

Watch this space! Developing a music/education partnership

Abstract

The Australian music sector is currently under-researched, inadequately defined, and lacks sector-wide communication. Music is a specialist field that demands exceptional skills and is unlikely to offer rewards commensurate with effort. Rapid change within the industry and related technologies has led to significant revisions in education and training programs. How can continual change be addressed in order to maintain the relevance of these programs? This research sought to establish the potential for a community of practice across the music and education sectors to facilitate the pro-active management of change within education and music.

Background

The Australian music sector is currently under-researched, inadequately defined, and lacks sector-wide communication. Music is a specialist field that demands exceptional skills and is unlikely to offer rewards commensurate with effort. Rapid change within the industry and related technologies has led to significant revisions in education and training programs. How can continual change be addressed in order to maintain the relevance of these programs? The dilemma of sustaining innovation is described by Blackmore and Grundy (2002:10) – ‘External factors seeking to scale up the reform and outside of the innovative school’s control undermine its innovative sustainability’. My research sought to establish the potential for a community of practice across the music and education sectors to facilitate the pro-active management of change within education and music.

Research was greatly assisted by the Australian National Training Authority, who provided funding through the Flexible Learning Leaders (FLL) program, a professional development initiative within the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the national Vocational Education and Training system 2000-2004. The funding was matched by Curtin University, and provided eight months of part-

time research and professional development incorporating opportunities to visit potential partners and to access expertise both within Australia and overseas.

The pivotal goal of my leadership program was to bring together collective expertise into a community of practice; establishing an ongoing network to collaboratively manage industry and educational change in order to maximise the employment potential of graduates. Whilst the research focused exclusively upon the music industry, it was anticipated that the process and findings would have significant relevance to other disciplines. Specifically, the aims of the program were as follows:

- ♪ To gain knowledge and skills to build a community of practice for the music sector incorporating participants from around the globe;
- ♪ To identify the benefits of a community of practice to students, educators and industry, and reflect these through the production of clearly defined community goals;
- ♪ To establish awareness of the performance and non-performance attributes required by musicians in the current business environment;
- ♪ To understand the mechanisms behind communities of practice;
- ♪ To gather information about potential virtual environments, funding sources and partners;
- ♪ To continue to share knowledge and to lead change beyond the program.

Literature Review

The Professional Musician

To the observer, the world of a professional musician may seem romantic (Rosen 1982, McCarthy 2001). The reality of the musician's working life, however, is rather different. High earnings of the 'superstars' create an unrealistic picture of average earnings, and the superstar image serves to inspire naïve interest in the profession.

A search of specialist music dictionaries including the *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001) failed to locate a single definition of the term 'musician'. General English dictionaries provided definitions that indicate a traditional view of a musician as one who performs; for example, *The Budget Macquarie Dictionary*

(2000:264) defines a musician as 'one skilled in playing a musical instrument', but is this a realistic view?

Engagement with the performance of music is a fundamental part of life as a musician, yet for many this engagement will be primarily through teaching, directing, technology and management. Numerous musicians would prefer to focus solely on engaging in performance; however, there is an expectation for musicians to be conversant with the role of business manager, and to utilise new technologies in order to achieve success in a global market place. In addition, musicians adapt their roles throughout their careers to reflect personal, professional and industrial circumstances. The multi-skilled nature of the music industry necessitates education and training that provides broad underpinning knowledge and ongoing professional development.

Employment

Musicians use a variety of different skills to secure regular work (McCarthy et al. 2001), and three-quarters of performing artists hold non-arts jobs either part-time or full-time (Alper, Wassall & Jeffri 1996). Careers in music typically are short, lasting until the mid-thirties or forties (Menger 1999), and there are numerous factors affecting attrition. The rate of injury amongst professional musicians in Australia is high, for example 60% of all orchestral musicians are injured at any one time (Archdall 2002). The demands of professional practice in terms of sporadic work and multiple employers, travel and unsociable hours influence many people to leave the profession early.

The music industry is poorly defined. The search for a definition of the wider cultural industries is relatively new, arising from the need to conceptualise cultural activity for the purposes of economic analysis and the compilation of data on issues such as participation and consumption (National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics 2001). The music, creative and cultural industries are each defined in many different ways due to a lack of consensus about what is encompassed within each category. Consequently, research relies heavily on the input of external partners to examine the current climate.

Women in Music

Readings undertaken as part of the program highlighted that men still predominantly hold leadership roles in music, particularly in classical music and jazz (Lawson 1991, Jepson 1993). The past twenty years, however, have seen an increase in the number of women within the fields of performance, management and composition as women have competed with their male counterparts for available positions. Despite an increase in participation at all levels of the profession, women still experience less opportunities to forge careers in music, and are less likely than men to audition for positions in traditionally male-dominated orchestras. For instance, did you know that the Vienna and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestras first admitted women in 1997? (Eakin 2003) It isn't surprising that when trombonist Megumi Kanda won the principal position with the Missouri Symphony Orchestra, only seven of the seventy six applicants were women.

Educational opportunities in music were traditionally quite different for men and women. It wasn't until the foundation of music conservatoriums in the 1880s that women were able to access music education and training at an advanced level. The fact is that many women have left, and continue to leave the profession due to the lack of opportunities and the difficulties associated with managing family and other commitments whilst maintaining a career in music (Bennett 2003).

Much of the feminist research in music, coming as it does comparatively recently, is either third-wave or compensatory research, the third-wave component addressing the 'lived' experience of women who 'juggle jobs, kids, money and personal freedom in a frenzied world' (Vitale 1999:2). Current research suggests that female mentors (Gould 1992) and examination of gender influence upon instrument choice will greatly assist women to succeed in music.

Changes to Pre-Tertiary Music Education and Training in Australia

According to Rogers (2002:4), evidence 'shows that significant areas within education, training and employment have yet to address effectively the changing realities of being a musician.' Furthermore, McCarthy states that 'it is not entirely

clear how to achieve a balance between education and job training within the traditional educational environment' (McCarthy et al. 2001:45).

Radical changes are occurring in Australian pre-tertiary music education. The new Industry Training Package (ITP) for music replaced the existing courses at all Australian Registered Training Organisations, including Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) institutions in 2003. Unlike traditional music courses, the new courses place equal importance on practical skills in music performance or composition, the application of technology, and skills in business and management.

Complementing these changes, the new university entrance course of study for music - the Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) - is due for implementation in 2006. In accordance with the new Industry Training Package the proposed music TEE has a much wider scope. Each course of study formed as a result of the Post-Compulsory Education Review (Curriculum Council 2000) has been designed to meet the needs of all students through the inclusion of general and vocational education, workplace learning and university experience.

According to McBeath (1995:1), '[C]urriculum change is a complex and difficult process and requires careful planning, adequate time, funding and support and opportunities for teacher development.' One of the most difficult aspects of curricular reform is to define the area that the curriculum intends to cover, and the rapid rate of change within both the education sector and the field of music indicates that there must be constant renewal and review in order to maintain relevance.

Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice are not new, having existed for centuries in forms such as early European Guilds, professional meeting groups or peer networks. The term community of practice was first used by Lave and Wenger (1991) when describing situated, or active learning, and refers to a group of people who communicate upon a topic of common interest. The current communities of practice research aspired to build upon established post-Fordist principles by assessing the potentiality to drive constant renewal of curriculum in accordance with industry and educational trends.

These included the following criteria as defined by Bates and Smith (2001:69).

Copyright © 2003 Bennett D. The author assigns to the Knowledge Tree e-journal and educational non-profit institutions a non-exclusive license to use this document for personal use and in courses of instruction provided that the article is used in full and this copyright statement is reproduced. The author also grants to the Knowledge Tree e-journal a non-exclusive license to publish this document in electronic or print form within Knowledge Tree e-journal publications and/or the World Wide Web. Any other usage is prohibited without the express permission of the author

- The effectiveness of organisational strategies to support flexible learning, including change management and innovation strategies.
- The effectiveness of the devolution of responsibility.
- The currency of the organisation's knowledge of its markets and customers.
- The effectiveness of the organisation's strategic alliances for flexible learning.
- The usefulness of partnerships and strategic alliances for flexible learning.

Research (McDermott 2000, Wenger 1998, Wenger & Snyder 2000, Mitchell, Wood & Young 2001) has emphasised the importance of communities of practice in successful knowledge management, and increasingly suggests that communities of practice form a valuable organisational resource that improves organisational performance (Lesser & Storck 2001).

Mitchell, Wood and Young (2001, p.3) described communities of practice as having the potential 'to be an organisation's most versatile and dynamic knowledge resource.' Communities of practice often 'cross organisational boundaries' (Lesser & Everest 2001:38) as participation draws together people interested in a common topic rather than working towards a pre-defined organisational goal. Further, Wheeler stated that 'through partnerships and ingenuity people can work together to come up with solutions in partnership with Government, education and business' (Wheeler 2003:1).

Shaping a new community of practice requires discussion about the current needs of the members in order to motivate interest and participation, illustrated by Manto (2003:1) as an algebraic formula for a sustainable online community:

$$\text{If } P = (I \times F) \text{ then } C = (P^\infty)$$

P = Participation (people actively engaging)

Manto went on to describe six key points for consideration: Identity; Ownership; Need; Whole Person; Sense of Place and Value, arguing that in order to sustain involvement all six are crucial for each individual involved in a community.

Methodology

Methodology used in this study was qualitative. The FLL program was organised around the categories of 'issue evolution' as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 441) - topical issue; foreshadowed problem; issue under development, and assertion.

Topical Issue: Could a community of practice involving both educators and music industry practitioners benefit students through the collaborative, pro-active management of change? Questions arising from the literature review included:

- ♪ In light of the changes to pre-tertiary music education and training in Australia, could ongoing collaboration between educators and the music sector assist with the pro-active management of change?
- ♪ Could a community of practice assist lecturers to collaborate on the development and delivery of new Industry Training Package units?
- ♪ Could members of a community of practice facilitate a process of continuous curriculum renewal as required in order to maintain course relevance?
- ♪ Could an online mentoring program assist music practitioners including teachers?
- ♪ Could a specific mentoring program for women help attract women to, and retain them in non-traditional roles?

Foreshadowed problem: There are radical changes occurring at all levels of education, and curricula have to evolve in order to remain relevant to the profession(s) with which they are linked.

Issue under development: What skills and knowledge is required in order to establish a community of practice? What are the potential benefits and advantages of such a community?

Assertion: Practitioners, educators and students welcomed the Community of Practice concept, and the Australian Music Network was founded as a result.

External partners from education and the music sector were involved as active drivers to the extent that the program took a largely action research approach, with the researcher a facilitator of the change process, and actions ‘primarily other-directed’ (Grundy 1997:3). Interviews and meetings were mostly unstructured, based around a pre-defined issue in relation to the research. Results were achieved typically through affiliative and visionary leadership, both of which foster resonance and have a positive emotional impact (Goleman 2002), and are described in subsequent sections.

The change process shared some of the characteristics of the action research approach advocated by Grundy (1997). Reconnaissance included an initial pilot study in which current TAFE students completed a short questionnaire. The interviews emphasised some commonalities of perceived need, and provided data on which to formulate planning for the proposed community of practice. The pilot study highlighted the need for the extensive involvement of music sector practitioners, educators and students throughout the research process, reflecting the need to share leadership.

Results/Outcomes

In accordance with the literature, an initial pilot study found that the majority of attrition within the arts profession related to five key factors: insufficiency of regular employment; a lack of career mobility; irregular working hours; high rates of injury, and low financial rewards (Archdall 2002, Menger 1999). In addition, respondents perceived that there was a lack of opportunities for professional development opportunities. Initial data from a subsequent survey indicated that less than 40% of musicians’ time is spent performing. The network agreed that ongoing professional development opportunities were required for music industry practitioners, and that assistance was needed in the areas of marketing, management, arts law, and community cultural development.

The Australian Music Network (AMN) is a partnership between education and industry; in this case Curtin University's Business School and the international music sector. The community aims to promote collaboration on issues of importance, and to provide a source of information and support for practitioners. Shaping the online community established an invaluable professional network, in itself a worthy community, and highlighted several crucial issues for immediate action. These issues became the initial goals of the community.

The research found that the concept of a community of practice was welcome, with particular reference to three key issues: mentoring for new music practitioners including teachers; communication between providers of the Industry Training Package, and an information point from which to access resources including existing websites and organisations. Whilst communities of practice can be entirely virtual, the majority involve a blend of online and other communication strategies. The music sector is unlikely to respond to an entirely online forum as observed in the lack of activity in existing music-related online forums, thus it is proposed that the Australian Music Network use a blended communication strategy.

The resulting network proposed to bring together existing initiatives wherever possible, rather than to create new ones that would simply add to the plethora of isolated initiatives. It was given the title 'Australian Music Network' to illustrate its origin, generic music focus and networking purpose.

Discussion

The Australian Music Network belongs to its participants. Its goals were established by those involved in its development, and are expanded below:

Mentoring

The need for mentoring for new music teachers is well documented, with research indicating that many music teachers in Australia leave the profession early, and that new teachers struggle to cope with the huge demands placed upon them, often finding themselves the only music teacher at their school (Leong 1999). Mentoring was also found to be necessary for music practitioners who struggle to find valid

advice on legal, marketing, copyright, management and other performance-related issues. Several mentoring schemes were identified, and permission was sought to link the schemes to the new network. As well as requests for an 'Ask the Expert' option, feedback indicated the desire for peer networking, and consequently a dedicated discussion forum was agreed.

The teacher peer-network

The research identified the need for collaboration on resource development, delivery and assessment, and for general discussion. Many vocational trainers, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and school music lecturers operate in isolation from peers. Student numbers are often limited, particularly in regional and remote areas, and programs depend upon the skills and knowledge of the individual lecturer rather than benefiting from a team approach. Mitchell and Young describe the development of the National Training Framework as 'the largest single change ever undertaken in the sector' (Mitchell, Wood & Young 2001:6). It is also the largest single opportunity for collaborative planning, teaching and assessment that has ever been presented.

Anderson and Ellis (2000:2) describe web sites that teach, as well as distribute resources, as enhancing 'learning opportunities in regional and remote areas as well as day to day, face to face tuition'. Technology has the potential to empower delivery and moderation of practical and non-practical music subjects to take place across two or more locations. The expertise of vocational practitioners, lecturers and coordinators is evident in the innovative ways in which the new programs are being run, and the community seeks to link together those delivering and assessing the Industry Training Package, offering new lecturers access to combined expertise and existing lecturers the opportunity to make further advancements.

Information point

Providing a source of information and support was an obvious goal, whilst linking together educators and practitioners to share resources, projects and research was found necessary due to the lack of a research culture both within vocational

education and the music industry. The music sector is diffuse, and internal communication is particularly poor between different genres, and between the government and non-government sectors. The information point seeks to provide, without genre barriers, global links to news, events, organisations and practitioners.

Setting up the Australian Music Network

Developing an understanding of the mechanisms behind communities of practice called for site visits and conversations with many people who are involved with communities of practice that function face-to-face, online or in combination. Research of the theory of successful learning communities included observation and participation in successful and not so successful communities to ascertain the realities of community establishment and maintenance.

The research also found that whilst an advanced forum is preferable, people were more likely to participate in a community with mediocre infrastructure and stimulating debate, than in one with a superb website and little to say!

The research benefited from a wealth of people with vast experience in music education, the music industry and communities of practice. At the commencement of the leadership program, it was anticipated that most communication would take place in person. The travel undertaken was invaluable, however, the network evolved to a point where the researcher was sufficiently confident to reduce the amount of travel through increased use of online, email and phone communication.

It is said that 55% of any visual communication is achieved through body language and other non-verbal means. For that reason it is understandable that building networks can be more comfortable in person, however, the common interest and enthusiasm that motivates people to participate in a community of practice are more than sufficient to make up for the other 45%!

The Future

The research confirmed that the proposed community has a place in the music and education sectors. The website is a subset of a firmly established network, and is due

for launch towards the end of 2003. By mid-2004 it is hoped that the program will be seen as a case study for other lecturers who wish to promote education/industry links. It is also hoped that the benefits will be seen throughout Western Australia through the involvement of the West Australian Music industry Association, which will lead mentoring activities. Teacher mentoring and other music-related teaching and learning discussion will encourage the involvement of colleagues overseas and in other states and territories.

Time is the reason most commonly given to explain non-participation in Framework activities. Collaboration is the key. Innovation is everywhere, and much of it exists in relative isolation with multiple groups working alone on the same or similar projects.

Recommendations

A number of initiatives could be taken to heighten the efficiency of this change process. Decision makers could:

- encourage peer networks for collaboration in resource development, delivery and assessment beyond localised links
- utilise listserves to connect providers of ITP courses
- examine ways in which regional areas can team-teach with others, limiting the impact of insufficient teaching expertise and inadequate students numbers
- provide funding incentives to enable regional areas to subsidise the cost of using these technologies
- recognise the increasingly flexible nature of delivery with reporting and statistical systems that are not dependent upon defined semester dates.

Finally, the need for a research culture in vocational education and TAFE particularly, is evident, and needs to be addressed urgently.

Conclusion

The change process was in keeping with some of West et al.'s nine propositions on leadership in learning organisations (West et al. 2000). For instance, as the research identified the extent to which external partners were needed to drive the development, we had to learn to give away leadership and become facilitators (proposition five). If read in the context of a community of practice bridging the education and music sectors, proposition two has a close alignment to the change process suggested by the community of practice research.

Learning organisations seeking to develop dispersed leadership models will move from the lowest common denominator of shared aims to the highest common factor of shared values and beliefs. (West et al. 2000:47).

The leadership program and the Australian Music Network website's progress will assist others to establish education-industry linkages, furthering strategic goals of program relevance, industry partnerships and networks. Dispersed leadership is one of the keys to a successful community of practice, which succeeds or fails according to the needs and resultant motivation of a shifting member base. Its members will direct the Australian Music Network, and ultimately its survival will depend upon them.

References

- Alper, N. O., Wassall, G. H. & Jeffri, J. 1996, *Artists in the Work Force: Employment and Earnings 1970 to 1990*, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington DC.
- Anderson, A. & Ellis, A. 2000, *What's the web doing for music teachers?* Retrieved 12 February 2003 from <http://ausweb.scu.edu.au/aw02/papers/refereed/anderson/paper.html>.
- Archdall, S. 2002, 'Strains of music that no musician wants', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 2 July. Retrieved 2 July 2003 from <http://www.andante.com/magazine/articl...ywords=Adelaide%20Symphony%20Orchestra.html>.
- Bates, D. T. & Smith, D. P. 2001, *Critical issues in flexible learning for VET managers*, TAFE frontiers, Melbourne.
- Bennett, D. 2003, 'Professional musicians, University teachers: How can research be added, and why is it so important?' in *Australian Technology Network Women's Executive Development Conference*, in print, Perth.
- Blackmore, J. & Grundy, S. 2002, 'Leading and Managing', in *Leading and Managing Learning Organisations*, Deakin University, Geelong, pp. 1-21.
- Curriculum Council 2000, *Post-Compulsory Education Review Position Paper*, Curriculum Council, Perth.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. 2000, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn, Sage Publications Inc, California.
- Eakin, H. 2003, 'Women are as scarce as change at Vienna orchestra', *New York Times*, 4 June. Retrieved 6 June 2003 from <http://www.iht.com/articles/98500.html>.
- Goleman, D. 2002, *The New Leaders: transforming the art of leadership into the science of results*, Little Brown, London.
- Gould, E. 1992, 'Gender-specific occupational role models: Implications for music educators', *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 8-12.
- Grundy, S. 1997, 'Leadership for Educational Change', in *Leading and Managing Learning organisations*, Deakin University, Geelong.
- Jepson, B. 1993, 'Women seek new visibility in the pit - on the podium', *New York Times*, 8 August. Retrieved 6 September 2003 from www.sun.rhbc.ac.uk/Music/Archive/Women/1994/milwauke.html.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. 1991, *Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Lawson, K. (ed.) 1991, *Women conductors: Credibility in a male-dominated profession*, Greenwood Press, Westport.

Leong, S. 1999, 'The plight of novice music teachers in Australia: Initial preparation and workplace expectations', *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 9(1), 1999, pp. 23 - 31. Retrieved 6 July 2003 from <http://education.curtin.edu.au/iier/iier9/leong.html>.

Lesser, E. L. & Everest, K. 2001, 'Using Communities of Practice to Manage Intellectual Capital', *Ivey Business Journal*, vol. March/April. http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/view_article.asp?intArticle_ID=279.

Lesser, E. L. & Storck, J. 2001, 'Communities of practice and organisational performance', *IBM Systems Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 1-11. <http://www.research.ibm.com/journal/sj/404/ledder/html>.

Macquarie 2000, *The Budget Macquarie Dictionary*, 3rd edn, The Macquarie Library Pty Ltd, Sydney.

Manto, M. 2003, *On the road to community*. Retrieved 16 August, 2003 from <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~marleman/index.html>.

McBeath, C. 1995, *Barriers to effective curriculum change: a case study in dissemination practice*, Retrieved 17 September 2003 from <http://www.curtin.edu.au/pubs/mcbeath/bris95.html>

McCarthy, K., Brooks, A., Lowell, J. & Zakaras, L. 2001, *The Performing Arts in a New Era*, 1st edn, RAND, California.

McCarthy, K. F. 2001, *Change of Scene: Traditional Arts Organizations Need to Update the Plot*, RAND, California.

McDermott, R. 2000, *Knowing in community: 10 critical success factors in building communities of practice*. Retrieved 6 September, 2003 <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/knowning.shtml>

Menger, P. 1999, 'Artistic labor markets and careers', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 541 - 574. <http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.soc.25.1.541?cookieSet=1>.

Mitchell, J., Wood, S. & Young, S. 2001, *Communities of Practice: Reshaping Professional Practice and Improving Organisational Productivity in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector*, Australian National Training Authority, Melbourne.

National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics 2001, *Selected Cultural Industries 1999 - 2000*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

Rogers, R. 2002, *Creating a Land with Music*, Youth Music, London.

Rosen, S. 1982, 'The economics of superstars', *American Economic Review*, vol. 71, no. 5, pp. 845 - 858. Retrieved 10 October 2002 from <http://ideas.repec.org/a/aea/aecrev/v71y1981i5p845-58.html>.

Vitale, S. M. S. 1999, *The 3rd WWWave: What's all this, then?* Retrieved 23 April, 2003 from <http://www.io.com/~wwwwave/>

Wenger, E. 1998, 'Communities of practice - learning as a social system', *Systems Thinker*. Retrieved 8 June 2003 from <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/lss.shtml>.

Wenger, E. & Snyder, W. 2000, 'Communities of practice: The organisational frontier', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 78, no. 1, pp. 139-145.

West, Jackson, Harris & Hopkins 2000, 'Learning through leadership, leadership through learning: leadership for sustained school improvement', in K. A. Riley & K. S. Lewis, (eds.), *Leadership for Change and School Reform*, Routledge Falmer, London, pp. 46-7.

Wheeler, L. 2003, 'Learning Communities', *Flexible Learning Leaders*, Canberra.