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Table of Contents

Stephanie Buyken-Hölker & Carmen Heß

Profilklasse Reloaded

Rethinking Spaces, Musical Scope and Curricular Connectivity within Cooperations between Secondary Schools and Music Schools

Introduction

This practice paper provides insight into the current processes of joint development work at the interface of general schools, music schools, and the University of Music and Dance Cologne (HfMT Köln). We will focus on cooperation between general education and music schools in *Profilklassen*[1] and outline how they could be conceptually merged with ideas and formats created in the development project *Eine (Musik)Schule für alle* (a (music) school for everyone; EMSA). Our intention is to rethink the established goals, spaces, and routines of music teaching and learning in *Profilklassen*.

In order to place our ideas more clearly, it seems important from an international perspective to keep in mind how the musical education system in Germany is structured and subdivided. In Germany, music-related educational paths can be taken through two different, formal, institutional gateways: music education in general schools reaches all pupils who attend school. Under the claim of general education, it is – with various deviations between federal states and school types – directed towards a wide-ranging engagement with diverse musical practices (Buchborn, 2011, p. 14). It is supposed to integrate and link music reception, music making and reflexive processes (MSB NRW, 2019, p. 13); on the other hand, music schools traditionally offer their courses in the afternoons as a leisure activity, usually for a fee, for those interested. At various age-appropriate levels, the focus

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[1]   In the following, we will use the German term *Profilklasse* since English translations like *band classes* or *performance groups* refer to either a brass/marching band or a rock band and *ensemble* is misleading as it does not cover the specific setting of a *Profilklasse* (see section "Profilklassen – Areas of Tension in Practice and Discourse").

is on acquiring and developing music-making skills (Dartsch & Geuen, forthcoming) in individual instrumental and vocal lessons and in groups.

In recent decades, (1) there has been a trend toward all-day schooling, reducing the free time to be spent in music schools (VdM, 2011). (2) Many music schools have found themselves in a difficult financial situation; and (3), a more practical orientation of school music education has often been called for (Heß, 2017, pp. 46–49). (4) The discourse on equal participation has raised the question of how all pupils can have access to in-depth music education (Krupp-Schleußner & Lehmann-Wermser, 2018). For these and other related reasons, cooperation projects between general education schools and music schools have increased considerably, especially in the form of *Profilklassen*.

It is precisely in this setting that the *Profilklasse Reloaded* project comes into play. Our paper begins with a very brief look at the current situation and discourse on the subject of *Profilklassen*. We then give an insight into the EMSA project and the premises resulting from it for our further work. Finally, we outline initial conceptual elements combining EMSA and *Profilklasse*, some of which were developed in a think-tank format together with our students (see section "New Formats and Modules").

Profilklassen – Areas of Tension in Practice and Discourse

Over the past decades, instrumental and vocal *Profilklassen* have become a more and more common setting within, in addition to, or even as a temporary replacement for regular music education in German primary and – more often – secondary schools. In *Profilklassen*, pupils learn an instrument or acquire vocal expertise together in a group of about twenty to thirty individuals from the very beginning. The group usually consists of one school class or interested pupils from the whole grade. Typically, the basic course spans two years in grades 5 and 6[2], and lessons are covered by a general school music teacher cooperating with one or several vocal or instrumental teachers for section-specific rehearsals.[3]

According to the *Verband deutscher Musikschulen* (VdM; Association of German Music Schools), about 33,000 pupils participated in *Profilklassen* in 2010 (VdM, 2011, p. 176). Since then, this number has continually climbed to nearly 126,000 in 2020 (Deutsches Musikinformationszentrum, 2021, p. 1).[4] However, this increase has not been uncontroversial, especially in the scholarly community; Godau diagnoses "the ambivalence of an attractiveness for practitioners and a skepticism on the part of scholars" (Godau, 2017, p. 7;

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[2] In grades 5 and 6, most pupils are aged between 10 and 12.
[3] For a more differentiated overview of organizational forms of *Profilklassen* teaching, see Bradler, 2016, p. 98–99; Heß, 2017, pp. 83–90; Heß, 2018, pp. 306–307.
[4] In the calculation, the following configurations were considered in descending order of frequency: *Profilklassen* with winds, strings, choir, keyboard, plucked, percussion, and band instruments.

translated by the authors). Partly, this ambivalence may be due to the fact that *Profilklassen* are located at the interface of instrumental/vocal pedagogy and music as a general educational subject[5] – both of which hold their own, to some extent, divergent emphases and orientations (see Introduction). Against this backdrop, *Profilklassen* seem to navigate in numerous conceptually loaded areas of tension concerning structure, content and learning objectives, such as

- the pronounced focus on the acquisition of instrumental or vocal expertise in *Profilklassen* vs. the demand for a wide diversity of music-related activities and competencies (Jank, 2005, p. 114; Geuen, 2008)
- their tendency to feature a stylistically limited repertoire vs. the claim of a wider range of musical genres, styles, and practices (Buchborn, 2011, p. 88–89; Godau, 2017)
- their prevalent design as a coherent, systematically progressing two-year basic course vs. the consideration of nonsynchronous individual learning progression and heterogeneity as a resource (Fromm 2011, p. 54; Heß, 2017, pp. 203–210)

These aspects have been discussed for some time, though not comprehensively and not in a way that has led to a consensus solution. This has now produced a situation in which answers have to be found on site, by the people shaping individual *Profilklassen* projects: "How *Profilklassen* teaching is realized and whether it succeeds probably depends to a large extent on the […] people acting" (Göllner, 2017, p. 70; translated by the authors). They often seem to be confronted with "a thicket of teaching practices and materials that lack a consistent theoretical framework" (Bradler, 2016, p. 97; translated by the authors) and thus, in conceptual terms, arrive at "individual elaborations based on different theories" (ibid., p. 111). This is where *Eine (Musik)Schule für alle* (EMSA; Buyken-Hölker, Schmidt-Laukamp & Stöger, 2018) comes in, as a cooperation and development project initiated by the University of Music and Dance Cologne and the Association of Music Schools in North Rhine-Westphalia (LVdM NRW) in 2015. EMSA does not solely consider individual solutions as something that arises out of necessity in the absence of a given consensus, but as something desirable. It creates structures and a platform for exchange and joint development work, as outlined below.

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[5]   Additionally, a "widely unresolved conflict about the content dimensions of music education in school" (Geuen & Stöger, 2017, p. 60; translated by the authors) apparently persists as the question "What constitutes good music education?" (Bradler, 2016, p. 106; translated by the authors) is still in the air and there is little agreement about corresponding "overarching characteristics" (Geuen, 2008, p. 1; translated by the authors) and "criteria for good music education" (Wallbaum, 2005, p. 80; translated by the authors).

Eine (Musik)Schule für alle (EMSA) – A (Music) School for Everyone

EMSA[6] aspires to connect secondary schools and music schools, encouraging a process driven by teachers of both institutions to enable music learning within school life – specifically on-site and in accordance with prevailing standards of music education, curricular guidelines[7], and pupils' demands. EMSA starts out by assuming that cooperations can succeed if they focus on the needs and aspirations of all involved actors and understand cooperation in the sense of "coconstruction" (Gräsel, Fußangel & Pröbstel, 2006, p. 210). According to Gräsel et al., this most advanced form of cooperation takes place "when the partners maintain intense, continual communication with each other about their joint task, and when they co-construct their individual knowledge in such a way that they either acquire new knowledge or find ways to solve tasks and problems together" (ibid., p. 211; translated by the authors). Musical activities in EMSA cooperations are consequently understood as a product of "human affairs […] [consisting] of the web of human relationships which exists wherever men live together" (Arendt, 1958, pp. 183–184). EMSA cooperations are thus not only oriented toward the site-specific requirements while taking current curricular frameworks[8] and pedagogical innovations into account; they are also embedded within sustainable structures of communication and organization.

Since its inception at three pilot schools, EMSA has followed a systemic-constructivist approach (Buyken-Hölker et al., 2018). Therefore, the EMSA model is implemented in each school according to specific local resources in order to create unique, individually tailored models of cooperation. As suggested by the imperative "for everyone" in its title, EMSA aims to be well aware of the great variety of pupils at each school or music school, thus positioning itself in the widespread ongoing discourse on equal participation in music education (e. g. Krupp-Schleußner & Lehmann-Wermser, 2018). Oriented toward the concept of the *capability approach*[9], EMSA regards education as an empowerment process that enables pupils to take part in music culture (in a broad sense) by applying their own self-determined perspectives and decisions (Krupp-Schleußner, 2018, pp. 99–101).

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[6]   EMSA is managed by Stephanie Buyken-Hölker and Ursula Schmidt-Laukamp and scientifically accompanied by Natalia Ardila-Mantilla and Christine Stöger.

[7]   With regard to music as a subject at school EMSA is guided by the curriculum for music in Sekundarstufe 1 (Grades 5–10) in NRW, concerning instrumental or vocal pedagogy by the curricula of the Association of German Music Schools (VdM).

[8]   From the start, EMSA has worked closely with the Ministry of Schools and Education and the Ministry of Culture and Science of NRW.

[9]   The capability approach is a philosophy of justice developed by Nusbaum (2011) and Sen (2012). While earlier approaches considered resources and rights as the sole characteristics of participatory justice, it focuses on the capabilities that people must have in order to live their lives successfully.
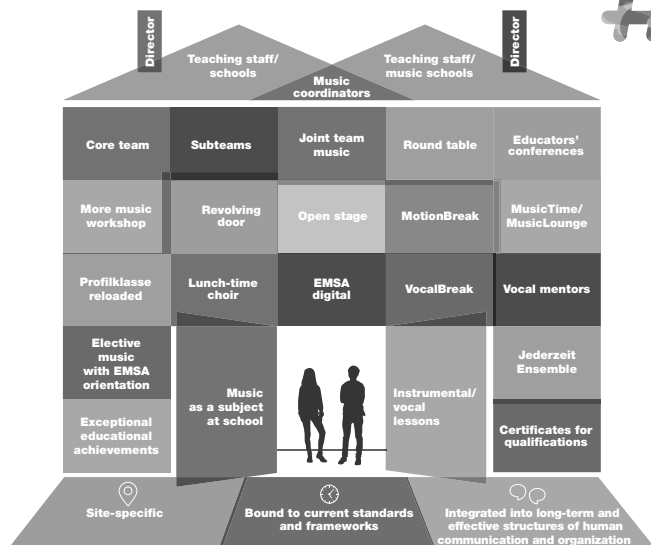
EMSA attempts to adopt this perspective by applying a cooperative approach: EMSA cooperative ventures address pupils' demands and their learning processes from the perspective of both music educational institutions, of music as a school subject, and of instrumental or vocal pedagogy. In so doing, EMSA provides a framework that combines the needs of the school with those of the music school following the aim of increasing individual participation decisions by providing the best possible "*Passung* (fit) between interests and [educational] offers" (Beisiegel & Krupp 2021, p. 112; translated by the authors). In this way "ideally, a kind of network of musical education emerges that is supported by teachers from the school and music school, extends across both institutions and expands and adapts the current forms of general music instruction and instrumental instruction" (Stöger, 2021, p. 224; translated by the authors).

The EMSA house (Fig. 1) attempts to capture and visualize this cooperative focus on the figures of two pupils (which represent all learners in a cooperation) combined with the abovementioned principles, structures, and results, bringing them under one roof. The *EMSA-Bausteine* (EMSA building blocks) inside the cooperation house are one of the outcomes of the kind of collaborative practice that has emerged at several EMSA schools. Responding to the specific needs of daily music-pedagogical practice, they are the particular results of this collective design-development process shared by all the actors involved in the school, the music school, and the EMSA team.

EMSA has been extended since 2019 across the entire State of North Rhine-Westphalia. It is now not only implemented on a local level in new EMSA schools, but is also available as a qualification for participating teachers, especially for the what are called EMSA Music Coordinators. These teacher tandems (one teacher from the school, one from the music school) form the personal and structural base of each EMSA cooperation (Schmidt-Laukamp, 2019, pp. 16–18). Apart from coordinating organizational and personal interrelations, such tandems also initiate and cultivate the aforementioned processes of conceiving and elaborating locally situated music learning formats in cooperative settings.[10]

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[10] Because an individual construct is developed at every school, it is not possible to give a general description of what EMSA looks like in practice; exemplary practical impressions can be gained on the project's website (www.emsa-zentrum.de).

Fig.1: EMSA house (EMSA, 2021)

Profilklasse reloaded – Conceptual Insights

Although both *Profilklassen* and EMSA-accompanied collaborations have become increasingly common in North Rhine-Westphalia in recent years, there have been no longer-term points of contact so far in the sense of conceptual exchange or linkage. This could be attributed to the fact that many *Profilklassen* projects were introduced several years before EMSA started, so that in many cases established structures have already evolved. As programs that tend to be quite fixed, systematic and course-like, they at first glance seem to contradict EMSA's more open-ended, process-oriented approach. At the same time, EMSA has recently been approached by general school music and instrumental teachers, as well as political representatives, with a request for conceptual integration with the *Profilklassen* sector.

In our ongoing project, we take up these impulses and strive to rethink established *Profilklassen* structures by merging them with the EMSA approach (see Fig. 2). As outlined in the previous section, one particular idea is crucial to EMSA: for a concept to work in practice, it has to be developed in close collaboration with on-site actors for the specific set of conditions. Furthermore, many schools seek conceptual input for their current *Profilklassen* system without wanting to replace it completely. Consequently, we cannot aim

for a renewed, accomplished one-size-fits-all *Profilklassen* concept. Our goal is to create a flexible, modular series of formats and learning designs that participating teams can choose from and adapt according to their individual capabilities and requirements. Due to the pandemic, we have so far focused on the conceptual drafting of initial ideas that remain to be tested and refined.
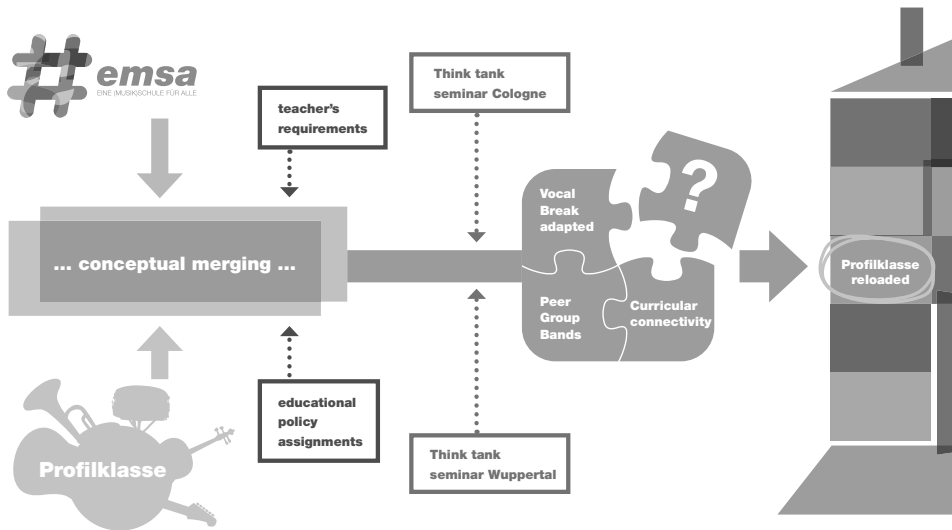
Fig. 2: Overview *Profilklasse reloaded* – elements and processes

VocalBreak

In this section we shall take a short look at one of the first music learning formats implemented by EMSA, which has inspired several ideas in our *Profilklasse reloaded* project. This format, "VocalBreak" (Buyken-Hölker, 2019), has already been put into practice at different schools; it was invented in an EMSA cooperation in the city of Cologne, where we needed to find a practical musical learning opportunity for all pupils that would be fully integrated into the daily routine at the schools. We developed a music-making format consisting of a short unit that is integrated directly into school schedules by taking place, for example, once a week during a math class.[11] The VocalBreak concept[12] tries to span the dichotomy between music-making in a group and self-determined individual musical progress by

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[11] The duration of lessons ranges from 45 or 60 to 90 minutes (double lesson).
[12] The VocalBreak was inspired, among others, by the method of the American music educator J. B. Ward (www.ward-zentrum.de) and by the elementary school format "Singpause" (http://www.singpause.de) [25.10.2021].

proposing a rapid succession of different two-minute phases that encourage different areas of competence (such as rhythm, solmization, vocal training, improvising, body percussion, conducting) and learning approaches while opening up spaces for pupils to make decisions of their own that allow them to take their own steps within the group (ibid., p. 24). The phases (Fig. 3) build up to Song Time, which lies at the core of each VocalBreak. Song Time is devoted to shared vocal creativity and motivated by a core content: a musical aesthetic problem chosen to inspire pupils to create something new in music. Methodical ideas were inspired by the Danish concept of "The Intelligent Choir" (Schirmer, 2019) in which a group of music-making pupils are entrusted with the responsibility for producing an artistic result. In addition to this, teachers encourage pupils to make their own decisions, for example, by letting them select the pieces for Song Time themselves or by motivating them to decide which role they take on in the musical arrangement (melody, bass, rhythm). This individual decision is picked up in the last phase (Check and Back), encouraging pupils to engage in processes of self-reflection.
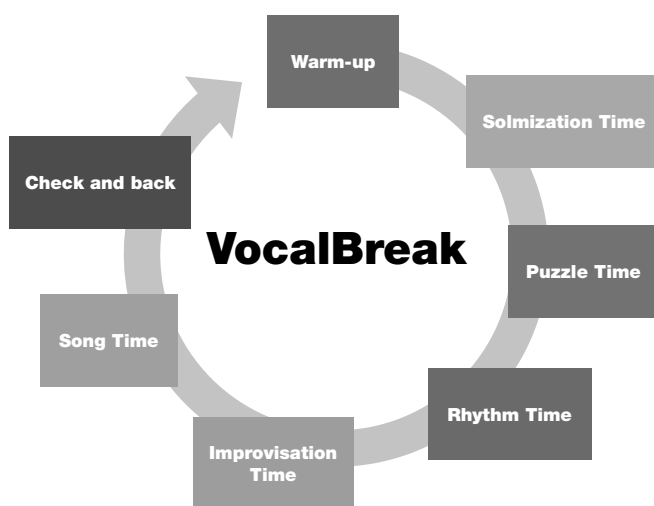
Fig. 3: VocalBreak Sequence

Especially with regard to the network of musical education mentioned above, the format explicitly considers potential connections to other music learning formats in the cooperative school setting.

New Formats and Modules

In the process of elaborating new formats and modules, we actively involved students of two cooperating think-tank seminars at the Cologne and Wuppertal campuses of the University of Music and Dance Cologne in winter 2020/21. The pandemic has prevented us from observing and designing *Profilklassen* teaching in practice with our students. Therefore we used authentic audio and video statements from *Profilklassen* teachers expressing their needs and requirements for conceptual development as a point of departure. Three of them are included in the following section as "practice windows".[13]

Rethinking spaces: VocalBreak adapted

> *'One of my main current preoccupations when organizing strings classes in our school is the need to find occasions and spaces for the pupils to practise. Particularly during the lockdown period, we have felt that group classes are not enough. What we need, and what is still lacking, are supportive ideas and concepts that inspire and motivate the pupils to play their instruments, both at school and at home.'*
>
> Susanna S., music teacher at a secondary school, Heinsberg (translated by the authors)

So far, VocalBreak has been a stand-alone format that has been practised at schools without *Profilklassen*. However, some of its key ideas could be relevant and enriching within the *Profilklassen* framework, especially

- a short, flexibly integrable duration of ten to twelve minutes
- a rapid succession of short phases targeting different musical competencies
- regularly established opportunities for self-direction and individual responsibility
- an approach that combines group music-making with individual learning progression

Although initially developed for schools *without Profilklassen*, these ideas seem appealing, for instance, in the following *Profilklassen* adaptations outlined with our students.

- The VocalBreak could be applied to various instrumental lineups by adapting the exercises to the specific parameters and skills to be trained (InstrumentalBreak). Two settings seem viable:
  — within weekly rehearsals: as a versatile, entertaining warm-up, or as an active break to increase concentration and offer a creative, playful, more self-directed moment.

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[13] The quotes are individual views of teachers from our collegial (EMSA) network. They are not the result of a representative study.

— in addition to weekly rehearsals: as a short instrumental practice session during school days. After the set-up between lessons, the subsequent non-music lesson then includes a ten-minute unit, e. g., with easily stowable small percussion at moderate volume (PercussionBreak) or a logistically easily feasible BuzzingBreak for wind instruments.

- Participatory InstrumentalBreak video tutorials for various instrumentations could unlock music learning spaces outside school in the private sphere while maintaining a group context. The tutorials can be put to use both as an in-between practice support and in times of continuous online teaching.

Broadening the Stylistic Scope: Peer Group Bands

'How can I incorporate the pupils' understanding of – and reference to – music into my Profilklassen teaching from the very beginning? [...] How can I acknowledge the development of music culture without judging?'

Judith H., *Profilklassen* teacher at a comprehensive school, Cologne (translated by the authors)

Rehearsing with the whole *Profilklasse* necessarily implies the choice of a joint repertoire. Pragmatically, this choice is shaped by established teaching materials and suitable arrangements; it often results in certain stylistic limitations and a hegemony of notation-based musical practices. Moreover, the musical interests of individual pupils within a group this size can only be considered in a very general way.

Given these issues, *Profilklassen* teachers could consider splitting the ensemble for part of the rehearsal time and have the pupils form small peer group bands – especially in the second *Profilklassen* year. At this point, most pupils are eleven to twelve years old and have not only acquired basic instrumental technique, but also built social bonds within the group. Apart from that, the vast majority of them lead a "musical life" (Ardila-Mantilla, 2018, p. 8; translated by the authors) outside of school in various, highly identity-relevant ways[14] (Hargreaves, 2013, pp. 78–81). Peer group bands are intended to create more autonomous, self-determined settings and informal spaces, allowing pupils to authentically express and share their musical interests and practices, while linking them with vocal or instrumental training. Activities could include listening to and arranging favorite songs, improvising, songwriting, recording – depending on the schools' equipment, the teaching team's resources, and above all on what the pupils bring in ("music is what people do"). Teachers contribute their individual skills by rotating between several peer group bands and taking on various instrumental or creative coaching roles.[15]

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[14] E. g. listening to music, visiting concerts, interacting on social media (with bands or generally about music), maybe covering or remixing songs…

[15] Inspiration for teachers can be drawn, for example, from the British project Musical Futures: https://www.musicalfutures.org [25.10.2021].

Peer group bands within the *Profilklasse* framework have already been tested in two *Profilklassen* with wind instruments in Cologne in previous school years. Based on this experience, it seems important to emphasize a core idea and, at the same time, a central challenge of the peer group band setting from the teachers' perspective. Teachers should support and facilitate processes, but even more fundamentally prioritize "self-responsible learning" (Heß, 2013, p. 91; translated by the authors) as well as the ideas and musical conceptions of the group – and not override them with their own values and notions of quality for singing or playing an instrument as a cultural practice. Giving space to the pupils' musical realms does not end with considering their repertoire wishes. It also means letting their expertise come to bear in realizing elements of a musical culture with which they are possibly more affiliated than their teachers (Blanchard, 2021, pp. 245–247).

Curricular Connectivity

> *'Several reasons motivated our request to participate in EMSA, including the desire to incorporate further general school curriculum competency areas into group wind instrument classes: not just music making, but also music reception and our thoughts about music.'*
>
> Christian R., music teacher at a secondary school, Düren (translated by the authors)

Based on these or similar current requests voiced by teachers and school authorities, and considering that an *EMSA-Baustein* (EMSA building block) is essentially characterized by its "connective quality" (Qualitätsstandards EMSA, 2021), the idea is to connect the curricular content featured in general music education and that of instrumental training in *Profilklassen*. This is of course nothing entirely new. Similar impulses run through the composition of the teacher's manual and teaching materials of "Leitfaden Bläserklasse" (Sommer, Ernst, Holzinger, Jandl & Scheider, 2018) and were elaborated, for example, by Buchborn (2011) in several teaching units on contemporary music, which were explicitly based on a general education claim for *Profilklassen* lessons.

In the context of EMSA, we want to take up these thoughts by linking the objectives of vocal or instrumental training in *Profilklassen* very specifically with the official requirements for the subject of music in North Rhine-Westphalia. This seems vital whenever the *Profilklasse* format takes up two-thirds or all of the schedule of regular music classes. Our goal is to provide examples of lesson sequences in which the objectives of both institutions utilize the resources and competencies of both music education professional fields – and are thus interconnected in a way that expands the varieties of individual learning paths in site-specific settings – while ensuring conformity with the school's internal music syllabus (MSB NRW, 2019).

If we take a closer look at a music class that treats the areas of content and competency equally seriously (such as areas of reflection, reception, and production in the curriculum in North Rhine-Westphalia) (MSB NRW, 2019), we can find several interfaces for

a curricular connectivity, although it seems important that the framework and impulse for music-making in class should come from the music lesson sequence and its main aesthetic ideas and tasks. For example, in a quarterly lesson plan for sixth graders (such as "Phonophobia: music can show what fear is all about. Create your own spooky radio play!") (EMSA, 2021; translated by the authors), opportunities for interaction with a wind instrument *Profilklassen* can be explored: musical elements of tension might be created using wind instruments improvising or experimenting with one-note patterns, or in explicitly associating wind section class repertoire with the music lesson sequence. The latter, in turn, can be trained in the wind section class in terms of breathing, dynamics, and intonation. In this way, the learners can examine the questions and tasks of the music lesson as artistic researchers based on their own artistic practice. A research diary, designed as a portfolio, can document the artistic reflection processes and serve as a basis for communication between the teachers of the school and the music school (Peters, 2017, p. 44). These are only rough ideas for a certain kind of connectivity. It is now up to us to see in the following implementation processes how this kind of a "third way" (Geuen, 2005, p. 39; translated by the authors) of musical learning in school can further develop: new perspectives will result, both for the profile class concepts and for the conceptions of curricula for music as a subject at school.

Outlook

The three exemplary modules just outlined are, of course, only intended as part of a much broader spectrum of modules, merging the EMSA-approach and the *Profilklasse* setting. They are supposed to illustrate potential points of departure concerning content, possible formats within our modular approach, and a useful level of abstraction to preserve adaptability. As soon as the pandemic situation allows, EMSA schools will successively incorporate these new elements, generating feedback and practice-approved impulses for further conceptual work in a circular process that follows design-based research guidelines (Abrahamson, 2019).

For subsequent steps, it remains important for us to be open to all participants from schools, music schools, universities, and the level of educational policy. In this, we strive to recognize, promote, and deepen a new, expanded connectivity within the music education professional community as a treasure for conceptual development work. Regular joint experts' days with different thematic emphases are already scheduled, during which teacher teams from different EMSA (music) schools will continue to work together on their site-specific (curricular) concepts, supported by input from researchers and educational policy representatives. Students from think-tank seminars will also be invited to participate. Further impulses for promoting a "Professional Community of Inquiry" stem from "the model for innovations in subject-specific didactics" according to Bikner-Ahsbahs & Peters (2018).

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