

Effects of coaching on generalist primary music teachers' classroom practice and their 'musical self-concept'.

Steven Schiemann¹

¹ Institute for Music, University of Education, Freiburg, Germany
steven.schiemann@ph-freiburg.de

Abstract

The majority of music lessons in primary schools are covered by generalist primary music teachers, usually with little or no training in teaching it. This practice-based research project is part a PhD program to professionalize generalist music teachers in primary schools to teach music lessons. The aim of this study was to describe changes in the generalist primary music teachers' didactic classroom practices in teaching music. Moreover, this study aimed to analyze the generalist primary music teachers' development of their 'musical self-concept' (Spychiger, 2010). This longitudinal intervention study is qualitative in character. Participants were 8 generalist primary music teachers and 4 specialist primary music teachers (control group). The 8 generalist primary music teachers were divided into two groups. The first group (n=4) received four coaching sessions (group 1), the second group (n=4) received four coaching sessions and 56 hours of further education in music didactics (group 2). The control group received no special treatment. The individual coaching sessions for all generalist primary music teachers (group 1 and 2) followed the 'Content Focused Coaching' (CFC) concept. Empirical data were collected before the beginning and at the end of the study by video-observations of classroom performances in primary music lessons (n=24), and questionnaires concerning the teachers' 'musical self-concepts' (n=24). The first findings seem to suggest on the one hand that generalist music teachers require fairly little support to enhance their didactic performance of teaching music in primary music lessons. But on the other hand it appears that coaching without a parallel measure of further education seems to be to no avail for the group of less musically trained generalist music teachers.

Keywords: video-based research, generalist, primary school music lesson, musical self-concept, coaching

Introduction

This practice-based research project is part of a PhD program to professionalize generalist music teachers in primary schools to teach music lessons. It was commissioned by the music staff of the University of Education Freiburg, Germany. The aim of this study was to describe changes in the generalist primary music teachers' didactic classroom performances in teaching music. Moreover, this study aimed to analyze the generalist primary music teachers' development of their 'musical self-concept' (Spychiger, 2010).

Generalist teachers of music in primary schools

In Germany specialist primary music teachers cover only up to 20% of all primary school music lessons (Hammel, 2011). The majority of music lessons in primary schools are covered by generalist primary music teachers, usually with little or no training in

teaching primary music lessons. In fact, the knowledge base regarding the generalist primary music teachers' didactic performances and their current practices of music teaching is very limited. It is suspected that in generalist music lessons only singing is practiced with the students every once in a while (Schellberg, 2005, p. 81). The conclusion drawn to this situation is that students' development of musical competencies is nothing that can be expected under these circumstances (Schellberg, 2005, p. 81). Only very few things are known about professional development of generalist music teachers. The overall situation in German music education research is that it is not known for certain, what is taught, how it is taught and what effects arise from it (Lehmann-Wermser & Krause-Benz, 2013, p.7).

Although teacher training measures seem to have effects on generalist teachers' practices in teaching music the extent of such influence has not received much study. A quantitative

study among generalist primary university students was able to show that (self-reported) self-confidence and musicality in teaching music were raised and inhibitions to teach music were lowered after participating in a preparatory music course for generalists at university (Schellberg, 2016). Generalist music teachers' confidence in teaching music has an influence on the perception and appraisal of their music teaching practices. This common pattern among generalist music teachers was found in a quantitative study by Hammel (2011). The generalist music teachers played down their own music teaching practices and did not give it the recognition it deserved, because they compared their individual musical skills to that of specialist music teachers and professional musicians (Hammel, 2011) and thus remained in a rather under-confident state of mind with their role as music teachers. The reported situation of German generalist primary music teachers is comparable to international research reviews to the greatest possible extent. Although the advantage of generalist music teaching is emphasized on the one hand, namely that it "could help improve the image of music among teachers as well as children" (Mills, 1989, p. 126). International reviews of music teaching in primary schools on the other hand conclude with appeals like "music-specific professional development is urgently required for generalist classroom teachers currently in schools." (Pascoe et al., 2005, p.6). An English study on primary music teaching results that "the amount of time dedicated to music in most Initial Teacher Training courses is inadequate to create a workforce [among the generalist music teachers] that is confident in its own ability to teach the subject in the classroom." (Henley, 2011, p. 35). The main problems generalist primary music teachers face are less musical training and low confidence in teaching music. Therefore professional development of generalist primary music teachers should provide musical training and promote confidence in teaching music. International research points out coaching of generalist primary music teachers as an important factor for professional development to promote confidence in teaching music (Pascoe et al., 2005, p.6; Hassel, 1999, p.33, 98). It seems reasonable to assume that teachers' musical self-concepts and their own musical training affect the

quality of didactic performance and instruction in primary music lessons.

De Vries states in a qualitative Australian study that generalist music teachers achieved high self-efficacy through "mastery teaching experiences [...], verbal persuasion from parents, teachers and school principals, and to a lesser degree vicarious experiences that focused on involvement in professional development experiences" (de Vries, 2013, p. 375). Consequently a professional development has to focus on the real needs of generalist teachers in their teaching practice situations in the primary music classroom to build up confidence in teaching music. Professional development that included coaching could fill the gap between general further education measures and the generalist teachers' need to apply the new knowledge to their individual situations in their music lessons.

Musical self-concept of generalist primary music teachers

The instrument to measure the generalist primary music teachers' musical self-concept is named the 'Musical Self-Concept Inquiry' (MUSCI) (Spychiger et al., 2009). It comprises eight sub-scales to research and evaluate musical identities and experiences with music. The 8 sub-scales altogether consist of 43 items: *Mood Management* (MUSCI 1), *Community* (MUSCI 2), *Technique and Information* (MUSCI 3), *Musical Ability* (MUSCI 4), *Movement and Dance* (MUSCI 5), *Spirituality* (MUSCI 6), *Ideal Music Self* (MUSCI 7), and *Adaptive Music Self* (MUSCI 8) (Spychiger, 2010). The MUSCI questionnaire uses a Likert scale with steps 1 to 4. The sub-scales operationalize the questions 'who-I-am' and 'what-I-can-do' relating to the social, cognitive, physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of music. In addition to these 5 non-academic sub-domains there is one academic sub-domain with regards to music skills.

Video analysis of generalist primary music teachers' classroom practices

To identify these teachers' current practices in teaching musical activities to students a video-based study has been piloted. The focus was in observing generalist teachers' teaching practices regarding the active involvement of

students with rhythm, melody and playing instruments. Other musical activities such as listening, dance and movement, production and composing have been excluded from this study. How do generalist music teachers practice music in their classrooms? To answer this question 4 practice conditions derived from the music theory of the *'verständige Musikpraxis'* (Kaiser, 2001) were applied to the video-analysis. *'Verständige Musikpraxis'* means *informed music teaching* and aims at making students aware and knowing of what they are practicing. The 4 practice conditions are: (1) requesting students to participate and counting them in (*counting in*); (2) modeling and imitation of the teacher while *practicing music*; (3) disturbances, and all kinds of interruptions that pause the flow of practicing (*interruption*) and (4) sharing feedback, praise and comments on the students musical performance (*feedback and guidance*).

Moreover sharing responsibilities and increasing learner autonomy is envisaged in the *informed music teaching* theory. To gain insights in the level and amount of provided teacher support to the students another 3 categories were added to the video-analysis: verbal, nonverbal and musical support. To represent to which extend the piloted video-data correctly measured the categories an interrater-reliability test (Wirtz & Caspar, 2002) was carried out with 3 raters on 3 videos. The interrater-reliabilities for the *informed music teaching* practice and the didactic teacher support were good to very good. Cohen's kappa ranged between $\kappa = .876$ and $\kappa = .982$ (see *Table 1*).

Coaching concept for generalist primary music teachers

The individual coaching sessions for all generalist primary music teachers (group 1 and 2) were structured according to the guidelines of the *Content Focused Coaching* (CFC) concept by West & Staub (2003). An adaptation for generalist music coaching was created that used forms of pre-, while- and post-lesson coaching inputs. Pre-lesson coaching inputs were observing the teacher before the coaching begins and collaboratively planning the music lesson (West & Staub, 2003). While-lesson coaching inputs could occur in 3 basic formats: the coach teaches the lesson (or parts of it), coteaching or the

generalist teacher of music teaches the lesson (West & Staub, 2003). The post-lesson coaching could consist of a postconference following a script for structured coaching interviews and in some cases of stimulated recall methods to incorporate video-sequences from the generalists' own music lesson (Meade & McMeniman, 1992; Blomberg et al., 2011). Each generalist primary music teacher was coached four times during that schoolyear. A coaching session lasted 63 minutes on average. The 8 generalist primary music teachers of group 1 and 2 were coached by 3 trained coaches. The 3 coaches were experienced specialist primary music teachers who also were involved in teacher training courses.

Methods

This longitudinal intervention study is qualitative in character. Research took place in the schoolyear 2014-2015 in 10 primary schools in South Germany. Participants were 8 generalist primary music teachers and 4 specialist primary music teachers. The 4 specialist primary music teachers served as a control group and received no special treatment. The 8 generalist primary music teachers were divided into two groups. The first group of generalist primary music teachers ($n=4$) received four coaching sessions (group 1), the second group of generalist primary music teachers ($n=4$) received four coaching sessions as well and 56 hours of further education in a period of 14 weeks (group 2). The further education measures focused on music didactics in classroom performances (Shulman's PCK) (Shulman, 1986), group singing lessons and song accompaniment on guitar.

Empirical data were generated before the beginning (pre) and at the end of the study (post) for coaching sessions, music lessons and the musical self-concept. Coaching sessions ($n=16$) with 8 primary generalist music were videotaped and analyzed according to the *qualitative content analysis* method (Mayring, 2014a, 2014b). Video-observations of music lessons ($n=24$) were analyzed with regards to the *informed music teaching* practices that primary music teachers performed in their music lesson with their students. The methodological approaches to the video-analyses combined *event-sampling* and *video-*

based micro-ethnography (Reh, 2012; Rauin et al., in press). Data focusing the primary teachers' musical self-concepts (n=24) were collected from 4 specialist primary music teachers and 8 generalist primary music teachers by using MUSCI questionnaires. The data of this small sample (n=12) was summarized with basic descriptive statistics (Bühner & Ziegler, 2009). Additionally 3 music coaches who visited the generalist primary music teachers in their schools and 3 video-raters participated in the study, but no empirical data was generated in these groups.

To be able to measure possible coaching effects and changes on the generalist music teachers classroom performance it was necessary to test whether the video-instrument will be able to detect differences in teaching practices between the specialist music teachers (control group) and generalist music teachers (group 1 and group 2). An excerpt of the analysis of the video-based pilot study is presented in which 3 primary music school lessons given by 3 different teachers (group 1, group 2 and control group) are examined for correspondence between practicing music with students, counting them in, interrupting them and giving them feedback and guidance (see *Table 2*). In addition, the video-analysis examined how primary music teachers supported their students' musical learning during periods of musical practice. The video-analysis investigated which kind of supportive teacher actions -verbal, nonverbal and musical- occurred during a primary music school lesson to assist students' practical music learning (see *Table 3*). The video analysis measured the duration of each event in every category in percentage of a 45 minute primary music lesson¹.

Results

The findings of the video-analysis of the pilot study show that the specialist primary music teacher performs differently than the 2 generalist teachers of music. The specialist primary music teacher practiced 44,3 % of the

time in a music lesson and gave *feedback and guidance* to the students for 13% of the time in a music lesson (see *Table 2*). The 2 generalist teachers of music practiced music for much shorter times than the specialist music teacher (group 1 for 21,9 % and group 2 for 35,7 % of the time). The 2 generalist teachers only spent little amounts of time to give their students *feedback and guidance*. The same difference is shown in the phase of *counting the students in* and preparing them to practice. The generalist music teachers spent almost no time (group 1 with 0,1 % of the time in the music lesson) to very little time (group 2 with 2,7 % of the time in the music lesson) on *counting them in*, compared to the control group with 5,7% of the time. The times measured off-task and not practicing music, because of *interruptions* (e.g. disciplining or organization of instruments) is high for one generalist music teacher (group 2 with 20,9 % of the time in a music lesson) and low with the generalist teacher of group 1 (8,7 % of the time), compared with the specialist music teacher, who interrupted music practice for 10,7 % of the time. In total the phases: *counting in, practicing music and feedback and guidance*, which can be regarded as useful to establish an *informed music practice*, are the highest for the specialist teacher (63 % of the time in a music lesson), compared with 23,8 % (group 1) and 43,4 % (group 2) of the time in a music lesson (see *Table 2*). The phase *interrupting* has been excluded from the total, because it does not attribute to a good teacher performance in the way it is seen by the *informed music practice* (Kaiser, 2001). Patterns and durations of supportive teacher actions differ between the 3 groups. The specialist music teacher supports the students' music practice best with 75,6 % of the time in a music lesson, while the generalist music teachers support their students for 40,9 % (group 1) and 41,3 % (group 2) of the time. Interestingly enough the generalist teachers did not show any (group 1 with 0 %) or only little (group 2) verbal and nonverbal support for their students' music practice (see *Table 3*).

Discussion

On the one hand it seems that generalist music teachers require fairly little support to enhance their didactic performance of teaching music in primary music lessons (see *Table 2*), because the duration of the phases *counting in*

¹ Only a part of the data can be presented at this point. The analyses of coaching sessions and the 'musical self-concept' scales have been excluded.

and *feedback and guidance* could be (easily) increased by drawing the generalist teachers' attention to it, for example by coaching. But on the other hand generalist music teachers seem to require significant support to enhance their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1986) and their diagnostic awareness of dealing with students' musical learning problems (KCS) (see *Table 3*). It appears that coaching without a parallel measure of further education seems to be to no avail for the group of less-musically trained generalist music teachers. Although, coaching could assist the generalist teachers' professional development, it seems unlikely that without further education and workshops on topics like leading, instructing, supporting and understanding students' musical learning processes, the generalist teachers will be able to learn and apply these competences to their teaching practice in their own music classrooms.

Conclusions

From this pilot study no final conclusions can be drawn, because the results are only based on a very limited number of video-based data from primary music lessons in German schools. The music teaching practices were examined focusing the performance of singing and playing instruments. For future professional development research on general primary music teacher it would be advisable to assess various areas of their teaching practices to obtain a full description of their abilities. Further research efforts could focus on forms, styles, tempo etc. of teaching practices and include other musical activities such as listening, creating, moving and rhythmic activities. For future generalist music teacher education and professional development it would *still* be recommended to raise their confidence in teaching music (Mills, 1989) and to sharpen their awareness of their guiding role as a music teacher. Teacher training facilities should support generalist primary music teachers' professionalization in these fields. Furthermore general primary music teacher development could be enhanced by offering a variety of measures during every phase of the teacher education that may include coaching and stimulated video recall.

Acknowledgements

The author wants to express his gratitude to the teachers and students who participated in the study. He also wishes to thank his co-video-raters Mareike Weiser, Daniel Fiedler and Katharina Leonhardt for their work in the project. The research project is part of the professional development program for teachers *profiL* and funded by ministry of science, research and the arts Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

Tables

Table 1. Pilot study: Interrater reliabilities for 3 music videos of 3 primary music teachers by 3 video-raters.

didactic performance and didactic teacher support	Cohen's kappa	% agreement
counting them in	.957	98,6
practicing music	.982	99,1
interrupting	.940	97,7
feedback and guidance	.954	98,3
verbal teacher support	.886	98,6
nonverbal teacher support	.876	98,3
musical teacher support	.937	99,1

Table 2. Pilot study: Comparing 3 primary music teachers' phases of their didactic classroom performances focusing music practice in % of the music lesson.

didactic teacher practice	control group (n=1)	group 1 (n=1)	group 2 (n=1)
1. counting in	5,7	0,1	2,7
2. practicing music	44,3	21,9	35,7
3. interrupting	10,7	8,7	20,9
4. feedback and guidance	13,0	1,8	6,4

Total (1.,2.,4.)	63,0	23,8	43,4
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Table 3. Pilot study: Comparing 3 primary music teachers' patterns of supportive behavior while practicing music in % of the music lesson.

didactic teacher support	control group (n=1)	group 1 (n=1)	group 2 (n=1)
verbal	8,2	0	2,9
nonverbal	17,3	0	3,2
musical (e.g. singing, playing an instrument)	50,1	40,9	35,2
Total	75,6	40,9	41,3

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