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Between innovation and tradition: The balancing act of the ‘protean’ music student

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Abstract

Innovation is being called for to renew higher music education (HME) due to substantial societal changes, yet the implications of this trajectory remain unclear. By turning to institutional theory and Foucauldian theory, this article investigates how innovation is perceived in HME. Drawing from a case study in which twenty-four music performance students and professors were interviewed in Norway and the Netherlands, the findings suggest that the call for innovation is enmeshed with institutional politics. Indeed, innovative practices (e.g. genre independent programmes) have caused institutional resistance but also fostered necessary renewal. Thus, the balancing act between innovation and tradition is discussed.

Keywords: *higher music education, innovation, institutional politics, institutional power, disciplinary practices*

Introduction: The call to innovate higher music education

Innovation and creativity are at the same time alluring and frightening. On the one hand, innovative goods and processes, and the aspirations to realize these, suggest progress; they renew hope and offer something to strive for or to anticipate. On the other hand, they also suggest the crumbling of known entities, with its concomitant uncertainty, anxiety, and apprehension. (Sogner, 2018, p. 339)

Since the turn of the millennium there has been a call for innovation in higher education in Europe (and beyond), including higher music education (HME). This overarching

call is perhaps best illustrated in the political sphere through initiatives such as *Horizon 2020*, referred to as the 'biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever' (European Commission, 2014, p. 5). However, what I refer to as the 'call for innovation' is also evident in the cultural sector. The *Creative Europe programme* (European Commission, 2021) has, for instance, given funding to the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC), that is, a voluntary coalition of HME organisations that envisions 'professionally focused arts education as a quest for excellence' in, as one of three areas, precisely 'research and innovation' (European Association of Conservatoires, 2016). Indeed, it is claimed that HME organisations are now curating 'research and innovation agendas' (Gaunt et al., 2021, p. 2), yet the very concept of 'innovation' is usually left open to interpretation by scholars and institutional leaders. How, then, is innovation unfolding in higher music education?

As an educational institution, higher music education is reputed to perpetuate artistic ideals which undermine the logic of neoliberalism (Allsup, 2015; Johansson, 2012; Jørgensen, 2009). Building on this, one might presume that an 'inverted economy' predominates, meaning that rather than being dictated by economic concerns, the value of music is dictated by its symbolic value, in line with Bourdieu's theory of cultural production (1993). If so, then the dominant discourses in higher music education might oppose the current 'call for innovation', given that the concept stems from economic theory (e.g. Schumpeter, 1934). Indeed, recent studies on higher music education have found that the application of market terminology to the field has been met with resistance from both music students and teachers (Angelo et al., 2019; Toscher & Bjørnø, 2019). Moreover, individual success has been emphasised to such a degree in higher music education that it may overshadow critical thinking related to shared 'social, political, moral and ethical issues' (Georgii-Hemming et al., 2020, p. 253). In the professional field, it has been claimed that 'institutions and sectors are dismantled in the name of flexibility and innovation', meaning that 'those who wish to work in such a dismantled sector are consequently encouraged to innovate and be flexible' (Moore, 2016, p. 51). However, friction between the old and the new is not only related to the call for innovation.

Nearly a decade ago, institutional change in higher music education was promoted by a 'creativity agenda' (Burnard, 2014, p. 78). It was considered essential for graduates to develop creative abilities to thrive as professional musicians in the changing labour market, and the notion of *multiple creativities* was introduced to challenge the 'singular and individualist discourses which define musical creativity in terms of the Western canonization' (Haddon & Burnard, 2015, p. 262). More collaborative forms of creativity were dominated by the 'primacy of composition' (Burnard, 2014, p. 78), thereby stifling creative development (González-Moreno, 2014; Hargreaves et al., 2012) and producing social hegemonies (Burnard, 2019). In recent decades, the authority of the instrumental teacher has been discussed at length (e.g. Gaunt et al., 2012; Johansson, 2012; Jørgensen, 2000; Nerland, 2007; Tuovinen, 2018; Yau, 2019) and the mandates and social responsibilities of higher music

education have been renegotiated (e.g. Allsup, 2015; Angelo et al., 2019; Carruthers, 2019; Gaunt et al., 2021; Minors et al., 2017). If we understand higher music education to be ‘the result of institutional practices in which some musicians have authority over others’ (Frith, 2011, p. 67), then institutional change will inevitably transform its social order. Hence, the call to innovate higher music education may constitute institutional politics that are worthy of examination.

Despite the potential for friction between arts and commerce (e.g. Allsup, 2015; Angelo et al., 2019; Moore, 2016; Toscher & Bjørnø, 2019), Dutch music students have been found to embrace a ‘holistic approach’ to career development, indicating that ‘entrepreneurship and creative values are not necessarily conflicting’ (Schediwy et al., 2018, p. 624). This suggestion is also reflected in the potential for today’s students to be(come) ‘change agents’ in (O’Neill, 2019) and ‘makers’ of society through social innovation (Gaunt et al., 2021). Indeed, higher music education may already be transforming due to the joint scholarly insistence that radical change is necessary, yet there seems to be a lack of critical discussion concerning how to innovate higher music education. In this article, a case study of two HME organisations from Norway and the Netherlands is presented. To uncover how the portrayed call for innovation is experienced, I employ a constructivist approach to institutional theory in combination with Foucauldian theory. By discussing the findings from this case study, in which twenty-four music students and professors were interviewed, I intend to answer the following: How do music students and professors from classical and genre independent performance study programmes experience the increased focus on innovating higher music education, and what are the implications of their experiences?

Backdrop: Higher music education and the concept of innovation

To address the call for innovation, the concept of *innovation* should first be briefly defined and delimited. For this I turn to Joseph Schumpeter [1883 – 1950], known for his work on creative entrepreneurs and innovation (Schumpeter, 1934). I have chosen to present the Schumpeterian lens of innovation in order to offer intertextuality with research on higher music education (see e.g. Angelo et al., 2019; Schediwy et al., 2018; Toscher & Bjørnø, 2019) and due to the term’s economic roots. Indeed, innovation is strongly tied to the market. At its root, innovation is about introducing ‘something new in the economy’ (Sogner, 2018, p. 327). According to Schumpeter, economic life ‘is represented by a special group of people, although all other members of society must also act economically’ (Schumpeter, 1934, p. 4). The ‘chief activity’ of some groups of society is ‘economic conduct or business’, whereas, for other groups, ‘the economic aspect of conduct is overshadowed by other aspects’ (Schumpeter, 1934, p. 4). Linking this sentiment to Bourdieu’s (1993) theory of cultural production, I build on the premise that for many musicians and institutional members of higher music education, economic conduct is typically overshadowed by other

concerns (see e.g. Moore, 2016), yet they must still act economically as members of society (even if they resist doing so).

The latter point may be linked to the notion that the changing labour market demands a more flexible and 'protean' musician who is able to undertake 'multiple roles' as needed (Bennett, 2008, p. 9). Over the past few decades, technological innovations have resulted in increased global connectivity (e.g. social media) and accessibility (e.g. streaming services). Today, music students are often expected to launch their careers on the internet or through social media (Rowley et al., 2015), and the newest generation of students are more interested in social innovation than previous generations (O'Neill, 2019). In light of this trajectory, it has been argued that music graduates must be equipped with new and inventive skillsets if they are to thrive as professionals (Bartleet et al., 2019; Bennett, 2012; Haddon & Burnard, 2015; Minors et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2019). In short, societal changes have affected higher music education, and it has been suggested that the time is ripe for a 'paradigm shift', a re-conceptualisation of the institution based on 'embracing musical practices as social process' (Gaunt et al., 2021, p. 16). This shift includes the concept of innovation (Gaunt et al., 2021, p. 15) and may offer new ways for musicians to approach economic life:

Rather than assume that musical artists are either rational investors in their own talent or irrationally oblivious to economic forces it would seem more fruitful to explore the idea that as a social fact musical creativity is defined by the tension *between* artistic freedom and material necessity (or, to use the terms in which the debate is usually expressed, between arts and commerce). (Frith, 2011, p. 69)

Lastly, the concept of innovation is inextricably linked to that of *creativity*. Both concepts challenge the status quo and may defy 'those whose power rests on the preservation of the status quo' (Sogner, 2018, p. 337). Indeed, it has been claimed that 'the most successful musicians' are 'ideas people' (Burnard, 2014, p. 80) and that the more 'innovative' aspects of music education are 'concerned with students finding their own artistic voice', including perhaps 'innovative creativity and pushing the boundaries of art' (Toscher & Bjørnø, 2019, p. 408). One way of fostering such innovation in higher music education may be through *innovative knowledge communities*, fostered by 'shared social practices' in 'the deliberate reinvention of prevailing practices so as to elicit pursuit of novelty' (Hakkarainen, 2016, p. 19). Building on this, innovating higher music education may be about transforming prevailing practices into seeking more novelty and then profiting from such institutional change.¹ However, it must be noted that innovative institutional work within the educational

1 A key notion in organisational institutionalism is that organisations must gain institutional legitimacy to secure organisational survival in the field (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). However, HME organisations are often publicly funded and must therefore adhere to specific requirements that come with this support. Requirements are typically formulated in detail in annual grant letters and allocation plans, thereby affecting

sector is most often linked to *incremental innovation*, where an already existing product (e.g. a study programme) is innovated upon (e.g. new teaching methods). The next section elaborates on this landscape, namely how institutional change and institutional politics are approached analytically throughout this article to discuss the call for innovation.

Theoretical framework: Institutional politics

A constructivist approach to institutional theory informs us that institutions ‘exist to the extent that they are powerful – that is, the extent to which they affect the behaviors, beliefs and opportunities of individuals, groups, organizations and societies’ (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 477). According to organisational institutionalism, higher music education can only exist as long as legitimacy is acquired in the field by reflecting and affecting societal behaviours and beliefs. Indeed, the survival of institutions is dependent upon their ability to reflect the constructed reality (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Following this line of theoretical thought, the endorsement of the current call for innovation could be one of the ways in which higher music education seeks to survive at the present time. Thus, institutional theory is applicable when investigating institutional change, introducing frameworks which may indicate both *why* and *how* certain changes are taking place. Specifically, I rely on the notion of *institutional power* (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017) to analyse the *institutional politics* associated with the increased focus on innovating higher music education.

This constructivist approach aligns with Foucauldian discourse theory, in which *discourse* is constituted by ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1972/2010, p. 49). In other words, Foucault considered discourse not only to be a matter of language, but also to include physical artefacts (e.g. musical scores and instruments). By the same token, an *institution* is constituted by ‘enduring patterns of social practice’ (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 477), as well as by the ‘built environment, including mechanical and technological systems’ (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 499). Furthermore, organisational institutionalism is foremost concerned with the *organisational field*. What is typically referred to as ‘HME institutions’ in the literature on higher music education would be referred to as *organisations* in the educational sector by institutional scholars. Thus, the participating HME ‘institutions’ from this case study are referred to as ‘organisations’ throughout the article, adhering to institutional terms. The *institution* that is higher music education, on the other hand, serves as an overarching unit for HME organisations within the organisational field. Institutional change occurs whenever the ‘enduring patterns of

institutional change in the organisations. Other stakeholders or funds may also affect institutional change, as evidenced in the support given to AEC by the *Creative Europe* programme (see Gaunt et al., 2021). In short, new practices are in demand and may be financially rewarding for HME organisations if they align with funding requirements or increase the revenue of the organisation otherwise (e.g. student recruitment).

social practice' are transformed. Because institutions change over time, it is not *if* but rather *how* change occurs that is of interest for the purposes of this article.

Central to this framework is an institutional perspective on power where 'actors are subject to forms of power that are disconnected from the interests and actions of specific others' (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 484). The notion of being *subjected* to power resonates with Foucault's understanding of power as a productive force, a 'mode of action' that exists 'only as exercised by some on others' (Foucault, 1994/2020, p. 340). Some individuals are given more authority than others in light of their institutional role (e.g. leaders, teachers, scholars), yet they may not always be aware of the subject positions they occupy (Foucault, 1972/2010). Power can even unfold as conformity, resulting from a socially constructed image of a 'normal' subject that moves music students and professors toward uniformity (e.g. how to play an instrument) while punishing deviants (e.g. sanctions for not performing well). In this way, *discipline* works 'through routine practices and structures that shape the choices of actors by establishing boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate behavior' (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 488) and *disciplined actors* have made these boundaries their own by internalising external demands (Lawrence & Buchanan 2017, p. 486). Most music students and professors may be considered 'disciplined' due to the engraved expectations of the institution (e.g. excellence in music performance).

The focal point of this article is to discuss the implications of how students and professors experience the increased focus on innovation in higher music education. As mentioned above, I lean on the notion of institutional power (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017) for the analysis. Two distinct forms of power can be drawn from this framework, namely *institutional agency* and *institutional control*. The interplay between these two forms is referred to as *institutional politics*: the 'role that power plays in shaping the relationship between institutions and actors' (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 480). In short, institutional agency is episodic and found in 'the work of individual and collective actors to create, transform, maintain and disrupt institutions' (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 480). Institutional control, on the other hand, is associated with *disciplinary practices* (Foucault, 1994/2020), systemic in its execution and visible in 'the impact of institutions on the behaviors and beliefs of individual and organizational actors' (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 480). Though institutional control is perhaps most visible in pre-existing dominant discourses, all study programmes are constituted (at least in part) by disciplinary practices. Because higher music education is multifaceted and consists of several subcultures (Jørgensen, 2009), institutional change can affect subgroups of institutional members differently, depending on the HME organisation.

According to institutional scholars, processes of institutionalisation become hierarchised and 'take on a rulelike status in social thought and action' (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). Who, then, has the authority to affect the 'rulelike status' of innovation in higher music education? By identifying forms of institutional power (that constitute institutional

politics) in the analysis, this framework serves as a fruitful tool in the examination of when students and professors have experienced ownership during the institutional changes associated with innovation and, conversely, when they have not. Foucauldian theory complements this lens by positing that subjects are often unaware of forms of power and that institutional members are rewarded and sanctioned for specific behaviours through established disciplinary practices (Foucault, 1994/2020). In higher music education, such practices include the ways in which students and professors are formally evaluated based on their performance and behaviour (e.g. grades, reports), as well as forms of surveillance that shame or embarrass those individuals who do not comply with expected social practices (e.g. not meeting the institutionalised expectations for musical performance, such as performing poorly in a masterclass or selecting a musical repertoire deemed unprestigious). The next section presents the fieldwork that was undertaken to examine these areas of interest.

Methodology: A comparative case study

To investigate how students and professors from different programmes and organisations experience the increased focus on innovation in higher music education, a comparative design was chosen to ensure several target groups for the study. Two HME organisations were selected on behalf of their genre independent music performance study programmes, namely *FRIKA* in Oslo, Norway, and *Musician 3.0* in Utrecht, the Netherlands. This informed the study with a deviant case (Silverman, 2014, p. 99), in so far as being genre independent is considered to be irregular in higher music education (Jørgensen, 2009). Another deviating factor was that the interview candidates were deemed ‘innovative’. This purposive sampling (Silverman, 2014, p. 61) was employed to recruit informants who could shed light on the increased focus on innovation. The target groups were otherwise selected through theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2014, pp. 97–100) based on subgroups found in research (e.g. ‘students’, ‘teachers’). A few professors from each organisation assisted in a chain referral by suggesting applicable candidates. Though they were free to interpret the meaning of ‘innovative’ subjectively, it was specified that informants needed to be bachelor students in music performance from classical or genre independent study programmes and professors affiliated with these programmes. A balance in instruments, ethnicity and gender was also encouraged during the chain-referral.

Before starting the data collection, the research project was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, including an ethics review. In total, the fieldwork consisted of twenty-four qualitative and semi-structured interviews that were conducted individually during 2019 as open conversations with the informants about their experiences with innovation in higher music education. There were twelve informants from each HME

organisation, including three informants in each target group, resulting in three levels of comparison: 1) music performance bachelor students ('S') versus professors ('P'); 2) study programmes in classical music ('C') versus genre independent music ('F' for *FRIKA* or 'M' for *Musician 3.0*); and 3) the *Norwegian Academy of Music* from Norway ('NMH') versus the *Utrechts Conservatorium* from the Netherlands ('HKU'). The interviews were recorded and transcribed during 2019, then coded in NVivo and anonymised to protect the identity of the informants. Interviews with the informants from HKU were conducted in English, the informants' second language. Interviews with the informants from NMH were conducted in Norwegian, then translated into English after being coded. The translation of language could have affected some of the information drawn from the interviews, however, all informants were given the opportunity to confirm that their selected quotations were authentic.

The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to uncover the informants' experiences with specific institutional changes. During the analysis of the interview transcripts, forms of institutional power from the theoretical framework were identified in the informants' experiences with innovation in higher music education. My own affiliation with one of the organisations adds a bias to the study, as does purposive sampling. However, the in-depth nature of a case study is more about falsification of, as opposed to verification of, the researcher's preconceived notions (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 311). Indeed, the relatively large number of informants increases the validity of the study, as does its alignment with other research on higher music education.

The findings consist of four categories that emerged from the analysis: 1) institutional agency for innovation; 2) institutional control for innovation; 3) resistance to institutional control for innovation; and 4) resistance to institutional agency for innovation. These categories of identified institutional politics are separated into the next two sections, presenting first the informants' experiences with innovation in higher music education and then their experiences with institutional resistance to innovation in higher music education.

Innovating higher music education

This findings section presents the informants' experiences with the increased focus on innovation in higher music education. Specifically, institutional agency and institutional control have been identified in statements about how the informants have either pursued innovative ideas and practices themselves, or have experienced new formal structures that seek to provide innovative practices. Through selected quotations, the following subsections illustrate institutional politics that work towards innovation in higher music education.

Institutional agency for innovation: Innovative individuals

The first category is derived from the informants' experiences with innovation in their own institutional role. For their experiences to have constituted institutional agency, their institutional work must have transformed or disrupted their affiliated HME organisation in some way. To achieve this, the informants could have influenced other actors (i.e. students and staff) to do something they would not normally do, or they could have attempted to disrupt institutionalised practices through technical or market leadership, or by lobbying for regulatory change and discursive action (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017). When the informants shared ideas and stories that they viewed as disruptive to the status quo of their organisation, this may be seen as an expression of how they were exerting forms of power that can be identified as institutional agency. The informants can also be described as *innovative* (building on the Schumpeterian lens of innovation), in so far as their institutional work has constituted new study programmes, elective courses and educational projects that have been both transformative and profitable to their organisation (albeit as *incremental innovations*). However, there was a gap between the informants' innovativeness and their understanding of the concept.

Though there was general confusion regarding what the term *innovation* actually entails, most informants associated it with doing 'something new' (HKU-SM2) and 'inventing stuff' (NMH-SF3). A notion of newness was thus repeated throughout the interviews, including comments such as 'stuff that hasn't been done before' (HKU-SC3), 'thinking out of the box' (HKU-SC2) and finding 'a solution that is completely out of the box' (HKU-PM2). In alignment with this, many informants also expressed a desire to be 'presented with different ways of being artists' (NMH-SC2) and 'to work with different styles and things' (HKU-SM2). This desire for artistic exploration was portrayed as exceeding current institutionalised practices:

I think a musician is like a writer or choreographer or whatever. It's the job of the artist to translate the things that go around in the world or their personal lives or in your own life or in that of others ... I see the musician as artist and not only as the technical crafts persons that are able to play the violin or the saxophone or the drums on a very technical high level. (HKU-PM3)

If you polish something, it will not be better, it will be polished. This is the fundamental problem in the approach to classical music ... We have forgotten that aestheticism exists somehow. (HKU-SC3)

A kind of creativity has disappeared from our profession, and I think it's important to bring it back in order for the classical musician not to become a reproducing machine on a higher and higher level that only aims to play perfectly, but that we aim to educate a creative musician, a participating musician, an artist that can reflect upon why and not only what and how, and take greater risks in music. (NMH-PC2)

These statements point to the fact that technical craft skills typically have been favoured over creative development in music education (e.g. González-Moreno, 2014; Hargreaves et al., 2012; Yau, 2019). Defying this status quo by promoting an understanding of the musician as an artist is, therefore, illustrative of how institutional agency is constituted when such ideas of renewal are promoted, particularly among the classical informants. Several of the classical professors encouraged more artistic exploration in higher music education while simultaneously underlining the importance of instrumental proficiency, a finding that also resonates in other studies (e.g. Angelo et al., 2019; Gaunt et al., 2012; Johansson, 2012). One professor stated that instrumental lessons should teach students 'to become free, to think out of the box' but also that 'for me, craftsmanship is number one' (HKU-PC2). Similarly, the classical professor who wanted to 'educate a creative musician ... an artist that can reflect' also claimed that 'what makes this institution so great is the maintenance of an excellent level of instrumental teaching' (NMH-PC2). Thus, it is worth noting that their attempts to transform their organisation do not equate with a rejection of the classical tradition but, rather, an expansion of it. By introducing more creative development into their programmes, classical informants disrupted the status quo (of 'reproducing'):

I think they [classical students] are extremely conservative ... I feel like we're tricking them, the students, by letting them reproduce the same musical works over and over and over ... It's like we're educating them for unemployment. (NMH-PC1)

The relationship between the 'reproducing' status quo and the increased focus on innovation was further elaborated on by one of the genre independent professors:

If the institution was innovative, then we would need to put ideas into a structured, methodical system where results are put out into society in a valuable way that people are actually willing to pay for. And if you look at the majority of events at the institution, then we are "repeating", "copying", and teaching our students to play a repertoire that is almost always approved by the teacher. At best we might be "recreating". (NMH-PF3)

During the interviews, several of the professors attempted to dissect the concept of innovation. Degree of newness was discussed, ranging from nuances such as 'repeating' and 'recreating' to 'creating' and 'inventing', musically as well as in their educational practices. One professor noted that 'creativity is almost a synonym for innovation ... but I think that innovation is a bigger word than creativity' (HKU-PM1). Another stated that 'I interpret innovation as something truly new ... you need to bring something new to the field' (NMH-PC3). A third professor was confused as to 'when can we actually call it innovation and when is it simply study activities, and when is it something genuinely new?' (NMH-PF2) Innovation and creativity were considered to be interlinked by most, yet innovation demanded greater

contextualisation. Classical informants were particularly vocal about improving the amount of artistic freedom that was offered in their programmes, whereas genre independent informants were considered to be both creative and innovative by virtue of their affiliation. The following subsection elaborates on the two genre independent programmes.

Institutional control for innovation: Innovative study programmes

New study programmes may be initiated in terms of institutional agency (e.g. by lobbying actors), yet they are constituted over time through the implementation of institutional control (i.e. disciplinary practices such as curricula and evaluations). Indeed, the entrance of genre independent study programmes can be illustrative of how institutional politics unfold in higher music education, as the institutional work that is required in the development of new programmes entails ‘deliberate strategies of actors as they skillfully and reflexively engage in activities to influence the institutional environments in which they operate’ (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 491). The interplay among members and their affiliated organisations is key when developing study programmes. Moreover, genre independent programmes can be considered *innovative* because they challenge the status quo of higher music education with an openness to musical genres and are profitable to HME organisations (that is, if they recruit new groups of students, which is often a source of funding for educational institutions). In alignment with this theoretical reasoning (i.e. a Schumpeterian lens in which innovation is financially rewarding), most informants considered the genre independent programmes—*Musician 3.0* from the Utrechts Conservatorium, the Netherlands, and *FRIKA* from the Norwegian Academy of Music, Norway—to be an example of innovation in their organisation.

At the time of the fieldwork in 2019, *Musician 3.0* had recently been expanded to offer an international class in addition to their regular class, thereby doubling their student number. On the website of the Utrechts Conservatorium (HKU), it is stated that *Musician 3.0* is ‘the only conservatoire programme in the Netherlands that is not connected to an instrument, style or genre’ (HKU University of the Arts, 2021). Moreover, any graduate from the programme is considered to be a ‘Music Performance Artist’ who is able to take on creative work as a ‘musical director, instrumentalist, performer, composer, interdisciplinary maker, entrepreneur, coach and educational innovator’, or even ‘create a new profession!’ (HKU University of the Arts, 2021). As these segments illustrate, the *Musician 3.0* programme is thought to educate versatile and innovative music performance artists, resembling the notion of the ‘protean’ musician (Bennett, 2008). This was reflected in both the *Musician 3.0* students and professors:

It [*Musician 3.0*] is quite exceptional and unique ... We connect the music part with other disciplines, not only on stage, but within people themselves. And we connect life coaching and the personal development in the whole study, and we connect the physical

parts of the body awareness and the dancing part and the being aware of societal issues, which is quite new and innovative within the conservatory world. (HKU-PM3)

We get really motivated to and also skilled to search for this, to search for new sounds and free improvisation and to see beyond borders ... You benefit a lot from doing other art disciplines, to opening some boundaries or some boxes and to perceive music in a different way. (HKU-SM2)

In order to develop into an interdisciplinary and open-ended programme, several of the *Musician 3.0* professors explained that the programme relied on carefully selected methods (that is, disciplinary practices) to enforce boundaries for their students to work within such as 'artistic coaching' (HKU-PM1) and an 'improvising mind' (HKU-PM2). One of the professors claimed that it could be 'quite hard actually to find the right teachers, that come from the same state of mind' because 'often people come from a conventional way' when they in fact need to 'allow themselves to be educated in very different fields so that they have this open mind' (HKU-PM3). This 'open mind' was searched for in the programme auditions, and overall the *Musician 3.0* students were considered to be innovative by the HKU informants. One student claimed that 'I have looked at a lot of graduation performances, and in 90% it is like the student creates a new genre almost' (HKU-SM2). Another student stated that 'you can't even imagine beforehand, you know, it's so different every time ... so I really see much innovation in our study' (HKU-SM3). This innovativeness was further elaborated on by one of the professors:

I think the department [*Musician 3.0*] in itself is an idea, and the way it is shaped and formed over time. I mean, it has been there for now 9 years or so, I believe, and it's changing all the time! Developing. I think that's definitely innovative, because as an institute, as an organism, it's a different organism than the classical department or the pop department. (HKU-PM1)

As its own HKU subculture, the *Musician 3.0* programme appears to foster social practices for innovation which constitute 'innovative' disciplinary practices (e.g. audition criteria). In fact, the continuous renewal of the programme resembles the notion of 'innovative knowledge communities' where novelty is actively pursued (Hakkarainen, 2016). Also central to the programme is the employment of student-centred teaching methods that are 'contextual, context-dependent, and emergent' (Tuovinen, 2018, p. 70). As illustrated in the prior subsection, classical informants from this study challenged the status quo by expanding their teaching to include student-centred methods while still relying on more transmissive modes as needed, thereby constituting institutional agency for innovation. Considering this institutional work, more traditional programmes may currently lack the disciplinary practices that are needed to innovate (e.g. teacher training, an 'open mind'). Indeed, it may

be unrealistic to expect any educator to transform into a career coach without the proper training or resources (Bennett et al., 2019). Moreover, the deliberate reinvention of old structures is institutional knowledge that is currently in demand (e.g. Carruthers, 2019; Johansson, 2012; Schmidt, 2019;). Consequently, the disciplinary practices of the *Musician 3.0* programme (e.g. teaching/assessment methods) are timely and could be further profited from if the programme's competencies are shared.

In comparison to *Musician 3.0*, the *FRIKA* programme was much smaller in size in 2019. Only one student was enrolled each year, and *FRIKA* was described as 'exclusive' by the informants from the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH). Shortly after the field-work, however, the programme was expanded and currently enrolls seven students a year, constituting a class dynamic that did not exist at the time of the interviews. Even so, the expansion of *FRIKA* was a heated topic of debate at NMH, ripe with institutional politics. One of the students claimed that 'either the whole institution will be like *FRIKA* or every other study programme has to become more open' (NMH-SF2). In short, *FRIKA* students suggest and shape their own curriculum. Thus, the openness of the programme is not only a matter of genre independence but of institutional structure. On the website of the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH), *FRIKA* students are portrayed to 'have the opportunity to adapt your studies and take advantage of the Academy's wide range of programmes and professional networks', leading to 'a broad music education that can serve as a stepping stone towards a diversified music career both in Norway and internationally' (Norwegian Academy of Music, 2021). The *FRIKA* model was characterised as innovative by nearly all the NMH informants:

Students should develop more ownership to their own career and what one wants, to have more freedom, and I think *FRIKA* is a model that can become very relevant for higher music education in general, particularly on the master's level. (NMH-SC2)

My impression is that very few conservatories offer similar programmes. I think it's [*FRIKA*] a cool innovation when compared to programmes that are based on genre, which has been done for many years. (NMH-SF3)

I think that *FRIKA* is an example of something innovative and even a little risky, the amount of freedom that is given to the students, there is something innovative about the way it is being done. But it is also a scary project. I think that sometimes we're speeding a little too fast perhaps. (NMH-PF1)

The sentiment that the *FRIKA* programme was 'speeding ... too fast perhaps' contrasts with the deliberateness of the *Musician 3.0* programme, with its institutionalised social practices for continuous renewal. However, even though *FRIKA* did not yet offer a class culture in 2019, the programme already practiced curriculum renewal with each enrolled student. As

indicated in the beginning of this article, such innovative practices (e.g. new methods of assessment not based on canonical works) can be both alluring and frightening to institutional members. The findings have thus far focused on the allure of innovation, but the next section elaborates on how the increased focus on innovation has resulted in institutional resistance in the two HME organisations.

Institutional resistance to innovating higher music education

This findings section presents the informants' experiences with resistance towards the increased focus on innovation in higher music education. In other words, it illustrates how institutional politics also work against innovating HME organisations. As noted in the previous section, institutional control and institutional agency are both identified in the informant interviews. Thus, the following subsections describe the informants' experiences of internal resistance to new formal structures that seek to provide innovative practices, on the one hand, and their experiences with institutional resistance to their own institutional work towards innovation and innovative ideas, on the other.

Resistance to institutional control for innovation: The 'façade' of innovation

Because music students and professors are considered 'disciplined' actors (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 486), resistance to disciplinary practices (e.g. assessment methods) is likely to manifest itself as internal tension. For instance, students and professors may want to conform to conflicting discourses from different parts of higher music education, thereby experiencing 'contradictions rooted in the differential attachment of subgroups to the values in play' (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017, p. 487). Such contradictory experience is illustrated in how the classical informants constituted institutional agency (e.g. by lobbying for constructivist teaching methods) while being subjected to opposing disciplinary practices (e.g. exam criteria based on canonical works). The genre independent informants were also disruptive in their institutional work (e.g. programme renewal), yet the disciplinary practices of their programmes fostered the very social practices that constitute continuous renewal. Despite these differences, all of the informants were subjected to the same overarching status quo (of 'reproducing') and disciplinary practices of their HME organisation (e.g. programme reports, opening hours, resources). Thus, most informants experienced resistance within themselves ('internal tension') because of the changing discursive landscape.

Though many of the informants' experiences were similar, institutional resistance appeared to be constituted differently at the two HME organisations. Informants from HKU were more open to innovation as a means of securing future employment than were the informants from NMH, indicating that their economic underpinnings stem from

different cultural heritage. This finding aligns with a study that examined the role of autonomy in the arts in the ‘social democratic state’ of Norway and ‘the world of independence’ in the Netherlands (see Kleppe, 2016). One of the professors from HKU noted that ‘you are forced to change ... especially in Holland’ (HKU-PC1). In contrast, one of the students from NMH stated that ‘the institutional leaders are very focused on innovation ... but it’s still important to maintain balance’ (NMH-SF1). In fact, several of the professors from NMH expressed that innovation had become an ‘accessory’ in the conservatory world and that the ‘façade of innovation’ (NMH-PF3) had not yet been critically addressed:

Well, I feel like the institution accessorises with such terms [innovation]. But when you enter the rehearsal rooms, people don’t actually do much innovative stuff. (NMH-PC1)

The credibility for this [implementation of the concept of innovation] is questionable. Do we really expect or wish to be innovative if we understand the term by its full meaning? (NMH-PF3)

There is a wish to innovate at the institution, but the question remains whether this is promoted by the teaching staff. How does one shake the ideas about what being a musician is about? How do you reach hundreds of our working teachers? And it doesn’t happen overnight, and certainly not without changing their mindset. (NMH-PC2)

Such statements point towards a lack of discussion concerning how higher music education will transform as a result of the increased focus on innovation and what its consequent pitfalls might be. In other words, while the social practices that constitute innovation in the two HME organisations were embraced and even established by the informants (e.g. student initiatives, student-centred teaching, new programmes and elective courses), the call for (or the ‘façade’ of) innovation was addressed with hesitance. This ambivalence was reflected in both organisations:

It often looks as though we’re being encouraged to some form of disruptive innovation ... To me that’s a contradiction, my life depends on the existence of classical music ... I’m not sure if a conservatoire is the right place to implement innovation in that sense, because it contradicts the ways of an institution. (NMH-PC3)

I think our institution is innovative in a lot of ways and extremely conservative in others. And then I think that this could be a healthy sign because we also preserve a long tradition. There are centuries with history and education to consider. One shouldn’t just jump on every wave that comes our way. (NMH-PF1)

Of course, I’m always open for innovation, but what you see a lot is that people are thinking so much of innovation that the basic stuff is gone, and that’s what I miss a lot. I miss quality. Just that somebody is really good. (HKU-PC2)

I'm not black and white about *Musician 3.0* because innovation has been overlooked a lot, I think; in classical music and jazz or other genres, things shouldn't become stagnant. That being said, I just again think that the ways to go about it are utterly and completely wrong. (HKU-SC3)

Probably we don't need this much technology and innovation ... Maybe we need to learn how to be ourselves and communicate and connect with our people instead of innovating ... What we really are as human beings, that's what we forget sometimes. (HKU-SM3)

As mentioned by one of the informants, it could be a 'healthy sign' that parts of higher music education are viewed as conservative, given that one of the commonly accepted mandates of the institution is to conserve musical heritage and traditional craft skills (Angelo et al., 2019). Yet the mission of higher music education is twofold: the institution exists in part to preserve the history of music (i.e. 'reproducing') and in part to prepare graduates for their careers as professional musicians (Johansson, 2012; Jørgensen, 2009; Minors et al., 2017; Rowley et al., 2015). The final subsection of the findings elaborates on this duality by presenting how conflicting discourses can constitute institutional politics in higher music education.

Resistance to institutional agency for innovation: Conflicting discourses

This final subsection of the findings presents the informants' experiences with resistance to innovation within their organisation, even in areas that are often deemed 'innovative'. For instance, all informants expressed that an awareness of the music industry was crucial for today's music performance students, yet the student informants experienced career courses to be yet another 'reproducing' facet of their organisation. Several students were displeased with the career courses they had taken, some claiming that courses on entrepreneurship were 'irrelevant' (NMH-SF2), 'outdated' (NMH-SC2) and did not communicate well (NMH-SC1). As innovative actors within their organisation, the students wished to develop their careers but were met with a rhetoric that did not speak to them:

We have a course on the music industry ... We talked a lot about developing artistic ideas, like, creating something that you can stand for as opposed to following the already trodden trail. But I didn't really like the course that much. But it's probably relevant for many others? (NMH-SC3)

Why don't we educate students to become freelancers? That's what most students want, but instead we're being told that "you probably won't succeed as fulltime musicians". (NMH-SC1)

Yes, we have a course on this topic ... about yourself, what kind of musician do you want to become ... I don't like the subject at all, but I think the teachers are okay. They joke a little about it: "Ha-ha, you are becoming musicians, no money". But they try their best. (HKU-SC1)

It's [entrepreneurship] actually really good in such a capitalistic society as in the Netherlands, or wherever, Western society. You need this skill! ... They should teach it here because otherwise people die ... That being said, I'm completely uninterested. (HKU-SC3)

According to a study from Norway where ten teachers and leaders within the field of higher music education were interviewed, two separate directions were identified within an entrepreneurship discourse of knowledge. In the first, a musician was considered 'an economic actor providing a service to meet market demands,' whereas the second represented 'an autonomous agent who possesses the power, skill and drive to change and improve society' (Angelo et al., 2019, pp. 89–90). Thus, it might be that the student informants had been taught entrepreneurship according to the first direction ('economic actor') but could have responded better to the second ('autonomous agent'). Another Norwegian study found that even when seen as entrepreneurial, music students might resist the term 'entrepreneurship' to such a degree that it could 'prevent them from choosing to take an optional course or module in an institutional environment that may be using this language' (Toscher & Bjørnø, 2019, p. 408). Similarly, professor informants from this study described both Norwegian and Dutch music students as 'pragmatic' (NMH-PC2) and 'hard-working' (HKU-PM3) in terms of career development. A few informants stated that inner tension could result in students:

On one hand they [students] think they have to be smart and business-like, and on the other hand they are very much against it and have a resistance to it because it doesn't feel right or good to them. They tend to sometimes go into the more alternative non-profit communities ... they are busy with the environment, they are busy with the animals, the planet ... They don't fit usually with the more business-like ideas about being an entrepreneur. It clashes. (HKU-PM3)

There are, of course, some [students] who don't want to "sell out", so there are mixed feelings about these things. But I think that students don't really know that much and are interested in learning more [about career development]. I remember that I appreciated having to work with entrepreneurship, even though I didn't like the teacher. (NMH-SF1)

Thus, while the informants expressed that an awareness of the industry was crucial, they also expressed that career courses may cause resistance (or 'mixed feelings') in music students. Notably, career courses were described by the students as 'outdated' and 'irrelevant', indicating that resistance to such courses is not only caused by conflicting discourses (e.g. around neoliberalism, as found in other studies) but, in fact, by a lack of innovation. One of the classical professors from HKU explained that 'we have to change, we have to innovate, we have to do different things, otherwise our jobs, our culture, our playing music are dying' (HKU-PC1). Despite the fact that innovation, like entrepreneurship, is strongly tied to the

economic market, the resistance identified in this study was directed at the *call* for innovation (i.e. 'accessorising' with innovation) and not at innovation itself (e.g. new study programmes). Indeed, the need to balance tradition with innovation was expressed by all target groups to varying degrees, as illustrated in the findings presented. The ways in which their HME organisation was 'innovated' upon were both appreciated and questioned by the informants. The discussion that follows centres on the implications of this unveiled landscape.

Discussion: Between innovation and tradition

Even though music students and professors sometimes lobby for seemingly contrasting discursive changes, there are more commonalities than opposing factors underneath the institutional politics identified in this study. For instance, all institutional members must adhere to the same overarching disciplinary practices of their organisation (e.g. opening hours, reports, resources), as well as consider broader societal changes such as issues of employability (Allsup, 2015; Bartleet et al., 2019; Bennett, 2012, 2008; Georgii-Hemming et al., 2020; Reid et al., 2019; Rowley et al., 2015; Toscher & Bjørnø, 2019) and social inequities (Gaunt et al., 2021; Burnard, 2019; Minors et al., 2017). Yet, as found in other studies on higher music education (e.g. Gaunt et al., 2012; González-Moreno, 2014; Jørgensen, 2000; Nerland, 2007), individuals are positioned differently in this discursive landscape based on the subject positions that are made available to them (Foucault, 1972/2010). Because the interplay between institutional agency (i.e. disruptive actors) and institutional control (i.e. disciplinary practices) is intricate and permeates all parts of HME organisations, institutional members will likely experience institutional changes differently depending on their affiliation(s). It is interesting, therefore, that all informants from this study, albeit representing different subgroups, expressed that innovation ought to be balanced with tradition. But what does this proposed balancing act imply exactly?

Recently, scholars have suggested that seemingly opposing values within higher music education can be 'partnered', as opposed to being seen as competing priorities (Gaunt et al., 2021). In practice, this means embracing 'canon repertoire *and* making new work' (Gaunt et al., 2021, p. 8) or pursuing both 'artistic imagination *and* social/cultural entrepreneurship' (Gaunt et al., 2021, p. 9). As found in this study, classical informants wanted to preserve canon repertoire and technical 'quality' (HKU-PC2) *and* they wanted more 'creativity' (NMH-PC2) and 'aestheticism' (HKU-SC3) in their programmes. By the same token, genre independent informants pursued innovation through artistic exploration 'beyond borders' (HKU-SM2) *and* stated that connecting with people was more important than innovation (HKU-SM3). Moreover, some resistance to innovation was deemed a 'healthy sign' due to the value of musical traditions (NMH-PF1). Such attempts at 'partnering' values may be favourable for HME organisations, considering the findings from this study.

The informants aimed for a ‘yes, *and*’ approach (as opposed to ‘either or’) to balance tradition with innovation in their artistic and institutional work. However, this balancing act was not achieved without conflict: by influencing their organisation in innovative ways (e.g. initiatives that resulted in profitable changes) their institutional work challenged the status quo (of ‘reproducing’) and constituted institutional politics.

Broadly speaking, the institutional politics associated with innovation in the two HME organisations studied seemed to emerge in two ways: on the one hand, as internal tension within individuals due to conflicting discourses; on the other, as tension points between ‘disciplined’ and ‘disruptive’ individuals and subgroups due to conflicting disciplinary practices (e.g. differing assessment methods). This does not mean that the various subgroups of HME organisations conflict with one another but, rather, that music students and professors typically are disciplined to such a degree that being exposed to the social/musical practices of other subgroups may be uncomfortable, even when a practice is deemed valuable or interesting. Institutional change is often uncomfortable for members (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017), perhaps particularly so in higher music education due to the perception that music is ‘dying’ (HKU-PC1). The notion that change is required for the sake of survival could explain why some HME organisations have become more tolerant of innovation as a means to attract new audiences (as was the case with the genre independent programmes; see also NAIP European Master of Music, 2021). Yet, if innovation can be a catalyst for new artistic expressions and help graduates position themselves uniquely as professional musicians in a crowded market (Toscher & Bjørnø, 2019), then why is there resistance?

For some time now, it has been argued that higher music education is under pressure to change and that HME organisations need to develop process-oriented methods to renew from within to adapt to societal changes (e.g. Haddon & Burnard, 2015; Johansson, 2012). Still, institutional members may associate innovation with the ‘crumbling’ of entities (Sogner, 2018), resulting in ‘dismantled’ institutions (Moore, 2016) and market-oriented pursuits. Indeed, the call for innovation was found to challenge the status quo (of ‘reproducing’) in higher music education, in opposition to the ‘primacy of composition’ (Burnard, 2014, p. 78). When identified, however, institutional resistance can be informative to leaders because it reveals the lived experiences of members (e.g. that the increased focus on innovation was deemed an organisational accessory). In fact, both students and professors are dependent upon the conservation of musical practices to perform their institutional roles (Angelo et al., 2019; Johansson, 2012; Yau, 2019). Thus, the call to innovate higher music education may very well be a ‘contradiction’ (NMH-PC3) to some institutional members. The genre independent professor who considered the innovative *FRIKA* programme to be ‘speeding a little too fast perhaps’ (NMH-PF1) noted that it could be ‘healthy’ for the conservatory to inhabit some resistance. If so, how can institutional resistance be met in constructive ways?

When incremental innovations (such as genre independent study programmes) are implemented in (HME) organisations, institutional resistance may be inevitable. Due to

the delimitations of this study, however, I can offer no conclusion regarding the overall resistance to the increased focus on innovation. What I can claim, though, is that there has been an evident lack of critical discussion concerning the role of innovation in higher music education and that the informants were concerned with both this shortage and with a consequent 'parading' of innovation. Though the genre independent *Musician 3.0* and *FRIKA* programmes were praised for continuously adapting their curriculum and teaching methods, they were also described as being 'a little risky' (NMH-PF1) and, moreover, to be executed 'utterly and completely wrong' (HKU-SC3). What, then, can such resistance to new programmes tell us? If met constructively, institutional resistance may shed light on potential pitfalls. For instance, active recruitment of 'disruptive' students could mean that HME organisations are able to renew from within (Carruthers, 2019; Hakkarainen, 2016; Johansson, 2012), yet the evolving disciplinary practices of new programmes could also construct a new 'normal' subject (Foucault, 1972/2010, 1994/2020) that ceases to be disruptive if institutional control is left unattended over time. Institutional resistance could bring such pitfalls to the surface during institutional change.

Overall, the informants viewed the genre independent programmes as innovative and a positive addition to their organisation. As discussed, however, the increased focus on innovation in higher music education also presents several pitfalls. A final example is that music performance students may become strained from being both 'conservative' (NMH-PC1), 'hard-working' (HKU-PM3) and 'busy with the environment' (HKU-PM3) in their efforts to balance innovation with tradition on their own terms. Because today's students are expected not only to develop as professionals but also become responsible citizens (Angelo et al., 2019; Bennett et al., 2019; Gaunt et al., 2021; O'Neill, 2019), they might experience inner tension due to the contradictory state in which many of them are positioned; music students are expected to be dedicated to their craft (as 'disciplined' actors) while being innovative in their professional careers (as 'disruptive' actors, or 'protean' musicians); and they are subjected to the institutional control of their HME organisation (e.g. grades, curriculum) while simultaneously meeting the social expectations of other subgroups and individuals (e.g. teachers and peers). Such tension points are drawn from the lived experiences of institutional members. Thus, in light of the identified institutional politics associated with innovating higher music education, would it not be wise to constructively discuss the role of innovation moving forward?

Concluding remarks: Renewing higher music education

In this article, I have discussed some of the implications behind the increased focus on innovation in higher music education. However, the discursive landscape is of such complexity that it is challenging to fully decipher the institutional politics that drive this call.

Future studies on institutional change in higher music education could benefit from employing organisational institutionalism in the examination of institutional forces, for instance by employing the notion of institutional *isomorphism* (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Based on the presented study, I conclude that processes for renewal may be found within genre independent music performance study programmes. Moreover, institutional resistance to ‘innovative’ practices can be informative for institutional leaders of HME organisations, as institutional politics can reveal underlying pitfalls that may be worthy of further examination. Finally, I posit that it could be helpful for music students and professors who are experiencing internal tension during processes of institutional change to consider ‘partnering’ innovation with tradition and that HME organisations may benefit from addressing this required balancing act.

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