

Abstract

Recent research findings have reinforced the importance of soft skills for managerial success. Consequently, there is an ongoing practical need for and research interest in effective soft skill training. In order to improve the soft skills of their employees, companies have begun to turn to performing artists in the hope of achieving a high training effect. While this phenomenon has created excitement, it has hardly been the subject of serious investigation guided by research questions and executed research methodologies. In particular, hardly any insights exist into the exercises artists use when providing soft skill training and coaching for a business audience. In order to explore such activities in a systematic way, this thesis turns the attention to the performing arts higher education curriculum for identifying relevant exercise categories and for linking them to soft skills. This is accomplished through in-depth interviews conducted with classical singing and drama teachers in Germany. In order to achieve a transfer to the business world, HR representatives from German-based management consulting firms are also questioned through in-depth interviews in order to explore relevant soft skills addressable by performing arts interventions. The results show transfer links between eight performing arts curriculum items and seven soft skill categories. Apart from exploring the relationship between arts-based exercises and managerial soft skills, the research results confirm the benefit rationale for arts-based training and highlight success factors. The outcomes are visualised in a suggestive model aimed at providing a systematic orientation for arts-based trainers and for organisations considering soft skill training based on the performing arts. However, the research has also limitations, especially a too conservative number of connections between performing arts curricular items and soft skill categories. Other limitations include a regional and cultural focus on Germany, as well as the reduction of arts-based training activities to the boundaries of formal performing arts education. These shortcomings are used for motivating future research.