Collaborative learning in conservatoire education: catalyst for innovation
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GENERAL DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The studies included in this dissertation focused on factors in collaborative learning which function as a catalyst for the innovation in conservatoire education. The research aims of the dissertation were twofold: on the one hand, it was aimed at investigating experiences with and perceptions of collaborative learning in conservatoire education; on the other hand, it was aimed at assisting in the implementation of collaborative learning approaches. Both aspects are related to creating a broader and better preparation of students for future musical practices. This means that this dissertation also aimed to contribute to theoretical and practical knowledge of collaborative learning in conservatoire education, with practical value for stakeholders.

The four studies presented in this dissertation are situated in conservatoire education and include data from teachers, students, and leaders. Empirical studies drew on data gathering: (1) perceptions of students and teachers in two vocal conservatoire courses employing a collaborative learning approach, (2) observations and perceptions of leadership on curriculum reform and innovation of pedagogy, and (3) teacher action research projects exploring teaching practices and professional development related to educational innovation. A systematic literature review of empirical research was carried out to increase understanding of collaborative learning practices that had previously been researched by both practitioners and researchers. In sum, these four studies provide a broad perspective of collaborative learning in conservatoire education as described in the literature and experienced in practice.

In this final chapter, each study's main findings are first summarized; the contributions of these to theoretical and practical knowledge of collaborative learning in conservatoire education and their relation to innovation in conservatoire education are then discussed. Next, the implications for practice of implementing collaborative learning in the conservatoire system are discussed. Finally, some limitations of the research and recommendations for future research are presented.

6.2 MAIN FINDINGS

The four studies included in this dissertation are summarized in Table 6.1. The review of selected studies (n=22) in Chapter 2 showed that collaborative learning had a positive effect on learning outcomes. This included quantitative (i.e., basic knowledge and basic skills), qualitative (i.e., structure, metacognitive skills, transfer), and affective

(involvement, engagement) learning outcomes. Both learning context and learning-focused activities had a strong influence on learning outcomes. As regards learning-focused activities, two influencing factors were omnipresent in the selected studies: students' active participation and interaction. Four different collaborative learning approaches were found: (1) peer-assessment, (2) teacher-guided instrumental group lessons, (3) participative and collaborative music groups, (4) student-guided teamwork. Each of these four approaches had a slightly different influence on the learning outcomes. Collaborative learning was found to foster and sustain a positive, safe, student-centred environment, including co-construction of knowledge and understanding, development of social, metacognitive, and professional skills, and strong feelings of self-efficacy amongst students.

The case study of Chapter 3 focused on examining the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers in two vocal courses, one from the classical department and the other from the jazz/pop department. Remarkable distinctions were found related to the perceived differences in the two dissimilar professional practices. Questionnaire results showed that elements such as improvisation, reflection, and engagement in musical experiments scored rather low in the classical course and higher in the jazz/pop course. Key elements in the classical course included repertoire study, techniques, and interpretation of music. The approach in the respective group settings was found to be different as well. In the classical course, it was repertoire-oriented; in the jazz/pop course the focus was on established themes like rhythm, text, breathing, concentration and meditation techniques, and stage presentation. Another major dissimilarity between the two courses was found in the setting: in the jazz/pop lessons, six to eight students participated in the groups; in the classical course, around thirty students were present, one of whom performed on stage. The group setting in the classical course was, therefore, found to imitate a masterclass setting. The design of group lessons should include a collaborative approach to both content and pedagogy in order to develop collaborative and professional skills.

In Chapter 4, a multiple-case study was used to gain understanding of the relations between teacher action research and professional development and between teacher action research and improvement of teachers' teaching practice. Teacher action research projects entailed forms of (1) professional development, such as the study of pedagogical topics and the literature, engagement in self-reflection, and peer discussion

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with colleagues, and (2) improvement of teaching practice, including structural implementation of reflection and feedback, and inclusion of a variety of different approaches. The respective action research projects related to the courses the teachers taught were influenced by regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in 2020. In addition to feelings of insecurity due to the COVID-19-related lockdown, teachers also reflected on positive outcomes, including adopting more innovative approaches as collaborative learning and blended learning. Teachers perceived important changes in their attitudes to and conceptions of teaching and learning through their engagement in action research projects. Student-centred approaches were included in their teaching, and they focused on how students actually learn. A critical friend in the process was highly valued: someone with whom to discuss, negotiate, and exchange experiences proved an important asset to their own professional development.

In the study reported in Chapter 5, the observations and perceptions regarding curriculum reform of leaders of Flemish and Dutch conservatoires were investigated. Findings from the analysis of twelve semi-structured interviews included three themes (1) professional practice and curriculum reform, (2) teaching approaches and pedagogies, and (3) teachers' competences, roles, and responsibilities. Regarding the first theme, leaders observed a large number of students engage in developing a portfolio career including a variety of activities. The educational sector was mentioned as a prospective field of work. Furthermore, leaders held different visions of professional practice. The perceptions of leaders concerning the changes to be initiated in teachers' teaching practices and approaches varied: (1) teachers would not be able to teach following a different approach; (2) teachers would not want to teach in ways other than those they were used to; (3) one-to-one teaching was simply the best way of teaching, and changing it would only be a cost-saving measure; and (4) teaching approaches would change naturally over time, with older teachers retiring and younger teachers taking over. Leaders observed teachers as residing very much in their own world, which was different from the students' world, and they also felt that teachers were not much involved in daily life at the institution. Overall, leaders perceived genuine changes in pedagogy as a task for the teachers themselves, whereas conservatoires generally consist of teacher-performers who possess great expertise in performance.

6.3 INNOVATION IN CONSERVATOIRE EDUCATION

One of the motivations to engage in this research project was a desire to investigate the relationship between the demands from professional practice and society, and the presumed need for innovation in conservatoire education. Various authors have voiced their concerns about the relevance of conservatoire education to professional practice and society (see, e.g., Burwell, 2016b, 2018; Burwell et al., 2019; Duffy, 2013, 2016; Gaunt, 2013; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Minors et al., 2017; Sloboda, 2011; Renshaw, 1986). Their reservations are mainly related to the limited collaborative skills, creative skills, self-regulated and independent learning, and integration of technology. Duffy (2016) stated that conservatoires are generally conservative. Though exceptions exist, the literature confirms this.

The preparation of future musicians would benefit from a student-centred learning environment with collaborative learning activities and tasks, increased student interaction and active participation, and reinforcement of learning outcomes with developed creative, critical, problem-solving, collaborative, and communication skills. Similar learning outcomes have been confirmed in a wide variety of studies over the course of several decades (see, e.g., Biggs, 1999; Dillenbourg, 1996; Johnson et al., 2007; Smith & MacGregor, 1992). However, participation in group lessons does not per se imply that student-centred learning takes place. Group lessons need to be designed purposefully to include learning-focused activities and designated levels of interaction and active participation of students. The teacher action research projects investigated showed that teachers' inquiry into their own practices led to inclusion of learning-focused activities, including collaboration, reflection, and blended learning.

Learning outcomes resulting from collaborative learning approaches match the intended learning outcomes described by AEC (2017). As part of the higher education system, institutions are bound to policies and regulations, at least for periodic accreditation and validation of courses and programmes. Differences in conservatoire leaders' views on curriculum reform were related to different interpretations of the Bologna process in Belgium and The Netherlands. Additionally, professional practice for future musicians was found to be different in the two countries. First, the dissimilar implementation of the bachelor-master structure of the Bologna process resulted in Belgium in "academization", with a greater focus on academic skills and research in higher arts education institutions as a result of the required affiliation with universities. Second, a

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future as a teaching musician appeared to be a very realistic prospect for music students in Belgium, more than in the Netherlands, hence a clear focus on the development of the educational and pedagogical qualities of students formed part of the curriculum.

In the systematic review of Chapter 2, we found a large number of Australian studies on curriculum reform, educational innovations, and collaborative learning. Forbes (2016a, 2016b) related such occurrences to major changes in Australian higher education policies based on the Dawkins review (1988), which instigated new subsidy instruments, the fusion of institutions, modifications in tuition fees, student numbers, and accountability procedures related to curriculum and research (Forbes, 2016b, p. 54). Higher arts education institutions were incorporated into metropolitan and regional universities, requiring greater "financial accountability and consequently, evidence-based justification for pedagogical models" (Forbes, 2016a, p. 23). The examples from Belgium and Australia show that major changes and substantial innovations in educational design, curriculum content, and pedagogy appear have resulted from top-down governmental and financial measures and actions.

To conclude this section, the adapted 3P model (Biggs, 2003) presented in Chapter 1 is included here (Figure 6.1), in a modified version to show the factors, learning outcomes, and results from the included studies. These results show that teachers form a significant factor in the implementation of collaborative learning approaches and in innovation in education.

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FIGURE 6.1

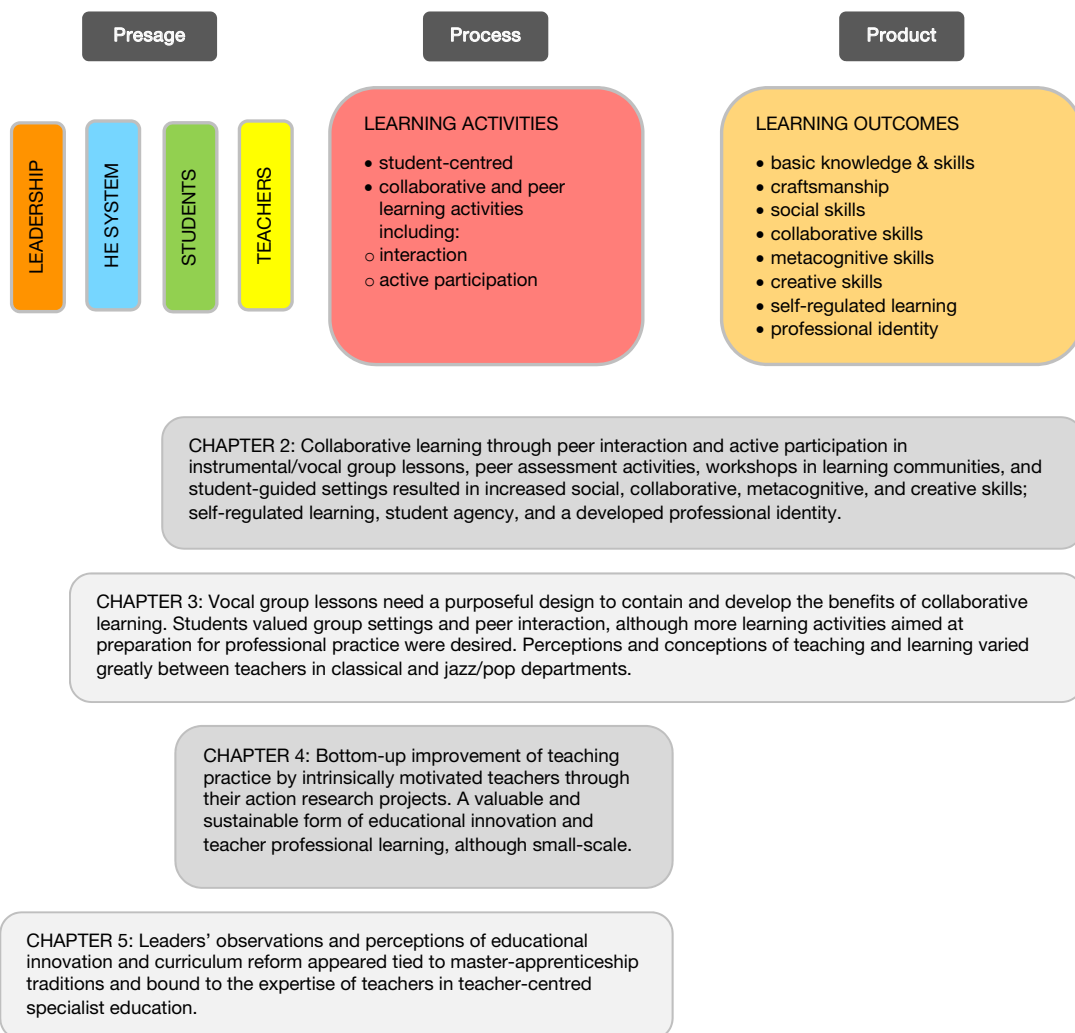*ADAPTED 3P MODEL (BIGGS, 2003), EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FACTORS AND RESULTS FROM INCLUDED STUDIES.*

Presage

LEADERSHIP | HE SYSTEM | STUDENTS | TEACHERS

Process

LEARNING ACTIVITIES
- student-centred
- collaborative and peer learning activities including:
  o interaction
  o active participation

Product

LEARNING OUTCOMES
- basic knowledge & skills
- craftsmanship
- social skills
- collaborative skills
- metacognitive skills
- creative skills
- self-regulated learning
- professional identity

CHAPTER 2: Collaborative learning through peer interaction and active participation in instrumental/vocal group lessons, peer assessment activities, workshops in learning communities, and student-guided settings resulted in increased social, collaborative, metacognitive, and creative skills; self-regulated learning, student agency, and a developed professional identity.

CHAPTER 3: Vocal group lessons need a purposeful design to contain and develop the benefits of collaborative learning. Students valued group settings and peer interaction, although more learning activities aimed at preparation for professional practice were desired. Perceptions and conceptions of teaching and learning varied greatly between teachers in classical and jazz/pop departments.

CHAPTER 4: Bottom-up improvement of teaching practice by intrinsically motivated teachers through their action research projects. A valuable and sustainable form of educational innovation and teacher professional learning, although small-scale.

CHAPTER 5: Leaders' observations and perceptions of educational innovation and curriculum reform appeared tied to master-apprenticeship traditions and bound to the expertise of teachers in teacher-centred specialist education.

TABLE 6.1

DESCRIPTIVE MAP OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM INCLUDED STUDIES WITH STUDY AIMS, METHODOLOGY, AND RESULTS.

Chapter	Study	Musical genre	Aims	Methodology	Results
				Bullet point description (study design; data collection; data analysis)	Bullet point summary
2	*Collaborative learning in conservatoires: A systematic literature review*	All	Contribution to insights into how collaborative learning has been used in conservatoire education	• Systematic literature review following PRISMA guidelines • Electronic database search and major journals of music education published between 2000 and 2021 • Full-text articles were screened (n=157) • Articles meeting all selection criteria (n=22) were reviewed and supporting factors were analysed (thematic analysis)	• strong relations between learning context factors and learning outcomes, and between learning activities and learning outcomes • two influential factors of collaborative learning include interaction and active participation of students • approaches found include (1) peer assessment; (2) teacher-guided group lessons; (3) participative and collaborative music groups (across various studies in communities); (4) student-guided teamwork • self-regulated learning and a student-centred learning environment led to increased and developed cognitive and affective outcomes: craftsmanship, metacognitive skills, social and collaborative skills
3	*Collaborative learning in two vocal conservatoire courses*	Classical & Jazz/Pop	Examination of development of professional competencies in vocal group lessons	• Mixed-methods case study with two student questionnaires (closed/open questions) (n=34; n=21); semi-structured teacher interviews (n=9) • Descriptive statistics for quantitative data; coding (thematic analysis) for qualitative data	• general value of group lessons was rated as quite high • development of professional competencies through group lessons was rated as rather low • teacher intentions were not clear to the students • students preferred more active participation and interaction for developing their professional competence • group lessons need to have a purposeful design aimed at collaborative learning and development of professional competence

Chapter		Aims	Methodology	Results
4	*Teacher professional development and educational innovation through action research in conservatoire education*	World music & Pop	Exploration of the values and outcomes of teacher action research in conservatoire education	• Multiple case study (n=2) with interviews and reflective journals • Cross case thematic analysis	• teachers perceived action research as a way to stimulate the advancement of their teaching practice and professional development • teacher collaborations and self-reflections were found to reinforce teachers' learning and teaching • teachers developed new perspectives, created more student-centred environments, and changed their conceptions of teaching and learning
5	*Conservatoire leaders' observations and perceptions on curriculum reform*	All	Development of insight into how conservatoire leadership regard the relationship between the curriculum, students' development of professional competences, and teachers' professional competences	• Qualitative case study • 90-minute semi-structured interviews with all leaders of conservatoires in the Netherlands and Flanders (n=12) • Data-driven thematic analysis	• conservatoire leadership perceived that teaching professionals continue to maintain an autonomous position, practising traditional forms of teaching and learning • conservatoire leadership appeared to be rather hesitant in implementing new pedagogies, teaching principles, and guidelines, partly due to a large amount of respect for the expertise of their teaching professionals • conservatoire leadership held on to craftsmanship as the main professional competence

6.4 FACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN CONSERVATOIRE EDUCATION

The first aim of the current dissertation was to investigate existing experiences with and perceptions of collaborative learning in conservatoire education, and how it is related to the preparation of future musicians. The perspectives of internal stakeholders and influencing factors were included in this investigation.

A model is proposed here to increase understanding of the relationships within the present learning system (Figure 6.2). First, society, professional practice, and policies may be regarded as influential external factors in higher education institutions. Second, related to teaching practices and student learning, the factors of pedagogies and approaches, learning activities, and student learning outcomes are incorporated as internal factors. Third, students, teachers, and leaders are included as internal stakeholders. The sides and points of each triangle in the model have a relation or connection to adjacent triangles. Policies may refer to both external and internal policies. The nested perspectives of leaders, teachers, and students as they were found in our studies are discussed below along this framework.

6.4.1 STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Students' preparation for professional practice takes place in learning activities and results in learning outcomes. First, professional practice, on top of the student perspectives triangle (Figure 6.3), generally influences the learning activities that are organised by the teacher. Second, learning outcomes are affected by the learning activities used. Depending on the type of learning activities, peer learning influences both learning activities and learning outcomes. Third, the competences developed in learning outcomes affect students' perceptions of and participation in professional practice. Although students and teachers do not form adjacent triangles in the presented model, obviously, in their course of study, students interact with teachers, generally taking part in organised learning activities within classes, lessons, workshops, coaching sessions, and other activities.

FIGURE 6.2

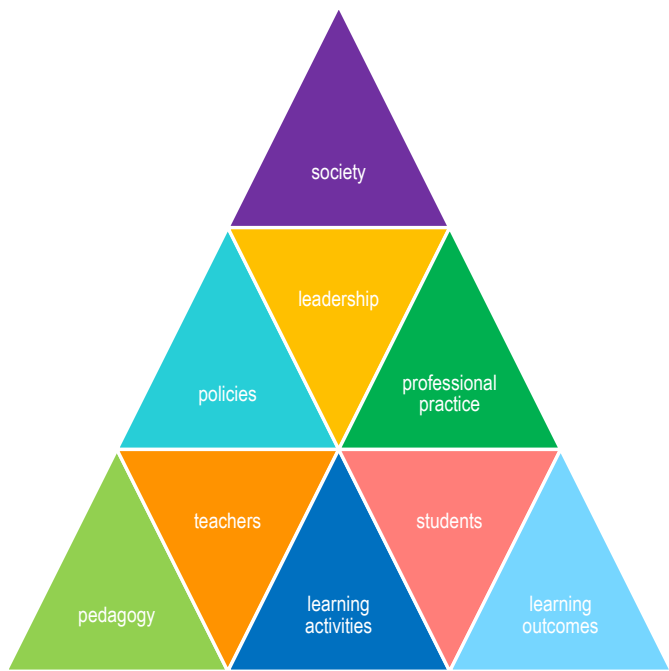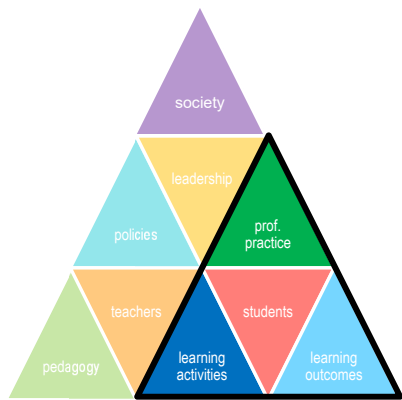*EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS.*

FIGURE 6.3

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES.

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Within the omnipresent master-apprentice model in music education, students engage in a discipline-focused setting from a (very) young age. According to Carey (2010) and Simones (2017), many students desire to remain in this position when studying at the conservatoire. Conversely, we found in Chapter 3 that students of both the classical and jazz/pop departments aspired to be prepared in a rather broad way for professional practice. Related to their perceptions of professional practice, they expected a broader type of education, exploring different aspects of that practice in their education: for example, including learning activities like collaborations in ensembles and choir singing.

In various studies, other professional competences such as creative and improvisation skills (e.g., Burnard, 2018; Smilde, 2009), collaborative skills (e.g., Gaunt, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Forbes, 2016a, 2016b), and metacognitive skills like reflection and critical thinking (e.g., Carey et al., 2018; Gaunt, 2007, 2013) were found to be regarded as crucial, next to elements of craftsmanship such as technical abilities, stylistic and repertoire knowledge, performance practices, practice strategies, and developed musical hearing. The inclusion of broader professional competences would develop students' agency and self-efficacy, and assist students in becoming self-regulated learners, a competency needed for students to be able to guide their own processes and engage in professional practice and lifelong learning (e.g., Smilde, 2008, 2009; Virkkula, 2016b).

In Chapter 3, remarkable differences were found between students in classical and jazz/pop contexts as regards cultures, learning outcomes, experiences, and perceptions. In the classical vocal course, learning objectives and intended learning outcomes included development of repertoire knowledge, vocal techniques, and interpretations of music. Although students valued the general idea of having group lessons, they rated the related learning activities in preparation for professional practice as rather low. They reported not having been actively involved as audience members when listening to group lessons. As audience members, students were not engaged in providing feedback. In fact, they were not allowed to take a more active role. Moreover, there was no specific preparation required and thus students from the audience remained passive listeners. Similar findings have emerged from a range of instrumental and vocal masterclass studies in classical music departments (see, e.g., Creech et al., 2009; Haddon, 2014; Hanken, 2015a; Long, Creech et al., 2012; Long, Hallam et al., 2012; Long et al., 2014).

In the jazz/pop vocal course, dissimilar perspectives on learning activities and experiences were expressed. Students' learning activities included engaging in peer feedback, completing assignments, and preparing a repertoire in accordance with the designated theme of the group lesson. Space was provided for equal contribution and participation in the group lessons, and students valued the setting for the learning activities, like improvisation, active participation, interaction, and peer feedback. Despite giving their approval, jazz/pop students stated that indispensable elements of professional practice such as ensemble and band playing, musical experimentation, research, and more general skills could be included more prominently in the learning activities. Considerations of society and societal participation appeared not to be part of students' perspectives on their present or future roles. In the model of student perspectives (Figure 6.3), society is positioned at a distance, representing the present level of societal engagement.

6.4.2 TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

Starting at the top of the teacher perspectives triangle (Figure 6.4), teachers are generally made aware of external and internal policies, including competence descriptors and final qualifications, by their (course or programme) leaders, and use these to develop intended learning outcomes or learning goals. This can be part of teachers' elaboration of a module description or course syllabus. Teachers interact with students in their teaching practice through organised learning activities. They develop their course, connecting pedagogies and approaches to learning goals and learning activities. Some teachers are active in professional practice as performers, producers, composers, conductors, arrangers, or in a combination of disciplines, as entrepreneurs or freelancers, or with employment contracts.

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FIGURE 6.4

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES.
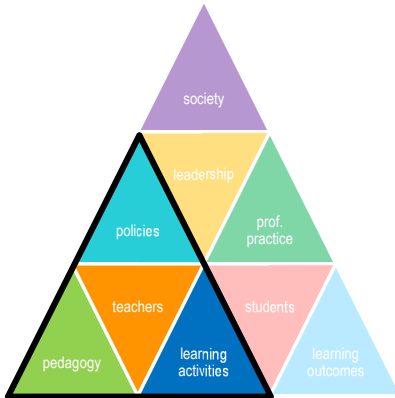
It was found in various studies that teachers did not interact as much with their peers or colleagues (see, e.g., Burwell, 2016b, 2018; Burwell et al., 2019; Carey et al., 2018; Gaunt, 2010; Duffy, 2016) as students did. In fact, teachers are regarded as quite isolated in their teaching rooms (Burwell et al., 2019). Moreover, a large number of teachers appear to teach in the ways they were taught themselves and do not initiate much change (Mills & Smith, 2003), threatening teaching practices with stagnation if this is continued over generations of teachers (Harrison et al., 2013). The studies in Chapters 3 and 4 showed that different perspectives exist among teachers, possibly related to their different cultural backgrounds (classical music vs. jazz/pop/world music).

In Chapter 3, a divide was found between classical and jazz/pop music teachers regarding the pedagogical approaches they used. For example, in the classical music department, peer feedback was not included since teachers did not perceive students as fully developed professionals and, therefore, did not consider them able to provide feedback. In the jazz/pop department, peer feedback formed a recurring component of the group lessons in which student engagement was encouraged. According to students in both departments, group lessons should have focused more on learning activities related to professional practice. Approaches could have been more attuned to the development of collaborative skills, experimentation, and investigative competences.
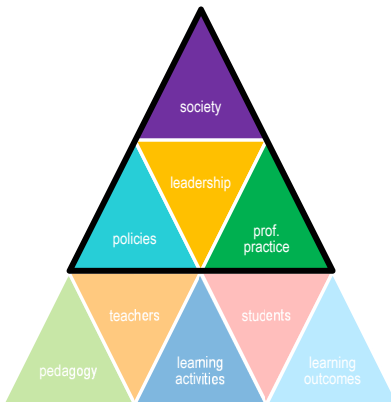
In the study reported in Chapter 4, the two teachers from the pop and world music departments learned through interaction and collaboration, and did not feel that

they were working in isolation. They were aware of policies, and the content of those policies was found to have an influential role in their reflections on their teaching practice. Searching for an increased understanding of pedagogy and possible approaches assisted teachers in improving their teaching practice. Reflective writing and study of the literature resulted in new conceptions of teaching and learning, and in improvement of their teaching practice, which in turn affected student learning. Both reflection and exchange are generally regarded as fundamental to professional development (see, e.g., Carey et al., 2018; Duffy, 2016; Eraut, 2004; Gaunt, 2013; Schön, 1987).

Teachers sustained strong intrinsic motivation to improve their teaching practices. They were looking for ways to convey their enthusiasm to colleagues and wished for structural peer mentoring sessions amongst teachers. In the studies included, teachers did not explicitly refer to connections with society or societal awareness. In the teacher perspective triangle (Figure 6.4), society is therefore located at a distance.

6.4.3 LEADER PERSPECTIVES

Leaders' perspectives are connected to the adjacent triangles of society, professional practice, and policies. Through their position, they amalgamate external factors with internal factors. Starting from the top of the triangle of leader perspectives (Figure 6.5), leaders are generally regarded as developing a vision based on input from society, external policies (meeting the requirements and demands of higher education descriptors, final qualifications, and course profiles), and professional practice. Leaders then develop their own policies, transfer these to teachers and staff, organise professional development, and appoint personnel in line with existing policies and their vision on education. Leaders interact with teachers and, to a lesser extent, with students.

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Different perspectives on the connection with society were found among leaders in the study reported in Chapter 5. Leaders from Belgium stated that students participated in social projects since they regarded societal engagement as an important aspect of students' future careers. Curriculum reform, being one of the themes in interviews with leaders, was connected to external policies in both countries. In Belgium, curriculum reform had taken place as a consequence of the Bologna process. The incorporation of reflection and research into the curriculum, and getting teachers involved, formed a major challenge, but resulted in increased research and reflective competences amongst teachers. According to leaders from the Netherlands, the external incentive for curriculum reform did not bring about much change and improvement.

Regarding professional practice, prospects varied from careers in the broad educational field to mainly playing in orchestras and performing on stage. In the model of leader perspectives (Figure 6.5), pedagogy, teaching approaches, teaching practice, and learning outcomes are represented at a distance. In Chapter 5, leaders expressed the belief that changes and improvements in teaching practice remained the responsibility of the teachers.

6.5 IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING APPROACHES

In this section, the focus is on the implementation of collaborative learning, the second research aim of this dissertation. The external factors of society, professional practice, and policies point towards a need for a broader education of music students, including collaborative skills. A synthesis of the literature on collaborative learning in conservatoire education showed that conservatoire education offers ample opportunity to implement collaborative learning approaches.

Music practice includes collaboration in ensembles, bands, combos, orchestras, choirs, and other heterogeneous music groups, and cross-discipline partnerships. Moreover, current conservatoire education includes popular music, and with it a culture of informal learning (see, e.g., Green, 2001; Forbes, 2020; Virkkula, 2016a; Westerlund, 2006) that should be recognized and adopted to a greater extent within the conservatoire (see Lebler, 2008). Furthermore, the literature on collaborative learning unambiguously shows that this approach develops various competences needed in professional practice.

Stagnation in the implementation of collaborative learning and other progressive teaching approaches is caused by the structurally conservative nature of the conservatoire, according to Duffy (2016), and she stated that perceived threats to traditional pedagogy will close the doors to any change. From our explorations of leader, teacher, and student perspectives related to external and internal factors, we conclude that implementation of collaborative learning requires well-structured roles and an awareness of the responsibilities of each of the stakeholders. For example, leaders need to establish a sustained vision on curriculum and effective contemporary pedagogies and approaches, and ensure a supportive working and learning environment. Duffy (2016) concluded that firm leaders are needed to challenge and encourage teachers.

On the other hand, teachers are responsible for aligning their teaching practice with contemporary professional practice, developing a larger repertoire of current pedagogies, and adapting learning activities to assure the education of self-regulated students with collaborative, reflective, and creative abilities. Related to teacher professional development, reinforcement of reflection and collaboration between teachers has been found to create openings for change and for making connections to different pedagogies (e.g., Duffy, 2016; Gaunt, 2013). In Chapter 4, teachers who engaged in reflection and collaboration were found to change their vision on teaching and learning, leading to a more student-centred learning environment, including collaborative learning

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approaches, peer feedback, and reflection. Teachers should be clear about their desires for professional learning, and be aware of their role in curriculum innovation and their teaching practice (Duffy, 2016).

In Chapter 5, conservatoire leaders observed that they had been adapting their curriculum over the course of many years, but that students still did not feel they were being prepared for professional practice. One conclusion from Chapter 3 is that students have strong ideas about professional practice and how they should be prepared for it. Therefore, it appears to be logical to involve students in the process of curriculum reform and pedagogical development; this was also recommended by Duffy (2013).

Overarching conclusions include: (1) leaders are responsible for establishing a sustainable vision on curriculum and pedagogy, fusing input from external policies, society, and professional practice, supporting the education of versatile musicians, and supporting continuing professional development of teachers; (2) teachers need to understand their responsibilities regarding the development of their teaching practice and the expansion of their pedagogical knowledge and understanding, and open up to colleagues for collaboration, reflection, and critical friendship; (3) students ought to be included in the process of curriculum reform and of educational development both as consumers of conservatoire education and as young professionals.

In the study reported in Chapter 3 we found that bringing students together in a group and engaging them in group activities did not mean that collaborative learning occurred: in other words, group tuition does not equal collaborative learning. A purposeful educational design aligns intended learning outcomes with collaborative learning activities, and with pedagogical approaches. In Chapter 2, two significant factors of collaborative learning were formed by peer interaction and active participation of students. The approaches included (peer interaction through peer assessment activities; teacher-guided group lessons; participative music making, including ensemble rehearsals and workshops; and student-guided teamwork) shifted slightly in focus, on more interaction or more active participation, depending on the learning activities. Learning activities included tasks aimed at collaborative learning, such as joint problem-solving, discussion, negotiation, peer assessment, improvisation, and co-creation.

In short, since no valid reasons were found to prevent implementation of collaborative learning, stagnation in its implementation seems to emerge from complexities arising from presumed threats to both leaders and teachers as stakeholders in the

innovation in conservatoire education. The question now remains what routes can be taken to advance the implementation of collaborative learning.

6.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

6.6.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CURRICULUM

Four recommendations are given for the implementation of collaborative learning. Guidelines are then proposed based on the findings of the current studies. The process of implementation of collaborative learning can be organised following these recommendations.

First, establish a few overarching principles to guide the process. For example, include aims to educate self-regulated learners, to foster student agency, and to develop competences for lifelong learning. Second, include examples of the different practices in the music profession, and determine (together with teachers) in which situations collaborative skills are needed. Consider these different practices and their respective learning cultures, such as informal learning as applied in popular music (see, e.g., Green, 2001; Lebler, 2007, 2008). Third, deliberate on *how* students will learn, before talking about *what* they will learn. This stage involves consideration of pedagogies and approaches, including collaborative learning. Examine where combinations of collaborative and other approaches would be purposeful for learning. Fourth, introduce the making of connections in society through cross-discipline collaboration as a relevant perspective for students. Along with these recommendations, the following guidelines may assist in curriculum design:

o   adopt a combination of teacher-guided group lessons (small groups) and student-guided teamwork in the first and second years in the domain of principle study, and in practical musical subjects like ear-training, sight reading, arranging, and improvisation;

o   foster participative music making and student-guided teamwork in group music-making activities including ensembles, bands, groups, and choirs;

o   develop peer assessment activities connected to student-guided teamwork.

Related to the approaches mentioned (peer assessment activities; teacher-guided group lessons; participative music making; and student-guided teamwork), a few considerations

are involved such as the teacher role and teacher intervention, group heterogeneity, inclusion of reflective journal writing, and the inclusion of cross-disciplinary work.

6.6.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

As teachers were found to be of pivotal importance in genuinely realizing changes in their teaching practice, three implications for teachers are discussed here: (1) collaboration with colleagues, (2) continuing teacher professional development, and (3) reflection on their role as teachers within the institution. The first and second implications include adopting the idea of collaboration and reflection with colleagues (e.g., Carey et al., 2018; Duffy, 2016; Gaunt, 2013). Uncovering teaching practices through collaborative professional development can promote a shared understanding of professional practices and assist in building a sense of community (Carey et al., 2018). Furthermore, collaboration with colleagues directly impacts the described isolation of teachers (Burwell et al., 2019), and through discussion and reflection assists in making implicit knowledge more explicit (Gaunt, 2013).

Continuing teacher professional development concerns developing insights into evidence-based pedagogies and a variety of teaching and learning approaches. Biggs (1999, 2003) described three levels on which teachers develop themselves over the course of their teaching. The first level involves teachers who mainly focus on what the student *is*. These teachers focus largely on the talents, qualities, and performances of students (Carey, 2010) and do not seem to use teaching strategies to influence students' learning; the student is either talented, or not so talented. Second-level teachers are described by Biggs (1999, 2003) as focusing mostly on what they themselves do, how they prepare their lessons, how much they know of the topic, and what they want to transfer. Lastly, third-level teachers focus on how students actually learn, and how they can create conditions, establish learning environments, and include evidence-based pedagogies to encourage the learning of all students, regardless of age, background, experience, and motivation.

This would imply, for example, developing greater awareness of the benefits of group activities and embracing a variety of settings in their teaching practice, ranging from one-to-one to small groups and larger groups, when applicable. It also implies reflection on their role as teachers, and how they can vary between transferring expertise, facilitating processes, and reducing their guidance. Following online learning during the COVID-19-related lockdown of their institution, Italian conservatoire students

stated that the live interaction and collaborative effort with their peers was the aspect they had missed the most, more than lessons and formal activities (Schiavio et al., 2021).

When teachers start to see themselves as part of a learning community in which they share their expertise with their students, in which space is created for students to participate and interact as equal members, a big step has been taken towards a different division of tasks, roles, and responsibilities, which is supportive of student learning. Returning to the second implication, we wish to draw attention to the use of 'teacher' in continuing teacher professional development, since most conservatoire teachers work both as artists/performers and as teachers. Identification with the role of teacher is related to the level of satisfaction experienced by a teacher (Parkes et al., 2015). According to Triantafyllaki (2010), teachers need to be positioned in both musical *and* educational workplaces (emphasis original, p. 187).

6.6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERS

Based on the findings from the current studies, three implications for leaders are presented. The first concerns the support of the teaching staff in continuing teacher professional development, both for teachers commencing their teaching careers (e.g., European Commission, 2010) and for teachers with ample experience. Leaders could be more demanding in this aspect, engaging in conversations with teachers about the preparation of students for present and future professional practices, the need for collaborative, reflective, creative, and problem-solving skills, and evidence-based pedagogies supporting this. The second implication concerns leader professional development, including increasing leaders' awareness of the fact that they are educational leaders more than leaders of the faculties of performers, composers, and music theorists. This means leaders should understand that they too need to increase their insights into evidence-based pedagogies and reflect on their perceptions of teaching and learning.

The third implication relates to their view of the institution, whether they regard it as a gathering of professional musicians or as a large learning community. The latter requires, for example, initiating and supporting a community structure, mixing and mingling groups of teachers, students, leaders and staff, from different disciplines, departments, and with different cultural backgrounds. Involving students and alumni forms part of opening up the institution, the classroom, and the board room, supporting a resilient and sustainable culture of participation, co-creation, diversity, and inclusivity.

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With no hierarchical differences between newcomers and old-timers, between apprentices and masters, between novices and experts, the main focus would not be on transmitting tradition but on establishing new knowledge and innovation (Hakkarainen et al., 2004, p. 74). Leaders could act as a lever for the successful integration of collaborative learning.

6.6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS

The first implication for students is the realization that they have a voice in the education they participate in, and that they are able to influence teachers and leaders. This already partly exists with student evaluations, although these are often anonymous and conducted after the conclusion of courses. In Chapter 3, we saw that students had clear perceptions of professional practice as well as aligned desires for their education.

As young professionals, students could be more aware of the possibility of bringing up the topics they wish to learn, work on, or discuss with their teachers. For example, their awareness of their own responsibility for their learning could be supported by keeping a reflective journal. The second implication for students is that, when groups are not organised by their teacher or institution, they can organise their own peer groups: for example, for playing, improvising, co-creating, experimenting, discussing, and providing peer feedback.

6.7 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This dissertation is intended to provide insights into collaborative learning approaches existing in conservatoires, and to assist in the implementation of collaborative learning. When interpreting the findings of this dissertation, some limitations must be considered. The first limitation concerns the generalizability of the empirical studies included. These studies were conducted in the context of Dutch and Flemish conservatoires. The results of these studies cannot plainly be generalized to other countries with different cultures in Europe or globally. The second limitation concerns the studies reported in Chapters 3 and 4, representing specific cases in two conservatoires in the Netherlands with relatively small sample sizes of teachers and students. However, such specific cases may serve as examples of collaborative learning approaches, teacher practices, and teacher professional development. The third limitation is formed by research design and data collection, which may limit the conclusions to be drawn from the studies reported in this dissertation. Although in the study presented in Chapter 3, a mixed-methods approach was used, including the collection of students' experiences and perceptions through survey

data, interview data was used mostly to collect participants' perceptions in the studies reported in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, using a case study design.

A larger variety of research approaches and data collection methods might have provided more insights into the complexities of the implementation of collaborative learning. Longitudinal data are needed to gain understanding of aspects such as the long-term effects of collaborative learning and teachers', leaders', and students' perceptions of these. Quantitative data collection could assist in the comprehension of correlational aspects involving larger populations of teachers, leaders, and students, and therefore increase the validity of findings.

Although supported by an academic context, this dissertation was based on practitioner research within the conservatoire, and a final limitation that needs to be mentioned is possible insider perspective bias. Even though the academic context, academic supervision, and the study of the literature formed major anchors to avoid deviation, the practitioner who conducted this research, was raised in the culture, and participated in the system, as a student, teacher, leader, and researcher, needs to be considered.

6.8 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Reflection on the model presented in this chapter (Figure 6.2) can provide directions for future educational research within conservatoire education, related to pedagogical development and innovation. As mentioned in the previous section, the findings from this dissertation can be strengthened through investigation of stakeholders within the conservatoire (i.e., students, teachers, and leaders) using other research designs and data collection methods, including quantitative and longitudinal data. Additionally, from the nested triangles, each individual triangle is valuable for further investigation, as are the various relationships between randomly chosen combinations.

We propose the following examples: (1) cohort studies of how music students learn; (2) cohort studies of how alumni perceive their music studies five years after graduation; (3) investigation of characteristics, behaviours, and motivations of teachers regarding innovation of their teaching practices, through survey studies; (4) observational studies of teaching and learning practices; (5) research conducted by teachers, students, and leaders themselves, as in action research or practitioner inquiry into their own practices.

6.9 FINAL REFLECTIONS & CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this dissertation, the breadth and depth of collaborative learning as a catalyst for the innovation in conservatoire education have been explored and investigated. The studies reported advanced insights into the role of collaborative learning approaches in the development of students' professional competences and their professional identity. Experiences with and perceptions of collaborative learning in conservatoire education were put forward, and options and suggestions for the implementation of collaborative learning approaches were proposed, aiming at a broader and improved preparation of students for present and future musical practices. A model was presented (Figure 6.2) to increase understanding of factors and stakeholders in the implementation of collaborative learning and innovation in conservatoire education.

The practice of music is principally grounded in communication and collaboration with others, in the freedom of the creative spirit, and the joy of musical proficiency. Renshaw (2013) highlighted that collaborative learning is crucial for changing the teacher-centred master-apprentice model to a more student-centred approach. Furthermore, he indicated that reconsideration of pedagogical approaches is essential in order to reflect the profoundly collaborative nature of music itself.

In retrospect, the master-apprentice setting as it was practiced formerly by Franz Liszt could be regarded as rather close to learning collaboratively and creatively, and in formal and informal ways. In the twenty-first century, a learning and working community in which they meet other people, cultures, ideologies, and conflict, will support students in making connections, constructing knowledge, and making sense of the world (Luce, 2001).

Collaborative learning was regarded as a catalyst for innovation in conservatoire education; teachers were found to have a pivotal function in implementation of collaborative learning where leaders could act as a lever for the successful integration of it. Students remain at the core of conservatoire education representing the motor of the whole system. To encourage their learning process, they should be provided with ample opportunities to carrying out learning activities and delivering learning outcomes in professional practice and in society, sustained by a variety of pedagogies and approaches including collaborative learning, and based on the broad support of teachers and leaders.

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