

Shared Leadership Education: The Experiences of Music Teachers in a Music School

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Abstract

In all levels of professional music education – music school, conservatory/art gymnasium, music academy, shared leadership is a new and little researched concept. Most of what is known in music education are that a teacher is the leader of education, who leads the education – prepares a program, marks fingers above notes, puts together dynamic symbols and cords of the piece, teaches posture and sitting while playing with an instrument, analyses the style and structure of a musical work as well as teaches music to the pupil. Amongst all else, consults, assists, listens, and takes care of the general well-being of learning. However in professional music education of today while preparing musicians it is a bit different. The teacher is the main person from whom the pupil learns and is like an assistant, the conveyor of knowledge, supporter and leading person towards the end-goal, which is performed by musician in learning and advanced musician. This publication reviews the concept of shared leadership, its dissemination in the education, the experience of music teachers in shared leadership development. The purpose of this publication is to find out how shared leadership based education predominates in professional music education in the work and experience of music school teachers. The results of the qualitative research, conducted by the authors, revealed that the shared leadership in professional music education is comprised of good relationship between the teacher and the pupil, good and favourable learning environment and the teacher's comprehensive support for the student. The shared leadership education concept is applied in the preparation of professional musicians.

Keywords: Shared Leadership, Professional Music Education, Music School, Music Teacher, Teacher, Pupil

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Introduction

Music education at all times has been valued as one of the most intellectual activities for the development of a child. Professional music education is coherent and long pedagogical work process. This type of education starts in the early childhood and continues in several stages until a mature personality for music is formed. Firstly, everything starts at the music school, when the teacher notices a student who has excellent abilities – musical hearing, rhythm, concentration and will power. If the child, encouraged by a teacher, becomes interested, later on he continues his road in conservatory or art gymnasium. After graduating from conservatory, the student usually picks music academy, in which he continues his career. When the performer can already lay out the musical aspects that are important to him, he becomes a professional and mature personality. There are many important factors in the development of a professional music performer that can lead to great results. One of them is the relationship between the teacher and the student. In educating a professional musician, the teacher's job is with one student. This means, that the relationship between the teacher and the student is very important when working with a single child. Such relationship puts the teacher's authority in the first place as person who leads and raises a professional musician. As can already be seen, the teacher's position in today's education has changed considerably. Taking into account the teaching of the past times, when the teacher was an authoritative personality, whose mere opinion was undisputed, the personalities of the today's teachers are different.

There has been a plethora of conducted research regarding the shared leadership - Gronn (2000), Harris et al. (2003), Harris (2005), Spillane (2005), Bolden et al. (2009), Harris (2008), Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010; Napoles, 2006; Patston & Waters, 2015; Creech & Hallam, 2003; Johansen, 2008; Teachout 2001. Spillane et al. (2004), Hargreaves, & Fink (2008), Pont et al. (2008), Northouse (2009), Harris (2010), Marzan et al. (2011), Lambert (2011). Meanwhile, the concept of shared leadership in educational institutions or education has been studied by only a few Lithuanian researchers - Deiniene (2009), Kazlionkaitė, (2009), Cibulskas & Žydžiūnaitė (2011), Rupšienė & Skarbaliene (2010), Targamadžė (2000), Želvys (2003), Žvirdauskas (2006), Mečkauskienė (2008), Navickaitė (2012), Budreckienė (2014). Researchers found that applying of shared leadership in education it is possible to reach the desired results more effectively. However, there is a lack of studies of shared leadership in music education. This study aims to show the leadership relationship between teacher and student in the professional training of musicians.

Shared leadership in professional music education while preparing musicians

Shared leadership is based on voluntary cooperation and interaction, competencies and a sense of responsibility of all parties. The important part of shared leadership is not the position of individuals or role, but their knowledge and competencies in accordance with a certain theme or task. Shared leadership reflects a culture of shared and common work that is shared by all parties (Adas & Bakir, 2013). Liang et al. (2015) claim, that shared leadership in a way coincides with democratic and participatory leadership. Both of the aforementioned concepts (democratic and participatory) describe the results of shared leadership – any form of a team or shared leadership that, in one way or another, means leading (Liang & Sandmann, 2015). Hulpia et al. (2012) claim that shared leadership is the link between leaders, followers, and situations. Shared leadership involves multiple groups of individuals. “Most of the time, shared leadership idea is related with: 1) sharing; 2) cooperation; 3) democracy; and 4) universal participation. Shared leadership is a phenomenon of multitude of

interactions, constantly changing, an energetic unit of the organization, involving universal participation based on interrelationships within the organization (Dukynaitė, 2015). A shared leadership team can be characterized as a close-knit group that openly expresses opinions to group members on mutual trust, communication, and collaboration (Hulpia and others., 2012). Shared leadership is commonly described as horizontal leadership or group leadership (Koccolowski, 2010).

Usually those who pick music schools, do so because they have already seen a performer and wish to play like him. Hoping that s/he can play like he had heard a performer play in a concert or perform how his classmate did in a class. The teacher is discussing and explaining to the student, that first it is paramount to learn the main technical principles of an instrument and then it is possible to play, what the student wants. In accordance with the requirements of a program, the teacher always coordinates the repertoire, however today a teacher pays more attention to the student and in attempt to interest him, allows him to play at least a single composition of his wish. This way, without obscuring student's wishes, s/he is motivated to play or sing even more. As a result, in shared leadership the so-called cooperation occurs, when the teacher listens to the student, consults with him. Then, accordingly, the student receives a positive response from the teacher and the student's wish to play or make music grows. Hard work at class or home for the student is an encouragement to appear in front of the others – friends, parents, teachers. Teachers and students become like friends and without crossing the line, the students preserve their respect towards the teacher and value her / him. Because the teacher is a leading person. To the student s/he is an authority. Therefore, such shared leadership development promotes student motivation and good learning outcomes. This is even mentioned in several scientific sources (Napoles, 2006; Patston & Waters, 2015; Creech & Hallam, 2003; Johansen, 2008; Teachout 2001), in which it is stated that shared leadership is based on connection and relationship between the teacher and the student is the reason for good results in the musician's career.

Teacher's role in shared leadership

The changed paradigm of learning leads to fundamental changes in the activities of both the teacher and the student. The bright conservatism in traditional learning can no longer satisfy the student. Inevitably the number of teachers, whom one way or another in their activities apply shared leadership principles, which are orientated towards the student's personality, are increasing. The role of the teacher is understood as that of a helper, who must take care of the learner's knowledge creation process. The teacher is no longer the controller, as was the case before, he moved into the position of the provider of knowledge, the organizer, the promoter of the expression of students. The main task of the teacher is to create an environment that poses challenges for the student, and by creatively solving these challenges to promote student's freedom, giving students the opportunity to decide the direction that the lesson should develop towards, encourages students' instinctive motivation (Blagg, 2000).

Teachers-leaders are those who have a dream to change something and are able to achieve it or rekindle their enthusiasm by working with colleagues in accordance with the principles of professional culture (Lambert, 2011). Teachers which share leadership, must always renew their knowledge, must be flexible and creative. The results of each student's achievements depend on it, as well as the quality and success of the school itself (Schratz & Petzold, 2007). The shared leadership is a dynamic cooperation process, happening between the members of the community, who aim for a common goal (Koccolowski, 2010). Community members, in the process of shared leadership, have a common goal and a unified voice, which is

strengthened through social interaction and includes shared responsibility, trust, cooperation and personal competence. The teacher is the leader and has a huge potential, because the true leadership of the teacher is also revealed in the dissemination of good practice, the sharing of ideas, thoughts, methodological gatherings and school management activities (Spillane et al. 2004).

Methodology

Research type

In order to reveal the ideas of shared leadership in the preparation of professional musicians in a music school, a qualitative research design was selected. This type of research aims to test existing theory about shared leadership and its applicability in preparing students in a music school.

Data collection

The selected data gathering method is semi-structured interview. Authors selected this type of data gathering method, because it is flexible and universal (Kallio et al., 2016).

Data analysis

Interpretative phenomenology, a qualitative data analysis method was selected in this research. For the phenomenologist the world is the world stated by consciousness. By conducting data analysis, it is assumed that the “living world” and experiences of each research participant are individual, and that reality is perceived subjectively. This is an understanding of the life experiences of the study participants (Žydzīūnaitė, 2008). Four stages were selected for the analysis of research data, in accordance with Willig (2001) interpretative phenomenology analysis concept:

1. Repeated reading of the text - the researcher noted relevant places, which include various associations, questions, comments, summary statements.
2. Formulation of topics and assignment of labels - the researcher formulated topics that characterize each part of the text, giving them titles that were taken from the participants' quotes during the interview.
3. Preparation of the structure of the analysis - the researcher forms clusters of concepts, giving them labels that reflect the essence of those topics in everyday language terms, taken from the text of the original informant's interview.
4. Compilation of a summary table – The summary table is compiled by using the cluster labels and the topic labels. These labels reflect the researcher’s experience and are related to the phenomenon that is being researched. Moreover, the table is filled up with quotations, where the excerpts of specific interviews can be found.

Research sample

Ten music school teachers from different Lithuanian cities participated in this research. The main criterions for the music school teachers were the following:

- no less than five years of pedagogical experience working in a music school;
- higher education;
- the average age of students, taught by the music teachers, is from 7 to 16 years;
- participation in republic and international competitions with students;
- good connection with students' parents;
- continuous improvement in the field of their specialty.

Results

Teacher's help during the education

The music teachers were surprised that teacher's help was a debatable issue, because to their mind, it is a matter of course in today's teaching paradigm and teacher's work. They claimed that the essence of their work and work itself consists of helping the students. Help in education, to both students and parents, is very important from the very first day, because the teacher has a strong connection with the student in individual lessons:

Help is very important, from the first class in every way, for both parents and the child. Because the teacher is like a friend of the family. Every child is individual, but the teacher must try to get to know him from the very first day. All of us try to help. During adolescence, parents in particular ask us to help, because [in their own] family, they have a hard time talking to the child. We have a strong connection with the children. (No. 2)

Assistance in a music school is necessary:

What is a teacher good for if he does not advice or help. To my mind help and advices are necessary. Even in a conservatory you probably cannot leave a student alone and give him freedom. Help is necessary, because without it, it is not clear what will happen and how will the child play. In a music school, to my mind, help is necessary. (No. 3)

Teacher's assistance does not affect the student's personality:

In reality, every teacher greatly impacts the child. But I do not like this. Because I think that that every child is individual and different. Therefore I try to influence [the child] as little as possible, but then again, if it is a classic [composition] there are certain canons or romanticism and you still impact the child. But every child of mine has certain different things. For example, sitting styles, I try not to repeat the program to make it as large and diverse as possible. (No. 4)

Assistance at the beginning of education, but later on, only the performer has to be left on stage:

I will say it like this, at the very beginning, the basis of everything is a teacher. Yes. Absolutely everything. He has to explain all of the material, learn [together], but at the very beginning all of the initiative is from me. When the child finally learns – text, technique, improvisation, colours, fantasies, when this process begins, the teacher must step back a little, and all of this has to transfer over to a child. The final result is this: when the [day of] the concert or competition is coming closer, together with the children we go to the hall. Then, at the hall, I tell the child that he has to forget absolutely everything that I had told him, and he must play the way he lives this music, the way he feels it. When you play on the

stage, nothing that was taught to you by the teacher should be seen. Everyone has to hear the music, the way you play it, thy way you hear it. (No. 5)

Psychological assistance, as an encouragement before performances is of great importance:
I always encourage, praise the children before concerts or competitions. Sometimes the text does not come out as it was supposed to, but I still tell them that they know the text very well and now, when they will step on the stage, they will show what they can the best. It is truly a psychological thing (No. 10).

Assistance is the work of two people:

To my mind it is a work of both. It is not only a teacher's work. And if you both work consistently, there is no such thing as perfection in music, where it is the end because you have to be prepared [for] everything. It is not like that because our goal is to prepare a work and to show it to the listener. Therefore, if only a single person will work, he will not learn on his own, he will be an adult, a performer. To my mind it is the work of both (No. 1).

Distributed education

Research participants had various opinions regarding distribution of duties in the education process, but they claimed, that this type of teaching is mandatory in the education of a professional musician:

To my mind, it can be allowed for a child to take part in the process of education. If a student comes and claims that he wishes to learn a certain composition, it is a celebration. And there is nothing better than that... the goal of ours, teachers, is for a person to want by himself to learn a certain composition. So that after he finishes a school he would not stop playing. It is very good when a person comes and claims that he wants to play this [composition]. It means that he finally found what he wants and that is wonderful. Of course, I help. And that does not mean it is some kind of a sin and that he will not learn anything. After all, we all want for children to desire [by themselves] and try to find ways how to make it happen, so that the child would desire [by himself], and when he finally expresses that desire, the question still arises as to whether or not to give him what he wants. It is music, after all. (No. 8)

Student who follows the path of a professional must show the initiative:

*If the child thinks of following the path of a professional, it is very important he would show the initiative. For children that claim that they want to study in music academy, I always tell them that they must show initiative, offer tasks, repertoires. In general, when talking [about] events, etc., I always talk over with the children and never do what they do not want. (No. 2).
Sharing between a teacher and a student happens even during the selection of repertoire:
When it comes to musical composition, we always consult, try to play them. We try to check whether the musical composition is beautiful, whether [the student] likes it or not. If [he] does not like it, we try to change something. When it comes to weaker children, I advise them to look over melodies on "Youtube" and search [for a melody] that is beautiful for them. I search as well. And alongside [the composition that they pick], I add some kind of composition from the program. (No. 10).*

Learning environment

The state of the learning environment depends on the student's mood and preparation for the lesson:

The way I see it, a student, prior to coming to a teacher, has already to be determined and ready. In any case, the teacher must be demanding enough. If the child feels that the teacher is relaxed and does not pay enough attention to him, there will be no result. For the teacher, demand is very important, because it is related to the question of respect. The student must be prepared for the lesson, expecting to be required to perform the task, whether he did it correctly or not. (No. 2)

The learning environment has to be the same for students of all aptitudes:

Of course, the environment has to always be pleasant, whether the child is a professional or an amateur. If it is unpleasant or there is fear to come [to a lesson], then of course it can discourage the will to play. I think that a good atmosphere is truly required. (No. 6)

Learning environment does not depend on the skills of a child. The only difference, is that a more skilled student can do more during a lesson:

Whether I am preparing a very skilled or a less skilled child, the learning environment stays the same. It is just, these are people, with whom you can do more during a lesson. With talented children I do a lot during a lesson. And there are children, with whom you do very little. But the environment, mood, attitude towards a human. They cannot differ, everything is the same. It is just that for those who walk towards the path of a professional it is more interesting during the lesson and the work itself is on a different level. (No. 3)

The learning environment in music schools has to be academic, in which tension sometimes prevails:

Of course, this type of atmosphere [has to prevail] among older students, such as seventeen-year-old <...>. Of course, if it is not working out for a child, there is tension during a lesson as well. It happens to everyone. If the child is honest, sensitive and is hard on himself when it is not working out for him, the teacher, of course, calms him down. That is a tension. In a case like this, that is for real. You calm him down, [saying] that it will work out and that is it. There are a lot of children who, when they start learning how to play with their right hand, start worrying that it is not working out for them. Then you have to psychologically start talking with them in an attempt to calm them down. (No. 5)

Learning environment depends on teacher's character and mood:

A lot of it depends on the character of the teacher. I never lead a lesson in a very matter-of-fact way. Sometimes I even wonder how teachers are able to have such intonations, [indicating] that they are the teachers and you are a student. Students come to me as if they were at home. For them, it is pleasant, warm and free. (No. 9)

Good connection between the teacher and the student

Good connection is not only between a teacher and a student, but with the parents of the student as well:

In any case, this is determined not only by the child's relationship with the teacher, but also by the parents. They are an especially important link. At all times it is mandatory to communicate not only with a child, but with the parents as well. If I see that there is a

problem with a child, I always contact with the parents, [in order to find out] what, why and for what reason, because not all of the children open up or talk about themselves. (No. 7)

A good connection is in the responsibility of a student:

If the connection is with the teacher, then it is the responsibility of the student. If there is not connection, that student does not feel the responsibility. He can come and say that he did not play, did not have enough time and will not play. The teacher can shout, but the student will not care. Scolding at home will also pass through his ears. (No. 6)

A good interrelationship is mandatory:

I always try to maintain good connection with everyone. Because otherwise it is impossible to work, since you work one on one. Therefore if you start getting into a fight with a child, this type of process will continue. It is impossible this way. (No. 3)

Good connection is important during the initial stage:

If we maintain a good relationship in the initial stage, it is a good start. They remember that teacher and they greatly idealize that whole musical path and all that. (No. 4)

Supporting the teacher's initiative builds a good interrelationship:

We talk about a lot of things. I tell them how I was when I was a child, how I played [with an instrument] and they tell me everything as well. Sometimes they ask me to keep a secret, we have secrets of our own. And by chatting this way, we come up to the necessary topics and musical things. Somehow, we communicate freely. We communicate warmly. (No. 9)

Conclusion

Teachers claimed that in music education finding a good connection, creating a comfortable learning environment and providing various support to the student in the learning process is the most important. As a result, the education between the teacher and the students takes place on a *sharing basis*.

Firstly, assistance during the learning process. It manifests in several ways: assistance with learning a text, assistance with text's interpretation, assistance with walking onto a scene, assistance to prepare psychologically for playing and instrument, assistance for parents in understanding their own children. In their opinion, the teacher has to help the student, but not do it for him.

Secondly, the creation of a good learning environment, in which the student would feel great. The learning environment depends on the character of the teacher, student's preparation and determination for the lesson.

Moreover, the learning environment has to be equally good for children of various aptitudes. Thirdly, when learning and preparing a musician, a good connection is mandatory. A good connection between a teacher and the student manifests in various ways – from the initiative of a teacher and the responsibility of a student. A good connection has to be with the student's parents as well. This connection has to be friendly, demanding and collegial.

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