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Stories on Higher Music Education – Changes and Challenges

1 Introduction

Huge changes have taken place in the Finnish higher education system since the 1990's when the structures of the higher vocational education were reformed. In this process there has been essential the foundation of the multidisciplinary universities of applied sciences. According to Raivola, Kekkonen, Tulkki and Lyytikäinen (2001, 129-132) the targets of the reform could be summarized in five themes: 1) to raise the level of the education, 2) to decentralize the administration of the education, 3) to reform the curriculum, 3) to collect the separate schools to regional and multidisciplinary universities of applied sciences and 5) to strengthen the connections to working life and to increase the regional impact (vaikuttavuus) of the education. The reform of the universities of applied sciences started at the beginning of the 1990's by the phase of the experimentation. The last permissions of becoming permanent were given in 2000.

The tasks of the universities of applied sciences are defined in the Act of the universities of applied sciences (351/2003). The task of the universities of applied sciences is to support the professional growth of the students and to offer higher education leading to professional expertise. The education is based on the requirements of the developing of working life, research and artistic starting points. The other task is to do research and development (R&D) work that serves the education at the universities of applied sciences and supports the working life and regional development taking into account the economic structures of the region.

The reform was significant also from the point of view of the teaching staff since the qualification requirements of the teachers are clearly higher at the universities of applied sciences compared to the ones of the former vocational higher or secondary education. The lecturer of the university of applied sciences is required to have an applicable higher academic degree, three years' vocational experience and pedagogical competence (60 ECTS pedagogical studies). Besides this the senior lecturers are required to have an applicable licentiate or doctoral degree.

The changes described above have had huge impacts on the education of arts, too. In the field of music the biggest structural change has been the transition of the education of music pedagogues from conservatories to multidisciplinary universities of applied sciences. Because of this transition there are new professional challenges which are directed to the skills and knowledge and qualifications of teachers taking care of the education of instrumental pedagogues. Rising up the level of the education requires continuing development of the teaching, both in methodology and content. Planning and developing are more and more parts of the work of every teacher. New demands of the qualifications of the teachers have caused in many cases a need for academic further education.

There can be seen a change in the working environment, in the content of the work and in the whole working culture. Teachers have reacted differently on these pressures of change; some teachers are developing their work positively motivated, whereas some like to lean on the old ways of working. Traditionally some teachers may think that the education they once got is sufficient for the whole career for the rest of the life. The demand for continuing development and reforming the orientation of working demand life long learning and increasing networking. The traditional operational modes do not necessarily support the demands described above.

In this article there are examined the developing contents and the changing challenges of the work of the instrumental pedagogues working at the universities of applied sciences through one case. The basis of the article is instrumental pedagogue Anna's story. The

article is based on narrative research approach when the viewpoint and the subjective experiences of the informant and the meanings given to them are essential. Narrative inquiry is based epistemologically on constructivism when knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the researcher and the informant (see e.g. Guba & Lincoln 1994, 110).

Lincoln and Denzin (2000, 1047) describe this paradigmatic phase as a transition from great narratives to the viewpoint of the individual when new, earlier silenced voices become loud. This change can also be seen in the position of the researcher and the interaction between the researcher and the informant. They form a cooperative working pair (Lincoln & Denzin 2000, 1049; see also Denzin 1996, 56).

The data of the article have been collected by narrative interviews characterized by a free flow of narration. In this case the data consists of stories recalling the music education from the childhood until the time of musical working life in adulthood. Becoming an instrumental pedagogue has been a result of a long development process. The analysis of the data has been carried out through a narrative analysis where experiential data are collected and the research aim is to organize the data to create a narrative with a plot that unifies the data. The created story is a narrative explanation of the phenomenon being studied. (Polkinghorne 1995; see also Kelchtermans 1994.)

In this article Anna's story is written parallelly with the official story that describes the change of the system of higher music education. The essential research questions are: how does the music pedagogue working at the university of applied sciences construct her professional identity within the change of the system of higher education, how does a teacher narrate her work within the change and how does a teacher narrate the music education she has got earlier and the correspondence of the education in the present requirements of skills and knowledge.

2 Education and professional challenges of the work of an instrumental pedagogue

2.1 Starting points

Anna narrates:

“I started instrumental studies rather late, at the age of nine years. I had huge enthusiasm towards playing, although I had to put time to traveling to the nearest city to have my instrumental lessons. Gradually it began to seem that music would be my profession. During my senior secondary years I spent more and more time on practicing. I was rather good at school and I could have applied for other branches of education, too. I realized that after school I would like to concentrate on music studies aiming to work as an instrumental pedagogue in the future.”

The amount and the quality of the Finnish music education have increased and improved a lot during the last 25 years. At the 1960's there were only few music institutes and they were mainly private. The system of music institutes supported by the state became possible from the end of the 1960's when the law and the act of the state subsidy for the music institutes came into effect (see Heino & Ojala 1997, 11). The developing process of the music institutes happened simultaneously along with the development of Finnish music life in general. In the recent decades the amount of the professional orchestras and music festivals has clearly increased. (See e.g. Amberla 1999, 45.) The first regulations concerning music institutes came into effect in the beginning of 1969. This created the basis for the development of the music institutes and the increase of their amount (see Law 147/1968 and Act 206/1968). Since the 1960's the regulations concerning the music institutes have been renewed many times (see e.g. A 486/1977, A 692/1987, L 516/1995 and A 880/1995). At the beginning of the year 1999 a big change took place when the separate regulations concerning the music institutes were given up. At this moment the music institutes are adjusted by the Law and Act of the basic education of arts (L 633/1998 and A 813/1998).

2.2 The work of an instrumental pedagogue on secondary level and in higher vocational education

“I studied instrumental studies firstly at a conservatory and later at the soloist department of Sibelius Academy. I graduated as Master of Music in the 1980’s. My studies consisted mainly of the studies of the main instrument and chamber music. In addition there were studies of music theory, music history and didactics including teacher training. I got high grades both in instrumental studies and in didactics.

I worked as an instrumental pedagogue both at a music institute level and in vocational higher education at a conservatory for nearly twenty years. My work consisted mainly of teaching: 22 lessons per week. In addition, there was also 90 hours’ work duty per year. This consisted of assessment of exams and concerts and different kinds of meetings. At that time I actively played concerts and I had time to practice along the working days. There was hardly at all any curriculum work or other planning activities in my work. Afterwards I have been thinking why the situation was like this. Obviously at those times the way of working was so centralized that there was no need for the work of individual teachers concerning e.g. the curriculum. International activities were rather unusual in 1990’s. However, I remember that I had been at least once in teacher exchange. When I now recall the music education I got and the way of working life these were clearly targeted to tuition of the instrument and the didactics – so purely on the substance of music. When I started as a pedagogue at a university of applied sciences the change in the amount and content of the work was notable.”

It has been discovered in many researches that the content of the work of a vocational teacher has been much narrower at the beginning of the 1990’s compared to that of the teacher of a university of applied sciences in the 2000’s. Auvinen (2004, 367) defines that at the beginning of 1990’s the core of the work of a vocational teacher has been to be an expert who is able to analyze, perform and train the subject and to make sure that the needed knowledge and skills are mastered. For example, the collective bargaining contract of the conservatories was an example of this: the amount of work was defined as

weekly lessons and a small amount of other work duties. Auvinen (2004, 367) continues that in the 2000's the teachers of the universities of applied sciences are expected to have versatile skills when the work, in addition to teaching, consists of many kinds of tasks like connecting to working life and planning of the work and working environment. Tiilikkala (2004, 213) writes that the vocational teacher education has traditionally been field-specific differentiated in the branches of education and there has been essential to give and to listen to lectures. At the universities of applied sciences the teachers work in co-operation rather than alone. The co-operation is taking place both in one's own organization and outside it (Jaatinen 1999, 88).

2.3 Reform to the universities of applied sciences

"I felt the reform to the universities of applied sciences took place rather suddenly. There were different kinds of evaluations at the conservatory, but as a teacher I wasn't very well aware of the facts they were connected to. I knew that the license for joining to the university of applied sciences had been applied. I also knew that at least the first application was rejected. When it became clear that the license will be applied again I started to find out to what kind of work my master education would qualify at the university of applied sciences.

I found out that the master's degree qualifies to the positions of lecturers, but to the positions of senior lecturers the licentiate or doctoral degree is demanded. I wanted to further develop my education and I was ready to start postgraduate education. In the field of music there are very rare institutions which offer postgraduate education. So, it wasn't so easy to take care of this thing. But finally I was able to start licentiate studies.

I was transferred to work at a university of applied sciences at the end of the 1990's when most of the degree programs in music became parts of the universities of applied sciences. In the new jobs the teachers were immediately transferred to so-called comprehensive working time. This meant that the annual working time consists of 40 weeks each having 40 hours working. In addition to this, there are 12 free weeks per

year. So, the whole amount of work is 1600 hours per year. Although the salary improved, the rising of the working time was a big change compared to the previous work. In this new job the teachers were pulled to different kinds of developing tasks. Now we had to work with also other duties in addition to teaching. I remember that the IT skills became very important in order to be able to meet all these new demands. This may sound self-evident today, but at those times it wasn't. E-mail became an important instrument of work and there were many kinds of literal duties. In those times I remember the intensity of the curriculum work and the active increasing of international contacts. Gradually we started a regular student and teacher exchange with the universities abroad. From the first season I was regularly visiting some foreign universities. Gradually the first international educational projects also took place, which were a new and an inspiring experience.”

According to Numminen et al (2001) the formation of the universities of applied sciences was a process which took place in the 1990's and it had many phases. The start of the experimentation of the universities of applied sciences in the beginning of the 1990's meant a wide re-organisation of schools. The separate field-specific schools were gathered by region to one university of applied sciences whose targets and functions had to be organized in cooperation. The universities of applied sciences were born on the basis of existing schools and new staff was recruited rarely. The phase of making these organizations permanent was taken place at the end of 1990's after applying for a permanent permission to operate. The first universities of applied sciences were made permanent in 1996 and the last ones in 2000 (Numminen et al 2001, 76-80.) The process from the beginning of the experimentation to becoming permanent was a long and at times also exhausting phase of development which had strong effects on the organizations and especially the staff working in them (see e.g. Lampinen 1995). Laakkonen (1999) has stated that in the phases of change the teachers were divided into realizers, adjusters and the ones who adhere to the traditions. The realizers actively took part in postgraduate and further in service education and tried to strive toward the goals set by the university of applied sciences. Adjusters were ready to take part in education if it was possible to take into account the available time and resources. The ones who

adhered to the traditions could justify their absence with many arguments. (Laakkonen 1999, 183.)

The music pedagogues had been trained in conservatories from 1970's. A conservatory as a type of a music institution giving vocational music education was mentioned for the first time in the Act of the state subsidy for the music institutes in 1977 (A 486/1977, see also Laurila 2000, 147). The field of music became a part of the universities of applied sciences rather late. It was not involved in the experimentations in 1990's. All the 11 Finnish degree programmes in music (earlier at the conservatories) became parts of the universities of applied sciences in 1999. The field of music had to adjust itself to many new practices which were already present in the other degree programmes which had started earlier. In the new organizations even the new concepts awakened many questions: what is research and development (R&D) in the field of music? What does the regional impact mean in the field of music? What should the thesis be like? And what about a thesis as a project work? There were already a lot of questions in the beginning but some of these questions are still current. Many questions have nationally been worked out together resulting in improved practices and joint understanding.

2.4 Research and development in the work of a music pedagogue

“The research and development work (R&D) started during the first years at the university of applied sciences. Projects belong essentially to this form of working and they have surely been a new area for many teachers working in the field of music – that also concerns me. R&D has become a permanent part of the basic function of the universities of applied sciences in the 2000's. The discussion concerning R&D is still continuing, although the education of music has been a part of the universities of applied sciences for nearly ten years. Still there are questions what is R&D in the field of music. Is it so that at the universities of applied sciences the instructions and the activity of the staff are so diverse that there is hardly a common understanding of the basic concepts. So, I have many times considered that it is important that there are postgraduated

persons in the staff of every degree program. It is difficult to imagine that every new demand could be taken care of only on the basis of the old education.”

From the point of view of a teacher at the university of applied sciences the 1990's there was the time when the structures of the universities of applied sciences and the practice of higher education were built. According to the Act (L351/2003) the universities of applied sciences have three basic duties: 1) pedagogical, 2) research and development and 3) the duties related to the regional developing. It is important how these three duties are realized in the work of a teacher. (See e.g. Kotila & Mäki 2006, 11.)

Auvinen (2004, 367) has noticed that in the 21st century a teacher should master among others project and communication skills in international surroundings. On the other hand, it is essential to master a researching and developing way of working which should be a part of the function of every university of applied sciences (see e.g. Suhonen 2006, 147).

2.5 Should the teacher do anything else but teaching?

“In the field of music I have heard considered if the teacher should do anything else but teaching. According to the present system of the universities of applied sciences the teacher has also other duties, such as developing the teaching, readiness to teach in a foreign language and connections to working life. What about artistic activities? Has a teacher enough time and strength for this?”

Every now and then I have been thinking of how the teachers elsewhere have solved these issues. I sometimes meet colleagues in national meetings. Still I don't know how much time they use for example for the developing of the staff. It seems that for example the artistic work during working time is resourced in many ways in different universities of applied sciences. I have noticed that in some places the artistic work is a part of R&D and in some places not. Sometimes I wonder how these practices are so different because there are instructions for example for the statistics how to handle these issues.”

Jaatinen (1999) has stated that in the identity of a university of applied sciences there is also connected the duty of serving. The clients are the surrounding area and its inhabitants. The skills and knowledge of the teachers is seen as a core resource when it is expected that a teacher is continuously renewing his/herself and developing the teaching. The teacher should be self-guided. A teacher has two tasks: firstly, in the relationship to the young students s/he is a tutor, a mentor and a producer of services. Secondly, in the relationship to the university of applied sciences s/he is a planner, a worker and a marketer. (Jaatinen 1999, 86-87.) Auvinen (2004) has defined that in the work of a teacher at a university of applied sciences it is essential the know how of the contest. The reform of the universities of applied sciences has especially brought challenges to the methodological skills of the teachers. These are among others international skills, IT and communication skills, the increasing literal communication, developing of working life, virtual learning environments, developing of evaluation methods, co-operation skills, networking, mastering projects, budgeting and methodological skills and knowledge. (Auvinen 2004, 348-349.)

3 Discussion

The new challenges of the teachers caused by the reform of the universities of applied sciences have already been researched during many years but not in the field of music. The new demands of skills and knowledge described in this article are very wide and diverse, especially concerning the methodological skills. It can be asked if the teachers in the field of music need all these skills and knowledge in order to be able to work properly according to the demands of the Law and the Act. On the other hand, it can be noticed that the measuring instruments of success are quite the same in the different fields of education. For example, the educational level of the teachers, ECTS credits implemented in R&D projects and the amount of thesis and thesis as project work are essential in the AMKOTA meters set by Ministry of Education. So, the success of music education is measured with quite the same meters as the ones of other fields of education. In this situation it can seem like a paradox that there is still wondering in the organizations about what is R&D in the field of music.

It can be asked if the present university education in the field of music meets the demands which the teachers working at the universities of applied sciences are facing in their work. On the other hand, it can be asked if such in-service education should be organized effectively to help the teachers in the field of music. Actually, the question is about what kind of pedagogical and methodological contents there should be included in the education for the teachers working at the universities of applied sciences. There is a need to activate the debate between teachers and the educational organizations giving in-service education.

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