

# “INSTRUMENTALBREAK” AND “PEER GROUP BANDS”: Co-creating innovative formats in cooperations between secondary schools and music schools

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► **Initial situation:** *Profilklasse* is a common model in cooperations of German secondary schools and music schools. Mostly fifth and sixth graders learn an instrument in a group of about thirty individuals from the start, instructed by a school music teacher and cooperating instrumental teachers.

► **Didactic issue:** Given the complexity of this setting, lessons tend to be quite teacher-centered and focus on the systematic training of basic instrumental skills – leaving little room to student participation in decision-making, creativity, and the expression of musical interests. Consequently, providing stimulation and space for these very aspects means significant, innovative change in *Profilklasse* teaching approaches and priorities.

► **Research background:** Research shows that sustainable innovation in teaching must tackle the teaching-learning environment (Bikner-Ahsbahs & Peters, 2019), which is highly site-specific and therefore cannot be adequately addressed by external top-down regulations (Rürup, 2013). Moreover, teachers play a key role in innovation; Bikner-Ahsbahs and Peters speak of “innovation [...] as a social practice of change” (p. 324).

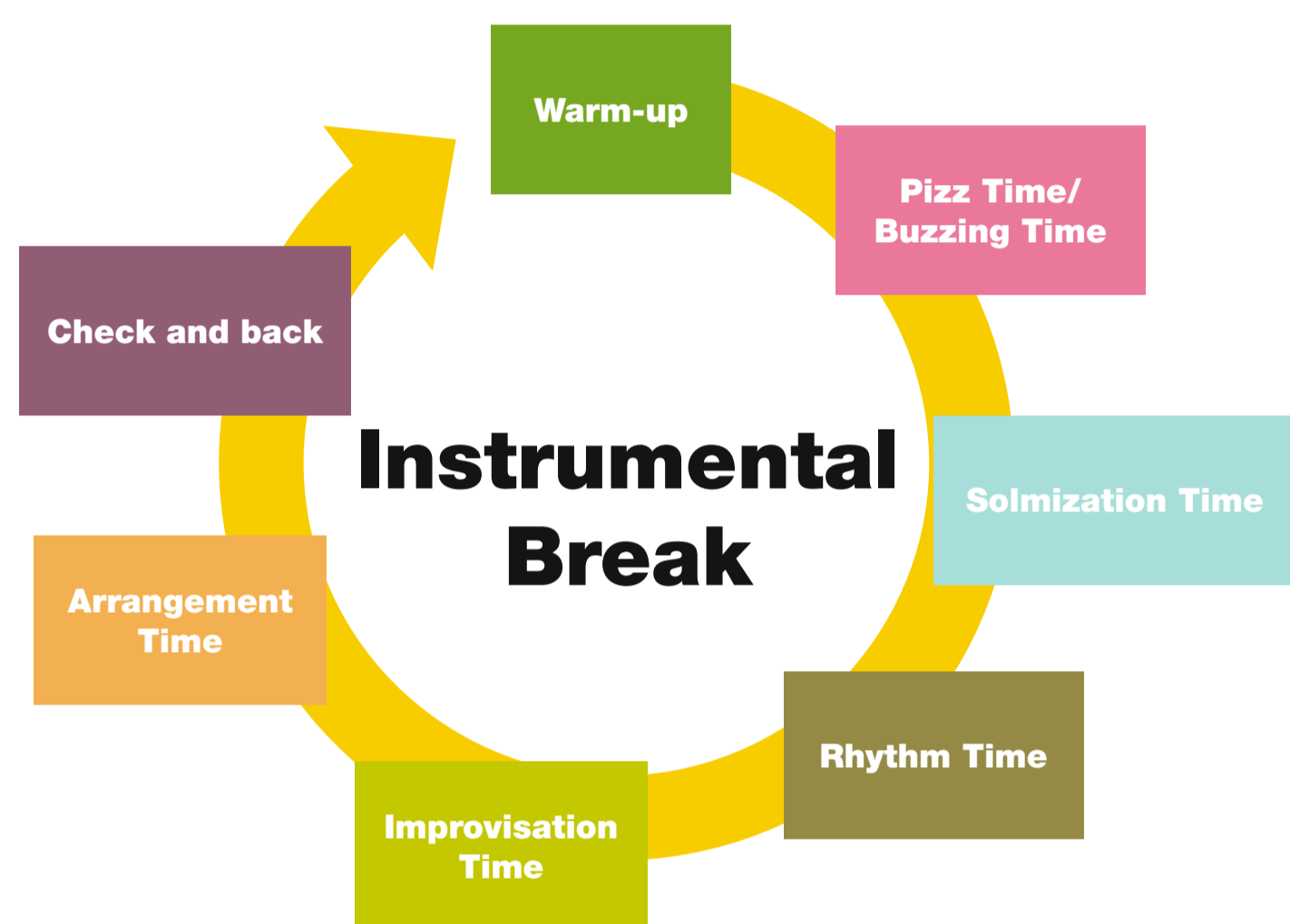


Fig. 1: “InstrumentalBreak” sequence

►► **Goal:** In a current practice project in the context of “Eine (Musik)Schule für alle” (EMSA)\*, we aim to develop music learning formats that open up space for students’ creativity and participation within established *Profilklasse* structures.

►► **Approach:** Starting from the research-based understanding of sustainable innovation (see above), we initiate processes in which on-site actors of both school and music school co-create new music learning formats (Stöger, 2022), based on the specific needs and resources of their cooperation project.



Fig. 2: “Peer Group Bands” rehearsal impressions

Crucial steps are:

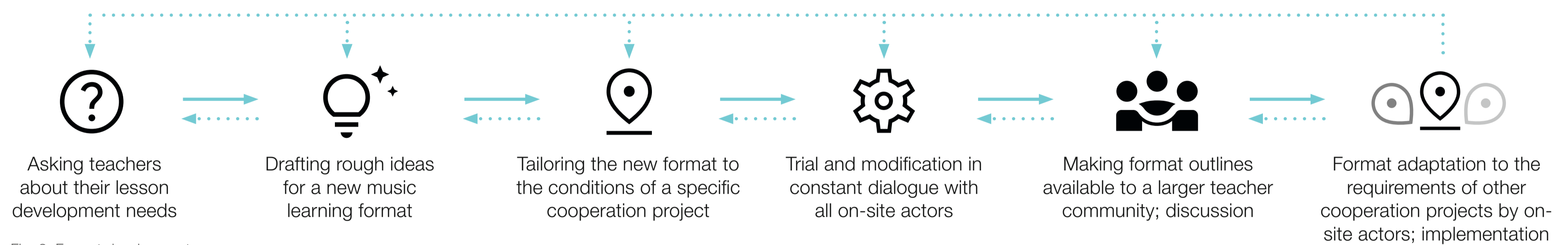


Fig. 3: Format development process

## “InstrumentalBreak”

**Lesson development needs:** Teachers complained that students in *Profilklasse* lacked meaningful practice contexts, music-making opportunities beyond *Profilklasse* lessons and connections to regular music lessons.

**How it works:** Within 10 minutes, the class goes through a fixed, ritualized sequence of two-minute phases featuring different musical and instrumental competencies (solmization, improvisation, specific techniques, etc.). The sequence leads into a phase of polyphonic music-making and contains firmly anchored moments of self-direction and reflection. The InstrumentalBreak can be put into action as

- a ritual within the *Profilklasse* rehearsal or
- a slide-in module during other school subjects’ lessons.

**Innovative features:** Additional space for musical learning and instrumental practice in school; ritual to rhythm the school day; diverse learning approaches enable connections with other music learning settings.

**Challenges:** High noise level for nearby classes; quick, flexible instrument set-up; communication with teachers whose lessons are interrupted.

There is no footage of the InstrumentalBreak yet; the QR code leads to impressions of the “Break”-format’s vocal version (“VocalBreak”).



## “Peer Group Bands”

**Lesson development needs:** *Profilklasse* lessons and established teaching materials tend to be stylistically limited, mostly notation-based and have little connection to the students’ musical interests outside school.

**How it works:** For part of the *Profilklasse* lesson, small student groups formed by shared musical preferences and friendships pursue self-selected projects (playing favorite songs, arrangement, song writing, recording, etc.). Teachers act as band coaches and rotate between bands.

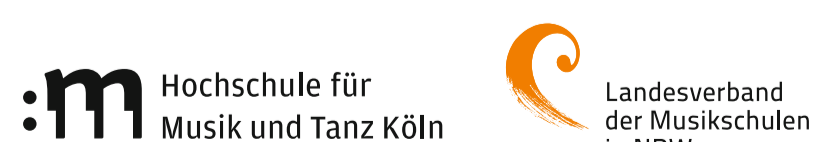
**Innovative features:** Peer Group Bands create more autonomous, self-determined learning settings and informal spaces where students can express and share musical interests while linking them with vocal or instrumental training. Upcoming tasks (arrangement decisions, playing by ear, etc.) foster creative, reflective and hearing skills. While the band format per se is not new (see Green, 2008; Godau, 2017), it usually is not part of the *Profilklasse* framework.

**Challenges:** Availability of additional rooms; teachers’ potential lack in pop music expertise and unfamiliarity with taking a back seat; dealing with debatable song choices (e.g. sexist, violent lyrics).



► **Next steps:** Trial and implementation of the new formats in further cooperation projects → site-specific innovation processes and format re-design.

\* EMSA is a development project of



Supported by



**References:** Bikner-Ahsbahs, A. & Peters, M. (2019). *How does change happen? Ein Modell zur Innovation im Fachunterricht*. In A. Bikner-Ahsbahs & M. Peters (Eds.), *Unterrichtsentwicklung macht Schule. Forschung und Innovation im Fachunterricht* (pp. 309-330). Wiesbaden: Springer. – Godau, M. (2017). *Gemeinsam allein: Klassenmusizieren mit Populärer Musik. Eine systemisch-konstruktivistische Grounded Theory über Prozesse selbständigen Lernens von Gruppen mit informellen Lernmethoden im schulischen Musikunterricht*. Berlin: LIT. – Green, L. (2008). *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*. London: Routledge. – Rürup, M. (2013). *Graswurzelbewegungen der Innovation. Zur Innovativität von Schulen und Lehrkräften, ‘At-the-Bottom’ der Schullandschaft*. In M. Rürup & I. Bormann (Eds.), *Innovationen im Bildungswesen. Analytische Zugänge und empirische Befunde* (pp. 269-301). Wiesbaden: Springer. – Stöger, C. (2022). *(Musik-)Entwicklung und Innovation*. In N. Ardila-Mantilla, S. Buyken-Hölker, U. Schmidt-Laukamp & C. Stöger (Eds.), *EMSA – Eine (Musik)Schule für alle. Musikalische Bildungswege gemeinsam gehen* (pp. 187-197). Mainz: Schott.

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