‘The body and the ear’: An aesthetic education approach for the international social work classroom under Erasmus+ blended intensive programmes

Abstract

The new generation of Erasmus+ agreements offer funding for innovatively designed compact *blended intensive programmes* in which international students study abroad together in Europe. The heterogeneity of international social work curricula, coupled with the linguistic and cultural diversity of students, presents pedagogic challenges. Inspired by teaching on such a programme in Germany, this paper theoretically examines an ‘aesthetic education’ (arts-based) response to these challenges. The basis of this learning is heightening students’ perception of each other, their own bodies, and their embodied knowledge.

Examining a music workshop and a tango workshop reveals pedagogies grounded in creative arts, and utilising the different senses of hearing, movement, and touch. It is suggested that theoretically-founded teaching approaches utilising non-verbal communication and learning can supplement the primarily verbal pedagogies more commonly used in the social work classroom. Investigating philosophical writings from Friedrich Schiller and sociological ideas from Hartmut Rosa, it is argued that playful interactions can lead to students deepening their understanding of bodily-based aspects of communication and thereby experiencing more resonant relations to one other. The skills and sensibilities acquired in such creative sessions have contemporary relevance, preparing the student social worker for communicative interaction with ‘the other’.

Keywords

Blended intensive programme, study abroad, international classroom, creative methods, arts, resonance

Introduction

Social work is a global profession supported by a global definition (International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) & International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014), a global statement of ethical principles (IASSW & IFSW, 2018) and a set of global standards for its education and training (Ioakimidis & Sookraj, 2021). Many of the social issues that social workers address are global, and even the local contexts of social work practice are embedded in interconnected globalised societies (Dominelli, 2010). Despite this, social work education in most countries is not characterised by high levels of internationality. Training is traditionally highly-regulated, with agencies at the national (or federal state) level tightly defining the knowledge and skills addressed in accredited programmes. This makes degree programmes dependent on how social work is seen within each nation state: the student is specifically trained to practice within their own country. Indeed, due to the reliance on nationally produced textbooks, students may be unaware of practices and theories from outside their own mother-tongue literature base (Author, 2019). However, many of the skills, qualities and characteristics required of social workers globally, sometimes referred to by the complex, contested term 'competencies', are shared. International seminars may therefore provide a helpful correction to the lack of internationality in national social work training modules.

Lecturers have been encouraged to internationalise their curricula and, as Knight (2004) observes, in this process integrate a global and intercultural dimension in the post-secondary educational context. In the United States, study abroad modules may be utilised to contextualise and broaden social work students' learning experiences, particularly at the master level (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013). Within Europe, the Bologna process has channelled universities to integrate transnational perspectives in training programmes already

at the first cycle (bachelor) level (European Higher Education Area, 1999). Questions are often asked as to how this is possible, how these efforts can be incorporated in the international social work curriculum, and what learning outcomes can be achieved (Mapp & Gatenio Gabel, 2019, Moorhead et al., 2021).

Within Europe, internationalisation efforts are supported by the Erasmus+ programme. This paper was written following an Erasmus+ grant-financed international seminar taking place in Germany. It presents a classroom pedagogy influenced by creative activity-based methods of direct work in social work practice. These are particularly strong in that country (Hoffmann et al., 2004), due to its history of social pedagogy. This approach, which we are arguing offers fresh possibilities for mixed-nationality social work groups, incorporates aspects of arts education. In Germany, this use of aesthetic elements in learning is sometimes known as *ästhetische Bildung*, (aesthetic education). This paper will illustrate aesthetic education approaches by sketching two concrete applications in the international social work classroom: a session using dance, and one based on music. The core elements of these sessions will be theoretically contextualised by their philosophical underpinning in discourses around the value of aesthetic experience on the intellect and personality development going back to Schiller (1795/2016). In the course of our discussion we will utilise a current sociological perspective from Germany, the concept of 'resonance' (Rosa, 2016/2019). First though, we will turn to the new organisational context of European international seminars, specifically the new Erasmus+ programmes.

Erasmus+ blended intensive programmes

The European Union is well-known for financing semester-long student mobilities, but a recent development has been promoting shorter mobilities, discussed by the European Commission (2020) in terms of 'micro-credentials'. Micro-credentials certify the learning

outcome of participation in a ‘short learning experience’ (European Commission, 2020, p. 5). One new form of micro-credential modules are *blended intensive programmes* (BIPs), in existence since 2021 (European Commission, 2021a). Students from the Erasmus+ ‘programme countries’ (effectively EU countries plus a small group of non-EU countries such as Norway and Turkey) are given grants to participate in a compact period (5–30 days) of physical mobility (European Commission, 2021a, p. 53). The programme contains an obligatory integrated digital component, and constitutes a minimum of 3 ECTS credits (European Commission, 2021a, p. 53). It is coordinated by a programme country higher education institute, which also receives additional financial support (currently between 6000 and 8000 Euros), and is delivered together in partnership with at least two further higher education institutions from separate programme countries (European Commission, 2021a, p. 53). Blended intensive programmes thus represent not only European students coming together, but also European educators. A key feature of the programmes, and one highly relevant to social work educators, is their inclusiveness: students who might previously have missed out on mobility for reasons of work, family, or disability are to be better represented in the new mobilities (European Commission, 2022, p. 4). The goal is clearly to move towards mainstreaming internationalisation and attracting a ‘wider range of learners’ (European Commission, 2021b, p. 5). The European Commission also allows students and lecturers from outside the programme countries (‘partner countries’ in European Commission parlance) to use their own funding to be involved in blended intensive programmes (European Commission, 2021a, p. 53); a common example, given the geographical proximity, will presumably be British students joining groups using their Turing-Scheme funding (should the programme length conform to their requirements). Such opportunities therefore suggest that these programmes will become a mainstay not just of intra-European exchange, but also of international student exchange in Europe.

The goals, design, and possible pedagogies of blended intensive programme are outlined in the European Commission literature. The programmes are to 'use innovative ways of learning and teaching' (European Commission 2021a, p. 52). Whilst the blended intensive programmes were conceptualised for use in all academic disciplines, their suitability for social work training programmes is particularly striking. The European Commission (2022, p. 5) considers their application to 'students in highly specialised fields or training for regulated professions', noting how such students can 'get the benefit of cooperating internationally on relevant topics and build their professional networks while not compromising the structure and timetables of their highly regulated study programmes'. Teachers and trainers on the programmes should not only come from higher education, but also from municipalities, companies and organisations (European Commission, 2022, p. 5), and where relevant, the programmes are to include field learning in the physical part of the mobility (European Commission, 2022, p. 9). The pedagogies should be rich, and the European Commission (2022, p. 9) notes 'physical mobility should as much as possible allow for group work, discussion and intellectual exchange instead of only lectures'. Indeed, the focus seems to be as much on 'facilitating friendships, contacts and supporting social networking' (European Commission, 2022, p. 4) as on traditional classroom-based academic learning.

Our paper is founded on this train of thought: that a focus of the social work study abroad experience can be human interaction with people from different places and walks of life. We argue in this paper that the ability to relate to 'the other' (for instance the culturally, socially, ethnically, and linguistically other) is a key social work competence, and that it can be made a core concern of such programmes. Our interest is then *how* the relationships and communication between the international students can be nurtured. This means relationships are not an add-on aspect of the week's learning: instead they form the week's pedagogic heart.

The challenges of facilitating the social work international classroom

Whilst the new blended intensive programme format offers educators rich opportunities, it brings considerable pedagogic challenges. First and foremost is the question of language skills. Blended intensive programmes will often involve student groups with three or more mother tongues speaking English as a second language (in our case the mother tongues of the twenty-two participating students were Swedish, Italian, Finnish, and English); this is quite different from a classic North American study abroad seminar, in which native speaker students are mixed with non-native speaker students. Students are likely to have English language competences ranging from B1 to C2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2022). The professional language of social work is idiomatic, and accurately translating practice terminology draws on comparative knowledge in areas such as organisation, theory, and law (Author, 2017). This paper acknowledges such language difficulties in the international classroom, and suggests planning structured non-verbal teaching methods accordingly. Indeed, we are proposing a change of viewpoint: seeing classroom communication difficulties not as an obstacle to learning, but, in contrast, as a resource: a ready-made learning task. Communication difficulties will focus students on their interactions, and this in itself comprises the students' primary learning objective.

An additional pedagogic issue is setting the level of course content. International and comparative social work can be considered advanced knowledge. However, blended intensive programmes may be taken by bachelor level students in their first year of study, as a taster to encourage a longer, second mobility later in their studies (European Commission, 2022, p. 4). In other words, programme designers cannot assume advanced social work knowledge on their students' part. Content complexity is compounded by the fact that blended intensive

programme teams are often envisaged to be not just transnational but also transdisciplinary (European Commission, 2021a, p. 52). Given the diversity of the training of the social professions on the continent (Lorenz, 1994), students may be as likely to come from social pedagogy or education backgrounds as social work. Moreover, the minimum participant requirement (15 travelling students from programme countries) means that it may be in organisers' interests to maximise uptake by opening recruitment to neighbouring disciplines ; the programme discussed here integrated students from criminology, sociology, and the health sciences. For this reason, our use of the term 'social work students' in this paper must be taken in the broadest sense: those learning about the work of the social professions. Taken together, these factors suggest blended intensive programme groups will be remarkably heterogenous in composition when compared to traditional social work classes. On the one hand, we argue educators should use the module to promote social work *values* (even to the non-social worker participants), but on the other hand, we are mindful that an exclusive, narrow focus on traditional social work *practice* may alienate some participants. Therefore, a different pedagogical style is recommended. We propose taking inspiration from the arts, and we base this suggestion on philosophical ideas on learning and growth which we outline in the ensuing section.

Social pedagogy, *Bildung,* and play: Friedrich Schiller on aesthetic education

The demands of supporting challengingly heterogeneous groups of learners in relationship-building and personal growth are familiar to European social professionals, since they are the primary objectives of a European social profession in itself: social pedagogy. Social pedagogy can be seen as a sister discipline to social work. As Cameron and Moss (2011) note, social pedagogy exists at the interface of care and education. Unlike much contemporary social work, it deploys methods of direct work with individuals and groups. This hands-on practice

is often in child care, youth work, or recreation-based group settings, and typically involves creativity or play: music, art, dance, theatre, film-making, creative writing, but also sports and outdoor education (Author, 2020, Author, 2022). German polytechnic social pedagogy degree programmes integrate arts-based practice-oriented modules as a standard component (Krisam, 1982). These modules, titled *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* (literally: aesthetics and communication), are oriented on both social pedagogy and aesthetic education theory and research (Mollenhauer, 1996). Module educators (such as one of the co-authors of this paper) are typically not licenced arts-based therapists, or social workers, but instead pedagogues, with an arts education background. Their students are trained for direct social pedagogic work using creative methods, as an alternative to primarily verbal techniques. Their future work may, for instance, comprise isolated creative sessions as part of wider youth work projects, and may be short in duration: the exercises discussed here were components of stand-alone 70-minute sessions. German aesthetic work has similarities with creative methods in Anglo-Saxon social work practice (Wrench, 2018, Author, 2023) and also Anglo-Saxon social work education (Dix & Howells, 2022), but there are also subtle differences. Aesthetic education is less a support for verbal communication, and more the experiential core of the communication itself. Moreover, it is typically process-oriented (focussing on the experience and related feelings) rather than goal-oriented (focussing on the result, such as producing a life story book or care plan). The blended intensive programme discussed here also had an art therapy session, but this was longer, different in its goals, and being therapeutic, conceptually separate from social pedagogic traditions, and so is not discussed.

The understanding of 'education' in German social pedagogy and aesthetic education discourses bridges two distinct concepts: *Erziehung*, a term describing child-raising, and *Bildung*, a term describing a process of self-actualisation and self-development. Both concepts are older than social pedagogy itself. The concept *Bildung* is a product of the late

Enlightenment in the German-speaking countries. Shaped by the intellectual movements of humanism and liberalism, *Bildung* addressed how a person could develop their own 'powers' via learning situations in sociable interaction with the world (Humboldt, 1792/2009). In doing so, they would 'cultivate' (*bilden*) themselves into an autonomous reflexive individual (in English: Horlacher, 2016).

Theories of *Erziehung* and *Bildung* were thus, from the start, concerned with activity and experience, and this led to an interest in sensual perception. In the German language, in the late eighteenth-century, perception was discussed as *Aisthesis,* from the Greek *αἴσθησῐς* (in English, aesthesis). This Greek term is, of course, also the origin of the distinct and separate term 'aesthetic', usually referring not to perception but rather to beauty (Nanay, 2019). Since the late Enlightenment, a discursive thread in education can be traced, in which the interrelationship of perception via the senses, and questions of taste and beauty is highlighted (Mollenhauer & Wulf, 1996). Whilst it was Gottlieb Baumgarten's mid-eighteenth century *Aesthetica* which re-introduced aesthetics into philosophy (Gregor, 1983), for educationalists the formative early theorist was the playwright and philosopher Friedrich Schiller. In his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* Schiller (1795/2016) expressed his conviction that there was a reciprocity between the intellect and the capacity to aesthetically experience. He proposed the 'culture' of sensibility (Schiller, 1795/2016, p. 28), not for the sake of taste in itself, but rather for the nurturing of intellect. He was viewing aesthetic education not as a complement to reason and moral education, but rather as an integral part of it.

The context of Schiller's theorising was the new machine age and the industrial society. Schiller was mindful of the problems of modernity. He identified what we would later term alienation, a world in which:

> …pleasure was separated from work, means from end, effort from reward. Eternally shackled to one small fragment of the whole, man imagined himself to be a fragment, in his ear the constant and monotonous noise of the wheel that he turned; never capable of developing the harmony of his being… (Schiller, 1795/2016, p. 19).

However, Schiller identified a liberating 'play impulse' by which, through aesthetics and creativity:

> …the fetters of all circumstance are taken from man, releasing him from everything that could be called either moral or physical constraint (Schiller, 1795/2016, p. 110).

He saw playfulness as the basic human characteristic, postulating reflexively:

> …man plays only when he is a man in the full sense of the word, and *he is only a complete man when he plays* (Schiller, 1795/2016, pp. 56–57, *italics in original*).

For Schiller, aesthetic play was tied to human freedom. The element of playfulness allows the human being to free themselves from worldly constraints (something which presaged the British psychoanalyst, Winnicott in the twentieth century). Play supports the imagining of new worlds. It opens the person up to the new and the as-yet undetermined. Schiller thus saw his examination of aesthetics as having a political dimension at the macro level, leading to considerations as to what form of state was conducive to holistic free human development. 'The basic law … is *to give freedom by means of freedom*', concluded Schiller (1795/2016, p. 110, *italics in original*). An 'aesthetic state', of 'free citizens who have rights equal to the most noble' (Schiller, 1795/2016, p. 112) 'fulfils the will of the whole through the nature of the individual' (Schiller, 1795/2016, p. 110). Schiller's concern with freedom, justice, and human development here can be compared to modern ideas in the capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2011).

We are proposing here that a social work blended intensive programme can be pedagogically conceptualised to utilise these German traditions of aesthesis (perception) and aesthetics (creativity/beauty). By placing a focus on creative expression, the role of verbal communication within the multi-lingual group is reduced. By working with perceptual experience and the senses, the sensual experiences of the mobility period can be accentuated. It should not be forgotten that study abroad mobilities, like all travel, are characterised by aesthetic perception across the senses. Students will be visually processing the natural and architectural environment around them, and quite probably documenting it photographically and sharing these images on social media. They will be tasting and smelling foreign foods, appreciating them together with students from other culinary cultures. They will be hearing the phonetic sounds of each other's languages, and possibly learning new words in these. In other words, we are arguing that a focus on the senses during the programme not only utilises the general heightened perceptual awareness of the travelling experience, but can add to it and enhance its inherent learning potential. Moreover, as we investigate below, creative methods support a person encountering the world and the people within it, giving the programme a focus on interaction.

We themed our course by dividing the physical mobility week into shorter sessions covering individual creative methods. These were sandwiched by field visits and other activities. This balance enabled students to enjoy diversity in their learning methods. In this paper we will theoretically discuss exercises from two different creative sessions, addressing tactile/kinaesthetic perception and auditory perception respectively. These creative forms were chosen specifically to maximise rapid experiential learning and facilitate contact between students. Both demand neither creative experience nor talents, are conducive to compact sessions, and can be adapted for use with physically or sensory-disabled participants (Benjamin, 2002; Straus, 2011), thus being compatible with the inclusion principle of blended

intensive programmes. Because of its particular immediacy and ability to unite strangers, one, the ice-breaking music-based exercise, was used to open the programme. The students' natural enjoyment of music-making at this early point in led to their openness to other, sometimes unusual creative methods throughout the rest of the week.

Embodied learning, embodied knowledge

Given the extraordinary breadth of literature on experiential learning (Dewey, 1934/1989) it is remarkable that so much social work education is based on the verbal and written transport of content. We tend to privilege verbal communication over non-verbal. However, the body is the primeval medium of symbols, with regard to information acquired via the senses (Wiegerling, 2008). Tacit knowledge transfer is supported by the body, as a place of information production and information reception in processes of embodiment (Hrach, 2021). In the following section, a short fragment of a tango-based communication exercise will be presented. Although other dance forms are also suitable for communication exercises, tango was chosen because of a programme educator's passion for it, and previous experience of using it in social work training. It should perhaps be stressed that despite public misconceptions, tango can be reconciled with feminist, politically progressive, and queer studies positions (Davis 2015). Apart from the reflection questions, the exercise is completed, on the students' part, in total silence. The exercise sensitises participants to a knowledge development of which they may be unaware. We are thus promoting a 'culture of the capacity for feeling' (Schiller, 1795/2016, p. 28) which simultaneously nurtures both aesthetics and social work non-verbal communication competences.

Tango: an exercise

The students are not in a conventional classroom but rather on the wooden floorboards of a performance area. Standing opposite one another in pairs, they are asked to keep their soles firmly on the ground and shift their weight entirely from their right to their left foot, centring themselves on a vertical axis on their left side. They are invited to observe how their centre of gravity has moved to the left, and how a vertical body axis can be imagined. They are now supporting their weight entirely on their left foot, and their right foot is entirely free to move. They are asked to alternate this movement, from the left to the right foot, and back again, experiencing how it feels in the body.

In the next step, one person in each pair is requested to transmit information on their axis movements to their partner, only via their fingertips. To do so, they reach out both their arms and place their fingertips together, so gently, as if a raspberry were being held between each set of fingertips. Each partner is invited to feel the other's body position through their own fingertips, as their partner shifts their weight from one foot to the other. Now comes the last step. In each pair, one lead 'communicates' via the fingertips a direction of movement, either with the left or right foot first. This one person prepares to step forwards, and their partner perceives the shift of weight for this step. Their partner thus 'discovers' that they must take a step backwards, just as their lead steps forwards. The students are asked to reflect what they have just communicated and felt.

Tango as a social experiential medium for reflecting on professional 'stance'

In this exercise, each participant can experience how their body can be brought into a state of control and organisation. They learn to detect differences in how their own body is positioned, and also in the body of the other person. They learn how to differentiate physical experiences and how to improve their relationship to their own body. They learn how it feels to physically

take a posture which may be described as *more present*: more in-the-room, together with the others. However, they also feel how exhausting it can be to keep this posture.

These physical experiences can be reflected upon in the group afterwards. They can be related to the idea of 'stance' (in German, *Haltung*). This choice of word, stance/*Haltung,* encourages an important connection to be made: the physical position of the body is brought into relation with ways of thinking, ways of perceiving the world, ways of positioning oneself in the world, and ways of expressing oneself in the world. We use the same words, stance/*Haltung,* in a social work context, to describe our professional positions and attitudes. Following the exercise, this point can be discussed with the students: what is the connection between stance in a physical sense and stance in the sense of the social professional's attitude and values?

Tango as a communication method in student aesthetic education

Dance illustrates the principles of *aesthetics and communication*. From a communication science perspective, dance is kinaesthetic communication. 'Kinaesthetic' is understood here in the sense of aesthesis, not aesthetics: kinaesthesis describes one's sensual *perception* of the body, in terms of the position and movement of its parts. Kinaesthetic communication occurs when one reads the movement and position of the other's body. Philosopher Dieter Mersch (2000, p. 206) claims that the body does not speak, but rather 'shows', observing this is transparent and without 'concealment or mystery'. It has no sense of past and future, but remains in the here and now. Showing oneself (here, in the intentional movements of the dance, but also in the unintentional movements of one's body) enables the human being to encounter themselves and the other (Mersch, 2000). This is where the art of attending, and the opportunity for an aesthetic experience in the exercise lies. Quinten (2016, p. 41) sees dance as a series of 'resonances' between movement and perception systems, in which implicit

knowledge is both generated and exchanged. We will return to the idea of resonance later in this paper.

A psychology of perception approach to understanding dance might regard the dancer not only as seeing their partner, but as engaging in 'haptic exploratory procedures' (Lederman & Klatzky, 1987, p. 365) to identify objects (here the dance partner's moving body) via active touching. It may be worthwhile here to recall Bernhard's (2008) theoretical view of aesthesis as registering through one's senses, but also through an inner feeling, inside oneself. The human sense system works to deliver information on external, and in Bernhard's sense, internal feeling and movement, thus enabling complex actions. Such a view presents the dancer as being constantly engaged in interpersonal, and, via the inner feeling, intrapersonal processes of exchange. The dancer's body is a communicating body. The dance exercises enable the participants to feel this challenge, supporting them in understanding how their body 'shows', but also, in parallel, perceives. Author (2020) sees the body as an interface for one's relationship to oneself, the world, and one's own embodied constructions.

The dance partners thus acquire a feeling for the duality of their body: *Körper und Leib,* as proposed by the anthropologic philosopher Plessner (1928/2019). This concept addresses two separate aspects of body. Like the animal, the human is 'lived body' (*Leib,* Plessner, 1928/2019 p.267), phenomenal body. This concept captures the idea of *being* a body, in the here/now, reacting. Humans, however, have an awareness of their body, and are able to distance themselves reflexively from their lived experiences: the human 'knows of itself; it notices itself' (Plessner, 1928/2019, p. 270), is a reflexive 'I'. In this sense, the body is something the 'I' has: the objective/physical body (*Körper*), *having* a body. Exercises such as dance can draw attention to the reflexivity within one's awareness of self and body. Relating this to social work practice, if the trainee practitioner has a reflective awareness of

themselves, their body and their lives, they can better nurture this trait in the clients they are supporting.

Tango supports students in developing communicative competences. The idea considered above, of continuous interactive exchange in dance, recalls the 'first tentative axiom of communication': 'one cannot *not* communicate' (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967, pp. 48–49, *italics in original*). This observation has particular value to the social worker, who, unwittingly, is constantly sending and receiving communication signals with their body. Social professionals must therefore be encouraged in their self-reflection to deepen their knowledge of non-verbal communication. We are arguing that an awareness of bodily communication can be regarded as core social work knowledge, and that dance exercises are a powerful means of supporting its acquisition (Author, 2013). Tango interactions enable the student lay dancer to experience knowledge in an embodied way, as a performative examination of the self and the other. They trigger changes in the perspective of the students by specifically focusing on body language and being attentive to 'the other'.

Hartmut Rosa: alienation and resonance

The success of dance interactions rests on the partners attending to one another, understanding each other's movements, and responding to them. The person interacts with the world in a relational way. German sociologist Hartmut Rosa (2016/2019) has theoretically examined this relationship, and uses the concept of 'resonance' to describe it. This term is founded in Rosa's critical theory-influenced approach to examining life in late modern societies, and his interest in reviving the neglected concepts of happiness and the good life. Rosa (2016/2019, pp. 47–82) examines human relationships to the world, starting with the basal, physical aspects of this: our physical situation, on our feet and with skin as our interface to the world, or our use of voice/body to communicate and enter into a responsive relation to the world. Rosa

develops this by examining how we ‘experience world’ and ‘appropriate world’: medially, aesthetically, socially. With reference to Plessner’s dual understanding of the body, Rosa (2016/2019, p. 83) takes the objective/physical body as a medium between the reflective self and the world. Through it, as medium, the person perceives/experiences world, but also acts on/appropriates world. Importantly, Rosa (2016/2019, p. 84) does not suggest that self and world exist independently, but rather the opposite: the objective/physical body is ‘the constitutive basis of both’. Rosa’s (2016/2019, p. 86) analysis thus examines ‘resonant’ ‘bodily relationships to the world’, those which are characterised by the world seeming a source of inspiration. Recalling Schiller’s line of thought, Rosa contrasts these with mute body relationships, in which the world seems merely a resource or an instrument. Such relationships are thus for Rosa (2016/2019, p. 179) ‘reifying’ relationships, tied to processes of alienation. Rosa (2016/2019, p. 184) suggests resonance is the ‘antithesis’ of alienation. Rosa’s resonance concept has been often referenced and applied, for instance in his home country in the area of school education (Beljan, 2019). The publication of *Resonance: A sociology of our relationship to the world* in English translation allows its application to the case of social work (Ferguson, Kelly & Pink, 2022) and social work education. Let us continue this application with a second example of an aesthetic education exercise, one using music.

Music as a creative medium

In common with the tango session described above, an objective of our music education session is student self-discovery. Like the tango session, it differs from other social work university seminars, which rely on verbal discourse or literature-supported reflection. Instead, it uses a creative medium for communication. The students, as layperson musicians, carried out exercises which in Germany are commonly practised in facilities for disabled or older

people. Whilst our session comprised several shorter music-based exercises, we will focus on one in particular: the use of 'play along' recordings for groups. This is where a pre-recorded music piece is played back, and students with instruments collectively play along with it as an orchestra.

Music: an exercise

The students are assembled in a music room. The room is without tables but filled with instruments along the walls, and the students are invited to sit in a semicircle in three rows. Going from left to right along the semicircles, the students are divided into groups sitting together. Each group is given different percussion instruments: one group has drums; the next has maracas; the next woodblocks. A single soloist has a pair of hand cymbals. The music recording starts: a cha cha cha. The room bursts into sound as the group is conducted to play along with the piece, each group playing their instruments in turn. The exercise is repeated with a second piece: a passage from Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker'. Following the playing, the students listen to the piece a second time, this time collectively playing the role of conductor: thirty pairs of hands 'conduct' the piece simultaneously, by pointing in turn to the physical spaces where the instruments in the music would be located. The students, many of whom may describe themselves as 'unmusical', are each conducting an orchestra.

Music for synchronicity, play, and resonance

As with dance, an advantage of using music in an international seminar is its suitability as a nonverbal medium of expression and communication. Music needs little explanation or instruction. A range of collective activities can be carried out with a group, simply by showing and musically demonstrating. The objectives of the exercises do not need

to be verbally articulated, since they will be experienced. The familiar predominance of the verbal momentarily disappears: instead, the 'body' and the 'social' provide frames of reference.

It is helpful to break down the different ways in which the students are learning and developing in such a session. Firstly, we note that the value of playing music to the social work exchange student is the same as for social care service users. Musical activity strengthens social contacts. The group itself comes together in a shared experience, and the collective nature of the music-making gives the individual a feeling of safety in their musical interactions. Moreover, the playing of music is a creative process. Enjoying the playing of music fulfils a basic human need, and acknowledges a fundamental human right (that of cultural participation, Article 27 in the Universal Declaration).

Music playing can be examined psychologically. In creating music (as with dancing tango), one can escape from the everyday and be invited to enter a game without stress, pressure or expectations (Jäger & Kuckhermann, 2004, p.79–80). From a student self-care perspective, the playfulness of engaging in music can be seen as an important counterweight to the regimented and rational demands of studying for one's degree programme. The visible expressions of well-being can be palpably observed in the music seminar room: in body language and facial expressions. Considering the playing of music, we may also be reminded of the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi's (1990/2008, p. xi) notion of 'flow', capturing 'the positive aspects of human experience – joy, creativity, the process of total involvement with life'. As Csikszentmihalyi (1990/2008, pp. 112–113) observes, 'Learning to produce harmonious sounds is not only enjoyable, but like the mastery of any complex skill, it also helps strengthen the self'. When music is collectively made, each individual becomes important and shares responsibility for the sound of the whole: feelings of social involvement, positive self-awareness and self-efficacy can follow (Author 2021, p. 588).

The way in which the body responds and participates socially in the creative arts is a form of learning which may be understood anthropologically. Here we cite the concept of mimesis:

> Social and aesthetic actions are termed mimetic, firstly, when they, as movement, refer to other movements, secondly when they can be understood as a physical performance or staging, and thirdly, when they are self-contained actions which can be understood on their own terms and which refer to other actions or worlds. (Wulf, 2017, p. 105)

We can regard both music-making and tango dance as mimetic processes. The movements constituting each are responses to the sensual perception of other movements: the aesthetic is thus triggered by aesthesis. On the surface, mimetic processes may seem to resemble acts of imitation. However, mimesis is more than mimicry, since there is always something of the self, something personal and creative, within mimetic processes (Wulf, 2017). Mimesis builds on hidden inner ideas and imagination and connects the experienced outer world to the person's inner world (Wulf, 1996). It is indicative of developing empathy (Koprowska, 2020). The music and dance sessions described here represent a form of learning from the other, and from one's body's reaction to the other. Wulf (2017) describes mimetic knowledge as performative knowledge, a knowledge in turn founded in tacit body-centred knowledge. He regards learning in child-raising, education, and socialisation as being acquired mimetically.

We can, however, also view the students' interactions from a relational perspective (Author, 2021). In contrast to normal classroom situations, in which one person speaks after the other, the music-making students are acting in synchronicity with one another. In order to synchronise their playing, they respond to one another. They make the same movements as one another, with the same force, and with the same metre. This synchronisation of their movements is both visible and audible. This collective music-making has an emotional component: one is touched by the rhythm of playing. We are arguing that this impact on the

level of the person's feelings justifies the description of its relational interactions as being one of resonance.

The resonance in collective music making is a double one: the players resonate *with each other*, but they also resonate *with the music*. This music is, in each and every moment, produced by the group together, it is the 'source' of the resonance. This seems to be a particular characteristic of music. Rosa (2016/2019, p. 95) considers music in his analysis of resonance, suggesting it 'negotiates the quality of relation (to the world)'. He ventures that this feature of the medium corresponds to the twentieth century rise of music: counteracting the growing reification which that century also saw. 'Music affirms and potentially corrects, moderates, and modifies our relation to the world, repeatedly re-establishing it as the "ur-relationship" from which subject and world originate' (Rosa, 2016/2019, p. 95). In playing music, or, formulated with reference to Schiller (1795/2016), in the play of music, the person can escape from self-preoccupation. In the moment in which it is happening, the play of music focusses the attention on the importance of one's relationship to others. By offering a corporeal and sensual relationship to world (to the music and to the others making it), it bridges the boundary between world and self.

The play of music offers fresh experiences in one's encounter with the 'other'. Such experiences are supportive of personal change. Jäger and Kuckhermann (2004, p. 79) note that if social workers' task is to challenge clients to reconsider their habits of interpreting their own situations, then student social workers, and their lecturers, must also learn to do this themselves. The play-along percussion exercise is a novel experience for participants not used to playing instruments together. It removes them from their own everyday patterns of experiencing and understanding. The acquisition of new musical competences can be seen as a music education process, but one which has relevance above and beyond music itself, since in the process of the music, resonant relations are established (Author, 2005). We are arguing

that these educational processes, in Schiller's (1795/2016) language, processes of cultivation, can have far-reaching effects: they can subtly change the person's lived relationship to the world.

The resonance within the exercises of the music session is a bodily one. It arises not from the cognitive connectedness of the participants, but rather from their emotional, social and motor connectedness. Playing music together is a corporeal act, challenging the person in all facets. The students have become familiar with instruments (cognition); they have played the instruments (motor skills); they have synchronised themselves rhythmically (social); and they have situationally felt and expressed the music (emotion). We are thus arguing for a greater consideration of *musicality* in both social work training, and in social work and social care practice itself (Author, 2005). Whilst the term musicality is often misunderstood to describe a musical talent, our usage of the term refers to the ability to take pleasure in music: encompassing each and every receptive and active resonant interaction with music. In this way, we consider all people to be 'musical', in that they can be touched by music and use it for resonant relationships.

Conclusion: the international social work classroom as a place of resonance?

We close this paper by returning to our social work application of the European Commission's invitation to use blended intensive programmes to investigate innovative classroom pedagogies, namely those focussing on the interactions and exchange between international students. We concede practical difficulties in implementing our arts-based approach. Obviously, some students may be initially sceptical and uncomfortable with dance and music, particularly given their traditional distance from Anglophone social work discourses. The physicality of the exercises may force some participants out of their comfort

zones. Students may also initially fail to see the relevance of the exercises to their personal development or future practice.

The social work educator using aesthetic education approaches may thus have to work hard at the beginning of the international seminar to create an atmosphere of trust, in which students feel safe to experiment and undergo new classroom experiences. Workshop facilitators' humility, awareness of their own limitations, and sensitivity to the state of ease or unease of the students become important. Reflecting verbally on bodily experience forms the concluding part of the exercises for students, and non-native speakers may need support to articulate their experiences in words. This articulation is an important component of each session.

Our reflections here on the newer European developments in international social work education practice have been at the theoretical level. Although the informal student response to these exercises during the week was highly positive, the practical application of our aesthetic education approaches to international social work training lacks empirical studies. As a second stage to our project we propose an evaluation of an aesthetic education-supported blended intensive programme, so that the student's voice can be heard. These comments notwithstanding, we suggest that applying Rosa's 'resonance' concept may offer a valuable orientation to social work educators. We claim that in working with creative media at the relationship level, educators can add to the traditional learning objectives of the verbally-based monolingual social work classroom with rich, complementary, new ones: communicative competences, relationship skills, reflexivity, and an improved awareness of one's body and self.

7967 words including references

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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