Thoughts on Time

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Abstract

Time is a most valuable resource in education and therapy. However, having time often proves to be an impossible undertaking, especially in everyday school life, as more and more task areas and duties in classes put a strain on the educational situation (Saul, 2020). Time is needed for important basic elements in all classrooms but especially in those including children with additional support needs e.g., learning with all senses, embodied cognition, an experience-oriented approach, dialogue and communication as well as differentiated instruction (Stavely 2020, Sangiorgio 2015, Haselbach 2003, Tomlinson 1995). Considering the use of time in music making is important for working with all groups, especially when taking individual levels and modes of learning as well as forms of participation into consideration. This is essential in order to include all children in the topic or activity so that each child can participate at their individual level (Feuser 2015, Stavrou 2015, 2021).

Keywords: differentiation, own time, pauses, senses, experience

Introduction

Learning and music occur through time. Dealing with time is relevant in different contexts and settings, whether music is a subject to be learned, or a principle for integrative holistic experience, or a means of fostering development or as therapy. We as adults and the children and people we work and play with are often challenged by the constraints of time in particular settings and contexts. This paper would like to present some thoughts on time that can be relevant for

educational as well as therapeutic settings. I will illustrate some of these by looking at examples from a children's group, focussing on one child.

Children tend to have a completely different sense of time than adults (Bischof-Köhler, 2000; Benke, 2011). In education this can often lead to misunderstandings if one is not aware of this difference. Children may sometimes live in their own world, their individual "here and now". They need time for processing, and some may have difficulty fitting in to the given time for tasks during lessons. We may be able to get a sense of this when we ourselves have FLOW experiences and how it feels when they are interrupted or cut short.

As adults, however, we often perceive our environment as exact planning, a flood of time-related necessities, fitting in many activities into ever shorter time windows. This can lead to misunderstandings in the perception of time, the planning of time resources, as well as individual needs. The organizational framework of schools, the timetable as well as the planning and teaching of lessons may stand in the way of natural child-oriented learning if we do not consider ways of dealing with time in our teaching.

The lack of consideration of the roles of time may even lead to inequity as Roger Saul suggests in his recent article: 'Temporality and inequity: How dominant cultures of time promote injustices in schools'. Saul emphasizes that "temporal tools like the clock and the calendar are not simply impartial backdrops against which school actors make their educations, but rather are contested, politicized, and ultimately limiting expressions of temporal experience" (Saul 2020). He maintains that "dominant cultures of school time differentiate, order, and discriminate in ways that benefit some students over others".

The aim should be to activate each child's abilities in every learning process in the best possible way. By extending and enhancing the learning environment - and the other students with their diverse competences contribute to this - a positive development is more likely to be achieved than with teaching methods that aim to speed up the learning process based on the deficits diagnosed (cf. Athey, 1990, p. 76).

Differentiation

Each group consists of individuals with different modes of learning, different readiness levels,

speeds and levels of learning (Tomlinson 1995, Stavrou 2015). Time is necessary for differentiation as individuals need different amounts and types of support. Time is needed to experience, play, experiment and create. When working with others, time is necessary for communicating, making contact, developing encounters, dialogues and relationships. As individuals need different amounts of time for processing and learning, the importance of repeating activities, often with variations, should not be underestimated.

All groups are groups of mixed ability. Georg Feuser (1997, 2001) points out, that fundamental, child-centred inclusive education involves teaching children and adolescents who are at different developmental levels and have different degrees of competencies in perception, cognition, and behaviour. It recognizes the individuality of each person (in the sense of his or her unique past experiences) and thus the heterogeneity of every human group (Feuser, 1997, 2001). Inclusive teaching means that all participants in a group work, play and learn together in cooperation with one another within one theme, activity or task according to their own individual capabilities (physical, emotional, mental, social) at their own developmental level oriented on their zone of proximal development. To realize this, it is necessary for participants to cooperate within one theme, task or activity as well as for the teacher to provide individual inner differentiation (cf. Feuser 1997, 2015).

Children have different levels of readiness and interests and have different learning profiles which means that we need to offer flexible social grouping as well as different learning paths. Differentiation can be applied not only to the content but also to the learning environment such as the space, the room, different types of instruments and props. It can be applied to the processes such as types of methods and forms of participation as well as the products such as accompanying a song, improvising or composing soundscapes (cf. Tomlinson 1995, Stavrou 2015). Goodkin reminds us that in using the Orff-Schulwerk approach, we work in a wide scope of media and try to understand each child's learning style. The teacher often needs to simplify or extend parts of a piece or compose and choreograph on many levels. Children should be able create at their own level of skill and understanding and each contribution is given recognition. The teacher needs to create opportunities for talent, and create challenges for discovery (Goodkin, 2012). This all requires time.

Types of Time

In his chapter 'Time and Rhythm as basic process of Life and Understanding' Georg Feuser

distinguishes three kinds of time:

- Intra-systemic eigen-time/own time, which is particular to each system and has to its own dynamics of change and movement;

- Extra-systemic eigen-time/time of other – which is time that is one system in relation to another; and

- A relational time between two (or more) systems that enables exchange to take place, a dialogue to be led, and makes co-operation possible. It means bringing together the intra-systemic own-time of both systems in a superordinate phase space and generates a common time that unites both.

These thoughts seem particularly relevant to music education and therapy where individuals experience themselves and others through and with music.

As we know, music can have many functions and effects. In relation to Feuer's three types of time we can recognize various possibilities. Music or sounds from two or more individuals may exist without the systems noticing or reacting to each other. Or individuals may produce sounds or music in relation to each other either as a dialogue or playing together at the same time. Music can be a means of making contact and finding a common time in music or movement between two or more individuals for instance in improvisation.

If we make music together or ask participants to move to the time of the music, we have a new time – the time of the music, to which all own-time systems adapt. In our activities, it is important that we are aware of the type of time we are using or aiming for.

We need phases or activities with joint time where the whole group is engaged in one activity and time for repetitions with variations. There should also be phases where children can experience their own individual tempo, as well as discover, explore, linger and process in their own time. Phases where the participants can work with a partner or in small groups, experimenting, improvising or composing are also necessary.

Pauses

In one-to-one sessions and in groups we can often observe that individual participants need to make

pauses. There can be many reasons behind this, one of which I want to mention here. Within Daniel Stern's model of development, Schumacher, Calvet and Reimer define a pause as "a strategy to process the intensity of an experience" (Schumacher et al. 2019, p. 76)

Looking at early development, in an optimal situation, new-born babies search for eye-contact with a caregiver as someone who reacts positively to them. The infant stays in eye-contact until he or she can no longer process what he or she has experienced. The infant then turns away and makes a "pause" (Papousek et al. 2004). Pauses are necessary to integrate the perceptive connections as well as the emotions that have arisen. The experience can then be sorted and integrated into cognitive higher structures (cf. Schumacher et al. 2019 p. 21).

It is necessary for the caregiver to recognize the meaning of pauses so as not to overstimulate the infant. If the caregiver does not give enough time for processing and overstimulates the infant, the infant will become overloaded and remains in avoidance. If this continues over a period of time, the avoidance increases and leads to defence, becoming chronic, leading to emotional instability and a reduced ability in the infant to cope in stress situations (cf. Schumacher et al. 2019 p. 24). The importance of pauses to process what has been experienced is relevant not only for infants but also for children. We should also be aware of the dangers of overstimulating or understimulating. It is necessary and essential to recognize the function of pauses in therapeutic and educational settings and recognize that individual children in groups may need and make "pauses" at different times.

The Didactic Triangle

The model of thought proposed by Siegenthaler and Zihlmann, two Swiss rhythmics teachers, is relevant when considering the importance of time in education and therapy. The areas of impression, lingering/dwelling, and expression form a triangle and influence each other. The authors describe the role of the teacher under these aspects and also propose the model as a guideline for planning lessons.

Impression (perception)
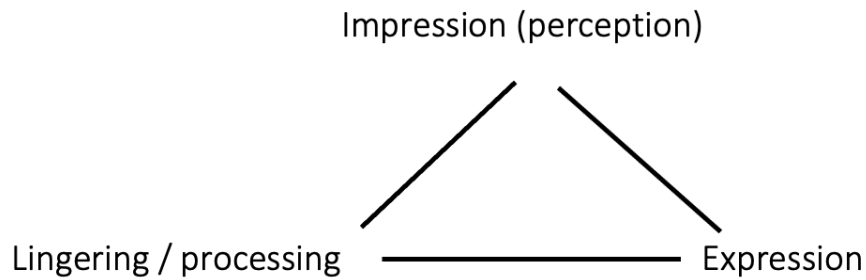
Lingering / processing ———————— Expression

Fig.1. Denkmodell/Model of Thought. Siegenthaler & Zihlmann 1988 p. 42 transl. S. Salmon

The phase of Impression includes providing impulses, creating situations, and enabling experiences. These can be with oneself, with the partner, with the group, with an object, play materials or the environment. This phase is also used by the teacher to convey sensory impressions such as hearing, seeing, touching, moving and balancing.

Having time for the phase of Lingering and Processing is particularly important. Here processes are set in motion and supported. In this phase, time and space are given to allow participants to immerse themselves in the task. Impressions and experiences can take effect and participants can become aware of them. Here the teacher can provide free space and time for participants to play with elements, follow new impulses or ideas that have arisen.

The phase of Expression provides pace for spontaneity and creativity, helping to "bring out" internalized impressions. The teacher can encourage the learning input to be expressed in different ways and enables solutions that are valid for the moment. The teacher can also allow time and space for creating and practicing whether participants are working alone, with a partner or in a small group. Often results from this phase will be shown to others in the group. This phase allows time for spontaneity and creativity, where spontaneous or planned ideas are developed, practiced, shown or played which in turn create new impressions. (Siegenthaler & Zihlmann 1988, p.65).

The time for lingering and processing is the valuable and essential time that is necessary if children are to experience, explore and discover and get to the inside of a particular content such as a musical element, a sound, a particular instrument or movement, a scale or rhythm and so on. The time for play, exploration and practice is where children are involved in constructing their own knowledge, assimilating and accommodating. These experiences and discoveries can then be used in different forms of expression which in turn provide new impressions.

The importance of reflection during and after activities is not mentioned in this model but is often important in good pedagogy. In extending this model, we can include Reflection which can take place during or after each phase. Phases of reflection may be led and structured by the teacher and involve individual reflection as well as reflection with a partner, in a small group or with the whole group. This too needs time.

Examples

I would like to illustrate some aspects of the importance of time focussing on Debbie, one of the children in a group of mixed ages and abilities that I taught for a long time. This group is a teaching practice group at the Orff Institute, Mozarteum University Salzburg, Austria for Bachelor and Master students of Elemental Music and Dance Pedagogy.

The weekly lessons focus on:

- Increasing body awareness and Joint attention;

- Joyful playing together;

- Goals in music, dance and language;

- Non-musical goals such as developing self-awareness, social learning, communication, self-confidence, social resonance and social sensibility.

When Debbie joined the group, it was necessary for her mother to also sit in the circle and join in. Then, for over a year, it was necessary for her mother to sit in the room at the side and observe. Only then was it possible for Debbie to develop enough confidence so that she could participate without her mother being in the room.

Example 1 New song

Debbie often used to curl up or hide her eyes especially when new content was being presented. She needed a lot of time. In the video where a new song was introduced, we could observe that Debbie does not participate in the activity, she holds on to a recorder and does not show eye contact until near the end but she does seek physical contact. Here Debbie is over-challenged with this particular task of imitating and participating in time with the teacher.

Example 2 Partner game: instrument and player

When the song 'Tumbula' was first introduced, the children were asked to listen to the melody with their eyes closed. I noticed that many of them were tapping the pulse of the song and took up this idea as a task or game with a partner: one child being the instrument, the other the player. In the video we could see that Debbie has a lot of physical contact with the student teacher, plays into her hand and lets the student teacher play for her as well.

Example 3 Shell shape

In a different session we could see that Debbie understands the task which does not involve music. The student teacher shows a position on the floor, lying on her back, imitating the shape of a shell and encourages the children to become shells. Some children react quickly – Debbie takes her time and is able, in her own time, to join in and imitate the position. She chooses to be near the student teacher, and we can notice that they communicate. The atmosphere is calm und not rushed.

Example 4   Accompanying with chime bars

For the session with the song 'Tumbula', different types of instruments had been placed on round rugs in the room – the children then had time to move around, trying out the instruments and then deciding which one they wanted to play to accompany the song.

Debbie chose to play a chime bar together with another child and student teacher – the 3 chime bars formed a triad. They start playing the beat slowly and I take up their tempo, which is slower than at the beginning of the lesson. Later, when the song speeds up a bit, Debbie is overchallenged. She is still busy with self-agency playing her chime bar and would need more time to adapt to the tempo. Debbie is obviously involved in playing and concentrating hard on her instrument. She is involved in her own playing and doesn't look up until a new instrument joins the group. Later, when we start the song again together, we can see that is difficult for her to start in time with the group. The topic of Tempo is important in all groups. We always need to consider: Whose tempo? When and why?

Example 5   Improvising with scarves

In my last example, part of the session had been taught by a student teacher. First, she gave time

and space for the children to explore, experiment and to play with the coloured chiffon scarves, to discover their qualities without giving any specific tasks to imitate and without music.

In the video example we see what happens afterwards when music is added and when there is time and space for the children to react and improvise. Debbie and a boy gradually find themselves facing each other with their scarves, reacting to each other and improvising. Debbie's encounters with her partner are affective and emotional. This can be seen in her facial expressions and the social-referencing glances which indicate that she is capable of joint attention. The task – playing, improvising and dancing with a scarf – and doing this with a partner - corresponds to Debbie's level of development.

As the activity is easier than playing the chime bar and at Debbie's level of development, she can be confident. Because of this, Debbie can open up, and has emotional freedom to make contact with someone else. We can recognize that playing an instrument is more complex than moving and improvising with a scarf as, developmentally, playing with an instrument typically develops at the end of the infant's 1st year while playing with a scarf is possible much earlier.

Conclusion

Time is a valuable resource. The challenge of working with groups is not just about the timing of a session but trying to provide the amount of time each child needs for different tasks, for dialogue, communication, learning and support. Time offers, among other things, opportunities to develop the unfolding of sensory power in teaching processes and to provide a sense of physicality in learning. The importance and relevance of physical learning is widely recognised (Stavely 2020, Sangiorgio 2015, Haselbach 2003) and prevents learning processes from being too quickly conceived just in cognitive terms.

The topics mentioned here - Feuser's three different types of time, the importance of pauses and the importance of lingering – are some of the important considerations that may help to manage aspects of time in teaching and therapy. The topic of time, its forms, necessity, contexts and effects need to be considered more fully in educational and therapeutic contexts.

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