject are thus – not surprisingly – well-established pillars of the English-speaking discourse and can be considered as fundamental tenets when it comes to specifying aspects for elementary school settings. There are also helpful concepts beyond the English-speaking discourse concerning elementary school-aged children’s perspectives which might implicitly encompass dimensions relatable to musical-aesthetic practices.

4. Further explicit and implicit references to the aesthetic paradigm

In this chapter, we turn our attention to further publications fruitful for our purpose, not explicitly referring to the aesthetic paradigm but only implicitly addressing or even consciously departing from it. Thus, these approaches offer insights into potential links to the aforementioned features of musical-aesthetic practices without necessarily claiming to explicitly represent a specific mode but rather promoting the potentiality for it by paving the way for an intensive musical experience.

4.1 Dimensions for promoting intense experiences in the elementary music classroom

In the following, we will revisit an open framework (Schmid, 2016) mirroring aspects to be considered when dealing with elementary-school-aged children in music educational settings. The model shows to be capable of conceptualizing most of the features potentially significant for musical-aesthetic practice in elementary school as elaborated above since it refers to dimensions fostering the involvement of children in a fulfilling music experience. Schmid has referred to the aesthetic paradigm, yet has deliberately chosen an inclusive definition of music experience, omitting “aesthetic” as an attribute to classify

children's holistic, fluid experience (Schmid, 2014, pp. 21–41). However, the dimensions of musical experience in that framework are tenets to be drawn on in elementary school contexts. These rely on children's musical experience as an assemblage of highly multimodal sensations. Against this backdrop, four dimensions for promoting intensive experiences in an elementary music class have been elaborated:

- *embodiment*, i. e. aspects of implicit and explicit motor qualities including incorporating enacted bodily movements as well as somatic awareness.
- *narrativity*, i. e. aspects of narrative qualities from imaginative "quasi-plots" or story-telling to narratives of self-expression and identity formation
- *sociality*, i. e. aspects of social contact and/ or belonging encompassing social scripts of musical interaction like role-taking as well as interpersonal resonance phenomena.
- *materiality*, i. e. aspects of haptic, visual and sounding appeal shaping aesthetic experiences and cognitions of musical practice (Schmid, 2016, p. 210–213; Schmid, 2019, p. 9).

The overlap with the aspects discussed above is obvious: the concept of *embodiment* can grasp the high attention to movement and bodily awareness that all of the authors above emphasized as central in elementary aesthetic practice. Storytelling and imaginal settings as introduced e. g. by Ribke (1995) and Kretz and Steffen-Wittek (1998) are summed up under the term *narrativity*. The dimension of *sociality* stresses the interactional setting and the group process that has particularly been addressed by Meyer (2020), including the call for tolerance as well as for verbal reflection (Meyer, 2004; Ribke, 2002). The significance of materiality has been emphasized by quite a few authors as Ribke (1995), Meyer (2020), and several authors in the book edited by Polzin et al. in 1998.

Evidently, many of the characteristics that appear in the literature cited above are encompassed when using Schmid's dimensions. However, the categories of *space*, *play*, *multimodality*, and *voice/agency* are not as clearly addressed. While all these

aspects are indeed included in Schmid's work, they are currently only implicitly contained in the dimensions listed here. Therefore, based on the sifted literature, we explicitly include them in our model. Fundamental *multimodality* is an overarching principle, also implied in the attention to movement and storytelling. Overall, the dimensions address multimodality in terms of multimodal sensations being a defining characteristic of children's musical experience. Schmid bases her approach on a deliberately broad definition of musical experience in the sense of "*Erleben*"⁸ (Schmid, 2014; 2016; 2019). Thus, the term musical experience here is defined in comprehensive terms, yet refers to Dewey's transformative quality of experience (Dewey, 2005).

4.2 Aesthetic paradigm from the perspective of special music education

In a recent publication, Löbber and Ziegenmeyer (2022) also use the term "*Erleben*" as a holistic concept of experience, explicitly demarcating from a supposedly exclusionary concept of aesthetic experience as "*Erfahrung*". They focus on aesthetic practice in inclusive music education, targeting the so far neglected group of individuals with multiple disabilities. The authors use a concert with wheelchairs on stage involving the audience as part of the performance as a case of equitable participation in musical-aesthetic practice, which is to be grasped in a specific, adequate way.

Referencing an experiential approach stemming from special needs education (Tischler, 2013), they favor the principle of holistic-integral experience and inseparability of mental, spiritual, physical processes (Löbber & Ziegenmeyer, 2022, p. 356). As a synthesis, they suggest the concept of *aesthetic attitude* ("*ästhetische Einstellung*") and conceptualize physical-bodily experience as the beginning of a continuum allowing for different levels of abstraction (Löbber & Ziegenmeyer, 2022, p. 357). They explicitly point an inclusive musical-aesthetic practice towards the concept of *coordinative spaces*⁹ (Hellberg, 2019), thus making the dimension of *space*¹⁰ even more feasible in the context of the musical-aesthetic paradigm. The dimension of *space* had been

⁸ See Schmid (2014) for an extensive reflection upon the terminology of "*Erfahrung*" and "*Erleben*" in the context of Dewey's "experience" (Schmid, 2014, pp. 21–41).

⁹ Hellberg created the concept of coordinative spaces as an analytic category with high relevance for coordinative musical and music-related actions within groups. The coordinative space creates a situation in which group members "perceive each other, refer to each other, can receive and respond to each other's impulses. Impulses and responsive actions primarily occur nonverbally through physical, bodily, or acoustic/musical signals." (Hellberg, 2019, p. 129, translation LO).

¹⁰ The spatial turn has been acknowledged in the German music education discourse (Eusterbrock, 2023) and is an important category in the educational discourse on inclusive schools (Nind, Köpfer & Lemmer, 2022). However, it has not yet been discussed with respect to the elementary music classroom.

mentioned in our overview mainly by Ribke (1995) and Kretz und Steffen-Wittek (1998) as relevant.

- Bodily experience (Löbber & Ziegenmeyer, 2022)
- Coordinative space (Hellberg, 2019)

The aforementioned dimensions of the open framework by Schmid (2016, 2019) and the holistic definition of aesthetic experience (Löbber & Ziegenmeyer, 2022), can become fruitful for the discussion about an equitable understanding of musical-aesthetic practice explicitly concerning elementary school. All these open and holistic concepts may be helpful for theoretically conceptualizing musical-aesthetic practice as an equitable one from the outset.

5. Tentative heuristic model of dimensions identified

The dimensions of equitable musical-aesthetic practice in elementary school carved out within the last chapters shall be brought in an overview in the following way: we broaden the four dimensions by Schmid (2014, 2016, 2019) in terminology in order to relate them to concepts mentioned by other authors. These relations will be listed in the heuristic model (see Fig. 1), condensing relevant aspects, which were identified when mapping the literature. This heuristic illustration diagrammatically displays a first suggestion of how to arrange aspects relevant

for the elementary classroom. For insights as to how the dimensions overlap and interact, we will illustrate them in a practice example (see chapter 6.).

In the center of the chart are Schmid's four dimensions (see chapter 4.2), complemented by closely related, explicit terms from other authors. Thus, the literature overview helps to map the discourse in that respect, making the according references transparent. For instance, *embodiment* (e. g. Schmid, 2014) – which also implies somatic qualities – is complemented by the more general term *movement* (e. g. Fritz, 2015; Matthies, 1987) referring to visible physical actions etc. (see Fig. 1).

Accordingly, we assume that (1) *embodiment*, fundamentally integrating movements and motion ideas are most essential. The chart also displays (2) *narrativity* hinting at and stimulating imagination and storytelling, (3) *sociality* stressing the relevance of role play, negotiation, and scaffolding group processes, and (4) *materiality* foregrounding the material nature of a sound generator and other things to interact with.

Moreover, the heuristic chart illustrates how other important characteristics for music elementary classroom activities aiming at equitable, fulfilled aesthetic practice, such as giving children a *voice* and fostering their (musical) *agency* extend across all four of these dimensions. This also applies to the preeminence of play: A playful mode can decisively be implemented in all four dimensions. The entire

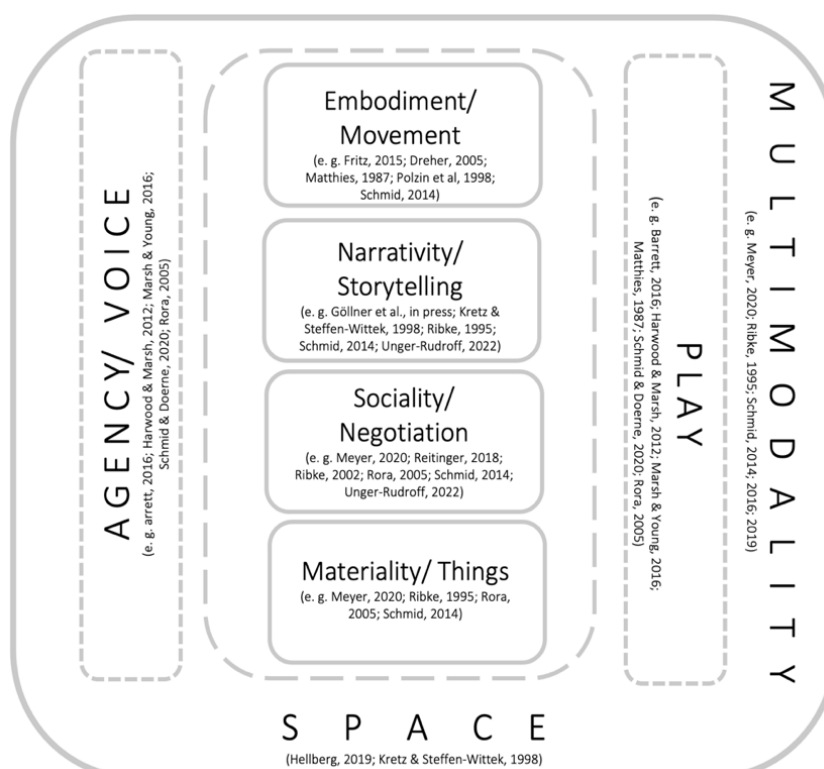


Figure 1: Dimensions for an integration of musical-aesthetic practice in the elementary music classroom.

setting is framed by the overarching significance of designing *space* and promoting *multimodality*. Thus, based on the literature overview above, we assume that the elaborated dimensions (see Fig. 1) are of fundamental significance for elementary school-aged children and may support equitable access to musical-aesthetic practice in elementary school. At a later stage, the heuristic framework might serve as tentative point of departure for empirical studies.

It is important to note that in total, all these dimensions may be just as relevant to secondary school and even adults' musical-aesthetic practice. Nonetheless, we argue that for elementary school-aged children, they are rather fundamental: elementary school-aged children need space to move and manifold ways to be stimulated and to articulate and express themselves, beyond auditive and verbal paths (Dietrich, Carnap & Staab, 2022). Lesson designs could be planned and reflected along these dimensions with the aim to foster musical-aesthetic practice with children.

In order to make these theoretically formulated categories more tangible, in the following, they will be illustrated using a practical example.

6. Practice example

The following practice example by Oravec (2012) was staged with first graders in an elementary school in Hamburg in 2012, therefore long before the (tentative) systematic elaboration of categories presented above. However, aiming to foster fulfilled musical aesthetic practice (and above more concrete musical competencies around the use of dynamics), most of the dimensions have been consciously addressed. Parts of the literature mentioned above gave grounds for the series of lessons into which an insight is to be given. Of categories named above, *narrativity* played the most prominent role in the lessons' design. As suggested by Ribke (1995), the lessons were purposefully staged as episodes of a fairy tale of which the students became a part. The content of the fairy tale was inspired by a specific storytelling setting with mythical creatures by Reitingger (2008). Nevertheless, it does not seem helpful to present this holistic teaching scenario broken down by category alone. First, we zoom in on a lesson to give a lively insight into elementary school settings for readers who may be less familiar with this age group. Later, we address the tentatively introduced categories a little more explicitly.

The inhabitants of Candy Village are in a frenzy: Fairy Jarno needs their help. The

village elders have just read Jarno's letter aloud, written in mythical language, to the assembled villagers. The letter was lying in a shiny blue envelope in the village square: Jarno has made it to the Knight Black's castle, past the sleeping giant who guards the palace and almost woke up when Jarno trudged across the pavement in front of the palace. He actually found all the candy and making tools that Knight Black stole from them the night after the last village feast. But now his magic bag can't be made small anymore. He can't make it home alone.

"We have to help Jarno," (see Fig. 2) says the hand puppet, representing Mayor Nejub, to the group. "We have to help Jarno, we have to help Jarno, we have to help Jarno!" sounds the chant into which the 21 children of class 1e spontaneously fall. They have just come to the village square as mythical creatures with their mythical creature families from their houses.



Figure 2: Hand puppet Major Nejub (own photo).

In one of the previous sessions, the students worked cooperatively in groups of three to invent their respective mythical creatures, negotiating their characteristics verbally, by drawing, by exploring possible types of movement together, and by agreeing on an instrument to sound these movements in addition to a family name and a candy specialty of the family's factory (see Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Cooperative drawings of a mythical creature and its family's house. Guiro as chosen instrument to sound its movements.

In the last lesson, they worked with shaker eggs to set Jarno's journey from the village square to the knight's castle to music: through a desert, across a wooden bridge, through an enchanted forest where he became temporarily invisible, across a stone floor, past the sleeping giant (see Fig. 4, right). Picture cards in the center of the circle marked the sections. In the plenum, it was decided in which dynamic the respective section should be set to music. There was great excitement about what would be hidden behind the heavy wooden door of the castle when the lesson was over. Thus, today's school lesson has been eagerly awaited.

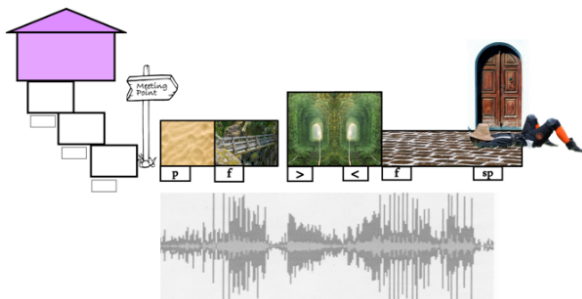


Figure 4: Pathway from Family Polis' house to the castle. Left: Individual plan. Right: Picture cards and dynamics cards. Below: Audio wave from a recording of the common walk of all creatures in the lesson presented.

The children now have to create the individual ways from their homes to the meeting point where the already known pathway starts and put them into music (see Fig. 4, left). Again, picture cards give inspiration, but also freedom for individual creations. Some choose balloons to sound soft when crossing, others argue them to be bursting aloud. One group comes up with a trail of feathers that must be crossed. The groups present their individual pathways and soundtracks within the story of all families coming to the meeting point. From there on, they walk the path together. A recording shows that the dynamics are quite differentiated (see audio wave in Fig. 4). Striking in the situation was the *subito piano* when having to pass the giant. Listening to and reflecting on the recording, one child said, he could very well imagine how the creatures walk the path together. When another child criticized that one group paused between the three different sounds, the children of that respective group explained that they liked the sound much better this way and that their creatures had to take breaks due to exhaustion.

Other indications that the children were involved in the story were the high level of attention ever since the problem of the story had been introduced, the disappointment when the lesson was over or chanting: "We have to help." Moreover, bodily and

facial expression were further indicators of involvement and musical-aesthetic practice. However, the lesson could not be videotaped and therefore not systematically analyzed. In any case, categorizing these gestural and facial symptoms would have been highly interesting. All in all, the sounds produced were unembellished, but astonishingly accurate in differentiating dynamics. In the flow of the fairy tale, having to solve a narrative and a musical problem, these sounds became meaningful.

Narrativity, Play, Embodiment: The fairytale narration spans the frame for the whole series of lessons. Within the narration, the children act in their roles as creatures, incorporating their characters and movements that they will bring to sound. They switch between being in and acting out the story and negotiating its further development and way of being performed.

Giving children a voice, Multimodality, Sociality, Negotiation: The narrative has been co-constructed by the children in the modes of making suggestions verbally, by showing, drawing, making sounds and movements, thereby shaping their social belonging in their respective self-designed creature families. Even though the framework – due to the children's young age and large group size – was highly pre-structured, there was still space for the children's impulses (e. g. designing the family houses, pathway sections, choice of instruments, dynamics, movements etc.), and even beyond the pre-structured settings (e. g. another hand puppet found in the play corner was introduced as Major Nejobs wife).

Space and Materiality: Props like carpet tiles marking the village square (the sitting circle) and self-painted pictures of the creatures' and their families' homes hanging on the walls structure the room, marking the locations for their respective group work, while the classroom becomes Candy Village (see Fig. 5). Handpuppets interact with the children within the story. Picture cards and dynamics cards

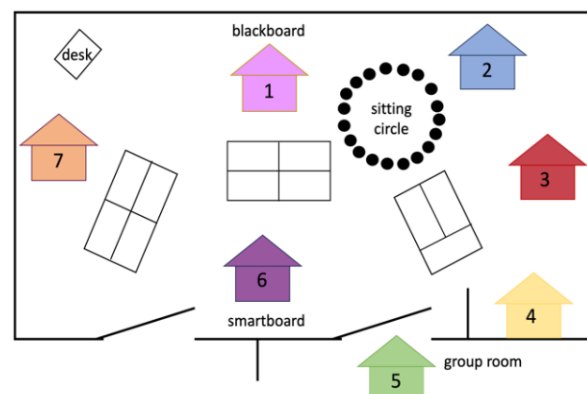


Figure 5: Plan of the classroom.

flexibly structure the parts of the narration to be set into music.

Figure 6 gives an overview of these aspects as implemented in the practice example (see Fig. 6).

7. Outlook

In the discourse of German-speaking music education, the aesthetic paradigm holds significant influence and is regarded as a central subject-specific objective (Kranefeld, 2021). However, we found a certain imbalance concerning a consideration of elementary school specifics within this discourse. Against this backdrop, our paper aimed to outline potential dimensions of aesthetic practice specific to elementary schools, drawing from literature on elementary school and childhood music education. These dimensions (embodiment/movement, narrativity/storytelling, sociality/negotiation, materiality/things, agency/voice, play, multimodality, space; see Fig. 1 and Fig. 6) were interconnected in a preliminary model and applied to an elementary school practical example.

How might this approach contribute to bridging the aforementioned gap between the prominent discourse on aesthetic practice and experience on the one hand and the consideration of elementary school-specific needs and opportunities of an equitable aesthetic practice on the other? Firstly, our text aims to increase the visibility of elementary school children within the relevant academic discourse on aesthetic practice. By doing so, we seek to

encourage a deeper consideration of their specific needs in further theoretical and empirical elaborations of the discourse.

In terms of the conceptual orientation of music education in elementary school, we perceive the dichotomy of either a curriculum solely focused on aesthetic practice or one emphasizing targeted competence acquisition, as outlined by the approach of a step-by-step learning in music (*„Aufbauender Musikunterricht“*) for elementary school according to Fuchs (2013), as outdated (cf. Brunner et al., 2021). However, we posit that purposefully staging lessons in favor of fulfilled aesthetic practice is central to the mission of elementary school music education. We hope that our developed model sketch presented here can serve as a helpful tool in this regard. Of course, this is not confined to elementary school music classes alone.

Given that these dimensions are not strictly discipline-specific, they apply to other subjects that focus on aesthetic practice as well. In the current educational policy landscape, where ministries of education, prompted by the declining performance of German students in OECD comparison studies, are contemplating amalgamating music with other aesthetic subjects (PM, 2024), this aspect of our model may pose potential risks for music learning in elementary school. The concern articulated by Fuchs (2013, pp. 11-12) particularly regarding elementary school music education, which is often taught by non-specialist teachers highlights the potential risk of prioritizing other arts or core subjects over

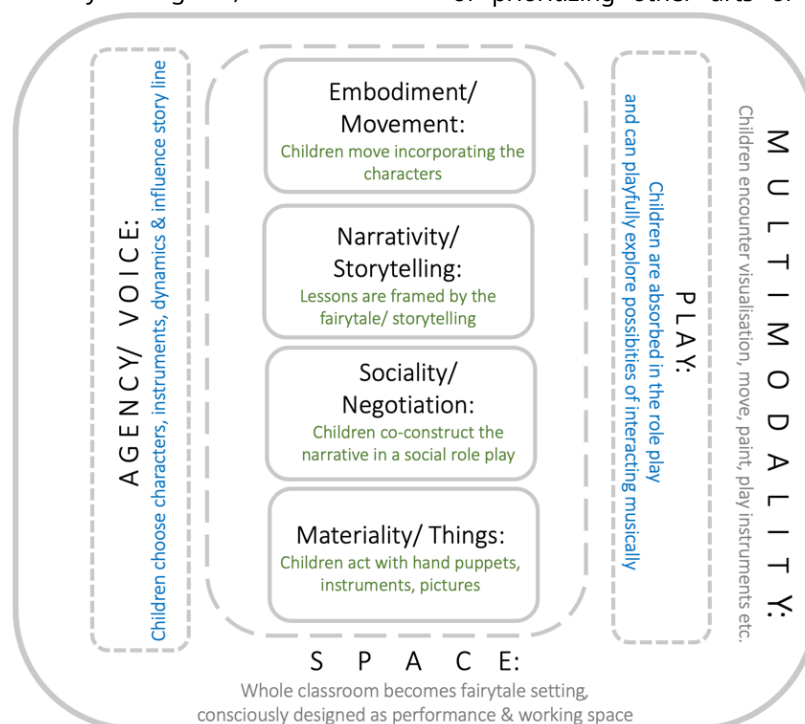


Figure 6: Dimensions for an integration of musical-aesthetic practice implemented in the practice example.

musical learning and musical aesthetic practice. This concern warrants serious consideration (cf. Fuchs, 2008).

Secondly, while the dimensions were identified as particularly relevant for elementary schools based on the reviewed literature, they may also have applicability to secondary schools. Therefore, they could be worth considering for secondary education contexts as well. Our literature review did not claim to be exhaustive, neither for the elementary school nor for other age groups. For example, the concept of scenic interpretation (Oberhaus & Stroh, 2013) was not considered here, which undoubtedly incorporates many of the central dimensions discussed (Schmid, 2016).

The applicability of the dimensions identified to our practical example (Chapter 6) suggests that it can also provide a meaningful basis for empirical classroom research. While initial empirical research exists regarding progressive music education (AMU) in elementary schools (Weyrauch, in press), there is a lack of empirical studies on the musical-aesthetic practice of elementary school children. It would be important to determine the extent to which the preliminary categories are suitable for analyzing classroom activities, and how the dimensions and their relationships might need modification based on empirical evidence. However, at this stage, this model can only describe music teaching and learning practices and cannot yet evaluate whether and how (individually) fulfilled aesthetic practice can be identified. To approach this question, one would need to incorporate the interpretation of facial expressions, body language, and verbal data. Future empirical research projects could in this respect build on methodological and empirical insights not only from the field of music education (e. g. Weber-Krüger, 2014), but also from general educational science, such as Theurer's (2014) study on creativity-promoting classroom climates in elementary schools or the study by Dederich et al. (2020) on possibilities and conditions of cultural-aesthetic education in inclusive pedagogical settings – examining modes of bodily articulation, gestures, facial expressions, and shifts of position in space (ibid., 2020, p. 47). Incorporating inventories of generic classroom quality criteria would also be promising "in the concretization, theoretical elaboration, and operationalization of a dimension of aesthetic activation" (Kranefeld, 2021, translation LO) as a central quality criterion in music education in elementary schools.

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Autorinnen

Lina Oravec

Universität Koblenz
 Universitätsstraße 1
 56070 Koblenz
 lina.oravec@uni-koblenz.de

Silke Schmid

Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg
 Kunzenweg 21
 79117 Freiburg
 silke.schmid@ph-freiburg.de

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