Collaborative learning in conservatoire education: catalyst for innovation

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CONSERVATOIRE LEADERS' OBSERVATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS ON CURRICULUM REFORM*

Abstract

Musicians nowadays need to be able to work both creatively and collaboratively, often in a wider range of artistic, social and cultural contexts. A strong vision on conservatoire pedagogy is needed to reach this goal and at the same time align with the demands of higher education. At the start of the 21st century, renewal of curricula concentrated on implementing the teaching of a broader range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes, including problem-solving, reflective, cooperative, and communicative competences, as part of the Bologna process of implementing Bachelor and Master of Music programmes. In semi-structured interviews, leaders of conservatoires in Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands reflected on their curriculum and revealed their observations and perceptions of its connection to professional practice. Based on a thematic analysis, conservatoire leaders' observations and perceptions of the process of curriculum reform were identified. They indicated that teaching professionals continue to maintain an autonomous position, practising traditional forms of teaching and learning. Conservatoire leaders were rather hesitant in implementing new pedagogies, teaching principles and guidelines, due to a dedication to craftsmanship and a large amount of respect for the expertise of teaching professionals in the conservatoire.

Keywords: higher music education; leadership; pedagogy; collaborative learning; professional practice

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Conservatoire programmes aiming to prepare students for a versatile professional career, require leadership with a clear perspective on future directions. Around the turn of the century, development of craftsmanship alone was considered too narrow a path in relation to requirements of professional practice. Renewal of curricula concentrated on implementing the teaching of a broader range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes, including problem-solving and reflective, cooperative, and communicative competences (AEC, 2007). Musicians need to be able to work both creatively and collaboratively, often in a wider range of artistic, social, and cultural contexts (Gaunt et al., 2012, p. 26). Myers (2016) resonates the conclusions in Campbell et al. (2014) that progressive curriculum changes are needed and argues that it is important to prepare conservatoire students for "leadership, adaptability, and initiative in advancing the values of music and musicians in a techno-global society" (p. 293).

However, very little research has been conducted into how conservatoires are guided to become institutions that connect with twenty-first century professional practice and society. Porter (1998) argued that British music conservatoires need strong leadership in order to keep up with the changes in professional practice and the demands of higher education. Leaders of a conservatoire should "...have a rounded view of its future direction which understands the external musical environment, and which is able to identify trends and act upon them..." (p. 14).

The aim of the current study was to deepen our understanding of conservatoire leaders' observations and perceptions of the effects of curriculum reform that concentrated on implementing the teaching of a broader range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes, including problem-solving and reflective, cooperative, and communicative competences, or in other words how students in conservatoire educational programmes were prepared for professional practice.

5.1.1 LEADERSHIP AND EXISTING PEDAGOGY IN CONSERVATOIRES

In their study, Carey and Lebler (2012) concluded that teachers strived mainly for excellence, which is a rather limited approach in relation to students' musical futures. Duffy (2013) described a process of opening up a traditionally narrow conservatoire curriculum, in order to provide opportunities to collaborate with other artistic disciplines. Aiming for multi- or interdisciplinary collaboration forms a specific type of curriculum

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reform, however, we would like to draw attention to process and approach described in her paper.

In this case study, conservatoire leadership established six curricular principles encompassing their artistic and educational vision, in order to realize curriculum reform: (1) to have excellence go hand in hand with reflection; (2) to have students take responsibility for their own learning; (3) to encounter a variety of artistic fields, including a realistic and informed understanding of employment opportunities; (4) to reinforce the interaction and relationship between practice and theory; (5) to include various skills and attitudes that could enhance collaborative learning in and through practice; and (6) to prepare students to be socially engaged and to make a contribution to the world. Duffy (2013) concluded that conservatoire teachers did enjoy designing a new curriculum while experiencing a growing sense of understanding and willingness to include collaborative learning across arts disciplines. However, she also pointed out the pitfalls of a traditional master-apprentice conservatoire model where professional musicians work as part-time teachers and guide students as expert, coach, and mentor on an individual basis. In that model, the master is regarded as a role model and source of identification (Gaunt, 2010; Creech, 2012), and students learn mainly through imitation (Jørgensen, 2000). Duffy (2013) suggested that this might make it harder to consider collaboration beneficial, as it distracts from the single-minded focus of the specialist discipline.

In her paper on Innovative Conservatoire (ICON), Duffy stated (2016) that even though progressive and innovative initiatives do exist, as in ICON, "if they appear to threaten the perceived 'core business' of the conservatoire (repertoire and technique development through the one-to-one lesson and focussed practice) the shutters will come crashing down" (p. 378). She concluded that conservatoires are structurally conservative and in need of leaders with enough agency and confidence to challenge and motivate their teaching staff, whereas teachers need to be more engaged in curriculum innovation within the conservatoire and be clear about their needs for professional development as teachers.

5.1.2 MUSIC AS A COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

Nearly all situations in the professional practice of musicians require collaboration, which makes the need to include this type of learning in conservatoire programmes necessary. Collaborative learning is a setting in which students learn from

each other in an informal way, developing problem-solving, reflective, cooperative, and communicative competences.

Renshaw (2013) claimed that collaborative learning is central to transforming the master-apprentice teaching model. Furthermore, he stated that collaborative learning is critical to developing, deepening, and transforming shared expertise and understanding, that it contains the power to liberate creativity, and is an important pedagogy in the connection of arts, education, and society. In addition, Renshaw (2013) stated that collaborative learning creates an environment in which teacher professional development, innovation, and change can be initiated and sustained, and as such makes it possible to open up the master-apprentice tradition and include a wider variety of pedagogies besides the one-to-one teaching model.

5.1.3 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND ROLES OF TEACHERS

Bjøntegaard (2015) described a project at the Norwegian Academy of Music where a horn teacher combined teaching individuals, in small groups, and in master class sessions. The teacher thought this to be the best way of educating students as responsible, reflective, and professional musicians. However, "the institution, the teacher and the students must believe in the advantages of organising teaching in different ways and establish a collaborative culture that makes it easier to introduce new models" (p. 33). Lebler (2008) described peer learning within a popular music curriculum due to a lack of intervention by the teacher. Reid and Duke (2015) described communities of practice, in which students of different educational levels were able to behave as self-directed learners.

Hanken (2016) concluded that implementation of collaborative learning requires different attitudes from both teachers and students. She reported on a project of peer learning in higher music education and described a case in which the teacher took on a more passive role with regard to transferring knowledge and skills, and at the same time supported his students in becoming independent learners and musicians. In their collaborative learning activities that took place as part of the project, she found that important aspects of organising group lessons start with the teacher. Teachers should focus on the learning process rather than on achievement and competition and need to focus on facilitating the learning process instead of transmitting knowledge and skills.

The literature described above showed that problem-solving skills and reflective, cooperative, and communicative competences are necessary assets in preparing

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conservatoire students for professional practice. In order to realize this kind of curriculum change, conservatoire leadership needs to have a strong educational and artistic vision. However, we did not find many empirical studies specific on the role of leaders in curriculum development and on their perceptions of the connection of their curriculum to professional practice.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to increase understanding of the observations and perceptions conservatoire leaders have of their curriculum. We have formulated the following research questions:

(1)   How do conservatoire leaders observe and perceive the relationship between the curriculum and professional practice?

(2)   How do conservatoire leaders perceive the competences of their teachers?

(3)   What do conservatoire leaders perceive as necessary to foster development of students' professional competences?

5.2 METHODS

5.2.1 PARTICIPANTS AND DATA

Leaders of all twelve conservatoires in the Netherlands (8) and Flanders (4) were invited to participate in an interview about their implemented curriculum and its connection to professional practice and were interviewed over a period of about nine months in 2015. The two neighbouring countries share the same language (Dutch) and system of accreditation. All conservatoire leaders had a background in music or in musicology. Interviews took place in the leaders' office at each of the conservatoires, were conducted in Dutch, and generally lasted for about 90 minutes. Prior to the start of the interview, participants had been informed in writing about the research project and asked for their consent. Participation was fully voluntarily, and full anonymity was promised as part of their consent for participation. Interviews were audio-taped with permission of the interviewees.

In the theory-driven semi-structured interviews leaders were asked to freely and broadly reflect on three topics: (1) professional practice, (2) pedagogy, and (3) teaching staff, all related to the implemented curriculum and past and potential curriculum reforms. Our interview framework centred on the alignment of problem-solving and reflective, collaborative, and communicative competences within higher music education programmes. Leaders of conservatoires were thus asked to share their observations and perceptions on

the implementation of curricula supporting the development of these competences. In some instances, we formulated for each topic follow-up questions to get a deeper understanding of what was exactly meant. For example (with the numbers referring to the topics of (1) professional practice, (2) pedagogy, and (3) teaching staff):

(1)   "What is your observation of the music profession at present?", "What sources give input to your perception of professional practice?", "What is your perception of past curriculum reform?"

(2) "What teaching approaches do you observe in the implemented curriculum?", "What teaching approaches do you foresee in a potential curriculum reform?", "What competencies do teachers aim to develop in students, in your perception?"

(3) "How do you perceive the role of teachers in the implemented curriculum?", "In your observation, what roles did teachers have in the process of curriculum reform?", "What link do you perceive teachers make between their teaching and professional practice?"

The semi-structured interviews had a theory-driven format making use of sensitizing concepts.

5.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

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The audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim, translated to English and anonymized. Participants are coded as L1 to L12. The transcripts were read repeatedly and were analysed using a data-driven thematic analysis. After repeated readings a coding scheme was established, and after several rounds of re-readings no new codes were found. These codes were clustered into three core categories, related to the sensitizing concepts. Subcategories were identified based on a clustering of codes within the main themes. Three core categories emerged, related to the research questions (see Table 5.1). All codes and codes quotations of these three clusters have been used to present the results in three sections: (1) present professional practice and curriculum reform; (2) teaching approaches and pedagogies; and (3) teachers' competences, roles, and responsibilities.

TABLE 5.1

THE SUBCATEGORIES AND CODES OF THE MAIN CATEGORIES.

Main category	Subcategory	Code/ Label
Professional practice	Characteristics of professional practice	Mixed
		Ever changing
		'Old vs. new'
		Unsecure
		Vulnerable
		Flexible
	Career aspects	Projects
		Portfolio career
		Entrepreneurship
		In context
		Related to society
		Teaching
Teaching approaches and pedagogies	Approach	Individual tutoring
		Master-apprentice
		Group lessons
		Small working groups
		Ensembles
		Research
		Implicit
	Learning aim	Technique
		Craftsmanship
		High level
		Interpretation
		Repertoire
Teachers' competencies, roles and responsibilities	Competencies and roles	Craftsmanship
		Orchestra
		Soloist
		Master-apprentice
		Tradition
		Reputation
		One-to-one
	Responsibilities	Quality
		Repertoire
		Level

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5.3 FINDINGS

5.3.1 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND CURRICULUM REFORM

A majority of the participants observed that their alumni participated in a "mixed professional practice": a mixture of teaching, performing and designing and setting up their own projects. Alumni worked in a so-called portfolio career (see, e.g., Smilde, 2009; Youth Music, 2002): a career including various projects in different engagements, such as teaching, educational projects, large- and small-scale performances, recordings, and sometimes other types of work in music-related businesses. Some participants also mentioned a shortage of jobs, which sometimes led to alumni finding work outside the music sector.

Participants observed that majority of the international student population returned to their home countries (Spain, Greece, Italy, and to lesser extent other European and Asian countries), making them hard to trace. They explained that it is very difficult to get a good view on the professional practices of alumni abroad. Another participant mentioned teaching as a source of basic income:

> I think that the basic income of most alumni relies on teaching. (...) Very few will manage to get a place in an orchestra, as few as just single individuals. (L5)

Both Dutch and Flemish participants described the insecurity of the professional practice and the inability to predict future developments.
While referring to professional practice, participants used terms such as "old vs. new professional practice", "ever changing", and "rapidly changing".

> A musician acts as a cultural entrepreneur who has to find his own route in a free and unsecure practice. (L1)

Five out of twelve participants described professional practice as "ever changing", and therefore hard to connect to in education. Adaptations of curricula were explained to have taken place related to the perceived changes in professional practice. For example, in music-theoretical subjects, many changes have been realized, and subjects related to preparation for professional practice have been added to the curriculum. These subjects include courses on entrepreneurship, research, and writing skills. Some participants also mentioned that students were not satisfied with the curriculum despite the many adaptations. The following participant did not observe major changes:

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> Despite mutual agreements on curriculum reform and tuning of profiles, every school is just doing what it did before and will continue to do so. Nothing has changed. (L1)

Participants in Flanders mentioned a wide range of secondary subjects, in addition to musical subjects, such as philosophy, psychology, cultural history, anthropology, research skills, writing skills, and reflective skills. Students also participated in social projects, since Flemish participants regarded societal engagement an important aspect of their students' careers.

More job opportunities were reported to exist in the broad field of education due to a government-funded educational system:

> A majority of alumni will work in educational settings: music schools, primary and secondary schools. Those who find a job in an orchestra are the exception; ensembles that can survive are dwindling. So, most of them will definitely find their way in education. (L12)

> Amateur art education (such as music schools) forms a field from which most of our students come, and to which they return. (L11)

A Dutch participant perceived a lot of tension regarding the prevailing image of professional practice and the necessary curricular changes, including such aspects as improvisation, research, and entrepreneurship. According to this participant, these aspects may be perceived to compete with the development of a high level of craftsmanship and a high artistic level. This participant observed:

> Those who start higher music studies do this from a passion, an urge to play music, learn the repertoire, and they do not question themselves about a future profession. Their role models consist of the famous musicians. Between this, and devoting one's life to education, teaching music to children in primary school, sharing music on a very basic level, there is a big gap. It is a completely different image of professional practice. So, yes, it is very complicated, and it is something that will evolve very slowly. But also, we do have a responsibility to act. (L6)

Other participants mentioned the fact that with their education they aim at the international market and not only the local or regional professional practice; having made this observation, they reported their students aim for orchestral positions nationally and internationally, and their curriculum includes structural orchestral projects, or an orchestra academy where students are coached to become orchestral players.

5.3.2 TEACHING APPROACHES AND PEDAGOGIES

As observed by participants, the traditional one-to-one teaching model is omnipresent in the field of principal study (instrumental, vocal, compositional teaching), although participants did observe other forms than individual tutoring: for example, in principal studies such as conducting, percussion and in vocal studies. Lessons in chamber music or ensemble-coaching were mentioned to be group-based by nature. Some participants gave examples of individual teachers taking initiatives to organise group lessons within their own faculty. However, a designated structure for group lessons and the organisation of them was not part of the curriculum.

One participant mentioned implementation of weekly group lessons in all principal study faculties besides the individual lessons; teachers however, were free to organise the group lessons themselves or add the available time to their one-to-one lessons. With regard to the process of implementation this participant stated:

> We have a few pedagogues who understand group processes and are able to guide them. [...] We had teachers – and definitely not the least – who asked: what should we do in such group lessons? They had no idea. Sometimes in a reproachful manner: Is he talking Chinese? Did he fall on his head? (L4)

Participants reported the following group settings occurring in some faculties: (1) group lessons around certain topics or themes; (2) group lessons where students gave each other feedback; (3) lessons where one student was taught in front of a group of students: a master class-like situation; and (4) situations of team-teaching: two teachers giving feedback to one student in front of a group of students.

Two participants mentioned pop departments, where - due to its band culture - collaborative practice is at the core of the curriculum. As an example of a group lesson with a master class-like setting, one participant stated:

> We would like to have more group lessons within principal study, but teachers feel awkward about letting go... Teachers – and students alike – desire to be one-on-one in order to go deeper into their own repertoire and development. Within the violin faculty, teachers agreed upon teaching in groups, including such aspects as techniques, interpretation, etudes, stick control. They organise it themselves and it is truly valuable. I would like to see it in other sections as well. (L5)

At another conservatoire, one participant gave an example of two composition teachers exchanging all composition students and having regular group sessions. Those sessions

included instrumental students as well, in order to perform the music of student-composers. Furthermore, the participant questioned the pedagogical competences of teachers involved:

> In a group lesson the question is whether the teacher is able to address and involve all students present, and not only teach individually in front of a group of students. (L7)

Another participant observed the strong culture of individual tutoring and would welcome other teaching approaches with regard to group lessons:

> In music schools many examples of group education do exist. There is an individual approach, but within a group of pupils. We would very much welcome such forms of teaching and are trying to implement it here as well. But our teachers are adepts of the master-apprentice model, and we cannot find an adequate solution to that. (L11)

However, the following participant observed individual tutoring as the starting point for their education, and did not express a need for change:

> In the end the criterion is: level. Level, quality and talent. Those are the starting points. And one-on-one tutoring. Although the entire faculty is present at yearly exams. That is the moment where students are being evaluated, and where they share: 'this is where you could develop the student a bit more', or 'wow, that student made a big jump'. Yes, it is always a lively discussion. (L2)

This participant observed individual tutoring as most desired teaching form and group lessons as a cost saving approach:

> One is constantly searching for ways to make music education cheaper, by making the groups larger, but in fact in any type of education they desire one-on-one tutoring. We use the organic forms that exist from tradition: one-on-one and smaller ensembles. Because of the production of sound, one has to work individually otherwise you disturb each other. (L9)

Some participants observed openings for change of pedagogy through younger teachers bringing in current professional practice. Another participant mentioned that they were waiting for retirement of older teachers since some of them were more difficult to address:

> I see less devotion to the narrow-focused one-to-one teaching in younger teachers. Some older teachers sometimes literally claim their student. I see it slowly disappearing with retirement of those teachers for whom it is hard to change approach. (L8)

5.3.3 TEACHERS' COMPETENCES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Participants observed that principal study teachers had a high degree of autonomy since it is their expertise, name and fame that attracts students. Also, they said, students usually apply for one specific principal study teacher, with whom they study for four to six years, and that these teachers have a completely different role than teachers of other subjects. A few participants observed a slow shift from teacher-centred to a more student-centred environment.

In conservatoires where research and reflection were incorporated as curriculum components, participants reported they were taken to address teachers in the broader role of educating musicians and stimulating lifelong learning skills. However, participants perceived obstacles in establishing changes in teaching approaches and responsibilities: (1) teachers were perceived to act from their own world, not connected to the world of the students; (2) teachers were perceived not to be involved in conservatoire context outside of their teaching studio; (3) teachers were greatly appreciated by students and leaders for their expertise as performers; (4) teachers were perceived to cultivate the one-to-one teaching model.

On the other hand, one participant observed that the research component in their curriculum created a change in attitude and competences:

> Due to our research model all principal study teachers apply reflection on and research within principal study. It was a major challenge and took us ten years of development. (L9)

Participants described the difficulty of changing the teachers' attitudes in terms of making collaboration a top priority, because many of them hold relatively small part-time positions and therefore do not have a lot of contact with each other, and with the institution, as one participant observed:

> Many teachers here hold positions a lot smaller than two days a week; as small as just a morning or an afternoon, which in itself creates a minor involvement in developments at the institution: not reading newsletters, not having goals in developing other teaching approaches, not being involved in collegial conversations about the curriculum. (L8)

Participants observed that some teachers, regard their students as part of their own identity or own world:

> It still happens that some teachers, maybe even with the best intentions, regard a student as their property: when the student performs at an exam, it is as if it is the teachers' exam... These kinds of things; they disappear slowly. (L8)

> Many principal study teachers live in their own world and are not enough aware of the
> fact that their students will not end up in that world. (L3)

Some participants perceived the inability to interfere with principal study pedagogy since it appears to be such a strong teaching culture:

> One-to-one teaching is strongly cultivated here. (L11)

The following participant started with a deep sigh before observing:

> New educational approaches? Maybe the ambition is there but opening up the
> exclusiveness of the one-on-one relationship...[...] And with regard to pedagogy: they use
> the same teaching approaches as always; that is a point of attention. (L10)

On the other hand, participants observed that a minority of principal study teachers do include and envision more collaborative ways of working. One leader stated that the conservatoires as a sector together should take greater responsibility in prioritizing the necessary curriculum reforms including teacher professional development. Furthermore, participants observed, some teachers include (some of) their students occasionally in their own professional lives, for example as replacements in orchestras or to perform in gigs. Gigs are common practice in jazz or jazz/pop departments, and in this setting, it happens very often that teachers and students perform together as colleagues.

5.4 DISCUSSION

In the current study we investigated the observations and perceptions of leaders of Flemish and Dutch conservatoires. We have organised our discussion according to the three core categories of the findings: (1) professional practice and curriculum reform; (2) teaching approaches and pedagogies; (3) teachers' competences, roles and responsibilities.

5.4.1 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND CURRICULUM REFORM

In the process of guiding curriculum reform, leaders' observations and perceptions regarding their curriculum and its relationship with professional practice are understood to be vital. In our findings we see a broad range of observed curriculum components, including a focus on education, implementation of a wider range of secondary subjects, research and entrepreneurship. Yet, music performance forms the core and foremost motivation for students to start with professional music education. However, conservatoire leaders in our study observed that only a small minority of alumni hold a music

performance position: most alumni work in a mixed practice and maintain a portfolio career including a broad range of engagements, mainly in educational settings. Furthermore, leaders observed cultural entrepreneurship being an important asset for their alumni. Nevertheless, about the further effectuation of cultural entrepreneurship, leaders did not express themselves.

Myers (2016) implied that cultural entrepreneurship should be taken to such a level that alumni will be able to take on roles as leaders and problem-solvers in a complex world. In such a scenario, musicians as part of a multi-disciplinary team, could take on new responsibilities and different roles in complex societal issues, possibly finding solutions to so-called wicked problems. This could create openings in the major concerns regarding the continuation and relevance of the music performance industry and conservatoire education (Gaunt et al., 2012; Tregear et al., 2016). Furthermore, Myers (2016) recommended greater involvement of students themselves in designing curricula, and argued that improvisation, performance, composition, music theory, and secondary subjects be taught in cohesion and found upon creativity, diversity, and integration.

5.4.2 TEACHING APPROACHES AND PEDAGOGIES

Renshaw (2013) emphasized that collaborative learning is central to transforming the master-apprentice transmission model of teaching to a more student-centred approach. He also stated that re-examining ways of learning in music education is crucial in order to reflect the fundamentally collaborative nature of the art of music itself. Conservatoire leaders in our study did not observe specific and explicit pedagogical approaches necessary as part of principal study, in developing such competences as problem-solving skills, a reflective attitude, cooperative and communicative skills. The organisation of group lessons in which such competences could be addressed was predominantly left to the teachers themselves, as was the content of those group lessons. Leaders perceived that consent of all teaching staff be necessary in implementing other teaching approaches, such as collaborative learning.

Leaders observed that in group lessons, many teachers teach individually in front of a group, like in a master class setting (Gaunt, 2008). Haddon (2014) concluded that students attending master classes are generally not instructed in how to develop and apply observational learning skills and how to transfer these to their own learning. Thus, the development of teaching approaches specific for group lessons or master classes forms an important starting point in changing one-to-one pedagogy and the competences of

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teaching staff. Duffy (2013) pointed out that collaborative learning is hardly seen as of added value by part of professional musicians, who work as part-time teachers and individually guide their students as experts: collaborative learning might distract students from the focus of a specialist discipline. From the literature, we have concluded a strong sense of urgency ought to be felt, and together with a strong vision on education should be maintained in order to be able to embark on the longer-term process that is needed in realization of this vision in curriculum adaptations and change of pedagogy.

In our study, some leaders observed openings for change of pedagogy through younger teachers bringing in current professional practice. Other leaders mentioned that they were waiting for retirement of older teachers since some of them were more difficult to address. Furthermore, similar to Duffy (2013), they observed that part-time teaching positions are usually combined with orchestral jobs, a concert career, and other teaching jobs, leading to a superficial relationship of the teaching staff with the conservatoire, and a minor interest in pedagogy.

5.4.3 TEACHERS' COMPETENCES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

With regard to the competences of their teachers in applying teaching approaches and pedagogies, we found that leaders observed individual tutoring as the prevalent pedagogy, and some of them perceived it as most desired and suitable teaching approach. Furthermore, participants were questioning pedagogical competences of teaching staff in settings where collaborative learning could be possible, such as in group lessons.

In some instances, leaders expressed to feel insecure about the ever-changing practice. The central role of principal study teachers in attracting students, the lack of incentives for a more collaborative learning setting, moreover the fear that it might be regarded as a cost saving measure, and the value designated to a high specialist level, all enforce the autonomy of teaching staff. The assets of such approaches as collaborative learning, communities of practice, and experience-based learning remain rather underexplored territories in creating a different type of organisational culture and pedagogical climate, fostering development of problem-solving skills, reflective attitude, cooperative and communicative skills in both teachers and students.

Recapitulating, leaders perceive genuine changes in pedagogy as a task that belongs to the teachers themselves, whereas conservatoires consist of teachers facing those pedagogical challenges, who mainly possess a great expertise in performance. Although

leaders perceive their education as teacher-centred and although they observe the need to change the curriculum according to the changing professional practice, leaders currently do not engage in curriculum reform due to various obstacles. Because of their great expertise as performers, a strong autonomous culture of teaching staff is maintained, deriving from the traditional master-apprentice model where the master is at the core of the education, and repertoire and technique development remain the most important learning aims.

Moreover, teachers were perceived to act from their own world, different from the future practice of their students. They were perceived not to be involved in the conservatoire context, but only in their teaching studio and therefor hard to connect to, and they were perceived to cultivate the one-to-one teaching model. Yet, according to Smilde (2010) ICON work forms did stimulate creativity and innovation in conservatoire teachers, and included peer learning, working with external input of texts and guests, embodied learning, improvisation and reflection.

5.4.1 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study focusses on the perceptions of conservatoire leaders about curriculum, professional practices and what is needed to align these two. Further research on the roles of leaders is both necessary and valuable in order to get a deeper understanding of leaders' choices, their behaviour with regard to curriculum reform, and approaches to initiate change. After having listened to their observations and perceptions, the following step could consist of observing and monitoring their actions and activities, and subsequently to learn more about their reflections on their actions.

Additional information from teachers, students, alumni, and other stakeholders could be helpful in gaining a broader perspective and making realistic considerations about curriculum change in conservatoire education. Moreover, observations and intervention studies at conservatoires implementing new teaching approaches could help to evaluate these new approaches and collect best practices. Those intervention studies might be expanded with other types of research with a focus on pedagogy, teaching approaches, learning styles, reflection, and feedback in conservatoire education. Such research remains necessary for building a body of knowledge regarding conservatoire education. Finally, lessons could be learned by looking at other disciplines having gone through curriculum reform already, such as in healthcare education. Perceptions of the

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profession in this area have changed and had major consequences for its professional education.

5.4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Since the major changes of and within professional practice hardly seem to be reflected in conservatoire education and teaching staff, we would suggest leaders to confidently direct innovation with a bottom up approach, for example by promoting peer feedback and peer mentoring for teachers, creating a collaborative setting such as a learning community amongst teachers, by creating informal space for meetings, by stimulating teacher professional development with regard to teaching approaches and pedagogies, and by including alumni to a large extent in conversations with teaching staff and plans for curriculum reform.

We agree with Myers (2016) that in redesigning curricula a greater involvement of students themselves is necessary, guided by a vision that takes cohesion and integration between components as a starting point, making more room for co-creation instead of reproduction. In a national or even European taskforce, stakeholders, alumni, students, teachers, and leaders should be involved to meet, discuss, connect, inform, exchange, and embark on a process of genuinely evaluating conservatoire pedagogy. A shared and collective responsibility has the power to function as a catalyst for innovation, fostering different perspectives from the various stakeholders. Duffy (2016) emphasized that a model of leadership development, specifically developed for a conservatoire context, is needed, and she suggested ICON could take on the role to educate and empower "institutional leaders – individuals who do have the agency within the institution and, importantly, the understanding of practice and confidence to work with teaching staff in an informed and challenging way" (p. 384, 385).

5.4.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

We would like to emphasize the urgency for change of direction regarding the education of musicians: both leaders and teaching staff need to fully realize that craftsmanship as the foremost important curriculum part, is not sufficient anymore in the education of future musicians. Professional practice requires musicians equipped with the skills to collaborate, communicate, create, improvise, reflect, initiate, negotiate, educate, experiment, and organise, in a context subject to change. That is why conservatoire

leaders need to restructure their education and include situations where mentioned skills can be supported, explored and developed.

Settings including collaborative learning, reflection, improvisation, and experiment can form the key to changing the culture within institutions; therefore, a change in teaching approaches and pedagogies is urgently needed, and communities of practice, learning labs, and project-based education should have a structural place in curriculum innovation.

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