

Visual arts, music and physical education on stage: A transdisciplinary theatre project with picture books

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Background

In Germany in primary schools all subjects are taught by classroom teachers even though the majority has not undergone formal training in every subject. Therefore, teachers tend to lack self-confidence in non-selected subjects, especially in teaching visual arts and music (Mills 1989, Holden & Button 2006).

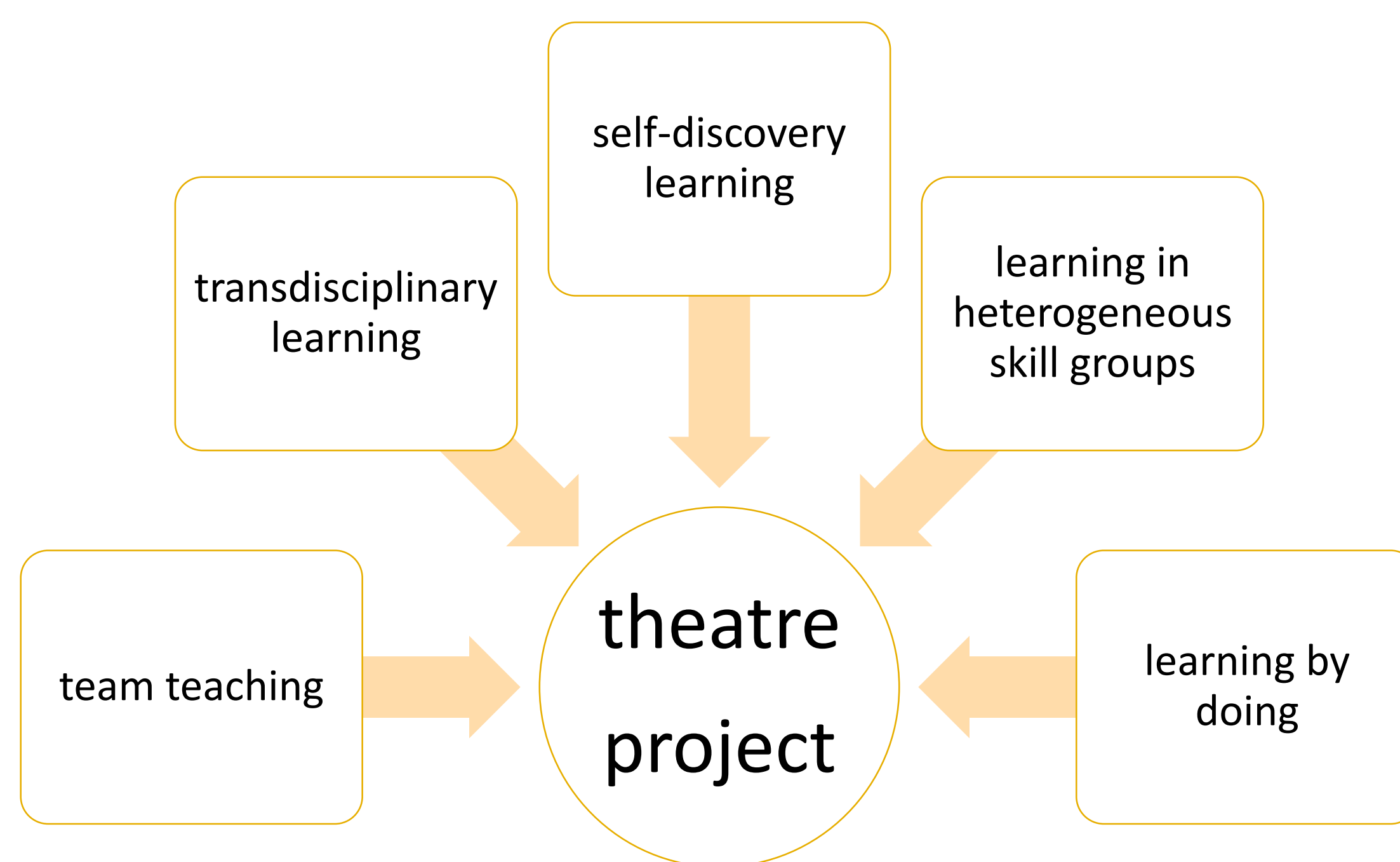
Aim

In order to enhance confidence and self-efficacy in untrained subjects a teaching project was developed as an additional format of instruction within the framework of the regular curriculum. This project is characterized by a cross-curricular combination of learning contents from the fields of visual arts, music, and physical education. Picture books are used as a starting point. Based on the concept of elementary music theatre, the students develop and present a scenic play that includes elements from visual arts, music and physical education. The aim is to demonstrate how to combine these subjects in a meaningful way in order to increase confidence and self-efficacy in the subjects that have not been studied.

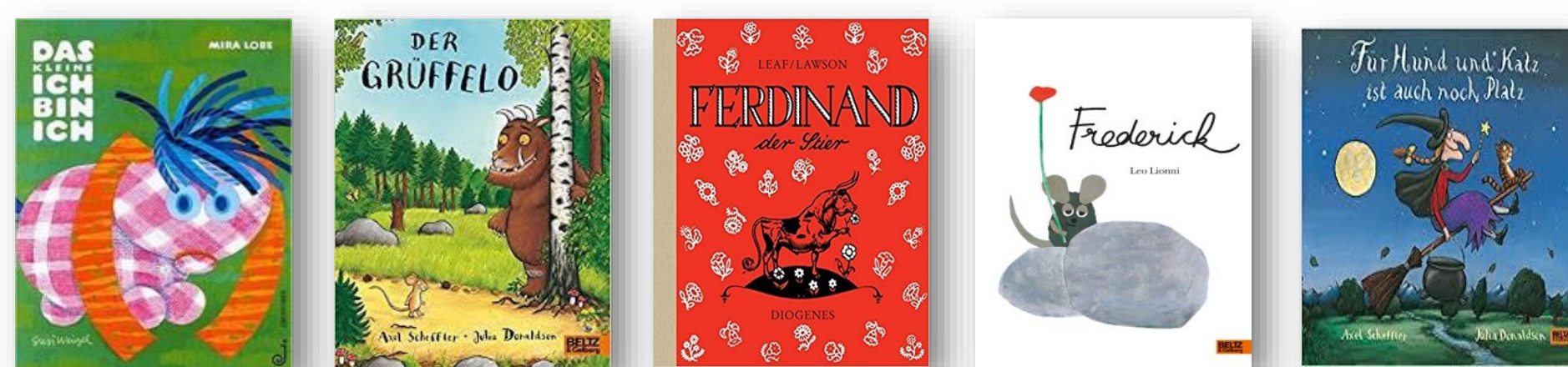
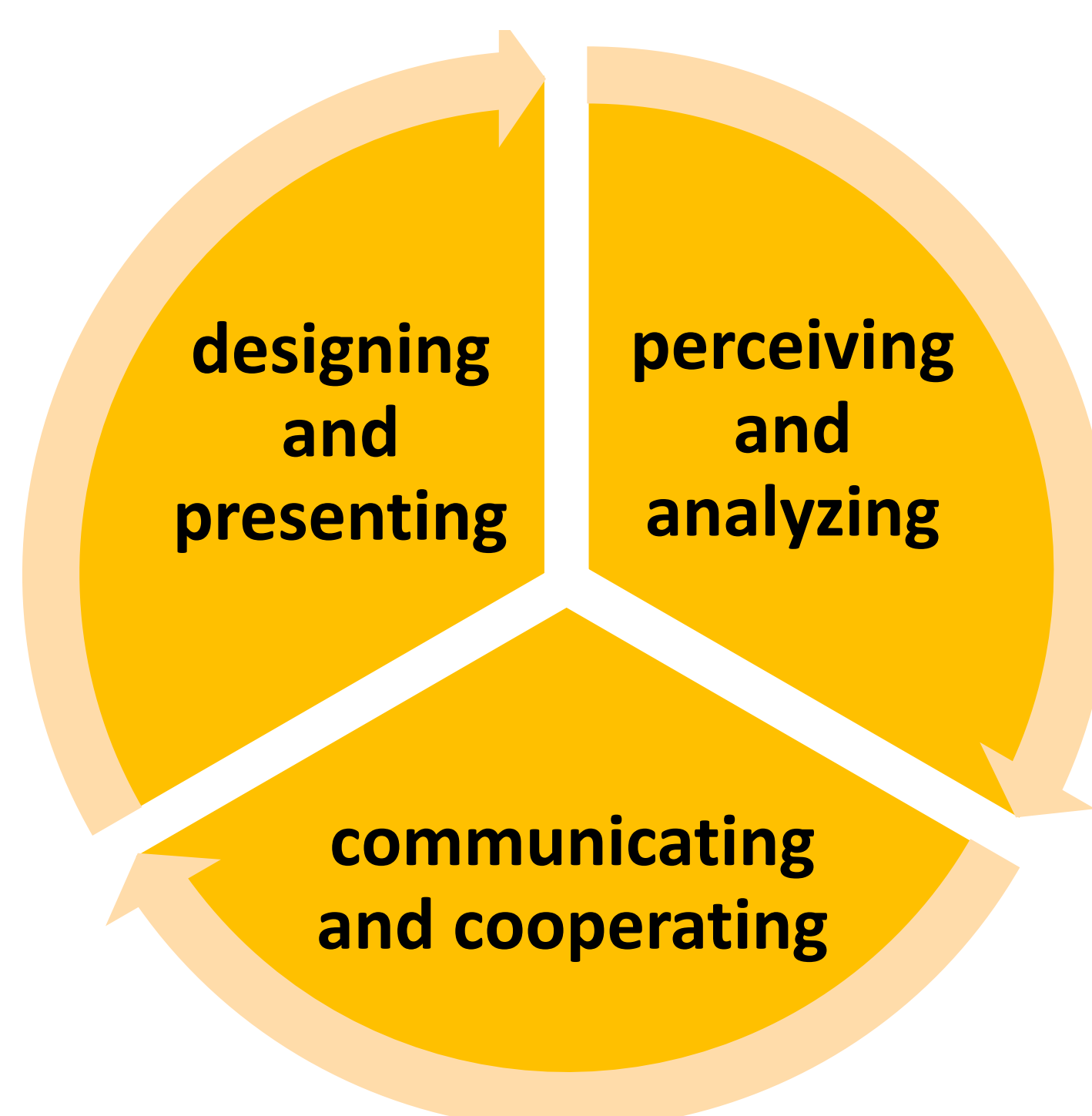
Research method

Five model seminars were conducted from October 2017 with a current N = 115 (81% female, 19% male) participants. A pre-test/post-test questionnaire was applied to evaluate the effects on self-efficacy. Additionally a qualitative evaluation was conducted by performing a content analysis of students' written reflections.

Components of our project work



Shared skills in the field of visual arts, music and physical education



"Singing on stage was new to me. Since I had no experience in this field, it was a bit of a challenge for me at first. With time, I also felt more confident in this area."

"I probably would not have dared to go to play on stage with my class before. In a sense, the weekend has taken away the fear and has shown many possibilities for implementation."

Results and conclusion

Prior results already show that on average the students feel more artistic, musical and sporty than at the beginning of the semester.

		How artistic do you think you are?		How musical do you think you are?		How sporty do you think you are?	
		pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
N	valid	92	92	92	92	92	92
Mean		4.18	5.24	5.65	5.97	7.34	7.45
SD		1.791	2.067	2.561	2.434	1.968	2.013
Effect size		d = .62		d = .26		d = .12	
Significance		p < .001					

Scale 1 (very bad) to 10 (very good)

The students feel significantly better prepared to teach the arts and transdisciplinary projects.

		How well do you feel your studies prepared you to teach?							
		Visual arts (Kunst)		Music (Musik)		Physical Education (Sport)		cross-curricular projects (KuMuSp)	
		pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
N	valid	89	89	91	91	90	90	66	66
Mean		3.08	5.91	5.86	6.04	7.61	7.51	3.92	6.09
SD		1.928	1.861	2.523	2.357	1.956	1.999	2.069	1.932
Effect size		d = 1.13		d = .10		d = -.08		d = .95	
Significance		p < .001						p < .001	

Scale 1 (very bad) to 10 (very good)

Conclusion:

Our experience shows that motivation strongly influences the group dynamics. The seminar concept works according to the motto of „less is more“. We fish for students' strengths rather than their weaknesses. Our learners become creative themselves at all levels. Universities should provide programmes to strengthen the future non-specialist teachers in their non-selected subjects to give them the confidence to undertake an interdisciplinary project. Children are thus able to benefit from interdisciplinary lessons rather than isolated subjects in school.



"Despite my previously rather negative attitude, we had a great weekend, during which you could learn a lot about yourself."

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"I had a lot of fun with the play and also the collaborating in the group made the tasks much easier. I have learned many warm-up exercises. Now I have a bit more confidence. I feel able to prepare a play and participate in a play as well."



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