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Hidden Recognition Mechanisms

Challenge and Coping in Music Education in Bavarian Secondary Schools

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English Summary

Due to its importance for personality development and school life, music education in general is viewed positively in the school context and forms part of the standard curriculum in Bavarian schools. But music teachers also face numerous challenges, leading to both a loss of teaching quality and to the imposition of a psychological and physical burden. These challenges sometimes arise from structural and organizational factors, such as the large size of music classes or a lack of material resources. To a large extent, however, they can be attributed to specific characteristics acting as central conditional variables in music teaching practice: physicality, emotionality, self-expression, everyday relevance or the use of subject-specific working methods. In addition, music lessons require more from students than the fulfilment of ›student job‹ requirements. Successful music practice requires a higher degree of motivation to active participation than other school subjects due to the aforementioned characteristics. All these factors suggest that the practice of ›good music teaching‹ places special demands on the teachers concerned. Within this context, the research project is dedicated to music teaching in Bavarian secondary schools, a topic which has hitherto not yet attracted much research, with the aim of developing new perspectives for teaching practice. The study focuses on the following two questions: (1) What are the challenges faced by secondary school teachers in music education and (2) is there a link between the coping strategies they employ and the emergence of specific challenges?

Based on ten interviews with music teachers, a challenge profile for the subject of music is created and the teachers' coping strategies described in this regard are analysed in more detail. In order to relate the evaluated coping strategies to the challenge categories in a theoretically sound and scientifically reproducible manner, the concept of recognition is used. For this purpose, classroom coping strategies are described as addressing events, during which the re-addressing of a teaching challenge situation results in the addressing of the pupils – who in their turn re-address. A neutral, analytical concept of recognition is used to interpret this event. Recognition is therefore seen as a communicative event in which a person is recognized by another person as a person in the context of a concrete situation. Against this background, any communicative act can be examined in more detail with regard to the recognition mechanisms thereby involved. The accompanying literature research resulted in the creation of a subject-specific recognition model in addition to an analysis outline tailored to the available data. This analysis outline acted as a heuristic tool in the further recognition-related interpretation.

Finally, two specific theories result from the data analysis: (1) Music-specific challenges arise in part from the coping strategies used in the classroom. In particular, unreflected measures designed to address discipline problems, heterogeneity, skills deficits and teaching organisation reinforce or evoke areas of challenge, often without teachers being aware of this effect. (2) A solution to this practical paradox lies in the act of reflection on related mechanisms and effects by the teachers themselves, not in the provision of a normative repertoire of action.

It was possible to work out and confirm the relevance of so-called 'hidden recognition mechanisms' in the course of the research. This can be understood to mean the unintentional effects of student-related recognition, which on closer inspection were found to run counter to the actual intention of the teachers. It transpired that challenging categories such as the often criticized low status of music as a subject, certain problems related to music practice such as discipline difficulties, or the high level of effort required in music-related teaching practice, are partly exacerbated or indeed caused by these hidden mechanisms. Particularly significant factors in this context are the teachers' own expectations of their music lessons (which are primarily intended to be fun and introduce variety into school life), differentiation measures in music practice that are not consistently implemented, and the motivation behind didactic decisions. The latter often supposedly focus closely on the students, but in fact rather reflect the teachers' own views or needs. In the last part of the thesis, recognition as a reflection category of music didactics is put forward as a possible practical perspective, resulting in a corresponding catalogue of questions relating to the teachers' understanding of their own role.