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## **Collaborative learning in conservatoire education: catalyst for innovation**

Roemjantsew, T.

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# 4

## **TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH IN CONSERVATOIRE EDUCATION\***

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*Abstract*

This study aims to increase understanding of the values and outcomes of teacher action research in conservatoire education. Teacher action research has been found to stimulate both professional development and improvement of teaching practice. A multiple-case study design was employed to examine teachers' activities and their perceptions of the value of action research. Findings from the cross-case analysis include teachers' perceptions of action research as a way to stimulate the advancement of both their teaching practice and their professional development. Constructive collaborations and self-reflections related to teacher action research were found to reinforce their learning and teaching.

**Keywords:** conservatoire education, teacher action research, improving practice, professional development, educational innovation

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Music professionals are engaged in a diverse and demanding practice in which they are required to work collaboratively and move between different roles (Gaunt, 2013). Quite a few contemporary studies within the field of conservatoire pedagogy have addressed the need for change of the conservatoire curriculum and alignment with the requirements of professional practice (see, e.g., Forbes, 2016b, 2020; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013; Partti & Westerlund, 2013; Virkkula, 2016a). Statements have been made about inclusion of such elements as reflective practice and collaborative learning to broaden students' education through including other skills next to musical expertise.

Conservatoire teachers need to prepare students for a varied practice even though they themselves were educated very differently, with the focus on becoming a "maestro performer" (Carey et al., 2013). Moreover, teaching in a conservatoire is individual in nature, without much collaboration or pedagogical exchange between teachers (Gaunt, 2013). Professional development is needed to bring about pedagogical change (Duffy, 2016). Studies on ICON (Innovative Conservatoire – an international learning community of conservatoire teachers) have reported on collaborative professional development through knowledge exchange, reflection, and an inquiry stance to support teachers in the practical exploration and elicitation of their knowledge; this included seminars on improvisation, creativity, embodiment, teaching approaches, and practice-based research (Duffy, 2016; Gaunt, 2013).

One such seminar was investigated by Gaunt (2013) concerning a participative action research project designed to inspire and support reflective practice amongst conservatoire teachers. Teachers collaboratively engaged in a process of communication and reflection on various sources meaningful to them as musicians. This collaborative process was found to build a language for communication among participants and bring tacit knowledge to the surface. Interacting with colleagues led to stronger artistic and professional self-images, as reported by the participants in written reflections and interviews. In line with this conclusion, Borgdorff and Schuijjer (2010) stated that teacher research not only affects professional development and teaching practice, but also impacts on artistic development within the conservatoire through more articulated and reflective communication of experiences and understandings.

Since teacher research appears to be valuable in various ways, and since we found a rather small body of such research in conservatoire education, we aim to

contribute to the growing understanding of teacher research in conservatoires by exploring the perceptions of teachers who have carried out action research projects.

#### **4.1.1 PRACTITIONER INQUIRY AND TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH**

Although practitioner research, practitioner inquiry, teacher research, and teacher action research all appear to centre on research teachers carry out in their own contexts, intertwining theoretical and practical knowledge, there are different philosophical assumptions and methodological points of departure for these types of research. First, action research typically includes a “plan – act – evaluate – reflect” cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Rather than being an imposed top-down change, educational action research is considered to initiate reform of practice, conducted by teachers as agents and insiders, examining their own situations and circumstances in their classrooms and schools (Pine, 2009). Reflection on their practice helps teachers to improve it, to develop their teaching and learning environments, to innovate, to gain autonomy in their professional judgements, and to increase their craftsmanship and expertise.

Second, practitioner research in which teachers seek to make sense of their teaching practice through *inquiry* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) departs from the premise that teachers are “deliberative intellectuals who constantly theorize practice as part of practice itself and that the goal of teacher learning initiatives is the joint construction of local knowledge, the questioning of common assumptions, and thoughtful critique of the usefulness of research generated by others both inside and outside contexts of practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p.4). It goes beyond the scope of the current study to explore further similarities and differences between these two branches of practice-based research. We found examples of both in the context of conservatoire education; we describe a selection below.

In the first example, Westerlund and Karlsen (2013) investigated the creation of an academic community of doctoral music students and senior researchers at Sibelius Academy, which aimed to improve researcher education through a professional learning community as a catalyst for learning and local knowledge development open to discussion and the critique of others (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The concept of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, Trayner, & De Laat, 2011) was used to develop a research community that carried out various academic tasks on which small groups within the community were working, such as a book project, a

conference symposium, collaborative research, co-authoring, and peer review. These activities created more interaction and negotiation between members and supported collaborations and learning partnerships among junior and senior researchers involved. Data collected from members' reflective essays and questionnaires showed that collaboration and communication increased, and that more informal peer interaction created more connections and relationships between students and research staff, feelings of belonging to the community, and a shared identity. Community development cannot be taken for granted, was a conclusion drawn: learning partnerships and collaborations need to be designed. In addition, the community itself needs to be adapted and redesigned constantly in order to match the composition of community members.

Rikandi (2012), a member of the above-described research community, adopted the concept of a community of practice as a starting point for developing a “free accompaniment/piano improvisation” learning community together with students to support an increase in their agency. The author started this community due to dissatisfaction with the design of the course (as part of a bachelor of music education) and the alignment between curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, which were focused on the individual apprehension of musical content rather than student learning. Rikandi (2012) aimed to develop a context for better teaching and more effective learning. The analysis of a rich data collection in two phases, including the teachers' research diaries, audio- and video-recordings, student essays, and individual interviews with students, showed that students increased their agency over their learning processes and their engagement in the co-construction of a learning community and of knowledge. Reflective journaling of the teacher-researcher led to understanding of the variety of roles the teacher can have which promote the agency of all community members. Regardless of their backgrounds, the students valued the collaborative activities and learning in the heterogeneous community greatly.

The third example refers to a report of action research into the effective teaching and learning of breathing techniques in oboe-playing among undergraduate and postgraduate students at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Gaunt, 2007). Students were free to participate in some, none, or all of the learning activities that were part of Gaunt's research (2007). Extensive data collection took place, including video recordings of students playing, stimulated-recall interviews with students, teacher's reflective notes, a student questionnaire, and observations of teaching activities by a

critical friend (senior colleague) who provided feedback. At the start of the project, participants had indicated that breathing problems hindered their musical expression while playing the oboe. Participants were, more than they normally would have been, provided with a wide range of learning activities: musical, physical, physiological, psychological, all included in the action research. Through these research activities, space was provided for students' individual personal and musical preferences. The impact of the learning activities was visible in the seriousness of the students' reflections on their own learning, in the scope of students' abilities to see alternatives for practice, and in the number of interactions in sharing experiences with the group, which all together resulted in the empowerment of the students in their oboe practice.

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### **4.1.2 CURRENT STUDY**

Although the findings on teachers-as-researchers suggest that there is a relation between teachers' professional development and innovation of teaching practice, not many studies have connected teacher's professional development and the innovation of their teaching in one study on action research in conservatoire education. Therefore, we aimed to acquire a rich and in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding their teaching practice and professional development as a result of conducting action research projects. Our questions included the following:

- (1) How do teachers perceive their professional development through action research?
- (2) How do teachers perceive improving their teaching practice through action research?

## **4.2 METHODS**

### **4.2.1 APPROACH, RESEARCH DESIGN, AND CONTEXT**

We applied a multiple-case design (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003), with two cases of conservatoire teachers conducting an action research project in their own teaching practice. The research context was a conservatoire located in the Netherlands with about 500 music students. Music studies are offered in classical, jazz, pop, and world music genres. The teachers' action research under investigation included two cases.

The first was a first-year integrated music theory class (including Western European jazz-oriented solfège, harmony, counterpoint, and analysis) within the world music department. The class had nine participating students. The teacher aimed to adopt a

more student-centred approach and establish stronger connections between music theoretical subjects and students' musical practice.

The second case concerned a team of four teachers of a second-year band skills class within the pop music department. The class had twenty participating students. Small groups of students (three or four) performed and practiced skills in band formation while other students in the class were listening. All four teachers present in class gave the performing students feedback, which was organised in an informal way. The action research aim of the teacher in the second case was to co-construct a team vision of education in band skills, and to engage colleagues in peer-mentoring, collaboration, critical friendship, and reflection. Both action research projects included the following phases: identification of the problem, planning of the intervention, monitoring of the intervention, data collection, data analysis, reflection, evaluation, and review of the process.

During the period of data collection in 2020, the on-site classes of both teachers were cancelled due to COVID-19 regulations, and the course and assessment of the students were revised. Instead of on-site pitches and presentations, students made video- and audio-recordings in their own homes or studios, to be included in a portfolio of assignments, which was then presented online (via Zoom), assessed, and given feedback by the teachers. The research aims of the two teachers remained unchanged.

#### **4.2.2 PARTICIPANTS**

Two teachers conducting action research were the subject of our study, and their projects are described here as case studies. Both teachers had nearly twenty years of teaching experience in higher music education and backgrounds as musicians. They started their action research projects with the aim of improving their courses, and were also co-researchers in each other's projects. They both had obtained an educational master's degree. Consent for research was given by the teachers and students participating in the cases, both verbally and in written form. The participants have been given pseudonyms.

We should mention here that, with three authors (two teachers and the first author) being insiders in the institution, our analysis and writing has been informed by this perspective. However, the utmost has been done to moderate subjective interpretations. Researcher bias was reduced by providing an academic context and having two external professors follow the process and take part in supervision, conceptualization, methodology, and review.



#### 4.2.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection regarding the two teachers took place over a period of eight months, and included two interviews, classroom observations and field notes, reflection reports, and final reports.

The reflection reports teachers wrote individually were based on the ALACT model (Korthagen, 2001). This model includes a cycle with five stages: action, looking back on the action, awareness of essential aspects, creating alternative methods of action, and trial. The topic of reflection was chosen by the teachers. After the entire project had ended, the teachers wrote a final report and a final reflection, and participated in an interview.

The interviews took place after the reflective reports had been written. A semi-structured approach was applied: the teachers were asked to reflect on what they perceived they had learned from their research projects, how they perceived themselves to have developed professionally, what activities they had used, and what they considered important factors in improving their practice. The interviews took place in the building of the institution or via Zoom, and were recorded with permission from the teachers. Audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim using Amber-script software and edited by the first author.

#### 4.2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

We performed a thematic cross-case analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) driven by a grounded-theory approach (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interviews and reflective reports were coded using Atlas.ti software. This data-driven stage of analysis was used to generate a preliminary codebook, including a code name, description, and example from the text. The analysis of the data focused on thematic discovery from the transcripts and was achieved through open and axial coding. Interview transcriptions were read and re-read to collect open codes. We kept reading and collecting until no new codes occurred and saturation was established.

Using labelling, colouring, and grouping in Atlas.ti, we discovered relationships and we kept re-grouping until a logical order had emerged and seven higher-level axial codes were established: *teaching practice*, *student learning*, *collaboration*, *professional development*, *research project*, *institution*, and *pandemic* (including lockdown and closing of the institution's buildings). Subsequently, grouping and re-grouping of these axial codes led to the construction of two overarching selective codes: *teacher professional learning* -

what and how teachers learned and how they developed professionally, including text coded with collaboration, professional development, and research project; and *improving practice*, including text coded with teaching practice, student learning, institution, and pandemic.

As a validity check, the analysis was read by the teachers, who reflected on the codes, the grouping of codes, and the interview fragments. Reflections and suggestions from the participatory action research teachers were discussed until mutual agreement was reached, and the preliminary codebook was adapted accordingly.

### 4.3 TWO CASES OF TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH IN A CONSERVATOIRE

#### 4.3.1 CASE STUDY JAMIE: MUSIC THEORY IN THE WORLD MUSIC DEPARTMENT

The aim of this action research project was to develop student-centred teaching and establish stronger connections between music theoretical subjects and the students' musical practice. From annual evaluations Jamie had concluded that students experienced music theory as being separate from their musical practice. Jamie sought ways to address (1) students' personal, sometimes intuitive relation to music; (2) communication about music with peers; and (3) formal descriptions of musical events in the lessons.

Jamie's objective was to adapt music theory lessons to be more practice-based and student-centred, based on input from the students' and his own experiences in class. The research project focused on allowing more space for students' personal experiences with music and facilitating conversations between students about what they perceived instead of forcing them to apply formal descriptions. Helping them to develop a vocabulary to speak about music other than with formal descriptions, but avoiding shallow statements such as "I like it", "It sounds nice", etc., Jamie remarked:

I always presumed students understood what I told them, that when I explained something only once they had the abilities to handle it. I probably misjudged them. I find it quite hard to genuinely relate to their experiences.

Jamie developed a framework based on embodied music cognition (Leman, 2008), comprising both cognitive and physical experiences related to music perception, through which students were encouraged to express themselves regarding their listening encounters; in this way he specifically acknowledged different listening and learning experiences among students. According to Jamie,

It was quite shocking to notice that I could dismiss the transfer of knowledge – as in a traditional music theory lesson – from the classroom. It appeared to be possible to focus on students' personal intuitive reflections on music; to share and communicate about their experiences during class. Students worked and collaborated in this new approach and had similar results in their exams to before. I found that there was an incredibly large amount of flexibility in applying pedagogical approaches; much more than I thought.

The students worked both individually and collaboratively in the classes. They received and worked out assignments digitally in a learning management system (LMS). Jamie reflected:

I have an urge to work more with a flipped classroom. Ideally, students would acquire the necessary knowledge themselves, through the LMS. Knowledge in their own time, and collaborative explorations of their personal experiences, perceptions, and reflections in class. Also, I aim to connect the stuff we do in class to competency-based education, having students work with goals and objectives, relating to other subjects and courses. Ultimately, it is my wish to terminate the subject 'music theory' and see it included in all other subjects.

Students kept portfolios of their learning goals, assignments, and reflections. Due to the lockdown, on-site lessons were replaced by online sessions via Zoom. Although many adaptations had to be made, according to the students the online sessions were successful. They especially valued working with peers, in pairs or small groups in breakout rooms, and they perceived the environment as one of trust and safety, due to a culture where they were not judged on right or wrong answers. Assessment included writing a final reflective report to conclude their portfolio. Jamie evaluated these reports and analysed them using a coding protocol, together with colleague Charlie. Jamie stated:

It has been so valuable to collaborate with my colleague. Also, I really needed to read about pedagogical approaches and concepts; what is knowledge, what is learning. My perceptions have changed completely. I held this stance for twenty years: I have knowledge. When I open my mouth and speak, I communicate my knowledge; it will then be in the minds of the students and they will grasp it. Now, I have a completely different perspective of what learning is... I had to knock myself off my own pedestal.

Conclusions from the analysis of students' reflective reports comprised their evaluations of the value of this new approach to teaching and learning music theory for (1) the extension of their vocabulary to speak about music, (2) the increase in self-regulation, and (3) the safe learning environment. Jamie concluded:

Collaborating and learning collaboratively affected the students' and my own development. Dialogues, peer-mentoring, cooperation with colleagues, with co-researchers. Social constructivism seems to work. But we have to consider the vulnerable side of collaborations. Opening up to other people. Daring to let go of certain features of control. It requires a safe learning environment, trust, support from leadership. It occurred to me that, as old school, old paradigm teachers, we have been working far too hard, on the one hand, trying to control everything, and on the other hand, not hard enough because we were not really concerned with how the students were learning.

#### **4.3.2 CASE STUDY CHARLIE: BAND SKILLS IN THE POP DEPARTMENT**

The aim of this research project was to develop a team vision of education in band skills, and to engage the team of teachers in peer-mentoring, critical friendship, and reflection. Charlie was dissatisfied with students' annual course evaluations, which showed low evaluations of teaching approaches, assessment, guidance, and feedback. Based on the final competences and indicators of the Bachelor of Music (Vereniging Hogescholen, 2017) and personal experiences from professional practice, Charlie argued that more attention should be given to the development of students' self-regulation and reflective practice. Charlie said:

Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) is very relevant to our practice. We do need a new paradigm to regard our working place, including those we work with, in a much more reflective manner. Everyone should read that book.

Charlie started with the idea that co-construction of a team vision was needed, in which the education of reflective and self-regulative students formed the core.

Charlie's motivation for undertaking the action research project included the assumption that these educational goals would be attainable through reinforcement of reflective skills and the in-class feedback strategies of teachers, and through increasing their ownership of the process. The teachers in the team were already close collaborators in lesson preparation and could be regarded as one another's critical friends. Charlie undertook several team interventions, such as interviews and peer-mentoring sessions, using Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008) and Korthagen's reflection models (Korthagen, 2001; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Charlie found,

It was of major additional value that we had time and space to have conversations about the lessons, their purpose and goals. We had to make these more explicit. There is so much that is implicit in the pop department. By gaining understanding of how colleagues are

involved, sharing our preferences, interests, perspectives, one becomes more aware of how others are engaged and it becomes easier to cooperate.

The collected data were analysed through a coding protocol, together with Jamie. Furthermore, a model of Elshout-Mohr (2000) was adapted in order to draw conclusions regarding the levels of reflection present among teachers in the team. As regards learning, Charlie remarked:

A whole new world has opened up: educational science, theories, concepts... So much is applicable to our education and organisation. We are too focused on the subject matter and not on the underlying learning processes. I became aware of that.

Charlie concluded that the willingness to reflect did exist among participating teachers, although reflective skills were missing or very basic.

Building of a team vision stagnated due to different opinions on the student competences to be developed. Conversations were focused on the content of music and skills instead of on the process and pedagogical aspects. Charlie reflected on this:

My team members are willing to innovate. They are flexible and do wish to change aspects of our course. However, they focus on the content, whereas I am trying to involve them in the learning processes of students. Yeah, I think that's what I mean, that I am trying to make them more aware of the learning process.

Peer-mentoring sessions within the team were perceived as positive and conversations as constructive, and the collegial feedback felt as if it had been given by critical friends.

Charlie concluded:

I recognize that I have my own blind spots. They have not yet been resolved. I want to create richer learning experiences for the students, continue to improve my feedback skills, use a flipped classroom...The need for educational innovation is enormous. The institution could be more demanding, for example, regarding teacher professional development. Leadership has to be more involved in innovation and should support peer-mentoring and professional development in our schedules.

#### **4.3.3 CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS**

Our cross-case analysis centred on teachers' perceptions of their own research projects and included two themes. The first theme concerned what and how they learned and how they developed professionally, as captured in teacher professional learning. The

second theme concerned important factors that influenced the improvement of their practice.

**Teacher Professional Learning.** One of our aims was to gain understanding of the relation between teacher action research and professional development. Teachers initiated studies of pedagogical topics and literature in their action research projects, and thus started to see and understand where they lacked knowledge. Being facilitated by the institution to conduct research and investigate materials close to their practice was perceived as very valuable.

Teachers engaged in much self-reflection to identify the relevance of their teaching. Through self-reflection and the study of various sources, teachers noticed that they had shifted from having a primary focus on musical content to having a greater focus on the processes behind teaching and learning. Moreover, they recognized that they had acted in teacher-centred ways in the past, which they now regarded as “old school” or “old paradigm” teaching.

Feeling a strong urge to become better teachers, they discovered they had to change perspectives and give up previous conceptions, opinions, and thoughts on what is important in teaching. Their comprehension of what knowledge to transfer to students changed and they consequently understood that merely talking about content knowledge does not automatically mean that students will understand or even learn to use that knowledge themselves. They regarded this partly as a process of awakening and becoming aware of the need for their own professional development, for peer mentoring, and educational change and innovation.

In recognizing the need for change, teachers valued greatly constructive collegiality from critical friends: they experienced that a collegial companion with whom to discuss, negotiate, and exchange experiences was a valuable asset to their own professional development.

**Improving Practice.** Our second aim was to gain understanding of the relation between teacher action research and improving teaching practice. Teachers stated that their present teaching practice appeared to be very different from their practice of fifteen years ago. Due to their experiences of their respective action research projects and from talking about these projects with each other, the teachers perceived that their conceptions of teaching and learning had shifted from a focus on the transfer of

knowledge towards a focus on students' learning processes. This change of conceptions was described as carrying more weight than adapting the curriculum.

In the period of the lockdown emotions such as anxiety and fear of losing control over the work situation arose, but the teachers continued to work on improving their teaching and their own professional development. The lockdown and related changes in the entire teaching situation were perceived as both positive and negative. Feelings of insecurity were present, but quick changes due to the pressure cooker effect were experienced as positive, exciting and inspiring, speeding up the need for new, creative insights into pedagogical approaches such as activating students, supplying collaborative assignments, using breakout rooms in Zoom, and including video-recorded reflections.

Important aspects of improvement included (1) structural implementation of reflection and feedback, for both students and teachers, and (2) implementing a variety of different teaching and learning strategies, including collaborative learning and blended learning approaches. Teachers expected to continue working with the different technologies that were used during the lockdown. Both blended and collaborative learning were found to create a rich learning environment.

#### 4.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Two teacher-researchers conducted action research projects, which resulted in advancing both their teaching practice and their professional development. From our cross-case analyses we conclude that, as an outcome of doing action research, the teachers developed an inquiry stance as part of their professional learning: (1) they developed their pedagogical knowledge and skills through accessing and reading various sources on teaching methods; (2) they gained new insights into their teaching and learning; (3) they developed understanding of their roles as teachers; (4) through reflection they became aware of what skills they had and what skills they still needed and wanted to acquire; (5) they developed new perspectives, and moreover changed their conceptions of teaching and learning. An inquiry stance has been found to induce a transformative and inclusive conception of the nature of learning, the practice of teaching, and the construction of knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

Regarding their teaching practice, teachers mentioned having improved or aiming to improve the following aspects: (1) they created a more student-centred learning environment; (2) they activated students through collaborative learning approaches, peer

feedback, and reflection; (3) they integrated blended learning approaches in their course; (4) they included working with portfolios and reflective journals. While their perceptions of their own teaching had previously remained tacit, the teachers in this study were now able to reflect on the changes in their teaching practice and professional learning. This comprised understanding a shift from mainly transferring their own knowledge to focusing on students' learning processes.

The perceived changes in the teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning supported the application of more and more varied teaching and learning approaches and were reinforced through personal and contextual reflections. Previously, their teaching expertise could be regarded as tacit and their professional behaviour as intuitive; through action research, metacognitive thought processes had become leading in their professional behaviour and their learning had become deliberate as opposed to implicit (Eraut, 1994; 2004). Based on these findings, we conclude that the teachers engaged in reflection on the nature and purposes of teaching and learning in a conservatoire. Furthermore, the teachers expressed a desire to share their acquired knowledge and skills through teaching and learning with colleagues in a supportive and collaborative environment.

#### ***4.4.1 LIMITATIONS***

We focused in this study on a small selection of teachers from only one conservatoire. The two teachers who participated were highly experienced, having taught for nearly twenty years. Both completed their master's degrees on educational topics, prior to the research projects presented here. We are aware that this forms a specific background. Thus, generalization to a broader concept of conservatoire teachers should be considered carefully. Another consideration is the COVID-19 pandemic: the regulations and lockdown related to this had an important influence on the teachers' educational practice as a whole.

#### ***4.4.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS***

In the rather young research tradition within conservatoires and higher music education, teacher action research can potentially have a positive influence on improving teaching practice as well as teacher professional learning. Also, for conservatoires in the process of becoming research-based institutions according to the conditions of the implementation of the Bologna process, it might be valuable to support those teachers who wish to engage in research.



From the findings of the current multiple-case study, we see that not only did these teachers develop their knowledge and understanding, but also other competencies like collaboration, negotiation, experimentation, and self-reflection. As a work place, the conservatoire has a variety of teachers and leaders with different preferences for teaching and learning approaches. However, for the sake of current and prospective students, it is necessary for institutions to take responsibility for the professional development of their teaching staff and educational innovation.

The demands of professional practice will not cease to be more diverse; future musicians will need to possess an explicit understanding of their talents and competencies. Teachers are role models for students and should, therefore, demonstrate how to learn professionally through deliberate reflective practices. In this respect, they are required to understand and explicate their own teaching practice, employ deliberate learning, and apprehend various teaching and learning approaches, including support and development of self-regulated learners and reflective practitioners.

#### ***4.4.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS***

The findings presented above suggest that teacher action research within conservatoire education can be a valuable approach to address the aims of increasing teachers' professionalism, improving teaching practice, and opening up to conversations on teaching and learning. Moreover, teacher action research can form an impetus for professional, educational, artistic, and organisational development.